

# RELIGION AND POLITICS IN KENYA

Essays in Honor of a Meddlesome Priest



EDITED BY BEN KNIGHTON



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Edited by  
Ben Knighton

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RELIGION AND POLITICS IN KENYA  
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To Wanja,

Rachel Nyawira, Charis Makena, Joel Munene, and Rosh Murimi

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## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I must thank all the contributors to this volume, without whom it would not have been possible. All of them have long experience of Kenya and have published in the area of this topic before, as the bibliography bears witness. They have endured my editing with great fortitude and support. Special thanks are due to John Lonsdale, who committed himself early to a large contribution and gave me some very helpful advice. A joint paper by two Kenyans was to have been included, but given the emotionally disturbing events in their home country during 2008, it is not surprising that they were not able to produce their chapter in the end. Between them, the contributors have set out an intriguing balance of tensions, for each part presents a case for and against the contribution of religions in Kenyan politics—for them making a valuable difference on behalf of people and nation or for them being sucked in to the venality and elitism of state politics. It is left to the reader to learn and decide from this appropriate dialectic. Are the churches compromised and co-opted or are they reforming and transforming politics? In which direction is the trend now moving? Of course a religion that was not rooted in contemporary culture would not have the leverage to affect it, but a church that has lost its saltiness will not stop the rot. Where is the balance to be drawn and who is to regulate it?

Again this book would not have happened but for the “famous four” Protestant clergy, who put their heads above the parapet when many refused to do so and faced the onslaught of the powers that be. There are all too few in their own denominations and in Africa who have had such a ministry as Henry Okullu, David Gitari, Timothy Njoya, and Alexander Muge. Gitari’s Episcopal Roman Catholic contemporary, Archbishop Ndingi Mwana’a Nzeki, also deserves a mention, though I personally never had the opportunity to enter his sphere during my nine-year service of the Anglican church in East Africa. Between them they have made a difference in Kenya’s history, especially when compared

with Uganda's. Each had a burning concern arising out of their faith that justice be done in the world, which transcended personal ambition or gain. They knowingly risked much, and in a different time or place, could have paid a higher penalty than they did. Many would say that Muge paid the highest price with his early death on the road. While the book is centered on issues and processes rather than personalities, the topic's focus is given by the work of the former archbishop of the Anglican Church of Kenya, David Gitari, who of the four has had the longest-running influence and the most structural. Though he retired in 2002, the contributors have taken their analysis forward to the traumatic events of 2008. I am particularly grateful to David Gitari and the Church Mission Society for giving me seven years in which to watch this process at close quarters and to encourage it in a younger generation of clergy who are yet to rise to the top, though several have already become bishops or doctors of the church. The dearth of prophecy will not be forever.

I am grateful to those former students, and others who knew me less, for enabling my access to rich oral evidence, though not much of it has been brought into this book. I heartily thank the sometime members of St Andrew's College, Kabare, particularly my faithful colleague Justus Mbogo, for energizing my activity in Kenya and for their welcome on my repeated returns since.

In producing the book, I was helped by Caroline Mose, now embarked on her doctoral studies in University College, London, who performed some copyediting work. Thanks are due to Luba Ostashevsky, Colleen Lawrie, Laura Lancaster, and the production team of Palgrave Macmillan for selecting this project, holding on to it, and enabling its completion.

The Oxford Centre for Mission Studies allowed me reading time and its library resources for me to continue my education in the topic of this book while being employed by them. My students there may have found us discussing Kenyan affairs not directly related to their research topic. Above all I must give gratitude to the one who led me most unexpectedly to Africa in the first place, through the agency of Philip Price and John Stott, obliging me to attend to, and so to understand, the other.

The African Studies Centre in the University of Oxford, where my wife, Wanja, serves as Administrator, has attracted many "Kenyanists" over the last decade to Oxford. They are represented by name in the bibliography, but their ideas have been an aural stimulant of the highest quality! Last, but no means least, I express my appreciation to my family who bore most of the cost of this nocturnal vigil. If they read this book,

they might come to understand why their father or husband was so preoccupied with matters on the computer when not attending to their worthy interests. However, they too are learning to study and to think for themselves.

Dr Ben Knighton

St Crispin's Day 2008

(According to legend, Crispin and his brother were beheaded on account of Roman imperial politics on 25 October 286)

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AASR	African Association for the Study of Religions
ACK	Anglican Church of Kenya (previously known as CPK)
ACNS	Anglican Communion News Service
A-G	Attorney-General
AIC	African Inland Church
AICs	African Instituted Churches
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCMS	Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society (now Crosslinks)
CCK	Christian Council of Kenya
CITAM	Christ Is The Answer Ministries
CKRC	Constitution of Kenya Review Commission
CMI	Chr. Michelsen Institute (Bergen)
CMS	Church Mission(ary) Society
CPK	Church of the Province of Kenya (now known as ACK)
DD	Doctor of Divinity
DP	Democratic Party
EAK	Evangelical Alliance of Kenya
EATWOT	Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians
ECK	Electoral Commission of Kenya
EFAC	Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion

EFK	Evangelical Fellowship of Kenya
FGC	Female Genital Cutting
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FOCUS	Fellowship of Christian Unions
FORD-Asili	Forum for the Restoration of Democracy-Asili
FORD-Kenya	Forum for the Restoration of Democracy-Kenya
GEMA	Gikuyu Embu Meru Association
GSU	General Service Unit
HE	His Excellency
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDP	internally displaced person
INFEMIT	International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians
IPK	Islamic Party of Kenya
ISITA	Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa
KADU	Kenya African Democratic Union
KAG	Kenya Assemblies of God
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KAYO	Kenyan Anglican Youth Organization
KBC	Kenya Broadcasting Corporation
KEC	Kenya Episcopal Conference
KENDA	Kenya National Democratic Alliance
KENYA	Kenya National Youth Alliance
KGVCU	Kenya Grain Growers Co-operative Union
KNC	Kenya National Congress
KPCU	Kenya Planters Co-operative Union
KPU	Kenya Peoples' Union
KSC	Kenya Social Congress
KSCF	Kenya Students Christian Fellowship

MBS	Moran of the Burning Spear
MEWA	Muslim Education and Welfare Association (Mombasa)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
NAMLEF	National Muslim Leaders Forum
NARC	National Alliance of Rainbow Coalition
NCC	National Constitutional Conference
NCKK	National Council of Churches of Kenya (or Christian Council of)
NGO	non-governmental organization
NTV	Nation TV
ODM	Orange Democratic Movement
PAFES	Pan-African Fellowship of Evangelical Students
PCEA	Presbyterian Church of East Africa
PICK	Party of Independent Candidates of Kenya
PNU	Party of National Unity
PROCMURA	Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa
PSC	Parliamentary Select Committee
RC	Roman Catholic
RGC	Redeemed Gospel Church
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist
SUPKEM	Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims
TEE	Theological Education by Extension
UECK	United Evangelical Churches of Kenya
UK	United Kingdom
UMA	United Muslims of Africa
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US(A)	United States (of America)
WCC	World Council of Churches

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# NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

## **PADDY BENSON**

After reading Politics, Philosophy, and Economics at Oxford, Paddy Benson worked for some years for a publishing firm, before taking a BD degree at Trinity College, Bristol. Following missionary training at All Nations Christian College, he worked for the Anglican Church of Kenya with Crosslinks and became Acting Director of Communications to Bishop David Gitari at a time of vigorous engagement between church and state.

Presently Vicar of Christ Church Barnston on the Wirral, he values links with the worldwide church, especially in Kenya. For ten years he was part of the planning group of the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion (EFAC), convening theological seminars for some of the rising stars among Evangelical Anglican theologians from the majority world. He has published “The Church’s Witness to the Living God in Social and Political Structures in Contemporary Africa,” in Gitari and Benson *The Living God* and “Ideological Politics versus Biblical Hermeneutics,” in Hansen and Twaddle, *Religion and Politics in East Africa*.

He is married to Eleanor, who is head of a church secondary school and they have three adult children.

## **JOHN CHESWORTH**

John Chesworth spent almost 20 years working in theological education in Tanzania and Kenya and established an MA course in Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations at St. Paul’s University, Limuru. He has just completed a doctoral thesis on the use of the Bible and the Qur’an in Swahili in Muslim and Christian outreach in East Africa. Now based in Oxford, he is working as a lecturer at the Oxford Centre for Muslim-Christian Studies. His recent publications include: “Challenges to the Next Christendom: Islam in Africa,” in Wijzen and Schreiter

*Global Christianity: Contested Claims* and “Fundamentalism and Outreach Strategies in East Africa: Christian Evangelism and Muslim *Da’ŷwa*,” in Soares, *Muslim-Christian Encounters in Africa*.

#### **JULIUS GATHOGO**

Dr. Gathogo is a full-time lecturer in Philosophy and Religious Studies at the Mombasa Campus of Kenyatta University. He also lectures in Theology in the postgraduate program at Daystar University, Nairobi Campus. He completed his Ph.D from the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2006. Since then, he has published over a dozen journal articles in various parts of the world. This includes his publications in *Swedish Missiological Themes*; *Black Theology Journal*, UK; *African Theological Journal*, Tanzania; *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*; and *Churchman*, UK, among others.

#### **PAUL GIFFORD**

Paul is Professor of African Christianity at the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London. In the early 1990s, he did research for the All Africa Conference of Churches in Nairobi. He has written extensively in publications on churches in Africa with *Christianity and Politics in Doe’s Liberia*; *African Christianity: its Public Role*; *Ghana’s New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy*, and this year, *Christianity, Politics and Public life in Kenya*, as well as widely read, edited volumes.

#### **JACQUELINE M. KLOPP**

Jackie is Assistant Professor of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University. Her research focuses on the connections between democratization, violence, internal displacement, and corruption around land. Klopp is the author of articles for *Africa Today*, *African Studies Review*, *African Studies*, *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, *Comparative Politics*, *Forced Migration Review*, and the *International Peace Academy*. She is currently working on a book “Land, Violence, and Democratization in Kenya.” Klopp received her BA from Harvard University and her Ph.D in Political Science from McGill University.

#### **BEN KNIGHTON**

Ben was born on a farm in England, and read for degrees at the universities of Nottingham and Durham. He first went to Africa in January 1984, out

of which arose his doctoral thesis on a pastoralist people of East Africa, his monograph on traditional Karamojong religion, and his Fellowship in the Royal Anthropological Institute. From 1991, he was a Tutor, Director of Academia, Vice-Principal, and Principal in St. Andrew's College, Kabare. Since 1998 he has been involved in leading the Research Programme in the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, enabling church people from the Two-Thirds World churches to read for their Ph.D and MPhil., while also conducting personal research among the Gikuyu of Kenya. Among his publications are: "The State as Raider among the Karamojong: 'Where there are no guns, they use the threat of guns,'" *Africa*; a monograph, *The Vitality of Karamojong Religion: Dying Tradition or Living Faith*; and "Multireligious Responses to Globalization in East Africa: Karamojong and Agĩkũyũ Compared" in *Transformation*. With Prof. Terence Ranger he teaches the MSc. course in "Gods, Kings, and Prophets" for the Africa Studies Centre in the University of Oxford. He is Honorary Treasurer for the African Studies Association of the UK.

#### JOHN LONSDALE

His father having served as a chaplain in Kenya, John Lonsdale has never ceased observing and studying the country over the course of his subsequent life. He retired as Professor of Modern African History at the University of Cambridge in 2004 and continues as Fellow of Trinity College. He has served as President of the African Studies Association of the UK. With Bruce Berman he published *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa*, and, with Atieno Odhiambo, *Mau Mau and Nationhood*. He put great care into writing "Kikuyu Christianities: A History of Intimate Diversity" in Maxwell and Lawrie, *Christianity and the African Imagination: Essays in honour of Adrian Hastings*. Major publications are expected on modern Kenyan history.

#### GALIA SABAR

Dr. Sabar is Chair of African Studies in the Department of Middle Eastern and African History, Tel Aviv University. She has two major fields of research. One focuses on the processes leading to the establishment of African communities in Israel and on their sociopolitical characteristics. Special interest is devoted to their religious life and on the significance and position of specific forms of African religion in non-African societies in the context of present waves of overseas migration. The other concerns state, society, and religion in East Africa, where

she has analysed the interaction between politics and religion in various African countries. The main focus is on the role of churches in East Africa's sociopolitical arena and how the churches established themselves as central forces in society and in the state by assuming responsibility for education, health care, and economic-oriented services to citizens. Her monograph, *Church, State and Society in Kenya—From Mediation to Opposition, 1963–1993* is most pertinent for this volume.

## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION: STRANGE BUT INEVITABLE BEDFELLOWS

BEN KNIGHTON

Religion and politics have a most ambiguous relationship in African studies. Among African students of religion, it has become an acknowledged orthodoxy that, at least from a precolonial perspective, religion and politics are one in Africa.<sup>1</sup> Certainly, my research among a contemporary pastoralist people (Knighton 2005a) does not show this to be a trite statement, but one supported by the profound overlap of religion and politics in personnel, functions, and institutions. After all in a region of uncertain and uncontrolled environments and livelihoods, where the weak went to the wall, or rather to the hills minus their cattle (Sutton 1990; 1993), issues of power and religion were vital for the preservation or expansion of identities and solidarities, and autonomy in the limits that the transcendent would allow was the prized goal of each community. With Arab and European invasion, the religions of traditional societies were not simply overrun by a secular modernity. The Arabs had little interest in proselytizing Africans beyond those who would prepare their food, while the European administrators, even if sons of the clergy,<sup>2</sup> were frequently more animated by the secular trends of Victoriana or an ethnographic fascination sparked by Kipling or Rider Haggard.<sup>3</sup>

### MISSION AND COLONY

In East Africa, however, it should never be forgotten how vital the missionary contribution was, whatever its consequences. Evangelical Lutherans of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) arrived on the coast just when Arabs reached Buganda from there, and 33 years later, in 1877, they caught up with them, closely followed by Roman Catholic missionary orders. The most rudimentary imperial administration began under the British Foreign Office some 17 years later.<sup>4</sup> The mere proposition of a Uganda Railway led to a host of missions from many denominations targeting the region, but it took six years to reach Lake Victoria; so most of them, faced with an Anglican–Roman Catholic duopoly in Uganda by law established, stopped off in the East African Protectorate that became Kenya Colony in 1920 because of the European settlers who were considered necessary to make the railway pay. Thus, in many localities of Kenya, it was the missionary who took up residence before the district officer. Roland Oliver's (1952) book, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa*, which is seen as marking the birth of African Studies as a recognized cluster in the University, suitably highlights a factor more significant in Africa's modern history than for other continents. Missionaries were themselves obliged by exigency to engage in the political and military conflicts and settlement of the region. One CMS missionary, Bwana Stokesi, traded in his evangelism for gunrunning in the Protestant cause in Uganda (Harman 1986).

While the administrators were finding their feet, budgets, and offices, the missionaries were working with Africans in the rural areas, attracting them with Western medicine, education, and religion. Often there was mass interest at first, and even if it proved much harder to distil a group of committed converts, these were to become highly influential in the construction of the colonial state and in reactions to it. In religious terms, they can only be termed as fertile. Not only did mission stations become permanent fixtures in the landscape, generally on hilltops for reasons of missionary health, but they also occasioned chains of reactions. Plural belonging was always a possibility stemming from the common practice of adhering to select ceremonies of both traditional and missionary religion. Irreconcilable beliefs or personality disputes frequently resulted in schisms. Since the missions had worked so hard to break the politico-religious polities of the existing societies, picking up their transgressors as their most loyal converts (Karanja 1999), it is not surprising that Africans no longer saw a religious need for hegemony, especially that instituted by foreigners, moreover foreigners who disagreed among themselves (Gatu 2006).

Western Kenya, in particular, ecclesiastically governed from the Protectorate of Uganda until 1921, but in the Protectorate of East Africa

from 1902, had the political space for New Religious Movements (NRMs),<sup>5</sup> even when these were welcomed by neither missionary nor state. Yet perhaps the state was more willing to entertain a new sect, if it dissipated the power of the meddlesome Archdeacon Owen, who campaigned for worker's rights. Since American and South African missions were slightly later on the scene than the European ones, they had to travel further up the railway to find a vacant sphere, which, with their early fundamentalist, holiness, or Pentecostalist distinctives, led to an even greater polarity.

The other large concentration of converts was in Central Kenya, which provides sharp comparison to Western Kenya. Christian mission centered primarily around what was perceived as one tribe, the Gikuyu. The first mission, sent by the Church of Scotland, was near the railway beyond Nairobi on uncultivated land that was soon called Thogoto (Gikuyu for Scot). The influential Anglican center and mother church was at Kabete, now a suburb of Nairobi, where Canon Harry Leakey became a godfather of the Kenyan state. Both missions were strongly Gikuyophile, and between them they created a Kiambu elite that was soon to become the African political establishment of Kenya, right at the heart of the new nation, ensconced on the pleasant, greener side of the capital. Any expansion of the mission to ethnolinguistically related neighbors beyond them was also an extension by them.

The Protestant missions, despite their different denominations and cultural backgrounds, were also committed at an early stage to an unusual ecumenism for their day, leading to the Protestant Alliance. Though this foundered over the rite of female circumcision, as it was called in Kenya, which did spawn African Instituted Churches (AICs) nevertheless, the Protestants worked in harmony far more than they competed. This was the foundation that produced long-term institutions such as the Alliance High School (Kipkorir 1969),<sup>6</sup> St. Paul's United Theological College (that even took in a few ordinands from AICs), and the Christian Council of Kenya (which was to become the most representative ecclesiastical voice in Kenyan politics, even during the Emergency of the 1950s). One key project for establishing Gikuyu identity in the newly literate society was the founding of an orthography and a translation of the Bible, which the missions achieved together.<sup>7</sup> The redefinition and writing of a language is difficult to underestimate in processes of social change in which literacy becomes popular (Lonsdale 1996, and Chapter 2 in this volume; Stromberg 1993; Peterson 2004). In their dictionaries, Derek Peterson (1997: 257; 1999) found that "missionary authors gave voice to the Gikuyu languages of class and politics."

Thus, while Western Kenya was peripheral, the mixing point between mountain and lake (both the broadest in the world) and between the

shifting borders of two states, Central Kenya was very close to the seat of government, colonial and independent. Western Kenya had experienced pillage and slave-raiding by Arab and Swahili *safaris*, who depended on Central Kenya for purchasing food supplies. The foremost entrepreneur engaging with them south of Mount Elgon was Mumia, son of Shiundu, Nabongo of the Wanga, so he and his clan became Muslims (Knighton 1990:I, 138f). The missions in Western Kenya were disunited within and between themselves, while those of Central Province were organized, predominantly mainstream, worked with a more homogenous constituency, and hosted a great deal of the educational activity in Kenya.<sup>8</sup> Archdeacon Owen's championing of workers' rights was sufficient to annoy the authorities in both government and CMS, but it was not enough to engage the trust of the Luo. He had not even entrusted them with a vernacular translation of the Old Testament (Onyango 2006).<sup>9</sup>

### RELIGION AND POLITICS

Religion then, or, in precolonial terms, the weight of symbolic tradition, was not sought as a third-best compensation for the loss of power or the consolation of the weak, but as vital force, at times perhaps the most effective. It was well to have armed men afoot, but if a seer could behold their coming, or the best medicine could confuse their approach, then the venture would be in vain. Even a dominant tribe could acknowledge the capacity of a minor one to court the protection of divinity, thus explaining why it had not been absorbed by the greater. With the incursion of world religions—and the Indian sepoy and railway workers brought some exposure to Sikh and Hindu rites also—alternative religion was presented. It was named *dini*, a Swahili word from the Arabic, meaning “a reading,” because all of them were scriptural, and the power of this religion was often thought to be located in the arcane knowledge of reading scripture. Thus Africans took the Bible seriously, whether they were convinced by the missionary gospel or not, and imbibed its stories for generations. The strength of the white man lay in his ritual practice of knowledge.

In the cultural paradigm shifts during colonialism, religion was frequently a means to innovate, to resist innovation, or to mediate and comprehend change.<sup>10</sup> To convert and join the congregation of the mission was a strong political statement for communities used to relying on, and maintaining, their unity and communal traditions, even if there were many centrifugal tendencies when intertribal wars had ceased. The religious choices of various families and clans could be politically determinative for them for decades, since others would attribute to them a certain position whether they held it dear or not. Thus while the colonial

administration would look down on the novel strangeness of a new *dini* (Mahone 2006), it was the African way of being active and creative in their appropriation of wondrous new signs and rites. In the pluriformity of Western Kenya, an NRM could become particularly associated and identified with a certain place or people, for instance, the Ruwe Holy Ghost Church and the Musanda Holy Ghost Church (Kuhn 2008:35). Such a mosaic becomes factored into any political map worth its price, as John Lonsdale (1992) has emphasized for the Gikuyu. Derek Peterson (2001) has shown how conversion to the East African Revival in Nyeri District was a way in which Gikuyu women and men argued about moral and economic change. Religious adherence binds, divides, mobilizes, or changes people; this is power whether dubbed religious or social.

Yet religion is not merely a power to conform, but one to subvert, liberate, and transform also. Hence the new-fangled Christian faith was a boon to those who, sometimes through no fault of their own, as in the case of ineligibility for an age-class, had little prospect of good status, or marriage, according to tradition. Christian reading allowed shortcuts to higher status, usually through engagement with the colonial government, and suddenly the long haul and slow graduation of the traditions lost their appeal for the younger generation. Churches frequently offered women the opportunity to escape the sexual tyranny of old men (Onyango 2006). Countermovements within the mainstream churches opposed or co-opted missionary rule, sometimes by outbidding them at their own game, making the rules more exclusive or inclusive than they would have. AICs could realize some significant freedoms over missionaries or their chosen followers by continuing to observe Anglican or Roman liturgy and church order, but still permitting a few crucial local customs (Swahili, *mila*). The power to dissent or protest is not a widespread right in Africa, and the religious history of these terms in the Anglo-Saxon world also bears witness to their being a specific feature of religion, or even it may be argued, a certain kind of religion that was not necessarily sectarian (Carter 2001).

Religious concepts of salvation often imply redemption into or emancipation from culture.<sup>11</sup> As the very language of fundamental human freedom, they cannot be reduced to a mere social function for long, for if it is that, religion has lost its vitality and the glory has departed. Religion is so much about the freedom of the human spirit and its capacity to interact with the divine, that it can be seen as the fount of all freedom and not just as its would-be controller.<sup>12</sup> While the ego may be battered socially, and the body bruised by furious blows, ultimately no-one can force mental and spiritual decisions, so it is religion and reflection that develops inner resolve. Many Kenyans have had to put their convictions to the severest

tests: whether because of the regular humiliation of migrant labor and laws passed under colonial rule; Mau Mau being harassed by security forces and commonly testifying to an extraordinary religious dependence whether neotraditional or Christian; resolute Christians being threatened daily by Mau Mau or witnessing atrocities against their brethren for refusing to conform; or because of political dissidents facing a regular beating from the police whenever the state under Kenyatta or Moi feared an inner threat.<sup>13</sup> It is often forgotten that Bildad Kaggia, the inveterate champion of freedom and justice in Kenyan politics, much too radical for Kenyatta, had been, not many years before they were interned together, an itinerant, revivalist preacher, courted by the masses and CMS (Kaggia 1975).

The Christian gospel of St. Paul explicitly offers freedom. "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1). From its context of cross-cultural relations, this was a potent message for Africans in Kenya surrounded by civilizing missions and the restrictive controls pushed by settler politics. For the secular student in Africa, these things were by the way. Kenyatta and Kaggia had been involved in and with mission churches, but they grew impatient of them, and became involved in the "real business" of politics. Yet, in their lives and consciousness, their turn to politics no more eradicated the religious influence or motivation than Christian profession had eradicated their inheritance of Gikuyu culture. Tired of missionary limitations, the Gikuyu ventured into independent churches and schools: "The whole Karinga movement was later, under the leadership of Kenyatta, to become openly political in aim" (Welbourn 1961:151). Both Kenyatta and Oginga Odinga remained very affectionate of some of their ethnic AICs to the end of their days, for in their genesis grew the roots of the independent spirit.<sup>14</sup> If they could not also be formal representatives of a denomination, it was usually because the churches would not give space to party politics.

*Dini* (reading, religion) was contrasted heavily with its Swahili counterpart, *siasa* (politics) across Kenya, where Swahili is the language of politics on the stump. In fact the referents of these two terms derived from Arabic were diametrically opposed: *dini* was quiet, almost private, and orderly, for you cannot read in chaos, while *siasa* implied people spouting, letting off steam, and vying for supremacy.<sup>15</sup> The first was a cooling down and the second a stirring up; the first made for reconciliation and peace at least within the fellowship, the second for making trouble; the first dignified people even humble laborers, while the second consisted of rumor, gossip, and backstabbing. Of course churches could in practice approximate to the latter, but this did not make them good churches. The few churches, mostly Spirit-churches that took on some

of the forms of early Pentecostalism, such as tongues and times of noisy worship to the banging of metal, were thereby rather disreputable to others (Hoehler-Fatton 1996). It is mainly the new wave of Pentecostalism that has begun to break the quiet-noisy, religion-politics bifurcations in what Bayart (2000:262) has called “a political alchemy”.

Nevertheless both church ministers and politicians continue to bear witness to their respective stereotypes. Most churches in Kenya have a long history of keeping politics, that is, its quality of stirring up and rivalry, out of their affairs. In this, Max Weber would recognize them as typologically Protestant, showing that the state of religious grace was “only possible by proof in a specific type of conduct unmistakably different from the way of life of the natural man” (Weber 1930:153). As with Weber, this new asceticism was required of everyone who would be certain of salvation, and it dovetailed nicely with traditional emphases on customary behavior rather than verbal confessions.

Of course mission churches in their political quietism were expected to acknowledge the colonial institutions, but none are stricter in the banishment of party politics than some AICs whose genesis often reflected early political stirrings. Churches often see themselves as the healing balm for the hot anger of politics. I was very surprised to observe this in action in Bishop Gitari’s own, politically conscientized diocese. In the 1992 and 1997 presidential elections some 98 percent of the whole of Central Province had voted against the incumbent Moi, yet he was returned both times. This was particularly galling in 1992, when the churches had been instrumental in restoring multiparty elections after 23 years. President Moi did not receive “a minimum of twenty-five percent of the valid votes cast in at least five of the eight provinces,” yet was “declared to be elected as President” with no fresh election as prescribed in *The Constitution of Kenya* (Republic of Kenya 1992a:Ch. II Part 1, s5 ss3.F & 4.D.II). A rerun between Moi and Kenneth Matiba might well have had the latter preferred on the back of Kibaki’s vote, since the two Gikuyu had gathered more votes between them. This rank injustice was very galling for the Gikuyu, but on the Sunday after the election, the Archdeacon of Kabare preached a dull sermon in Gikuyu, considering the highly charged situation, adding the strict injunction that all people should “cool down.” This was repeated in 1997, and I was perplexed and a little disappointed that the prophetic nature of the church had so little bite in such a situation.

Much later the thinking became clearer. Most clergy used to see themselves as primarily having a “cooling down” ministry; they have seen what happens when their people boil over, which can indeed happen in church as well as outside of it, so they ensure that it does not occur with

its messy and possibly violent consequences. For instance, when the local monopolies of coffee co-operatives integrated into a parastatal that was being broken by the rise of private coffee firms in June 1998, a mob was incited, in the same rural deanery, that went to the homestead of a respected Christian elder and devastated his crops and slashed his cows with *pangas* on the suspicion that his choice was spoiling the co-operative. In Kenyan thinking this could not possibly be the product of *dini*, but was the inevitable, nasty outcome of *siasa*. Thus, in 2007 the Gikuyu counted on the church exercising a similar cooling down of the Luo and the Nandi. Obviously this did not happen to the same effect, and the Gikuyu are dismayed with the contrast between their reaction that kept them out of power, and that of the Luo and the Nandi in 2008, which gave them a share in power. Yet it is probably the ministry of the churches that has changed.

Western and Central Kenya are alike in having been heavily influenced by the East African Revival from the 1930s. The Revival is significant for making a normative theology out of the *dini-siasa* polarity. Politics was dirty in and of itself; it was not a fitting occupation or commitment for a saved Christian. Politics would make the Christian and the church unclean. It was their business to pray to God, who would protect them. Since the Revival spread to many denominations, even to the Roman Catholics, there was always an obdurate and vocal section of the churches to oppose the blessing of any political act or person. Thus the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) became the expression of a certain liberal, sophisticated side of the church, not that the whole-hearted, full-throated dimension was much closer to the Revival and its persistent witnessing that did bring converts into the church, even if they could not survive the Puritanism of the Revival Fellowship for life. Neither could Africa benefit politically from Revival theology, for demonizing politics only left it to the unscrupulous. The East African Revival had been born in the Rwanda Mission in the 1920s. Its complete priority of personal salvation, holiness, and evangelism over sociopolitical action (Hession 1950) meant that the disengagement of the Rwanda Mission and Rwanda's Anglican church meant that it had nothing to say against the Tutsi genocide of 1994 and even less to say in its own defense. Soon afterwards the General Secretary of the Rwanda Mission apologized for this lacuna, and before long the whole organization was reabsorbed into CMS (Bowen 1996; Gitari 1996a).

When all kinds of Kenyan politicians would beat off the attacks of churchmen by saying that the churches should keep out of politics, they knew full well that they were levering deep veins within the churches themselves, that politics should be kept outside of the church. They often

uses Rom. 13 to give themselves scriptural warrant, as have many clergy, without referring to Rev. 13 (Gitari 1991e). Despite its pejorative connotations, politicians have been happy to promote the division of *dini* and *siasa*, whenever the former does not support their particular *siasa*. Politicians do not try hard to promote the image of their own profession, except in terms of remuneration, for they will severally condemn their rivals for stirring the people up, that is, for acting as politicians. This taint has by no means been removed; it is just that some churches have become much more tolerant of it and see political patronage as their means of growth, especially in fundraising.

The *dini-siasa* polarity was natural to the particular Christian traditions brought to Kenya. It has been well said that the mainstream Protestant missions were liberal in their thought,<sup>16</sup> yet at the most they were Liberal Evangelicals: Presbyterian, CMS (out of the Clapham Sect), Reformed, and Methodist. There was always some opposition between church and culture, alongside a great use of the contrasts of good and evil, light and dark, God and Devil. Even now, ordinary members may be singing more about the activity and threat of Satan than about magnifying the attributes of God.<sup>17</sup> Philosophical theology has a term for such a pattern of beliefs: dualism. Evangelicals are often too happy with the simple contrast: the personal choice between salvation and damnation, "Once I was lost, but now I see," and a disdain for systematic theology instead of the traditionally typecast verities of personal witness and experience. The widespread emphasis on "getting saved," depreciates the work of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit and makes it a merely human decision to join the right side, or the one that feels right. Were it not for the spiritual gloss, the basis for the choice would not differ greatly from the choice between political parties, which change their stand as much as the churches now.

The main theologians who stand at the head of the Evangelical tradition in the twentieth century, even though their influence is mostly implicit and anonymous, are Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Schleiermacher (1928), both confined to the playground of faith, fenced off from knowledge, which Kant allowed (Wolterstorff 1998). From Kierkegaard came the personal existentialism aimed against anything systematized or organized, the radical binary oppositions making any coherent resolution between God and man, Father and Son, impossible. From Schleiermacher came the incorporation of a feeling of dependence, a subjective appropriation of divinity rather than a direct revelation, though he paid meticulous attention to the interpretation of scripture (Crouter 2005). The doctrine of the Trinity became an appendix to his theology, not being immediate to consciousness, while the sentiments of Pietism and Romanticism could

be combined. In this brief sketch, one can see the range between Revival and Liberal, between the convert's rejection of culture, and the value of finding some comfort in it. Neither present a corrective to dualism, while Kierkegaard does much to promote it. Though neither writer could be said to be determinative of any Christian expression in Africa, nevertheless their marks abound in Kenyan Protestantism, which itself has had an unusual local impact on Roman Catholicism. The religious influence is self-authenticating, for whatever is happening in the world, the belief in the encounter with God cannot be taken away.

Kenyans then may not be proud at heart of their politics, but do find much satisfaction in being "notoriously religious" in John Mbiti's oft-quoted phrase (1969:1). This is one aspect of culture in which they can be assured of superiority over the secularizing Europeans, who have fallen away from the morals espoused by many a Kenyan church. Blessing homosexual practice could be no clearer a proof of that. Though its softer, embedded expressions may not be very visible to the Western student of Kenya, the religious impulse has been and still is a self-standing factor in Kenyan public life. It cannot be completely explained in factors other than itself. Even if Kenyans tire of the absolute contradictions currently being presented to them in terms of Christian salvation, religion cannot be reduced to a product of social structure, as Durkheim would have it. To put it in the terms of social science, religion may act as an independent variable. It brings to the cultural-historical equation a unique quality, resisting the political view that all religious ideology is caused by social conditions; indeed the term "ideology" is only correct for religion in a sociopolitical perspective. In Africa, anyway, religion is manifestly not derived, but integral.

Religion—be it Christianity, Islam or that of African tradition—was the sanction for all that was most traditional in Africa; it was most closely linked with all that was most colonial, and it would seldom be far away from all that was most revolutionary.

(Hastings 1979:17)

Though politics has mostly had a poor image, Kenyans have a highly developed sense of where power lies and its sources. The question that remains is how to access them. This sense operates also in the institutions of the church, making them seldom smooth to run, and tending church government toward the monarchical form of bishops, whose permanent office could seldom be overturned by the machinations of politicians.<sup>18</sup> However much the professional politicians are kept to a limited space, a political awareness can be acutely sensitive, especially where an ongoing

grievance of unfair treatment persists over many years. Politics is also a perennial aspect of human culture, as is society, economy, and so on. Culture, also a popular and valued term in Kenya, then co-ordinates its independent variables of religion and politics, though both are also dependent variables in that they are both affected to various extents by military, technological, legal, economic, and social forces among others. The characteristic error made by the post-Enlightenment departments of the University is that all phenomena can best be explained in one discipline or another, but this is another form of intellectual pride. Religion and politics share a common objective. They work for the unity of people, or hold up visions of unity for the future, while seldom being able to escape their diversity. Both hold ideals, however defined, of peace, justice, and order. There can be no kingdom of God impacting on this world without such ideas. That is why religion and politics are inevitable bedfellows, assuming religion has not lost its vitality in a culture. Since religion expresses values and aspirations for society and mobilizes its adherents to behave according to certain morals in society, politics is already happening, and high politics will want to recruit it.

#### POLITICAL SCIENCE AND AFRICA

Politics, then, whatever the overlap, is not identical to religion, and requires different tools to study it. The problem is that political science is not quite convinced of what it is studying in Africa. Driven by the needs for policy formation toward Africa, political science too often looks for Western political features and institutions that are “more honour’d in the breach.”<sup>19</sup> The focus is stroboscopic, with observers flocking in with the journalists to cover general elections that are urged on and sponsored by Western governments and NGOs rather than working out and observing how political decisions are usually made amid the political pressures at work. Göran Hydén (2006:2) admits that theories come and go in the social sciences, but the “rotation of theoretical orientation that characterizes the discipline” still produces an overemphasis on some issues in the last 50 years. One of those must surely be the comparative approach beloved of the 1960s.<sup>20</sup> There is nothing wrong in comparison in itself, for all study of the other implicitly uses it, but when it amounts to a systematic abstraction of phenomena from culture, explanatory power as to human relations is likely to be lost. Politics is that aspect of culture, which has a special focus on how humans relate *in camera* and *en masse*.

Area studies may have become integral in political science, but still Hydén reports a tension between comparability and contextuality (Hydén 2006:2), and entitles his book a “comparative perspective,” when the

burgeoning of studies in African history has already decided the case for contextuality. He has learned that there are institutions “driven by a social logic that is different from market or the way the modern state operates,” and that “economy and culture are no longer two separate spheres, but analytically as well as empirically are understood as one” (Hydén 2006:3). He concludes with a model of relativities: society has priority over the state in Africa,<sup>21</sup> private over public, patronage over policy, politics over economics, concentration over the separation of power, and so on, but religion does not figure (Hydén 2006:229–31).

Political science still cannot escape its positivist birth in its exclusive search for proximate and immediate causes as opposed to more diffuse or ultimate ones. For instance political succession is assumed to be determined by elections, but such a starting point can only come from a deeply rooted Western perspective. Political science is as embedded in post-Enlightenment thought as is modern Protestant theology.<sup>22</sup> Residual Marxism combines with philanthropic liberalism to insist that class is more significant than tribe (perhaps if we say it is not there, it will go away!).<sup>23</sup> The problem is that we are looking at Kenya,<sup>24</sup> which has undergone rapid and painful changes, but has not gone through the same agrarian, industrial, and philosophical revolutions as the West, for good or for ill. The point is almost too obvious to make, but why is it that the same kind of polity, the Westphalian state, is imposed in East Africa and expected to work in a century or so?<sup>25</sup>

Yet the programs for Africa keep coming from global institutions. The World Bank’s governance agenda is found to have missed three pivotal aspects of African politics: “The unity of political and economic power; the extreme openness of African states to external pressures; and the salience of historically embedded cultural and political relations” (Harrison 2005:240). Politics is no longer separated from development (Mahadevan 1994) and the World Bank has recognized the importance of Faith-Based Organizations (which it will never fund) for its work (Belshaw, Calderisi, & Sugden 2001), but the belated recognition of culture by political science still keeps religion at arm’s length. For political scientists more than anthropologists, “it seems that unless special circumstances bring it into view, Christianity is still an occluded object” (Cannell 2006:11). “In Africa, though, all Christianities—including the new Evangelical and Pentecostal movements—have engaged with the cultures, and with the politics, of the strong African peoples” (Ranger 2003:116). This longstanding and widespread failure to appreciate an important aspect of contemporary African cultures has led Barbara Bompani (2008:665) to overturn the role of political science and consider it a mere subset of religious discourse: “Rather than evaluating AICs

according to a literal Eurocentric definition of politics, this article argues for a holistic interpretation of African Christianity that treats politics like other aspects of the realities of religious communities, as integral to religious discourse.”

To avoid its humiliation in Africa, it is high time that political science addressed the critique of Karen Fields (1985:18), who observed that the content of politics was assumed to be an instrumental, practical, and rational introduction to secular methods, while the cultural content of religion only consisted of curious ritual behavior that had no practical political consequences. I have argued that precisely such a one-eyed stance has meant that observers of the Karamojong in East Africa simply do not see their traditional political events as they happen (Knighton 2003; 2006b). Fields (1985:18) argues that the pertinent research question about religious actors, “Why did they not do what it would have been rational for them to do?” which of course leads straight to some of the current frustrations with African governance, but rather, “What did the converts do and with what consequences?” This book is concerned with what various religious adherents, Christian, Muslim,<sup>26</sup> and NRMs, have done to certain effect in the Kenyan political arena.

What religious people do is not just personal, private, and mystical, the corner in which Immanuel Kant and so the modern University would have it confined, but it is also public, social, institutional, and moral. Religious adherents are never happy with their rationality being defined, whether by Mill or by Marx, in terms of material self-interest. The material matters, but can never be said (admittedly behavior may contradict this to varying extents) to be the governing motive. Fields (1985:18) found that quintessentially religious slogans like “God is great,” “the baptized are saved,” “leave adultery and witchcraft,” or “Thy Kingdom come” became a mighty threat to law in Zambia. So she worked by imagining God inhabiting the religious actors’ horizon, and concluded that “a commonly held notion that the colonial state was ‘modern’ will wither away” (Fields 1985:20). Perhaps political science’s problem is that it keeps on supposing that the postcolonial state is, or should be, modern? Missionaries never had a monopoly on the insertion of norms.

There are signs that the political science of Africa is recognizing the cultural relativity of concepts such as democracy and seeing how African politics is “othered” by Western democracies to the detriment of international relations, when contextual paradigms are needed.

Democracy is a configuration of governance molded by the general values, biases, prejudices, and nuances of a given culture. Individuals in Western countries typically identify with the state as reflecting the desires

of the body politic. However in the African world, including northeastern Africa, identity is primarily reflected in one's ethnicity, religion, and communal adaptations and traditions.<sup>27</sup>

(Bradley 2005:407)

On the political ground, religion cannot be avoided, whatever its particular form or direction, because its influences and effects are not limited to forming a political party, one of Kenya's more superficial institutions. As Donal Cruise O'Brien (2000:521) writes:

The political impact of Christianity is not confined to the elite level, the alliance of big men of church and state in the belly politics<sup>28</sup> model of Jean-François Bayart and Achille Mbembe. Stephen Ellis and Birgit Meyer suggest that Christian ideas have penetrated deep into African Society, but with effects that can be contradictory.

This volume is alert to contradictory outcomes.

#### DAVID GITARI: THE BACKGROUND

Having set the scene for Kenya, it is now important to set David Gitari in it, for whom these essays were written, without reiterating what Julius Gathogo has written in Chapter 5. David Gitari was born on 16 September 1937 in the foothills of Mount Kenya to a highly unusual couple for the division for Gichugu Division. It was not that his father was born a Kamba, as the area was a common refuge for famine victims from the east, and Mukuba had walked, aged 17 with his mother, Mutaa, from Mutunguni near Kitui to Ngirambu in Gichugu in 1899 during the great famine (Smoker 1994:200; Ambler 1988). Neither was it very odd that as a client of a landowner he should go and look for employment in Mombasa in 1914, provided by an Asian, to at least raise their hut and poll taxes. What was unusual was that Mukuba son of Nzuki found the Christian faith there and brought it back.

Mukuba learned to read and write in the CMS evening school, was converted as not many were there, and catechized with a few others from near Mount Kenya (Hewitt 1971:129). "In about 1919 he heard a voice from heaven telling him to go back home and share the gospel" (Gitari quoted in Smoker 1994:200). The others collected money for him to go and evangelize the Gikuyu around Ngirambu (though the British assigned Gichugu to Embu District then). Converts were scattered in various parts of Kenya. When he preached to the assembled elders, they refused to believe he had brought a Gikuyu Gospel of Mark from as far as Mombasa, so instead he chose 12 young disciples and taught them,



Figure 1.1 Bishop Gitari conducting a service of confirmation and communion at St. Andrew's Church, Kabare, on 3 April 1994

showing them how to teach others to read the Gospel of Mark (Smoker 1994:201). It was such methods that led Gikuyu elders to dismiss the Christian God as the “God of children” (Peterson 2004:52).<sup>29</sup>

Samuel Mukuba was soon discovered by the CMS, who had started work at Kabare in 1910, and Ngiriambu was the perfect place for an out-school within walking distance, 10 miles, of the mission station. Mukuba was the first evangelist and catechist there for over 50 years, becoming also a prize-winning farmer, and a small businessman with a water mill. He catechized his Ngiriambu-born fiancée, 20 years younger than himself, Jessie, whom he married in 1924. She learnt to sing by heart the canticles of Evensong from the Gikuyu translation of the Book of Common Prayer, a feat I have never seen equaled. They used to rescue twins and babies whose upper incisors grew before the lower, as they were believed to be afflicted by spirits and so had to be devoured by hyenas to avert worse calamity. Samuel and Jessie added them to their family. He worked with Revd. W. J. Rampley, the noble's coachman from Sussex, who built a dispensary at Kabare.<sup>30</sup> After serving on the African court at Kianyaga and Nyeri, then from 1930 at Embu, District Council, CMS sent Mukuba to St. Paul's College, Limuru, in 1931 for two years' training (Smoker 1994:201f). Despite having little immediate missionary oversight, he was meticulous with his pastoral duties, noting down the children for whom he held thanksgiving services in the church (Gitari, Interview,

2 December 2007), so accumulated a wide knowledge of the people, their sub-clans, lands, and ancestries. He became a county councillor.

Mukuba's quiet ministry was disturbed in the 1940s by a local, educated, young man, Bernard Makanga, whom he had brought to church in 1934 and influenced very much. Revd Obadiah Kariuki was active in the East African Revival and taught the pupils in Kahuhia Normal School that they must be born again. Makanga was hard against it, but repented and confessed to all his teachers (who were European), "I am now a new creation." Bedan Ileri (who died a canon in the Diocese of Embu) was born again the same year and together they preached pioneer Revival messages around Central Province and Embu District. Bildad Kaggia had also gone to school in Kahuhia, having been brought up in Muranga District, but had gone to Burma with the King's African Rifles, where he was promoted to an interpreter, and saved. He later joined their itinerant Revival group, trying to coordinate it with others in Muranga, Kiambu, and Nairobi, but CMS did not like it, comparing these groups to sectarian Jehovah's Witnesses (Makanga, Interview, 9 December 2006).

The Revival group consisted of Makanga, who was to become a District Commissioner (DC); his mother and his wife, Joan, the daughter of Gideon Mugo Gahika, the Kahuhia catechist who was Secretary of the Kikuyu Central Association and primary supporter of Kenyatta and his constitutionalism; Kaggia and his fiancée; Kihiga Kihota from Kahuhia, brother to Gideon Mugo, who join Kaggia in politics; Peter Kagendu who was to become a politician; Godfrey Gikunju; the brothers of Geoffrey Kariithi who became head of the Civil Service for the last decade of Kenyatta's presidency and later elected MP for Gichugu; and Jessie Mukuba, even though her husband, Samuel, did not like the Revival (Makanga, Interview, 9 December 2006). Despite the Revival's view of politics, we see here a group of religious enthusiasts whose political potency span off in a number of trajectories. Makanga was twice dismissed from teaching posts in 1947, when these "Bible-convincing Christians" were preaching in the open air at Kiamutugu Market. They were hauled up before the magistrate, District Officer I, Embu, who told them, "You held an illegal meeting, with no licence from the administration, so you committed an offence" (Makanga, Interview, 9 December 2006). They denied the offence and refused the bail offered, in order to preach to the convicts and warders in Embu Prison while on hard labor carrying rocks and stones. The Kabare missionaries had a word with the DC and they were released, but Makanga was banned from teaching in any CMS school and, later in Muranga prison for a similar offence, Kaggia declined the entreaties and threats of CMS to conform to church and law (Welbourn 1966). Within a year he was administering oaths

to many people in Nairobi to the Mau Mau cause, quickly becoming a senior leader until his detention in 1952.

All the indications are that Samuel Mukuba was a man to be trusted by all-comers, missionary and administrator alike. He did not want to compromise the gospel with the blood of goats. One night during the Emergency Mau Mau oath administrators came banging on his door, frightened by a large, out-of-place hippopotamus. In the morning they said, "We are not going to give you the oath after all because we saw something last night that made us really scared," and they left him under divine protection thereafter (Gitari quoted in Smoker 1994:202). He was selected to be an assistant chief and a screening elder (*mugunia*) at the nearby police post at Kiamutugu in order to discern who was supporting Mau Mau and who was not. He thought he could do some good by ensuring fair play. In one screening, the white officer conducting the interrogation pulled out a knife and pushed it point down into the suspect's thigh: "Now tell us!" he demanded. Mukuba resigned on the spot (Gitari, Interview, 2 December 2007). He then began pleading with the government not to torture people or waste any more human life.<sup>31</sup>

Since Gitari was 15 when the Emergency broke out and 22 when it ended, he would have been aware of the grievances circulated, even though he was slightly insulated from Mau Mau by life at mission-schools and in the fortified government village of Kiamutugu. He also recalls another of the early pillars of the Native African Church (NAC) in Gichugu, Daudi Petro, who was one of the few Independent churchmen trained at St. Paul's College, Limuru. Later he became an Anglican, but lost none of his fire against injustice. During the Emergency he wrote a letter to Queen Elizabeth II, for whom he prayed according to the Book of Common Prayer, complaining of the maltreatment and torture of detainees whom he visited in the Mwea camps (Gitari, Interview, 2 December 2007). Clearly Mukuba and Petro served as role models for Gitari in both their desire for justice, and their refusal to harbor bitterness against the white man, which is not to say any would give Europeans unnecessary leeway.

Gitari, then, was brought up in a time of political and religious ferment. He started teaching Sunday School in Ngiriambu at the age of 12, and gave his first sermon three years later (Church of the Province of Kenya 1997:35). As a young man he came to own the Revival tradition of his mother, so has had an unusually smooth relationship throughout with the brethren, who can prove irascible in the extreme when roused. "Her faith has meant a lot to me", he volunteered to Dorothy Smoker (1994:201). As a bishop though, he makes little of any born-again experience, favoring very much instead the connection with his father. Though

he did not use his father's name as his surname, which became standard in the colonial period, he included it as a much-valued middle name, signing himself particularly "David M. Gitari". He also seems to have followed in his footsteps rather than his mother's.

Though robustly Christian at a time when peer pressure was against it, Gitari avoided going to any other extreme in a way that is unusual in youth. Certainly, he avoided all the options offered by his mother's Revival group. Talking to those who knew him while at school or when teaching, the impression given is that he was a loner beyond the norm in Gikuyu society. For example, he taught Cyrus Mwangi, who ended up as a University lecturer in Japan, geography and English at Kiburu Intermediate School, Ndia, in 1959 (Mwangi, Interview 13 September 2008).<sup>32</sup> Next he went to the Royal Technical College, Nairobi, to read for a BA in history, geography, and economics. In his first term he wanted to leave to study theology, and despite Bishop Beecher's encouragement to stay, he told me he became rather depressed, and on seeking medical advice, was whisked in for electroconvulsive therapy, which was then being tried as a panacea for a new mental illness called Mau Mau (Mahone 2004; 2007). This appears to have been his closest encounter with hardcore rebels. There are very few who knew him so well as to understand his capacities and potential, and I have been directed to none as a best friend or authority on his early life. It is as though he has been carrying an impartiality from boyhood, which would stand him in good stead for his selection as a leader.

#### THE MEDDLESOME PRIEST

Having been a founder-member of the Kenya Students Christian Fellowship in 1959, it was at what would soon become the University of Nairobi that he developed an evangelistic student ministry, which would continue through his being General Secretary of the Pan-African Fellowship of Evangelical Students (PAFES) from 1966 to 1968 into his time as bishop, when he would lead student missions.<sup>33</sup> Student ministry established his Evangelical credentials and he was taken in 1965–1966 by the Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society to their training college in Bristol, Tyndale Hall, then the most conservative of all Evangelical colleges, and then for a Bachelor of Divinity 1968–1971, awarded by the University of London. His Principal thought well enough of him to raise his funding,<sup>34</sup> but it was not an easy start to married life, and he was surrounded by British students who assumed, mistakenly, that as an African he would not cope with the course. Bravely, he supported the Liberal Party in politics. Back in Nairobi, the Anglican Diocese under

the Archbishop, would not license him, so he became General Secretary of the Bible Society of Kenya and Chairman of the Kenya Students' Christian Fellowship 1972–1975. He did not feel that its work of translating and distributing the scriptures in several languages was his calling, but it taught him the administration of an organization as well as how to relate to all the churches of Kenya. Gitari was ordained priest in his first year by the Bishop of Mount Kenya, Obadiah Kariuki, Kenyatta's brother-in-law, in Muranga. He was also able to preach in Nairobi, working under Revd George Wanjau at St. Andrew's Church (Presbyterian) and under Revd Tom Houston at Nairobi Baptist Church. This was how the sudden breakthrough came, and it was all politics.

On 2 March 1975, J. M. Kariuki, an assistant minister, was brutally murdered, having last been seen in the company of Kenyatta's bodyguard at the Hilton Hotel. "J. M." personified the acceptable national liberation hero. As the most obdurate of young intellectuals, he had gone through the whole gamut of detention camps in the Emergency, quietly provoking officers to apoplexy and writing about it to every British authority he could address (Kariuki 1964). When his murder was known, there were many Gikuyu, Kenyatta's natural supporters, who were utterly bewildered and weeping.<sup>35</sup> It seemed that the government had just become the opposite of what they had struggled against under colonial rule. Even the imperialists had not perpetrated or permitted assassinations of politicians in government. A heavy cloud settled over the whole nation, which was not removed when an inquiry was set up and then obstructed. The then National Christian Council of Kenya (also NCCCK) declared a week of national repentance and prayer, inviting Gitari to take the 6:55 a.m. slot on the voice of Kenya's "Lift Up Your Hearts" national radio program (Gitari 1996b:13). He structured the talks on the National Anthem, which begins, "O God of all creation," climaxing with "the glory of Kenya," and combined them in a sermon preached at Nairobi Baptist Church the following Sunday, 20 April 1975. From the start, he put up his manifesto:

In Old Testament days Israel was a nation set apart to serve God. In adopting the word "glory" for our nation, we accept a calling to which we must live up. We are consecrated and set apart to render true and glorious service to God and humanity. It is the Church's heavy responsibility to remind a nation, called to be holy, of the standard of righteousness and justice which alone can exalt that nation . . . If, however, those in authority depart from the righteousness which God expects of a nation, the church should follow the footsteps of the prophets and the apostles in declaring boldly the righteousness and judgment of God.

(Gitari 1996b:14)

Though the churches had in 1969 anxiously, though belatedly fulminated against Kenyatta's oath-taking of the Gikuyu, no individual of the church had ever challenged the nation and "those in authority" in the mass media before. Gitari was not even licensed by his own church, which, it may be argued, gave him greater freedom to speak, but it also made him and his responsibility for the Bible Society more vulnerable. No naïve exhibitionism drove Gitari, because in those days of single-party rule and the twin silencers, Mbiu Koinange, Minister of State in the Office of the President, and Charles Njonjo, Attorney-General (Thrupp 1995:146; Sabar 2002:178), the President's authority went unquestioned. It was still a time, in political theory, for nation-building and pulling together, not for challenging authority; Kenyatta never wanted to be on the receiving end. Gitari knew he was taking risks, but had chosen to "follow the footsteps of the prophets and apostles."<sup>36</sup> Anyone who has read their Bible seriously knows that many of them met a very grisly end at the hands of the authorities of state.<sup>37</sup> The message had bubbled up within him from his sense of injustice and, unless he was prepared to be numbered as "men spake from God" (II Pt. 1:21), he would have betrayed everything for which he had come to stand. After the fourth radio talk, as he often relates, he was grilled by senior civil servants in the Ministry of Information, who directly controlled Voice of Kenya radio. They were disturbed, as Gitari's talks deemed to imply that the government was involved in the murder of J. M. (as it undoubtedly was<sup>38</sup>). Kenyatta sent out that he wanted a transcript of the sermon at once in Mombasa.

Two weeks later I received a telephone call from the Permanent Secretary in the Office of the President, who wanted to see me. Assuming that this concerned the sermon, I called all the members of staff at the Bible House for special prayers as I went to face the wrath of the authorities.

Carrying a copy of the sermon I walked into the building where I expected to find a good number of top civil servants. But when I was ushered in I found only the Permanent Secretary, Geoffrey Kariithi, who received me warmly and took me by surprise with the question, 'Why are you delaying in accepting your appointment as Bishop of Mount Kenya East?' He then took out his diary, and with my consent rang the Archbishop, and we fixed 20th July 1975 as the date of my consecration and enthronement.

(Gitari 1996b:21)

The Electoral College of the newly created diocese had unanimously elected him the previous week. Though Bachelors of Divinity of the University of London were thin on the ground in Mount Kenya East, a polyglot

region that stretched from the south of Mount Kenya to the Ethiopian border, there can be little doubt that Gitari's words made him the man of the hour. Kenyatta too can have had little objection, else Kariithi could not have acted so openly. Ecclesiastically Gitari was suddenly made, for it is extremely difficult and rare for a bishop to be dethroned, an essential quality when regularly speaking out against the government.<sup>39</sup>

#### THE MEDDLESOME BISHOP

Gitari led two of the prayers at Kenyatta's remarkably Christian state funeral, one on creation and work, the other on leadership and government:

O God of our fathers, God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Joshua, who have always raised leaders to meet the challenge of nations at all times of great need and have endowed them with wisdom, courage, and devotion beyond anything they can personally claim, we pray for him on whose shoulders the powers of the President of this Republic have been placed during this transitional period, His Excellency Mr. Daniel T. arap Moi. That he and the Cabinet may steer this country to the safe shores of dignity and understanding among all the sections of our community.

(Republic of Kenya 1978).

He went on to pray for "smooth and peaceful party elections." Since the prayers were officially printed beforehand, there is no doubt that Kenya was content to acknowledge that the necessary presidential powers and attributes for the common good of Kenya came from God and needed to be prayed for. The church leaders had reason to be optimistic about Moi, since he came to politics with a strong Evangelical testimony of being born again from the Africa Inland Mission, in sharp contrast to Kenyatta's age-old split with the Church of Scotland. Gitari had only been bishop three years; astonishingly the remaining 24 years of his ministry before retirement would be spent with Moi as president, who gradually proceeded to dismay the most committed believer in the irrefragibility of being born again. In 1976 Moi had been Guest of Honor at the first fundraising for the new church at Ngiriambu, when Gitari conducted the ceremony.<sup>40</sup>

The great turning-point in Moi's rule was the attempted coup d'état of 1 August 1982, which came as a great shock to him,<sup>41</sup> making him thereafter suspicious of the intentions of both Luo and Gikuyu. Replacements in the Cabinet, and gradually the Civil Service, were quickly made, with many Kalenjin being drafted in (Thrup 1995:147). The meritocracy of the Kenyan Civil Service was soon compromised with well-qualified

Gikuyu being excluded for the first time in favor of less qualified recruits whom Moi could trust.<sup>42</sup> The situation was ripe for nepotism and clan appropriation of skilled tasks necessary for the maintenance of the state.

Disgruntled by the displacement, laymen from Mount Kenya became his closest supporters. Geoffrey Kariithi retired in Moi's first year though there was plenty of politics to come from him. James S. Mathenge was chairman of the Public Service Commission of Kenya 1986–1989. Mr. Johnson Ndegwa rose to the heights of the Teachers' Service Commission. The Hon. Jeremiah Nyagah was a fixture in the Cabinet following the Lancaster House talks and his previous elevation to the Legislative Council in 1958, but he found himself more of a backbencher and retired from politics in 1992 to become a regular feature of diocesan occasions in Kirinyaga even though it had been divided from his home diocese of Embu in 1991. Then there was a former colonel of the King's African Rifles, Joel Gatungo; the former DC, Bernard Makanga; and local chiefs such as Jotham Ngure and Ephantus Mwaniki Thuo. These were all fine churchmen,<sup>43</sup> and they formed the elders behind the bishop's throne, whom Gitari was always careful to bring in when faced with a challenge to his leadership in the diocese. Some of them had been part of the Electoral College that had been so keen to select this champion for their part of Kenya. There was however a problem with this bedrock home constituency, which Gitari seemed not to see.

The elders of the diocese were too good. They were often more respectable and more bourgeois than the new thrusting politicians, who tended to be more transient. They were old men who had seen others with less professionalism and manners take positions and jobs in the government. This meant that they, like Gitari, and with reason, soon became predisposed to disapprove of the direction of Moi's government. The problem with this has been well put by Mutahi Ngunyi.

The indigenous elite which came to dominate politics did not differ in social background, education, socialisation or general outlook from that which came to dominate the formerly European-based and missionary-run mainstream Christian churches. In many of the churches in question, the political elite moreover formed the dominant layer of the laity...

Of course it was precisely this elite, in both its clerical and lay/political guises, who became severed from [*sic*] the reins of power under the Second Republic, as the new president sought to construct a new power bloc from which both the Kikuyu and Luo were excluded...

Given this historically produced and politically sustained proximity between the traditional political class and the activist clergy, the political interests of ethno-regional elites have often found expression through the church.  
(Ngunyi 1995: 146f)

Ngunyi goes on to itemize the preponderance of the Gikuyu in Anglican, Presbyterian, and Roman churches, though he appears to have had more figures than the churches themselves. In one sense this is unfair. Suddenly replacing oral polities in a state only a hundred years old, would inevitably lead to wide differences in education and the more educated would naturally be those implementing the responsibilities of the state, as indeed happens in every mature democracy. Western education and class go together, when education is leading people out of traditional society, whatever the drawbacks (Knighton 2002). It is Marxism that makes elites bad per se, irrespective of how dedicated they may be to the common good. They would not have improved their image or the state by acting as unsophisticated, antibureaucratic, ethnotraditionalists, and neither Marxism nor the postwar world order could do without the state.

On the other hand, independent politics in Kenya has always been based on “ethnically based coalition building. The nationalist coalition at independence was therefore jammed with ethno-regional notables flying the ethnic banners of ‘their’ communities and organising local politics along ethnic lines” (Ngunyi 1995:146; Salih & Markakis 1998). He gave Jeremiah Nyagah as a prime example of a leading ethnoregional notable and ex-member of government, who was also a lay leader in the church’s rural parishes. Again this has an unfair edge to it, since the Mount Kenya East elite saw themselves as meritocratic and anti-tribalist, not to mention Christian, and also suffering from the superiority complex of the Kiambu elite, who formed a more permanent establishment. Charles Njonjo, for instance, has been a resolute opponent of Gitari, theologically and politically, almost throughout.

Nevertheless this is not how other parts of the country perceive it. For instance Dr. Robert Ouko, a Luo, responded to news of Gitari’s sermon to the Civic Service in St. Peter’s Church, Nyeri, on Daniel Chapter 6 applying lessons from the story of King Darius to the Kenyan situation, by insisting that from President Moi down, Kenyans were “God-fearing people” (“Bishop Gitari under Fire over Sermon” *Kenya Times* 30 June 1987). Despite the three ministers arriving from the scandalously abandoned molasses plant near Kisumu, a “huge crowd” responded with its applause as though this was a Gikuyu attack on the ability of the rest of Kenya to worship God. Since Ouko himself was dead in three years from a political assassination in which one of his fellow ministers on that occasion was thought to be complicit, he might have been better advised than telling Gitari not to use the church to “freely criticise the political ideologies”. Bishop Henry Okullu, a Luo, who had been socially conscientized by being chaplain to the migrant Luo factory and plantation

workers in Uganda, was consistently critical of both the Kenyatta and Moi governments (Oluoch 2006), but was seldom a close ally of Gitari. The relationship mirrored the Luo-Gikuyu political divide with Okullu favoring the laborer and Gitari favoring respectable enterprise or the professions,<sup>44</sup> not that he has ever despised manual work. Gitari sees no ethnocentricity in himself, because of his expository preaching, in his well-used phrase, “without fear or favour,”<sup>45</sup> and in his record of standing up to Kenyatta’s government before Moi’s.

When Manasses Kuria’s arch-episcopate was drawing to its stuttering end, it was obvious that on merit, Gitari was the obvious successor, since Okullu was retiring in 1994. However, Kuria hesitated to retire in the same year despite reaching the age of 65 and delayed solving constitutional issues. This led to a long interim period until 1997 in which Gitari, as the longest serving bishop, was Dean of the Province, having to manage the fast-growing Diocese of Kirinyaga, the chaotic inheritance of the enormous Diocese of Nairobi, and the whole Anglican province, not to mention the ecclesiastical tatters of the Rwandan genocide. Gitari felt that his best years were wasted, while waiting for the highest office. When the election did at last come on 20 November 1996, resistance was put up by delegates from Western Kenya and it required three ballots to overcome the candidacy of the more youthful Luo, Joseph Wasonga. It was felt that Kuria had been a Gikuyu, who had unfairly supplanted Henry Okullu in his election with Charles Njonjo’s influence, and it was now a Luo’s turn. Gitari pointed out that by patrilineage he was a Kamba, but this did not convince. The Kalenjin bishops disliked Gitari’s frequent attacks on President Moi, and wanted to work with the government like the Africa Inland Church (AIC) was doing to its advantage in the area.<sup>46</sup>

What motivated Gitari to resist the demands to keep politics out of the church?<sup>47</sup> Sub-consciously there was the unstructured influence of his background, but this all had to be rationalized for Gitari to set out his stance intellectually. Interestingly the key step was made before his radio addresses and his election to bishop. It was the epochal conference of Evangelicals from all over the world at Lausanne in 1974 that gave Gitari a green light theologically. As a Conservative Evangelical Anglican, Gitari was actually signed up to a tradition that had little to say to party politics. It normally supported the *status quo*, preferably and tacitly right wing, while throwing heart and soul into evangelism and a Biblical ministry (Lewis 2007). Evangelism was seen then, especially by North American Evangelicals, as a priority over any involvement over the kind of social action advocated by both Liberals and Anglo-Catholics, indeed by Liberation Theology (Scott 1994). It was the unprecedented international presence at Lausanne that began a sea-change in this regard. In the final formularies the senior Evangelical

statesman, John Stott, came down firmly on the side of marrying evangelism and social action. Sandwiched between two sections on evangelism, the Lausanne Covenant stated in §5:

*Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrine of God and man, our love of our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment up every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist.*

(Stott 1996:24, where the 1974 Covenant is published in full)

Gitari specifically mentioned the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in the preface to his book of *Sermons to a Nation* (Gitari 1996b:11), and at the celebration of his retirement at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies in 2003. Reinforcing the sociopolitical line, he chaired the Bangkok conference in 1982 of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians (INFEMIT) on emerging Christologies in the Two-Thirds World, which “was the first time that theologians of evangelical commitment had met at their own initiative,” in reaction to the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization going back on its 1980 conference in Pattaya, also in Thailand, on the synthesis achieved in Lausanne (Samuel & Sugden 1984:vii). Soon afterwards, Gitari also became founder-chairman of the institutional expression of INFEMIT, the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, with its publishing imprint of Regnum.

It was at the inaugural theological conference sponsored by the Africa Theological Fraternity of INFEMIT, which Gitari hosted, that he staked out the approach to church-state relations that would guide him, which indeed they did for life, since the same analysis appeared in *Responsible Church Leadership* after retirement (Gitari 2005:147–68). The venue for the conference was St. Andrew’s Institute for Mission and Evangelism that Gitari started for ordination training three years after becoming bishop on the old, abandoned CMS mission station at Kabare (see Figure 1.1).<sup>30</sup> Before 1960 it was the parish centre for the whole of Gichugu, and he had had some primary schooling there himself. The late Kwame Bediako gave a paper, who was to become a much-lauded African theologian in the Reformed tradition, and also Sam Kobia, who became the sixth General Secretary of the World Council of Churches in 2003.

As usual Gitari was Evangelical and Ecumenical in his sympathies. In his own paper he classified African examples of the church's "four possible attitudes to the powers and states with which it coexists: enthusiastic support; passive ignoring; constructive dialogue; or outright opposition" (Gitari 1986b:119). Because of the human proclivity to sin in church and state, the first two would amount to "forms of betrayal of the Church's God-given prophetic ministry," while constructive dialogue was for the good times and direct opposition for the bad. In the 1990s, Gitari summarized this in two words: "critical distance". The church was to critique the performance of the state, before saying anything in public, and was to keep the correct distance, neither so far as not to have any effect, nor so close that the state held it captive.

In order to bear witness to the truth of the Word of God, to the liberating power of the Gospel, and to the Kingdom of God,<sup>48</sup> the church was to engage in a distinctive detachment, a creative participation in society, and "the prophetic ministry of Judgement" (Gitari 1986b:119, 135).

Judgement means that the Church will constantly remind people of the standard of righteousness and justice which alone exalts a nation. The Church will also take a lead in giving moral and practical support to the State when it upholds that standard, and will responsibly criticise the State or those that are in authority when they depart from it. When society accepts as normal racism, tribalism, corruption<sup>49</sup> or the exploitation of fellow men, Christians cannot be silent. They, like the prophets of old, must speak out and pronounce the will and judgement of God. The Christian community must be an ever-present reminder to the State that it exists only as the servant of God and man.

(Gitari 1986b:135)

"If the Church does not challenge wrong structures, she is unfaithful to her prophetic calling," because not to challenge signifies consent (Gitari 1986b:136). Thus the churches must of necessity exercise a prophetic ministry to the state.

Gitari now had a theological mandate for action. Even in the conference discussion of his paper a policy emerged on voting by queuing (*mlolongo*), and it was driven by clergymen and civil servants who, quite understandably, did not want their voting preferences identified by the people whom they served as professionals. Gitari responded by saying, "We need to make strong representations to the government to request that in future all such elections are conducted by secret ballot" (Gitari 1986b:119, 135). Having mastered the administration of the sprawling Diocese of Mount Kenya East, in 1986 he moved Paddy Benson, who

has contributed Chapter 3 of this volume, from St. Andrew's Institute for Mission and Evangelism, Kabare, to be his publications secretary in Embu. This enabled a methodical approach to recording and media relations, which was continued by Joyce Karuri (Kirigia 2002b).

Gitari ensured thereafter that all his important sermons were fully typed out, and given to the press and government representatives to give himself some protection in the event of being misquoted. He would also take the initiative to have members of the press called to a significant sermon, especially Kamau of the *Standard*, who had experienced firsthand the torture cell in the basement of Nyayo House.<sup>50</sup> It should not be forgotten that it was not the outspoken clergy alone who became the popular opposition to the Moi government, but as reported by the national press in particular.<sup>51</sup> The famous four, Okullu, Njoya, Muge, and Gitari, would preach on the Sunday and be reported with photographs in the Monday dailies.<sup>52</sup> Indeed there were those who would buy the *Nation* or the *Standard* then, in order to see what Gitari in particular had to say on a political issue. This is not to say that these were merely media events, like televised football with a few spectators. Sermons were usually given at a diocesan event, and Gitari was good at devising these in front of at least 2,000 participants. When his life was threatened, there were many times this at St. Thomas' Church, Kerugoya in 1989. Those who were not Anglicans, or even Christian, would come to listen, and the climax of each four-hour service would be the sermon. Undoubtedly, people came not only for the church event, but because Gitari spoke for the people, when others were too scared to. Most definitely Gitari had gone beyond the usual church role of mediation to one of open contestation with power, so rare for an Evangelical leader (Freston 2001:152).<sup>53</sup> Would it succeed or be counterproductive?

The turning-point in Gitari's impact on the Moi government came in 1987, when Gitari preached four major sermons in the month of June, and had them published by the church's own press the following year (Gitari 1988b). They took on a prophetic consciousness from Jesus, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Paul, respectively. They should not be taken for anything other than sermons, since the political allusions or references to Kenya typically take up a small proportion only of the content. However the Bible reading has often been selected and the sermon prepared to give these applications maximum effect.<sup>54</sup> Though Gitari does not explicitly claim to be a prophet, he still has a clear consciousness of his prophetic task as a preacher.

Furthermore, the expository preacher would fail in his duty if he did not let the message of the Bible come alive to the modern hearer. Though written thousands of years ago, the word of God is meant to be effective in

our lives today and it is the task of the preacher to make his hearers realise this fact. The process of bringing God's word to bear on our contemporary world is part of what is meant by a prophetic ministry (Gitari 1988b:v).

Gitari, unlike Revd. Bernard Njoroge, preaches as a churchman and a student of scripture and not as a politician manqué.<sup>55</sup> It is just that he conceives it to be the task of the Christian witness and a bishop in particular to meddle in politics as a duty to God.<sup>56</sup> To an extent, the Christian in Moi recognized this fact in a way that a Milton Obote, Idi Amin, and Yoweri Museveni would not.

Though the standard response by politicians has been to say that the church should not meddle in politics, Gitari's clams to authority have had a peculiar affect on Kenyan politics. Moi had tried to embarrass the bishop into silence, but his response appeared to have been based on a misreporting, certainly of the sermon on Matt. 9: 35–8 ("KPCU: Moi Hits Out at a Bishop" *Standard* 9 June 1987). Three sermons and three weeks later, Moi had learned that it was wiser not to argue the toss with him: "President Moi said yesterday that the outspoken Bishop David Gitari of the CPK should be allowed to speak his mind as Kenya was a democratic country" ("Let Bishop Gitari Speak, says Moi" *Nation* 1 July 1987). Compared with Archbishop Janani Luwum's death after speaking out, Gitari's practice might be noted: speak out early and often; give Biblical warrant for what must be said, choose your words carefully and make them verifiable; check your facts; and speak in the context of worship and prayer where others, even politicians, have an opportunity to greet the congregation! Even so the would-be prophet must face the possibility that a totally unscrupulous leader would not be daunted by the religious barrier, even if those who break it usually come to a sticky end. However the churches are in most countries of the world a political constituency, which leaders have reason to be loath to alienate. A church that is alert and aware will prevent a government from taking shortcuts, so will benefit from a ratchet effect. Once the government has conceded that to behave in a certain way would be moral bankruptcy, the ground is established to extend public morality.

Eventually results came in the form of political decisions:

At one time, the reform of the party appeared to be a distant dream. But we prayed to those dry bones of Ezekiel's vision and the bones started rattling:

- The queuing system of election came to an end on 4th December 1990.
- On 21st June 1991 at Kasarani the President announced to KANU (Kenya African National Union) delegates that *anyone* could stand for elections...

If KANU cannot reform itself to the satisfaction of Wananchi, then the Nation should have the courage to allow more than one party—after all the wind of change is blowing all over Africa including South Africa and Kenya might find itself an island of one party system. Yet the time for Multi-party has not yet come—pray that God may hasten the day of Multi-party!

(Gitari 1991c)

Before the year was out KANU agreed to scrap the 1982 section 2A of the constitution that legalized one-party rule and abolished the two-term limit for a president. This had noticeable effects in ordinary society, since people could now talk about politics, politicians, and parties openly and freely in a way that they had not been able to do since 1965 for fear of being reported to some authority or other that expected complete loyalty. The dry bones of Kenyan politics were not only rattling but coming together.

A series of confrontations between the churches and the state marked the drawn-out showdown between Gitari and Moi. When Kenneth Matiba resigned from the cabinet, he was expelled from KANU and a by-election held, which was awarded to the new KANU candidate. Even though a minority had appeared to queue in order to vote for him, Gitari denounced this malpractice and accepted a summons by Nahashon Njuno, the former Member of Parliament (MP),<sup>57</sup> to face the KANU committee in Gichugu. Not actually wanting this, the committee hired KANU youth-wingers to heckle his sermon on 9 April 1989. Two were dragged out of a congregation of 6,000 at St. Thomas' Church, Kerugoya. The following Saturday one of them accosted Gitari in a Kerugoya street, and when he was eventually arrested, the District Officer and Chiefs of Ndia Division insulted the bishop and secured the youth-winger's release. Political activists informed the press that there was a plot to burn the bishop's home and car; they were arrested and detained in prison for a month for their pains.

On Sunday morning 23 April 1989, I was woken by a BBC news report that Gitari's home had been attacked. Sure enough, in the night, a large gang, apparently collected in a vehicle from the local prison and armed with pangas<sup>58</sup> and iron bars, came to his house by the main road, cut the telephone wires, smashed the windows, tore off steel grills covering them, and prowled around shouting, "We have come to finish the bishop." Gitari with his wife and guest, Revd Andrew Adano from Marsabit, climbed on to the roof and shouted for help. A group of villagers hurried from Difatha's armed with anything they could lay hold of, and the gang scattered. The following Sunday, Gitari preached three sermons to a congregation of 33,000 and became immortally untouchable (Gitari 1996b:86, 90f; Diocese of Kirinyaga 1995:23). With its

international connections, the Anglican church made the ruling party of Kenya aware that it could not get away with murder in its own backyard. President Moi commissioned and received a report of inquiry into the incident, but it has never been released.

The following year, having been warned by the Minister of Labour Okondo not to enter his district or he would “see fire,” Bishop Alexander Muge took up the gauntlet on 14 August 1990, and was then killed on his way back home by a careering milk lorry. While other church leaders talked of witchcraft or state conspiracies, Okullu and Gitari with Archbishop Kuria called for a general election at once and a government of national unity to cheers at the memorial service (Throup 1995:168–71). Once again KANU’s bullying tactics had seriously backfired, but they continued using them.

In 1991, I heard Gitari preach from Ezekiel 34 in a most direct fashion, sparing no leaders.

This passage is relevant for Heads of schools, Chairmen of farmers’ Co-operatives, Village and Market leaders, Assistant Chiefs, Chiefs, District Officers, District Commissioners and Provincial Commissioners. The passage is relevant to KANU leaders at every level, Councillors, Members of Parliament, and Government Ministers. The passage is relevant to Lay Leaders, Mothers’ Union Leaders, clergy and even top church leaders. The passage is also relevant to the sheep i.e. those who are led.

(Gitari 1991b)

He was gloriously specific and detailed about “land-grabbing” in Kirinyaga District and quoted a *Standard* article (7 June 1991) naming leaders who owed large sums to the Kenya Grain Growers Co-operative Union (KGGCU):

	KSh.
The Minister of Energy owes KGGCU	13,000,000
Ass’t Minister of Livestock Development	3,500,000
Minister for Local Government	3,700,000
Minister for Research Science & Technology	3,000,000
A nominated member of parliament	7,000,000
A former Asst. Minister for Agriculture	4,900,000

Setting the undisputed facts in the prophecy of Ezekiel gave them moral force, especially when the finger was pointed at all who would lead, not just those in government. Gitari interwove the story of Israel with the stories of

Kenyan current affairs, including that of Kenneth Matiba still detained by Moi in solitary isolation at Kamiti Maximum Security Prison after a stroke, and compared it with the story of Steve Biko in South Africa.<sup>59</sup>

A multiparty, secret ballot duly occurred in December 1992. This became part of what Terence Ranger (2008:9) has called Africa's "second democratic revolution," the first being independence from colonialism.<sup>60</sup> Yet in Kenya it was born dead, as elsewhere (Villalón & Huxtable 1998; Ellis & Haar 2004:103f). A mighty alliance against KANU, the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD), split down the middle. KANU, using cash bribes, rigged the elections in many constituencies where there was little monitoring, so there was no change of government. Moi was to complete 24 successive years as president.

But if the principle of "majority rule" did not ensure democracy in the 1970s and 1980s, neither did the concept of multipartyism in the 1990s... In many countries networks of corruption replaced outright military repression, but popular democracy seemed as far away as ever. Hence what is being attempted at the beginning of the twenty-first century is a "third democratic revolution": the struggle against presidential third termism; the struggle for incorrupt "transparency"; the struggle not only to develop electoral institutions but also to achieve a democratic culture and practice.

(Ranger 2008:9)

Gitari was always focused on the church before the state, however. After 20 years as Bishop, he claimed in his cathedral that he had confirmed some 120,000, made 500 lay readers, ordained 136 clergy, and consecrated 89 church buildings. As Gitari took up the reins of the Church of the Province of Kenya (CPK) and had it renamed the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK),<sup>61</sup> another uphill task faced him.<sup>62</sup> With the elections of 1992 and 1997 producing ethnic clashes over land in Rift Valley and Coast Provinces,<sup>63</sup> but no change in ruling party or president, Gitari with the NCCK and the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Nairobi, Raphael Ndingi Mwan'a Nzeki made repeated calls for a constitutional review and a limit on presidential terms. Jackie Klopp picks up the ongoing territorial violence and the work of the NCCK in Chapter 7.

#### THE MEDDLESOME ARCHBISHOP

Gitari served the last five years of his ministry as Archbishop, seldom staying in the official residence just round the corner from State House (Thrup 1995:144), and making a point of retiring on his sixty-fifth birthday on 16 September 2002. He failed to outlast his old adversary,

Moi, by three and a half months; the President, by that time, was already a lame duck, and the Christian and Muslim call for a constitutional review, which Gitari had led, had become unstoppable. John Chesworth will take these issues further in Chapter 6.

The initiative of meetings in Ufungamano House (run by the NCCK) wrested the initiative away from Parliament for years.<sup>64</sup> On 7 July 1997, *saba, saba* (seven, seven: a politically significant date for radicals) reformers decided to hold pro-democracy rallies in Uhuru Park without prior permission from the government as the procedures prevented them happening anyway. So the security forces used violence to disband them and demonstrators took sanctuary in nearby All Saints' Cathedral,<sup>65</sup> but some of the presidential guard followed them in and spilt their blood on the floor. Dr Timothy Njoya

suffered 20 head injuries, many bodily bruises and a broken arm. He escaped being shot thanks to journalists who covered his battered body. "On July 7 members of the press didn't do what journalists did after Princess Diana's accident—they didn't keep snapping pictures. In this case they dropped their cameras and piled on me. They saved my life," Njoya said. His heart stopped in the hospital, but he was revived and has recovered. Fourteen people were killed in that clash.

(*Christian Century* 10 December 1997)

It was as if Gitari's life had been a preparation for this moment, since he knew exactly how to respond, though only enthroned Archbishop for six months.<sup>66</sup> He informed the primates of the Anglican Communion, who often with their governments quickly expressed their displeasure to the Republic of Kenya. The Archbishops of Canterbury, Canada and Korea; the Church of the Province of Southern Africa; and the Synod of the Church of England at once sent Gitari messages of support. The following Sunday he carried out a service of cleansing in the cathedral<sup>67</sup> to remove the taint of the men of violence.<sup>68</sup>

Moi allowed the All Saints Cathedral to be defiled when his police stormed it to break up pro-democracy demonstrations. That is enough to bring down divine wrath on him, as the writing appeared on the wall when King Belsassar [*sic*] defiled the holy vessels in the Book of Daniel.

I am no prophet [quoting the prophet Amos (7:14)], but I told Moi myself that his days are numbered and his kingdom will crumble if he refuses to repent and accept constitutional changes.

("Kenya Primate Predicts President Moi's Kingdom Will Crumble"  
Anglican Communion News Service 21 July 1997)

Two days later he, along with five members of the NCKK, five Roman Catholic archbishops, and two Muslims, met with the President: “We put a lot of pressure on him. We told him there would be a lot of trouble if he does not agree to constitutional changes.” Until then Moi had refused to make changes, but with condemnation from the whole world, and the United States, UK, and Japan pressing for reform, he announced the following day, “From now on, licences for public rallies will be issued automatically. He also agreed to meet with opposition leaders next week to discuss democratic reforms.” The price of the next election for Moi, then, was an agreement to a constitutional review and the promise that it would be his last term. It needed the Prophet Daniel to bring President Daniel to the end of his rule.

There was a face-to-face confrontation at the consecration of the first Bishop of Kitale on 20 July 1997, which aligned Gitari, the bishops, and the NCKK General Secretary in the centre of Kitale Stadium, facing President Moi and his ministers (see Figure 1.2). I witnessed this set-piece display of church and state nearly end in rupture. Mutava Musyimi tried to rub in the current ascendancy of the NCKK by talking about a dialogue between the government and opposition on constitutional review, since the mainstream churches had experience of dialogue ever since the missionary alliance was hatched in 1913. Irrked, Moi replied in Swahili:

You cannot dictate to us about the issue of politics and dialogue. Before you were born I was in politics, fighting for the independence of Kenya. You cannot teach us history about dialogue. This is Sunday, a holy day, and I do not want to engage in politics.

He became very angry, so Gitari was obliged to pacify the situation. Michael Wamalwa of FORD-Kenya and leader of the opposition conceded that the opposition could not criticize Musyimi, because it could not agree among itself. Then he admitted as a Kenyan politician: “The trouble is that everyone wants sole power.”

#### THE DECLINE OF PROPHECY

So it was that by 2002 the rats were leaving the sinking ship of KANU with as much state booty as they could take.<sup>69</sup> Sadly a number of them soon reappeared in Kibaki’s government. Kibaki himself, a Roman Catholic, had a good record in regard to the church and politics. When Minister of Education, he declared during the annual meeting of the NCKK in May 1971:

A modern church is expected to be outspoken because other groups in society must be cautious. We must have at least some organization which



Figure 1.2 President Moi speaking at Kitale stadium at the enthronement of Bishop Stephen Kewasis by Archbishop Gitari on 20 July 1997

speaks up for the right of men regardless of what happens tomorrow... an active organization which speaks for our problems which we face today. I cannot think of any other organization or better place than the church to play the role.

(Quoted in Sabar 1997:31)

In March 1984 Gitari found it refreshing to hear Kibaki as Vice-President say, while addressing the member churches of the NCCK:

The church leaders should not spend their time praising politicians; we have enough people to praise us. Your task is to correct us when we go

wrong and need to be reminded of the justice that God requires, and to pray for us.

(Quoted in Gitari 1986b:125)

During a service in December 1997 to give thanks to God for Gitari's ministry in his two diocese, Mount Kenya East and Kirinyaga, Kibaki assured him that "the medals of a leader are sometimes insults and false accusations," adding as a matter of fact, St. Andrew's is the best theological institution in the CPK." Such a self-denying approach did not advance his political career at the time, since it is not one to be found in either of Kibaki's two predecessors or in any of his would-be successors, who are already lining up at his political backdoor in the race for succession in 2012, if not earlier.

Faced with a much more benign, liberal, and Gikuyu president,<sup>70</sup> the problem for the churches has been that they lost their critical distance from government almost as soon as he was elected. Signally, the General Secretary of NCKK and chairman of the Ufungamano Initiative, Mutava Musyimi, having been a resolute opponent of President Moi was anything but with President Kibaki. Musyimi accepted high-level government appointments, such as Chairman of the National Anti-Corruption Campaign Steering Committee, and did not resign after the shameful hounding out of John Githongo (Wrong 2009) and the resignation of the Director, Jane Kiragu, in February 2004. Musyimi admitted that "the committee has been unable to implement its mandate" amid a growing opinion that the government was not preventing "massive looting" of public funds, and not punishing those responsible, least of all government ministers ("Second Kenyan Anti-Graft Chief Resigns" (*Namibian*, 21 February 2005). The rumors that Revd Musyimi would join the ruling party were confirmed when he stood for Gacoka, Jeremiah Nyagah's old constituency, and won it for Kibaki over his son, Norman Nyagah. At least he resigned his church job six months before the election.

Now it is very difficult to say that the NCKK is politically impartial, so the media has been paying it and the churches much less attention in 2008. Kofi Annan, who spent an inordinately long time in Kenya during the crisis, mediating between the two main parties searched for a senior churchman of integrity and courage to enable a Kenyan solution, but never found one. The current leaders are commonly regarded as too compromised (K'Aluoch, Maurice "Chaos: Churches Blamed for Silence" *Nation* 3 January 2008), which gives John Lonsdale his title for Chapter 2. Metropolitan Archbishop, John Njue of Nyeri soon sided with his lay member, Mwai Kibaki, and suffered a rare public reaction from his brother Luo Archbishop, Zacchaeus Okoth (Munene,

Mugumo “Church Split as Poll Draws Near” *Nation* 16 December 2007). Bishop Wasonga was to stand yet again in 2009 for Anglican archbishop, while his fellow Luo, Bishop Abiero, anointed Raila Odinga for election as president (Otieno, Daniel & Kiragu, Sollo ‘Clerics Anoint Raila for Top Seat’ *Nation* 29 July 2007). The Evangelical Alliance of Kenya condemned the secret Memorandum of Understanding between Raila Odinga and Muslim representatives, while four Luo bishops supported it, irrespective, it seemed, of its content. Neo-Pentecostalist clergy, sweeping aside the old suspicion of politics being dirty, stood for President and for Parliament, Bishop Margaret Wanjiru triumphing in Starehe for Raila Odinga who was to be seen smugly in her church (Kavulla 2008). Gitari opposed Wanjiru’s candidature, and Pastor Pius Muiiru of Maximum Miracle Centre from bidding for the presidency: “Bishops and other ordained church leaders should not seek elective political positions” (Barasa, Lucas, & Thuku, Wahome “Keep Off Politics, Gitari Tells Clergy” *Nation* 19 January 2007).

Gitari is acutely aware of the failure of the church to fill the void, and when he is given a platform in the church,<sup>71</sup> he usually emphasizes the need to speak out, as when he spoke before Internal Security Minister, John Michuki, a sick Kenneth Matiba, more than ten serving and retired bishops, Vice-President Moody Awori, the chief guest at the centenary of the mission station at Kahuhia in Muranga District (“Gitari Appeals to Clergy to Keep Government on Toes” *Nation* 4 December 2006). Previous generations of clergymen had contributed toward the liberation of the country (Gitari was obviously referring more to times after independence rather than before) and the current religious leaders needed to pick up (Elijah’s) mantle, for they had the duty of monitoring the government of the day.

“You are the conscience of the nation. Pray for the country. Keep an eye on the Government. You must criticize it fearlessly” he said.<sup>72</sup>

... The church must ensure that this country is not led by chaos and confusion but by the peace of God.

(Mwangi, Alex “Keep an Eye on the Govt, Gitari Tells Church”  
*Christian Today*, 4 December 2006)

Yet Gitari does not criticize from on high, for he is very comfortable engaging. During campaigning before the 2007 election, he delighting in praying for all-comers who were standing as candidates at a service at St. Mary’s, Kabete,<sup>73</sup> for the renewal of wedding vows of a couple from Embu he had married. It was well covered by the media on the Monday (“Elect Trustworthy Leaders, Gitari Advises Voters” *Nation* 3 December 2007), but they did not relay these words from his sermon expounding

Exodus 18, where Jethro advises Moses on the four qualities to check before choosing leaders:

We cannot tell you from the pulpit who to vote for: that is quite wrong, but we can tell you the qualities to look for... we only need three parties—and Safina (Muite's)

**i. Capable** There is one MP who has never spoken in Parliament since he was elected in 2002. You go to Parliament to represent your people. Those who do should check their facts before they speak, yet they must be courageous.

**ii. God-Fearing** Fearing God is obeying his commands, the Ten Commandments. One is "thou shalt not kill!" Who killed Tom Mboya? JM Kariuki? Robert Ouko? they were people who had been elected. Showing capability raises up enemies. "Bless this our land and Nation!"<sup>74</sup> The nation cannot be blessed if the leaders are mad. "Thou shalt not steal!" And there is a lot of stealing going on.

**iii. Trustworthy** We must have people we can trust to collect taxes. I hope we will come up with a good constitution after the elections.

**iv. Incorruptible** Bribery is a two-way traffic. Both the giver and the receiver are corrupt.

Elections are very important. "Seek and ye shall find!" was Jesus' most comprehensive statement on prayer. We had to struggle to remove the one-party leadership that was bringing us problems. An owner of a *shamba* (cultivated plot) complained to his priest: "Why did you not pray for my *shamba*?" "This *shamba* does not need prayer, but manure." You must seek! Don't stay at home on 27 December. Uganda allowed Amin to rule; the consequences were terrible for the church as well. Make use of your democratic right, go and vote and do your homework first!... God bless you as you go for elections!

All four candidates were still listening at the end, before going outside for their media interviews.

Paul Muite returned for Holy Communion with George Nyamweya, the President's campaign organizer, who had forged a political reconciliation the previous night over how much funding the President's campaign chest would allow Safina, a different political party but one which would support Kibaki for President. It is most likely that the main purpose of the Anglo-Leasing government procurement scandal was to fill that chest years before, which explained why John Githongo hit a wall when he fulfilled his job by investigating it. Such is the curious mixture of religion and politics in Kenya. At least on this occasion the church was not succumbing to immorality, when temptation abounds. Before the 1997 elections, Gitari told me that a reformist political party had already mentioned had offered to make a donation of millions of shillings to the church, if

Gitari would endorse the party. Kenyans in 2007 were convinced that a number of churches had taken such bribes in a ripe season for fund-raising. In this way the people of God could benefit too from the mammoth, national corruption, aided and abetted by externally funded NGOs granting cash to each of about 200 political parties that tried to form.

Gitari cannot easily be made out as a hypocrite. He maintained his clear dictum throughout: that clergy should not take a party-political role or government post. If they should definitely be called of God in that direction, then they must resign their ecclesiastical appointment first without any expectation of return (Gitari 1986b:138).

“Our work is not to take over the presidency, but to be the light of the world.”

A Church leader could possibly take over for a short while only, in a transitional capacity, Archbishop Gitari suggested. “But I can do a better job as an archbishop than as a politician.”

(“Kenya Primate Predicts President Moi’s Kingdom Will Crumble”  
Anglican Communion News Service 21 July 1997)

In May 2002 after telling Moi to resign from the chair of KANU and announcing his forthcoming retirement (“Primate of Kenya Announces Retirement after Calling on Moi to Quit” *Anglican Journal*, 1 September 2002), delegations from his Mwea parliamentary constituency visited him at home, requesting him to be their candidate. There can be little doubt that if he had, he would have won, for standing up for ordinary people there in the past. “God called me to be a Priest and not a Politician” was the reply (Gitari 2005:iii).

As a priest, Gitari could not do everything, depending more on the power of story than of command. He did not leave a perfect church behind him, but a better administered one with a brand new constitution (Anglican Church of Kenya 2002), which the politicians had not managed to achieve after the lead he gave them. What he could not pass on was his undoubted courage, which he so much wanted his new bishops to take (Gitari 1996b:131–35). In 2008 he was lamenting that “the State and the Church have gone to bed together... the Church has been compromised... the conscience of society has been wounded.” Admitting that church leaders took politicians’ “loot” of late, he remained optimistic of the potential of the churches in recommending that those leaders should return the money and others preach against ethnic partiality and “the evil of greed”. “They must stand firm on what is good even if it means death because that is what is required of them” (Thatiah, Peter “Archbishop Gitari: The Conscience of Society is Wounded” *Standard* 8 July 2008; Moberly 2006: 147). The question remains is Gitari’s

model, of which Julius Gathogo writes in Chapter 5, the one needed by church and state now?

The book will not give a clear answer to the future, inviting you to choose. Paul Gifford's hypothesis in Chapter 8 is that whatever effect the churches had before on Kenyan politics, this has been dissipated in an increasing involvement in development that has made them all indistinguishable from the woes of their country. In contrast to this Afropessimism, Galia Sabar, who has published more on the Church of the Province of Kenya than anyone, came to this unambiguous conclusion:

Under Moi, the Church sometimes on its own, sometimes with other churches and civil society organizations, provided virtually the only available public stage for protesting against the government's abuse of power and discussing the need to change the rules of the political game. It drew the government, accustomed to secrecy and silence, into a discourse it did not want. It actively encouraged people to know their rights and fight for them. It monitors the vote-counting, documented evictions and land-seizure, and brought to public attention other forms of violence and corruption. It led the struggle for human rights and multipartyism. It gave succour and support to political detainees and to persons thrown out of their homes. In its words and actions it taught over and over again that politics is no dirtier than the people who engage in it, that the churches had a Christian obligation to engage in politics so as to create a just society, and that citizens had the responsibility to participate in the politics that shaped their earthly lives.

(Sabar 2002:291)

She continues, arguing that the church models democratic conduct, but that is less convincing even in 2008 against a generally freer Kenya with a prospering middle-class. In Chapter 4 of this volume, she details the political contribution of the churches up to the 1992 elections. Is this still their a true picture or have they all changed? Are the churches accurately portrayed by their faded generation of prophets, or by their post-modern successors only too ready to enjoy the politico-socio-economic benefits of leadership, as Lonsdale exemplifies by the former Provost of All Saints' Cathedral in Chapter 2? If the latter, then Chabal and Daloz (1999:70–73) are right in saying that the churches, like civil society are insufficient for reform, even if some culpability in the postelection violence is being recognized: "Clergymen admitted to blessing warriors to engage in violence and inviting politicians to disseminate hate messages that incited people against members of various communities." ("Clergyman Own Up to Partisan Role in Post-Election Chaos" *Nation* 23 August 2008).

Ranger (2008:19–27) identifies African churches' lack of positive content for democratic society as a major obstacle. They face crises of violence, poverty, and morality, and are too often sucked into them. Though commerce has grown apace under Kibaki, Kenya has produced a shocking outburst of premeditated violence, which the church had come too close to stop. Can it win back its integrity through another wave of brave leaders, or have hierarchical bishops had their day? Ngunyi (1995:152) argues that, "Those institutions with more authoritative systems of governance, lower involvement in local level development, less autonomy from parent organisations and more socially dependent leadership were more susceptible to political patronage." Yet how do more democratic leaders with more involvement in development stand out against general trends? The mass media have now identified the selfish materialism that is adding to the 44,000 churches associated with the EAK, which itself says, "Churches are coming up at an alarming rate" ("How Preachers Fleece their Poor Flock" *Nation* 10 October 2008). The Registrar of Societies says it is receiving 60 applications a month to start a church, when 10,000 denominations have already been registered, many by people with little theological knowledge or training who want to make money. Academics are reporting beliefs and practices detailed by Gifford (2004) in the prophet-churches of Ghana,<sup>75</sup> so unrecognizable by Gitari's model. He would mark their shepherds down as doomed, and the government is asking his successors to help curb the proliferation of sects.

After a serious lapse from 2003 in the churches acting as "the conscience of the nation" in Gitari's view, in February 2009 they, alongside representatives of other religions, did confront the President and the Prime Minister in a national event. The Inter-Religious Forum (moved by the NCCK) organized a prayer meeting and fund-raising, ironically for two disasters occasioned by greed in which 160 people were burnt to death: In the first, the management of a supermarket allegedly locked the exits when a fire broke out, to prevent looting (Ombati, Cyrus "More Nakumatt Staff Grilled" *Standard* 6 February 2009), and in the second, poor people opened an overturned tanker to steal its load of petrol as someone lit a cigarette.

The Church versus State wars broke out, with the men of the cloth harshly rebuking President Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Odinga "for abetting corruption".

Threatening mass action, the religious leaders told Kibaki and Raila to their faces that Kenyans were disillusioned by their reluctance to punish perceived friends who are "corrupt and greedy".

In a bold move not seen among the clergy in recent years, they regretted that while the public expected the two to punish lawbreakers, the principals were doing the exact opposite.

(Ndegwa, Alex & Jamah, Ally “You have Failed Us, Kibaki, Raila Told”  
*Standard* 20 February 2009)

To loud cheers and wild applause from the crowd, the “blistering attack”, televised live, was led by the Anglican Archbishop, Benjamin Nzimbi, followed by the chairmen of the EAK, the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims, and the Hindu Council in an unprecedented show of religious unity against the Grand Coalition government. It was only spoilt by the failure of the RC Archbishop, John Njue, to take his place, and afterwards he disowned his church’s involvement to accusations of tribalism.

Table 1.1 Religious affiliations in Kenya, 1970–2025

Kenyan's affiliations	%		%	
	1970	Mid-2000	Mid-2000	Mid-2025
<b>Christians</b>	<b>63.5</b>	23,859,839	<b>79.3</b>	<b>82</b>
Unaffiliated	10.6	1,380,462	5.1	2.9
Roman Catholics	16.8	7,000,000	23.3	25.6
Independents	14.3	6,607,000	22.0	24
Protestants	14.5	6,375,000	21.2	24.6
Anglicans	5.1	3,000,000	10.0	10.8
Orthodox	2.2	740,000	2.5	3.1
Marginal	0.0	30,000	0.1	0.1
Doubly-affiliated	0.0	-1,274,635	-4.2	-9.1
<b>Trans-Megabloc Groupings</b>				
Evangelicals	14.8	6,750,000	22.4	25.2
Pentecostals/Charismatics	8.9	8,350,000	27.8	30
Great Commission Christians	10.0	3,693,709	12.3	14
<b>Ethnoreligionists</b>	<b>28.1</b>	3,461,629	<b>11.5</b>	<b>8.4</b>
<b>Muslims</b>	<b>6.4</b>	2,187,002	<b>7.3</b>	<b>7.4</b>
Baha'is	1.1	308,292	1.0	1.3
Hindus	0.3	145,988	0.5	0.5
Jains	0.3	55,317	0.2	0.2
Non-Religious	0.0	32,003	0.1	0.1
Sikhs	0.1	27,518	0.1	0.2
Jews	0.0	1,786	0.0	0.0
Zoroastrians	0.0	728	0.0	0.0
Buddhists	0.0	271	0.0	0.0
Total Population	11,498,062	30,080,000	30,080,000	41,756,000

Source: Adapted from Barrett, Kurian, and Johnson 2001:III, 426

At the time the public believed that members of the government were benefiting from a rise in untaxed remuneration, the sale of a plush hotel, the disappearance of millions of liters of fuel, and a huge scam under the Ministry of Agriculture that more than doubled the price of maize-meal, while 10,000,000 starved and the promises of reform in the National Accord, which had ended the political violence the year before, remained unfulfilled. The President's main reply to the religious leaders was: "It's not that you are holy and you are not guilty at all" (Makan, Jami & Barasa, Lucas "You've Failed Kenya, Kibaki and Raila Told" *Nation* 19 February 2009). What the event does show is that the prophetic impulse of Protestantism in Kenya is still alive and kicking, if not entirely well.

Not taking media reports at face value, I conclude the book with Chapter 9, which charts the rise of an NRM, trading violence with the state, but gathering political force as the church is nonplussed by the ethnicity into which it wants to plug. Paddy Benson, recognizing this sharply, puts forward a theological solution in Chapter 3. David Gitari had assumed that modernity was the whole future for Kenya, but this has not been evidenced since he has left office. It is not that Muingiki are retreating from modernity, for they would attempt to control it under a new solidarity. The trouble is that their discipline operates by command enforced by violence, and they are not Christian, whatever the manifold conversions of their leaders. The churches have not tackled the burgeoning problems of youth poverty, so the nation is not redeemed, however many souls confess Christ (see Table 1.1).

## NOTES

1. The influence of John Mbiti (1969:2) here is still enormous: "Wherever the African is, there is his religion; . . . if he is a politician he takes it to the house of parliament."
2. No less than 34 out of 95 British colonial governors in the twentieth century were the sons of Anglican clergy alone (Nicolson & Hughes 1975). If clerical progeny were not to take the cloth like their fathers, then they were financially and socially obliged to make the most of their unusually privileged education at Anglican foundations, such as Marlborough College whose chapel is festooned with the names of imperial agents, and find an expanding profession. As with the sons of the Victorians (Brown 1961), reactions against the paternal faith were many and varied.
3. For instance, Graham Greene (1951:14) was repeatedly drawn to colonial service in Africa by reading Rider Haggard, who was highly popular among boys at the turn of the twentieth century. For British motives in going to empire, see Rich (1990).

4. A Protectorate of Uganda was declared in 1894 and a Protectorate of East Africa the following year. These declarations more than any other brought about obvious change on the ground throughout these expansive “territories,” parts of which took decades to come under civil administration.
5. The strategy of the Anglican mission to encompass both Luyia and Luo by basing their work between them at Maseno chiefly resulted in antagonism between their clans (Kuhn 2008:25–7). The result has been a multiplicity of self-insufficient diocese, reflecting these divisions.
6. The Alliance High School was located on the large tract of land owned by the Church of Scotland at Thogoto in leafy Kiambu and was the producer of the political elite under its legendary CMS headmaster, Carey Francis, though his worries about the depth of the Christian character of his products was well placed. “Carey Francis made the Alliance High School one of the leading secondary schools not only in Africa but also in what was then called the British Colonial Empire” (Mann 2003). Though he had his detractors in CMS, he was immensely loved and admired by the elite he had equipped, and many of the cabinet turned out for his funeral at All Saints’ Cathedral. At a diocesan event in Kirinyaga, the Hon. Jeremiah Nyagah lauded a whole litany of Protestant missionaries, not least Francis. In a country where a nation-state was an exotic hybrid, they taught their pupils to understand it, even though he said, “I dislike all politics and most political missionaries [WE Owen was the one he knew best]. Yet so wickedly unjust is some of the legislation here that we must do something to stand up for Africans politically” (quoted in Greaves 1969:87). Obadiah Kariuki, the first Gikuyu bishop, who was an old boy of the Alliance before Francis, wrote, “He helped the churches to raise their voices against injustice, and to bring healing and peace to our peoples” (quoted in Greaves 1969:181).
7. The United Kikuyu Language Committee proposed the adoption of the Westermann system, recommended by the International Institute of African Languages and Culture, and was gazetted by the government in 1934 with two extra vowels, “i” and “u” marked with a tilde (Barlow 1951:v–vii). Despite various objections, this is the one generally used when publishing Gikuyu texts. Gakaara wa Wanjau, however, insisted on doubling long vowels. The committee failed to follow their orthography in using the Anglicized “Kikuyu”, instead of the “gikuyu” in their translations. Church texts still predominate among publications in Gikuyu. Indeed, apart from one multivolume work of Ngugi wa Thiongo (2004–2007) none is to be found in the Text Book Centre in Nairobi. Accents are regrettably omitted here in the interests of wide publication, and ethnic names, like Gikuyu, are used in their uninflected form.

8. Though self-interested, John Anderson (1971:9) is right to point out that the widespread formal, political implications of education, which before nationalization was overwhelmingly mission-run, issued in the
 

gradual development of popular political consciousness and party organizations able to bring mass pressure to bear on the colonial authorities. A remarkably sophisticated pattern of political reaction developed, including the creation and influence of trade unions, efforts to gain a footing in the legislative councils, appeals on moral grounds through the church, appeals against injustice in the courts, and the utilization of the whole apparatus of petition, negotiation, and democratic election, which Europeans appeared to emphasize so much in their own political aspirations. Throughout this development, formal education played a central role. Formal education of the European type was essential for Africans to make contact with and to understand colonial authority, and also to develop and organize local feelings into party-controlled mechanisms able to challenge colonial power.
9. John Anderson (1971:11–13) contrasts the missionary approach adversely in Central Province as against Western Kenya, but most mainstream missionaries were more liberal and patient than Dr. Arthur. Perhaps the most significant difference lay in local responses to mission education. While the Luo came to be happier to have mission education for its own sake, for the Gikuyu it was much more of a political tool (Ranger 1965), leading to a greater emphasis on independent schools as opposed to churches.
10. Ellis & Haar (2004:9) argue that, “throughout Africa’s history religion has served as a means of regulating change in both individuals and collectivities, and continues to do so.”
11. The Gikuyu name for the East African Revival was simply *uhonokia*, salvation, which was understood in a highly personal and spiritualized way, but with indisputable social and political implications.
12. This is where I part company with Ellis and Haar’s (2004:4) belief in a widespread perception in Africa that “all power has its *ultimate* origin in the spirit world.” To be sure it is there, but Kenya is rather different in having deep influences from Cushitic and Nilotic cultures, which do not emphasize ancestors and spirits so much as the Bantu. More like the Bible, they emphasize divinity and humanity more, thus giving more space to human freedom and moral responsibility. Similarly their association of religion with the invisible and supernatural, defining it with Tylor as a belief in spirits and including magic (2004:3) does not do justice to the regularities of religion in a created order.
13. The inveterate dissident whom I interviewed had been so often tortured that he was at last robbed of his sound mind.
14. Much of Kenyatta’s political activity before they were closed early in the Emergency revolved around the independent schools attached to independent Gikuyu churches (Kangethe 1981; Knighton 2005b). Odinga assisted Legio Maria to register as a society in 1960, so they in turn supported

- Odinga's Kenya People's Union when it was formed in his Luo constituency in 1966 (Ngũnyĩ 1995:135).
15. See Kuhn (2008:120f). It is astonishing that the dictionary definition gives exactly the opposite association for *siasa* (politics): orderliness, gentleness, carefulness (Inter-Territorial Language Committee 1939:428). We can only suppose that their Swahili assistant was a would-be politician who did not want the Europeans to have a low opinion of African politics!
  16. Lonsdale (1999) uses the term "liberal" ten times in "Kikuyu Christianities" of the mainstream Protestant missionaries and their churches that they instituted, and is correct to qualify it as "a relative term." Throup (1995:143) is incorrect to state that, "Most clergy and lay workers of the Church Missionary Society and the Church of Scotland Mission had belonged to the conservative evangelical tradition." Later products of St. Paul's United Theological College came not to see themselves as Evangelicals when taken to be American fundamentalists, but, to the British observer, easily fit Bebbington's (1995) four marks of Evangelicalism: conversionism, activism, biblicism, and crucicentrism. Certain traits of Conservative Evangelicalism are to be found, but not self-consciously as they were in Britain after the battles between Liberal and Conservative Evangelicals, not least in the CMS (Knighton 1990:I, 406–10).
  17. This observation is replicated in Kenya (Lonsdale in Chapter 2 and Gifford in Chapter 9 of this volume; Ellis & Haar 2004:209; Blunt 2004), in Ghana (Meyer 1992; 1996), and elsewhere (Ellis & Haar 1998; Clough & Mitchell 2001), including nineteenth-century Germany where demons were stronger than God in people's daily lives. Donal Cruise O'Brien (2000:522) quotes Weber as saying, "You don't need to go to Africa to find the devil." Gitari, on the other hand, will not allow politicians to wield evil power, for the power to rule comes from God. Therefore he is not a dualist, though many who confess Christ are, including various Evangelicals and Pentecostals, but Ellis (2007:247) is wrong to cast either the Christian or Islamic faith as dualist, since their contrasts between God and Satan are not "absolute," when Satan is a creature of God (Job 1:6).
  18. In 1988, Timothy Njoya, under Presbyterian church government, was transferred to Nyeri and not given a pastorate, but left to the mercies of the Special Branch and the Nyeri District Security Committee. "Only church leaders have the freedom to criticize the government without risking detention" (Throup 1995:156, 159).
  19. This is admitted by political scientists who stay with Africa and do not fall into Afripeessimism, for example, Baker (2000), Chabal and Daloz (1999), and Villalón and Huxtable (1998).
  20. The problem consists mostly in politics being approached as though it were a universal science, free from epistemological considerations. "In what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what place is occupied

- by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints?" (Michel Foucault quoted in Bernauer & Carrette 2004:8).
21. Kobia (2003) well represents the priority of society from an African perspective, with his finger on the root of disjunction in African politics, which the Western state-spectacled eye simply does not and cannot see (Gifford 1998:9). "The coming of the nation-state was not only a false start in Africa but a crime against Africa" (Kobia 2003:58). Constitutions are alien because nation-states are alien (2003:77) to the point of tyranny (2003:101). Political development is mapped out for Africa "without any criticism of the models of the nation-state form itself" (2003:78). However, when he advocates "a new way of doing politics in Africa as people recognize the irrelevance and unpopularity of the nation-state" (2003:108), he goes beyond his compatriot Gitari who seeks to establish it in justice. Is this an example of Christian mission imposing recognition of the West "as the sole center of meaning" (Young 1994:281)?
  22. In his attack on the Western philosophical tradition, Foucault dissolves the boundaries between politics and theology produced by modernity (Turner 1991).
  23. Kenyan scholars are prepared to be more open about ethnic political features (Oucho 2008), when not saturated by the political correctness of Western academia. It is an obvious, if far from sufficient, explanatory factor (Salih & Markakis 1998). Kenyans talk far more easily of their ethnic culture than of their national culture; though religion is but one aspect of culture, they talk more readily of their Christian faith than their traditional rites. The logic of these generalities is that the Christian religion usually functions as a mask rather than as the solution for ethnic loyalty that the Bible alone potentially is.
  24. A Kenyan, Gideon Mutiso (1975:284), writes on Kenyan politics from a secular social scientific approach, but by the end includes primary material that betrays the Christian influence in what he is examining: "My son Noah... I turned myself into myself and was Jesus."
  25. Hallpike (2002:1) argues that the "characteristics of the modern state are antithetical to those of tribal societies."
  26. Internal Muslim politics of the North Eastern and Coast Provinces of Kenya lie outside the scope of this book, not least because their context lies beyond Kenya towards Asia (Simpson & Kresse 2007).
  27. Ngunyi (1995:124f, 145–9), for one, emphasizes "the salience of ethnicity," when examining religious institutions and political liberalization. This increased the explanatory, indeed predictive power of his argument: "a protracted ethnic showdown may ensue," as indeed it has, 1997–2008, with no genuine resolution in sight apart from the ghastly lessons given.
  28. Kobia (1993a) tries to demonstrate a few of the possible mechanisms by which the profit-maximizing goals of the West combine with the politics of the belly to privatize the value of Africa's labor and natural resources.

29. Carey Francis noticed this, which did not endear him to his fellow missionaries: “So often Christianity is made to appear an affair for ignorant and childish people” (Greaves 1969:93). Similarly the Karamojong regard the Christian church as “a religion of children” (Knighton 2005a:76).
30. The good works of the Rampleys and the Mukubas are connected, for Rampley answered the invitation of the Save the Children International Union to a conference in Geneva in 1931 with enthusiasm: “they wanted to work for the ‘arousing of native interest and native help, and thus gradually bringing into being a national movement for the care and protection of children”” (Eglantyne Jebb quoted in Marshall 2004:273).
31. Thus Mukuba does not fit neatly into Bayart’s (2000:261) “anonymous legion of Africa catechists... [et al.], who contributed mightily to the concrete form of clientilism taken by the colonial ‘rhizome state’.”
32. He also taught in Thika High School 1964–1965 after graduating (Diocese of Kirinyaga 1995a:28; Church of the Province of Kenya 1997:36). Paul Muite of the Law Society of Kenya and Parliament well remembers being taught by him. Gitari’s prayers and laying on of hands at St. Mary’s, Kabete, for his candidacy (and others) on 2 December 2007 did not result in re-election for a fourth term for Kikuyu constituency, however:

We thank you for those who have led this country, and now we have come to this crucial time of election for the tenth Parliament. May elections be free and fair... for those aspiring to be MPs, we pray, Lord, that you be with them, you care for them, that they will be able to communicate... Help people not be violent, until the [result] of this year’s election result be known. We pray that justice be done.

33. PAFES was renamed the Fellowship of Christian Unions (FOCUS) and joined the politically conservative Evangelical Alliance of Kenya, directly opposed to Gitari’s later ministry. It was in PAFES that Gitari met and mentally and spiritually bonded with Rene and Catherine Padilla. Rene was Latin American traveling secretary for Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru (Padilla, personal communication 15 October 2008).
34. “We all agree that he has outstanding abilities. It would be a very great pity if he had to leave with only half his diploma completed... he is a first class man.” Trinity College Archives, Bristol; Revd John Stafford Wright, Principal, Tyndale Hall to Dr. Oliver Barclay, General Secretary, Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 9 February 1966.
35. The choir of PCEA Gathaithi composed a protest song, *Mai ni Maruru*, meaning the water is bitter (Ngunyi 1995:135).
36. As with the early Kikuyu converts, Gitari used the Biblical prophecies to argue that a new epistemological and political era was at hand. Religious thought was experimental and embodied, not dogmatic and abstract. Despite Gitari’s theological education, he was not interested in debating contending theologies, so much as finding theological permission to try “new forms of social power” (Peterson 2004:25, 35).

37. Gitari (1986b:136) himself later quoted David Bosch approvingly, "Prophecy will inevitably lead to controversy and unpopularity."
38. Whether it was a blunder by the security forces under James Kanyotu or an intentional assassination has still not been established, but J. M.'s family blame the state ("JM Kin Sue State over his Murder" *Nation* 2 June 2000), which itself at long last opened an inquiry (Kago, Tony "Assassination of JM to be Probed Afresh" *Nation* 4 June 2004). If it were a blunder, Kenyatta could be expected to be more tolerant of sermons on the sanctity of human life. Though born in Kirinyaga, Kanyotu might have been seeking an implicit absolution, by giving a record KSh. 420,000 to build Kerugoya Cathedral, which gave him a vote of thanks despite its probable Goldenberg connections (Diocese of Kirinyaga 1995a:23).
39. Gitari once said *in camera* at Kabare, that "democracy is a disaster for the church," in terms of its internal dynamics. Though the Anglican constitution has adequate provision for synodical government at provincial and diocesan levels (Anglican Church of Kenya 2002) as well as councils, boards, and committees, at the diocesan level and below, the members of these frequently allow the bishop more power than the constitution allows. The opposite error was seen when the whole diocesan synod would determine a new bishop in a sitting. This allowed campaigning, and candidates promising rewards to supporters, including ordination without meaningful training, which then packed the house of clergy. It must be remembered that the church virtually always consists of a people called out of society as custodians of certain beliefs and traditions. For a large body to elect anyone would undermine the church, which is not there to replicate society, but to leaven it. If, as salt, the disciples of Christ lose their savor, they have lost their reason for being in the world (Matthew 5:13, a verse used in Gitari 1986b:135; Luke 14:34). Therefore, there must be greater discipline in the church, but much dictatorial, monarchical behavior will leave it little to say to authoritarian or repressive governments (Mwangi 2008).
40. The guests of honor for the next two *harambees* in 1983 and 1985 were Isaiah Mathenge, close friend of Kenyatta and founder-member of the Democratic Party, the Provincial Commissioner for Eastern Province, now reputed to be the largest landowner in Nyeri with 10,000 acres besides ranches in Laikipia and properties wherever he served, and Kenneth Matiba, who had also gone to Kangaru High School, then Minister for Transport and Communications, owner of hotels and schools, and presidential candidate from 1992 (Diocese of Kirinyaga 1995b:14f.).
41. Had Moi listened to Gitari's sermon two weeks before, he would not have been so surprised. His Provincial Commissioner was present, but insisted on countering the sermon with a message of "peace, peace, when there is no peace," which was published by the press to the exclusion of the sermon, so there was no doubt in the bishop's warning:

You may be a member of the armed forces in the military, air force or navy. If you discover that some of your colleagues are planning to

change the government through the unconstitutional use of military action, you must not keep quiet.

(Gitari 1996b:41)

42. Appointments on the basis of ethnic discrimination meant that the state could not be emancipated from society, for the Civil Service was constrained “by the dynamics of social pressure,” making the state “simultaneously illusory and substantial . . . unable even to domesticate internal violence” (Chabal & Daloz 1999:5, 10f).
43. Nyagah was given this unusual tribute when he died by the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation: “Mzee Jeremiah is considered by Kenyans to be the most humble and honest Cabinet Minister and politician to ever grace Kenya’s political landscape.” (Kanyongo, Wangari & Kamau, Rose “Jeremiah Nyagah Dies” KBC 10 April 2008). The disempowered moiety in Mbeere would beg to differ when faced with the Nyagah dynasty for half a century, but Nyagah made relatively few enemies nationally and internationally.
44. “Where there are openings, Christians should find their way into every aspect of the nation’s life, including business, education and politics” (Gitari 1986b:135).
45. “Without fear or favour”, words from Britain’s judicial oath, appears to be one of Gitari’s contributions to the constitutional review process in the oaths actually taken by the President and the Prime Minister on ascending to office in 2008.
46. The Africa Inland Church made political capital from Muge’s alienation of KANU. At the same time, the African Independent Pentecostal Church of East Africa (an old AIC, not a Pentecostalist church), the Association of Baptist Churches, the Full Gospel Church, the African Gospel Church, the Redeemed Gospel Church, and the United Pentecostal Church all dissociated themselves from the NCKK for presidential patronage (Throup 1995:151f). American-instituted churches found a home in the Evangelical Fellowship of Kenya (EFK), founded in 1975 but revived in the late 1980s to counteract the radicalism of NCKK, which became much more pronounced when Sam Kobia replaced John Kamau, the nation-builder, when he declared in his maiden speech, “political issues are an integral part of our witness and mission” (Ngunyi 1995:136, 160f). John Karanja (2008:70) gives an ethnic reading of EFK as a “feeble Luo-Kalenjin device,” whose only theological consistency lies in support for authority. He might be right, when the Kenya Assemblies of God (KAG), as a Gikuyu-dominated denomination, did not join EFK but also opposed ODM’s dalliance with Muslims; see Chesworth Chapter 6. Its church building near Eldoret was burnt to the ground by a Kalenjin mob on New Year’s Day, 2008. As the Evangelical Alliance of Kenya (EAK), it is the umbrella organization for many Pentecostalist churches. For Gitari they were always the fracture in a united religious front to politics.

47. These demands were set before Gitari's ministry at the beginning of independence:

African politicians will want to see the Church remain separate from the state and preoccupy itself entirely with religious matters... whatever advice churchmen give politicians should be given privately or regardless of faith. The new states would prefer that political parties, trade unions and civic organizations should be the ones to speak publicly on political matters.

(Mboya 1963:23)

48. See Benson, Chapter 3 in this volume.
49. Gitari makes Africans be morally responsible for corruption, while Revd Samuel Kobia, then General Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches whom he invited to a graduation at St. Andrew's, Kabare, tends to shift the blame to the West (Kobia 2003:75, 80). The British taught corruption back in the Second World War more than either side expected: "Almost everyone here, black, white, brown, in and out of uniform, is on the make... Nairobi is full of controls and controllers; the black market flourishes; stealing and corruption abound" (Francis quoted in Greaves 1969:82).
50. The tower-block in the centre of Nairobi is named paradoxically after Moi's hegemonic project in the "footsteps" of Kenyatta, Nyayo. The three keywords of Nyayo party dogma are proclaimed as unity, love, and peace, themselves deeply indebted to Christian teaching (Benson 1993; 1995:177-9). It is misleading to characterize politics as ever being actually driven by this policy for which Gitari and the NCCK gave the content (National Council of Churches of Kenya 1983), for no idea or principle provides the motivation. Nyayo is itself the key term (Gitari 1998:13).
51. The *Weekly Review* (12 January 1990:33-35) reflected why the mass media had given more coverage to Njoya's sermon, than to the Vice-President's justification of one-party rule, arguing that Eastern Europe now revealed the bankruptcy of the single-party state. Clearly Njoya was moving with the times and was not speaking out of his own self-interest. Gitari (1997:20) also saw prophetic significance in regimes toppling in eastern Europe, especially Communism only holding sway in Russia for 75 years.
52. It is noteworthy that these four oft-recurring names did not coordinate their political pronouncements more, especially the three Anglican bishops. With these three, ethnic considerations appear to the fore: Muge was "a stalwart opponent of Kikuyu power in and out of the church," even if he had to be helped out of a local political tight spot by Gitari visiting his Nandi District Commissioner (Thrup 1995:148f, 161), but they differed on reporting a meeting with Mwakenya to the authorities and the issue of a one-party state, for which Gitari, supported by Okullu, was denounced by President Moi in Kirinyaga on 10 May 1990. Gitari once

- had Njoya to preach in a diocesan service at his cathedral in Kerugoya, but evidence of the prophets honoring one another is thin, which could be due to the clerical ego. Compared with the Roman Catholics, it was the lack of organizational unity, which attracted state retribution (Throup 1995:161), but also greater publicity and public admiration.
53. If Pentecostalism is included under the head of Evangelicalism, as Freston does, contesting the ruling system is rare indeed despite participation in party politics: "Pentecostals almost always make politics subservient to proselytism" (Maxwell 2006:220); "We also honour the great by contributing to make them greater. Add to greatness" (Duncan-Williams quoted by Gifford 2004:63). These statements, when applied to pastors of the prophet-churches, are hardly a threat to political leaders.
  54. Again, in the use of expository preaching and the importance of application, Gitari (1996b:11) makes explicit acknowledgement to John Stott, who led the first mission to the University of Nairobi, which he organized, as well as Martin Luther King.
  55. In September 1988 Vice-President Karanja claimed in response to Gitari's "merely a rubber stamp" jibe at a KANU conference, "some of the clergy are frustrated politicians trying to come out," and President Moi termed the CPK, "The Church of the Politics of Kenya" (quoted in Sabar 2002:209).
  56. Gitari's role in meddling contrasts greatly with the gruff Thomas Becket, who changed from pursuing the King's interests to the church's material interests, and started excommunicating Henry II's supporters. Because of Becket's intransigence, the Pope threatened to excommunicate the whole of England. Gitari was reticent even to allow claims for charitable relief on import duty on church vehicles in case it compromised his position with the government.
  57. Njuno was the brother of Revd. Titus Ngoto Njuno, a maverick clergyman who had known Gitari from boyhood and tried to take him to court over the issue of women priests, whom Gitari wanted to ordain.
  58. A heavy steel blade commonly used in agriculture and forestry. A local KANU chairman has always been believed to have been behind the event. In 1976 Gitari had complained outspokenly that party elections at Kiini were not free and fair, because membership cards were only being sold to a few. Kenyatta nullified the elections and when they were repeated, James Njiru lost the branch chairmanship to John Gachie, who had been detained in prison over the issue (Diocese of Kirinyaga 1995b:14).
  59. For the power of story in Kenyan politics, see Gitari and Knighton 2001 and Benson 1995.
  60. Ali Mazrui had called it the "second liberation struggle" (Gruchy 1995:178ff). Jeffrey Haynes (1999:14) claimed it was a trend to democratization in the "third world" as a whole, stimulated by international, transnational, and domestic pressure fuelled by globalization. It made Sam Kobia (1993a) very optimistic about Africa. Of course the end of the Cold

War and the collapse of one-party states in Eastern Europe was a major factor (Gifford 1998:14; Gruchy 1995:193), but in Kenya change was not initiated by politicians rightly interpreting the times, but because their authoritarian defenses had been breached by clergy and churches, who spoke for the Kenya public as an alternative political vehicle, and whose active membership was far greater than that of the political parties.

61. In order to promote local participation, he asked a meeting of diocesan clergy and church-workers in Kutus for suggestions for a name; ACK was proposed on the grounds that it made the church sound less provincial.
62. Being Dean of the Province and not yet Archbishop did not prevent Gitari contesting power directly. He invited the Minister of Education, Joseph Kamotho, to the graduation at St. Andrew's College of Theology and Development, Kabare, in November 1996, when the government was proposing the registration of all religious organizations, a requirement that the old Protestant churches had pre-existed. Gitari's message to the minister was, "We do not want it!" After that the bill was quietly dropped.
63. Even Gikuyu literati used to write, "What is better, money or land? Is it not land?" (Peterson 2003b:91). Land questions were the prime source of Gikuyu suspicions (Maher 1938:17), and the Kenyan hunger for land has only increased with the population (Juma & Ojwang 1996; Heyer 2005). Ellis & Haar (2004:106) call the events of the 1990s straightforward "ethnic cleansing."
64. Involvement for AICs in Western Kenya remained controversial (Kuhn 2008:132f).
65. The dispersing mob flooded Kirinyaga Road roundabout as I drove round it with my family, disconsolately throwing a broken paving slab toward my windscreen.
66. In the enthronement at All Saints' Cathedral on 12 January 1997 an Anglican bishop from elsewhere in Africa prayed: "Give us boldness to preach the gospel in all the world, and fearlessly condemn injustice, lawlessness and violence in our midst." The General Secretary of the WCC, Konrad Raiser, prayed (in part), "Guide the leaders of this country into the way of Justice, Love, Truth, Peace and Unity." The General Secretary of the NCCK, Mutava Musyimi prayed, "Protect our ministers from threats and harassments from the enemies of truth" (Church of the Province of Kenya 1997:18–20).
67. As Archbishop, Gitari was in a position to create services of worship that were in every sense national events. For instance, the consecration of the first bishop of Kitale on 20 July, 1997, was followed by a series of ceremonies in the run-up to the general elections, at each of which Gitari invited the politicians present to greet the people: the Enthronement of the first Bishop of Diocese of Kajiado on 3 August, the Enthronement of the first Bishop of Mbeere at Nyangwa on 26 October, the Enthronement of the Bishop of Kirinyaga to succeed Gitari at Kerugoya on 23 November, and the "Ceremony of Thanksgiving and Farewell for the Ministry" of Gitari at Kerugoya on 15 December. Many politicians took the opportunity to endear themselves to a mass audience, including

- Vice-President Saitoti, Charity Ngilu, Kalonzo Musyoka, Martha Karua (MP for Gichugu), and Mwai Kibaki.
68. The front cover of Freston's (2001) book pictures clergy in cassocks holding Bibles as the tear gas spreads in Uhuru Park on 7 July 1997, while Ranger's (2008) cover has a photograph of Gitari spraying holy water outside the cathedral in the service of cleansing. These then are the central public events involving the church in Africa of the period.
  69. Ali Mazrui (1988:336, 357f) might see this as the ancestor's fighting back at the imposition of the state.
  70. Such relativized adjectives do not absolve Kibaki of his lapses.
  71. The Anglican Church of Kenya has been careful to allow him no positions of importance, with his successor, Benjamin Nzimbi, levering him out as council chairman of St. Paul's University as the theological college became on 14 September 2007.
  72. These are pointed words in the light of Koigi's experience of state persecution: "For a long time, I thought our national conscience was dead, but it is only frozen with fear" (Wamwere 1997:274).
  73. What he would have said if Kamlesh Pattni, the central figure in the enormous Goldenberg financial scandal, who had now converted as Paul and was happily using his wealth to bankroll a party of candidates who had failed to be selected elsewhere, named Kenya National Democratic Alliance (KENDA), was not put to the test, as he failed to attend.
  74. This is the second line of the National Anthem, still a determinative source of unity, not least because it begins "O God."
  75. "Tomorrow is only the fruit of seed sown today" (Otobil 2002:107). Pentecostals are now teaching Kenyans that God will reward seed-giving to the church an hundredfold.

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PART 1

THE RELIGIOUS  
BACKGROUND TO  
POLITICS IN KENYA

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## CHAPTER 2

# COMPROMISED CRITICS: RELIGION IN KENYA'S POLITICS<sup>1</sup>

JOHN LONSDALE

### INTRODUCTION

Early in 2008 up to half a million Kenyans fled their homes in fear for their lives. Their country seemed about to rupture into communal violence after a disputed election or, in some areas, in anticipation of it. Hundreds were killed before they could flee. Some had their homes or businesses or, in one especially horrific incident, their church, torched and burned over their heads (Cheeseman & Branch 2008). Many wondered if “Kenyans” could still exist after such a horrendous breach of trust between neighbors. Had they become, irrevocably, tribesmen and women, mutually hostile, no longer fellow citizens? The poor, especially, had known political violence for more than a decade, suffering at the hands of thugs acting on behalf of political elites. Other gangs outdistanced their patrons’ ability to control them. The state had lost its monopoly on the use of force (Mueller 2008). Memories were revived of the partisan violence of Mau Mau—the insurgency that had propelled, hindered, and then divided the politics of freedom half a century earlier. The colonial state, barely more than half a century before that, had itself been founded on violence, small in scale, localized and spasmodic, but destructive all the same. The burning of huts and standing crops and the confiscation of livestock had, in British eyes, “punished” native obduracy. As if that history were not intimidating enough, soon after the colony’s birth, in the First World War, the British had had to defend it against its

German neighbor, now Tanzania. More Africans lost their lives in this war, in more wretched circumstances, than modern Kenya has witnessed before or since.

The British effort to impose ruling institutions on self-governing peoples, who had run their affairs with little executive apparatus, initiated Kenya's long century of violence. It was revived at halftime by the Mau Mau "Emergency." In this internal war insurgents, African "loyalists", and the British each abandoned their customary or statutory rules of law. In recent years successive Kenyan presidents, keen to weaken any public institution or opinion that might check their massively centralized, divisive, executive powers, have not been slow to use force. Any attempt to analyse the role of religious belief, teaching, or practice in Kenya's modern history must start by acknowledging the often disastrous consequences of state-building, insurgency, decolonization's transfer of the sovereign power to allocate resources, and, now, of presidential will amid state decay, in blighting the lives of Kenyans, believers and unbelievers alike, clerical and lay. Personal survival has more often demanded prudential acceptance of one's inevitable entanglement with arbitrary power rather than criticism of or resistance to it. People are the clamoring clients of power, its expectant kinsmen with reciprocal obligations of obedience, and its resigned subjects more insistently than they feel themselves to be its free, dignified, citizens, its legally protected critics. It has often taken great courage—and underlying that, a particular theological conviction—to speak out against oppression. Lurking powers of darkness continually reemerge in public to revive the fears that haunt the Kenyan mind (Mwangi 2007).

This chapter does not aspire to be a narrative history of the interactions between "religion and politics" or "church and state." It is no more than a series of reflections on Kenya's long last century. It attempts to suggest the moral and religious premises, arguments, and competitions that have shaped Kenyans' critical reactions to their successive political predicaments. The best summary of its argument is that nothing is simple. There are ambiguous, complex, and variable answers to such questions as: Can Kenya be said to have developed a religious, or moral, culture that is its own, that is indigenous rather than alien in its arguments, its images, its references, and in its demands upon behavior? Has this religious tradition, whether "derived" or "authentic"—both misleadingly exclusive terms—helped or hindered the realization of the rights and obligations of citizenship? How far has the development of capitalism affected the issue? Has "religion", in belief or practice, demanded the "good governance" of a citizenry, or colluded, if only by neglect, in their misrule? How far are religious institutions

independent of, or clients upon, state power and how far are they seen to be legitimate? How far do the holders of state power feel it necessary to pay heed to moral scruple or clerical reproof and, if not, in what else might their legitimacy rest?

The answers, as I say, are bound to be blurred by cautious qualification. Kenya's political and moral culture cannot be read as a stable "text". It is created and recreated by many and continuing contests between unequal players, each attempting to exploit differently remembered aspects of Kenya's past, imagined as indigenous or foreign, authentic or colonial, but in every case intertwined within the knotty rope of history, wonderfully well analysed in Haugerud (1995). This chapter will examine five causes of complexity and ambiguity.

First, Kenya is for the most part Christian in self-admitted allegiance but includes a large Muslim minority. Both faiths, moreover, are internally divided in the theological views they take of earthly matters, social, political, and economic. Second, one Christian attitude to state power—the "liberal" Christian theology, the one most often voiced but probably not the most widely held—what I call Kenya's "emancipation theology" (to distinguish it from quasi-Marxian "liberation theology"), has changed in several cycles in modern Kenya's history. Third—and underlying those theological cycles—while much has changed in the social, economic, and cultural life of Kenya's peoples, there has been much continuity too, not least in the fluid, porous, argumentative, nature of these local ethnic communities or nationalities. These hybrid and disputatious pasts are increasingly denied in a competitive electoral politics that demands intraethnic solidarity, supposedly rooted in historical rights to indigenous territory, to native "soil" (Lonsdale 2008).

Fourth, the narrative poetry of the Bible, available in many vernacular translations, has contributed far more than the astringent advice of the Qur'an to these argumentative but local continuities in change. Fifth, the relationship between these historic localities and the new center in Kenya has changed greatly over time. While some degree of devolution of power in colonial times helped missionary church-builders to retain some (if not much) independence from state power, the increasing centralization of power since independence in 1963 has entangled relations between churches, which are always locally rooted, and the state, which so often seems to disturb matters from without. It could only be as severely compromised critics, therefore, that the churches and, to a lesser extent, *imams*, played their part in the 1990s, alongside other members of civil society, in demanding for Kenya a "second independence", a process to which I can only refer rather than narrate. The churches—but never all of them in unison—reacted to 20 years of one-party rule and a growing restriction on

freedom of thought, with Biblical arguments for constitutional reform. In this most recent turn in the cycle of local emancipation theology, churchmen hoped that Kenya's political independence would, at long last, allow its citizens to experience the rewarding, demanding, moral dignity of personal liberty.

In Kenya, as elsewhere, the Old Testament is generally regarded as the main Biblical archive in which to search for prophetic statements of truth to power, the New as the source-book of personal and societal salvation. Many Kenyan churchmen, those of a more liberal theological persuasion, combine the two. One favorite image has been the prophet Isaiah's vision of a God who called on a rebellious Israel to "reason together" with Him. Another is Christ's declared intention for his people, that they should enjoy "life more abundantly" (Isaiah 1:18; John 10:10). Both texts lend themselves to wide interpretation but multiparty democracy was seen as the proper response to the divine invitation of the first text and as a necessary condition for fulfilling the divine promise of the second—a better, fuller, life for the Kenyan children of God. The result of the general election of 2002, which swept a multiparty opposition coalition to power, was greeted with high expectation accordingly, leading many churchmen to feel that their work was done. Like their Creator on the Seventh Day, they could take a rest from political activism, leaving the achievement of social justice to the alleged market disciplines of political competition—so often flouted, as they tried not to remember, by a calculated circulation of political elites. The unreformed behavior of the new government and continuing factionalism between and within the churches soon made such Biblical expectation seem no more than naïve illusion. The conduct of the 2007 general election has converted dashed expectations into ethnic paranoia, felt equally by those who believe their patrons were cheated of their lawful power and by those, generally the weakest of their supposed "enemies", on whom their anger fell. The "second independence" seems to have come and gone.

#### PRAYERS FOR CASH

What, if anything, can religious belief and action do to break disillusion? It is a commonplace to say that Africa is now Christianity's most ebullient frontier, and that the religion that not long ago used to be the faith of the world's affluent North is now, more accurately, that of its impoverished South—although the world's most powerful nation, for the moment, is also said to be its most Christian, even if many of its widely held beliefs are not easily accepted as such by someone who was brought up as an Anglican of middling-to-low church inclinations, doubts, and prejudices.

Kenya is no exception to the African rule of energetic Christianity. Perhaps 80 percent of its 32 million people claim to be Christian, and of these no less than 10 percent say that they attend church regularly—a figure reported by an Evangelical survey that seems not to have counted Roman Catholics, Kenya's largest single church denomination, as fellow Christians (Africa Center for Missions 2004). As with other Africans, "it is largely through religious ideas that [Kenyans] think about the world today" (Ellis & Haar 2004:2). Religion and politics are topics that obsess them, whether in bars or bus queues (Spear 1999:307). Many ask, constantly, in private and in public, in a remarkably outspoken press, how it is that so avowedly Christian a country can be so badly governed by politicians, lords of misrule who shamelessly loot the public purse like bloodsucking ogres or the devil's accomplices (both common figures of speech); who have no sense of the common good, and yet who were educated at church-related schools; who go, ostentatiously, to church most Sundays; who invoke God's name when paying funeral tribute to their departed companions in ministerial kleptocracy; and who seem to sleep soundly at night?<sup>2</sup>

It is a question to which most Kenyans give robustly cynical answers. Their political leaders, they say, have no shame, but are nonetheless full of the hypocrisy that pays tribute to virtue—a double standard of self-esteem examined by Iliffe (2005). That can be of little surprise. Many of their church leaders appear to be no better—and in a country where Christ himself was believed to have appeared to Nairobi slum-dwellers at a service of faith-healing only 20 years ago (Ellis & Haar 2004:43). In 2004 a judicial inquiry was launched into the "Goldenberg" financial scandal of the 1990s. This, under President Daniel arap Moi, had debauched the currency, made all Kenyans 30 percent poorer, and slashed the gross domestic product by 10 percent. Yet, Moi claimed to be not only Christian, but one who was born again. There were calls for him to testify before the inquiry. Most believed he had been personally and profitably involved in the grand fraud. Yet, an ecumenical gathering of church leaders declared that to put the ex-president in the dock would demean national honor. The next day the leading Nairobi daily carried a cartoon showing a gimcrack procession of sanctimonious bishops and other holy dignitaries trooping past a disbelieving crowd of citizens. One of the crowd exclaims, "Ah! Those are Moi's new lawyers!" At the bottom the cartoonist's signature mouse asks, "With bishops like these, who needs lawyers?" (*Nation* 7 December 2004:8). When the Asian tycoon who facilitated the scandal converted to Christianity and opened a church in Nairobi's International Casino, others may well have asked, "With converts like that, who needs bishops?"

Public respect for episcopacy had not been helped by reports a few weeks earlier—headlined “Rent-a-Bishop” or “Prayers for cash”—that the new Anglican Bishop of Nairobi had been put on the city council’s payroll. He was promised an exorbitant fee in return for a monthly prayer for the city’s welfare. Most observers thought that service should be freely rendered as no more than his bounden Christian duty—as his archbishop’s rebuke confirmed. Did the bishop then return the money? “No,” my Nairobi friends told me, “He couldn’t. He had eaten it!”

Meanwhile there was also the “miracle babies” scandal. A self-styled “Bishop” Deya, a Kenyan, promised to relieve the misery of childless couples in London by offering instant infant births. These were discovered to be no miracle but abandoned babies sold off by a Nairobi orphanage. There was not much popular reaction to this affair in Britain, certainly not from students. They see things differently in Kenya. A Nairobi University drama society produced a play lampooning “Bishop” Deya. Flyers advertising the show were pasted all over the campus in late 2004. They portrayed Death, capped with bishop’s miter and holding a bishop’s crook. The posters boldly promised “Prayers and miracles for sale! Instant Miracle Childbirth, from shillings 149,999/-. Instant riches, 29,999/-. Husband Repossession 24, 999/-. Hurry now while stocks last!” (Personal observation 2004). A recaptured husband was clearly a cheaper miracle than fertility. Kenyan women always appear stronger than their men.

In this chapter I hope to show why Kenyans can be so cynical, not so much disillusioned as unillusioned, and yet at the same time take their religion seriously. At stake, for them, is no less than their survival, moral no less than physical, in peace and justice. They have an acute sense, reinforced by the recent postelectoral catastrophe, of how fine is the line between moral civilization and devilish anarchy. Their theologies reflect urgently on the sheer uncertainty of life in Africa, pauperized too often by the fickleness of nature, failures in human fertility, the malevolence of man for man, the arbitrariness of power. Where else could one find a glossy magazine called *Disasters*<sup>3</sup> advising on how to cope with rural banditry, drug abuse and HIV/AIDS in school, muggers, female genital mutilation, or IT fraud, with offers of training in disaster management? Its “Thug Tips” (clearly borrowed from an American magazine) began: “Please remember there are 11,500 thugs that were released during the month of December from Prison: please read on” (*Disasters* 10; 2004:19).

This chapter tries to take Kenya’s modern history as seriously as Kenyans take it themselves and to enter, however vicariously, into their often bitter life experience, one that they bear with stoicism and cynicism, hope, humor, and, many of them, with faith. But does that faith,

to take up the first of my five causes of complexity, help them to see themselves as citizens?

### RELIGION AND CITIZENSHIP?

Christianity and Sunni Islam, Kenya's two main religions of the book, both make universalist claims on their adherents. The children of God, or the *'umma*, are both, in imagination, global, transnational and therefore, surely, transethnic. Each has a history of critical engagement with secular authority in demanding social justice. They therefore have the potential to unite Kenyans as citizens no matter what their ethnic origin. Furthermore, one of Kenya's bravest newspaper groups, the Nation Media Group, always as far as possible on the side of liberty and good governance, has for the past 40 years been owned by Muslims—by the small Shi'a Ismaili sect, followers of the Aga Khan.

And yet, as elsewhere, in practice these religions also divide Kenyans, and not constructively. The most obvious fracture, one might think, would be between the 80 percent Christians, the perhaps 7.3 percent Muslims—religious affiliation is deliberately not required by Kenyan census returns and the figures are disputed—and the perhaps 11.55 percent who follow supposedly “traditional” religious practices. These figures, educated “guesstimates” from my Kenyan sources of information, suggest that there are now twice as many Muslims in Kenya as 20 years ago (Cruise O'Brien 1995:201; Oded 2000:1f). In fact the divisions *within* the religions of the book have more power to inflame passions than divisions *between* them—except very recently when an openly recognized status for *shari'ah* courts was mooted as an element of possible constitutional reform. Among the severest divisions of opinion are those that reflect on how far faith is concerned at all with secular governance and social justice.

Of all the world's religions, Islam states most clearly how rulers should act justly, not least with respect to the fatherless and the widow. It was no accident that President Mwai Kibaki, a Roman Catholic, early in his first term of office in 2002, appointed a Muslim, a Somali, to be his Chief Commissioner of Police, charged with cleansing the police service of its corruptions. Yet, Islam in Kenya is a minority faith, and a potentially secessionist one at that, among its two main minorities, the well-armed Somali pastoralists of Kenya's northeastern deserts and the peaceable Swahili and Arab townspeople of the Indian Ocean coast. The Muslim desire for the entrenchment of *shari'ah* law courts has been, in the eyes of many Christian Kenyans, a major obstacle to otherwise desirable reforms that would decentralize state power. And Kenya's Muslims

are indeed law-abiding. Their street demonstrations in defense of their *shari'ah* family courts against the Christian onslaught were uncharacteristic. Nor is there much evidence that Kenyan Muslims harbor terrorist designs—despite the 750 Kenyan guards posted at the American embassy to reinforce the U.S. Marine contingent after the truck bomb of August 1998, and more recent violence against Israeli citizens and interests at the coast. Such threats are apparently derived from Somali or other extremists, based in what used to be Kenya's neighboring state of Somalia, now a living example of anarchy (Abrahamsen & Williams 2005).

Kenya's Muslims are, then, united in a critical political *theology*, but territorially unreliable in their now-latent secessionist political *allegiance*, and in any case difficult to mobilize as a political constituency, being as decentralized and non-hierarchical as anywhere else in the Muslim world, despite the government endowing them with a unified council structure with which the state can deal (Oded 2000: chap. 2). Kenya's Christians are still more divided. They have no agreed theology of power. None of them, apart from Roman Catholics and perhaps Anglicans, can claim to speak on behalf of all Kenya's peoples—did not the latter continually multiply their ethnically defined dioceses. Only Roman Catholic bishops regularly speak for a whole institution. Other churches more often speak, if at all, through individuals.

To take the so-called mainstream churches, the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches with British missionary origins—Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Methodists—all espouse a liberal, incarnational, Trinitarian, political theology in which the Son of God's sufferings demand, in response, the pursuit of justice for His suffering brothers and sisters on earth. This theology is informed by Biblical hermeneutics that assume that the Bible's authors were men of their particular time in history, divinely inspired but also contextually limited in their interpretation (Benson 1995). These churches conclude that while obedience is indeed due to Caesar, Caesar also owes it to God to protect his citizens, not least to defend the human dignity, the key measure of liberty, owed to all children of God, especially the least of them.<sup>4</sup> Although the Presbyterian Timothy Njoya is for many a controversial figure (not least because of his recent dialogue with Nairobi's Muslims), liberal churchmen would agree with his core beliefs: That work is the means by which people affirm their dignity, there is no dignity in material or philosophical dependence on others, and "human dignity always starts with freedom and ends with responsibility"—just as the Israelites "obtained the salvation of their national dignity" in their harsh desert journey to self-discovery in Exodus (Njoya, 1987b:7, 12f, 16, 27). This last image is deep rooted. One of the earliest criticisms of independence was expressed in the Presbyterian

hymn *Mai ni Maruru* (Water is Bitter); Moses had released sweet water from the rock, not so Kenya's politicians (Chepkwony 1987:156–57). But liberal clergy find the Beatitudes as appropriately subversive of Kenya's political culture as the Old Testament's prophets; they used to engage in vigorous and plain-spoken voter education before that need seemed to come to an end with the opposition victory in 2002. Nonetheless Kenya's political theology, a local version—or subversion (Freston 2001)—of liberation theology, what I call emancipation theology, has borne a cyclical tendency to worship the state before examining it critically, a matter on which I will elaborate shortly.

But these mainstream churches, all represented in the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), have in recent years hemorrhaged followers to the charismatic churches—“sheep-stealers” as their critics call them, or “mushrooms” that grow overnight, in the dark—as everywhere else in Africa. And for Kenya's thousand or more charismatic churches or its quieter, older, Conservative Evangelical congregations descended from American faith missions, the nature of secular governance seems to be largely immaterial to personal salvation (but see Kavulla 2008). Their theology is dualist, contrasting good and evil, God and the devil, more sharply than the liberals, and urgently eschatological, preaching the imminence of Christ's Second Coming, an event that makes salvation so much more compelling than earthly justice. So different is their churchmanship that, under the aegis of the Evangelical Fellowship of Kenya (EFK), they seceded from the NCCCK in the mid-1970s. Insofar as they comment on politics at all, Evangelicals would say it is the conviction of personal salvation in the country's rulers, rather than their respect for democratic rights and procedures, that is the best guarantee of just rule. These churches quote more from the Old Testament than from the New. They recall how God rewarded or punished Israel's rulers according to their obedience or disobedience to Him, not according to their adherence or otherwise to democratic procedure and the will of the people, who could so easily be led astray. In this respect, Kenya's charismatics, Conservative Evangelicals, and older African Instituted Churches resemble their counterparts elsewhere in Africa (for example Gifford 2004); but in Kenya, charismatic congregations seem to be much less tolerant of the “gospel of prosperity” than elsewhere (Droz 1997, 1999; Lonsdale 2002a:183–92). This chapter says far less about Kenya's charismatic Pentecostals than their growing numbers deserve.

The distinctions drawn above relate to formal theologies, to the Bible learning of Kenya's clergies. One suspects, again as elsewhere in Africa, that many laypeople judge politicians according to their supposed personal power to *exploit* rather than to be *defeated* by unseen forces (often

ancestral forces, curses, or the sorcery employed by rivals) that neither Christianity nor Islam seem willing to confront and overcome (Ellis & Haar 2004; Haar 1992). There is certainly popular demand for protection. Nairobi pavement kiosks sell, for KSh30 each, pamphlets on “How to Identify and Break Curses”, and “The Dangers of Witchcraft Covenants Practices”, sourced from Deuteronomy, Leviticus, Proverbs and other largely Old Testament texts and published by Stephen Gichuhi, founder-director of Global Revival Ministries. President Moi felt he had to set up a commission of inquiry into devil worship, mainly to clear himself of the popular suspicion that he shared in the occult power, after he was blamed for Kenya’s growing poverty and unemployment at a time when there was too little of the work that gives people their dignity. In a continent full of unseen powers, both malevolent and benign, some people, sometimes, believe it is only prudent for one’s rulers to have some familiarity with those powers—and the devil is especially accessible to golfers and Freemasons, both popular forms of community among Kenya’s elites—while others, especially charismatic Pentecostals, are terrified or repelled by that prospect (Droz 1997; 1999).<sup>5</sup>

If these theological differences were not enough to cast doubt on the capacity of Kenya’s Christianities to inspire good governance or effectively reprove the bad, there is the still more disabling fact that in the popular mind, many of its churches bear an ethnic, not national, character. This segmentation makes it easy for politicians to scorn clerical critics as “tribalists” rather than defenders of the common good. The problem stems from the early twentieth century when a colonial government nervous of the potential for religious strife between excitable natives obliged different missionary societies to evangelize separate spheres of territorial, and therefore ethnic, influence. Far too often since the rebirth of multiparty democracy in 1992, political competition has pitted NCK churches against those of the EFK (Ngunyi 1995). This correlation between church and tribe is said to be fading today, but it nonetheless remains strong. Urbanization, and social and denominational mobility, may in time produce a cohesive Christian voice that is less vulnerable to factional competition for political favor, but in popular opinion that time is yet to come. Only the Roman Catholic church dares to post some of its clergy—but almost none of its bishops—to areas of the country other than those into whose ethnic culture they were born.

So the relationship between religion and citizenship is far from clear cut. Nonetheless—despite the manifest failings in both Kenya’s Muslims, Sunni and Shi’a, and in all of its many Christianities, with respect to their capacity to nourish a critical citizenry or transparency in government—there remains much that the religions of the book can claim to have achieved in

helping to imagine the Kenyan state and even a Kenyan nation. Quite how much they can claim is disputable. Unlike too many of its near neighbors, Rwanda and Burundi, Uganda, the Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia, Kenya has not fallen apart in civil war; it retains constitutional procedures, if only when they suit today's holders of power. But the relative peace enjoyed until the last two decades owes more to the transition in Kenya's political economy than to its religious history, in which it is very similar to these neighboring states. Until the 1980s, Kenyans' competitive energies were for the most part constructively employed in exploiting the opportunities left by the departure of white settlers from the land and of many South Asian traders and artisans from townships and cities. It was natural for churches, especially for the NCKC, to work with the grain of this "development" phase of nation-building (Chepkwony 1987). But various time-bombs were set ticking in the process, liable to explode when the national cake of fertile opportunity ceased to expand or, indeed, started to shrink into barren, life-wasting evil when measured against the expansion of population. In the last two decades, electoral tension has repeatedly erupted into violence along the internal boundaries of these earlier African colonizations of the formerly colonial economy. In the 1990s the churches and Islamic civic bodies did much to help exert the pressure that restored some of the formal decencies of good governance. But the electoral crisis of 2007–2008 has shown once again the near-fatal flaws that persist within Kenya's more fundamental political culture and economic structures.

Religion is deeply implicated in that culture and in those structures. But it is not religious division, not directly, that most threatens Kenya's peace. Many would indeed say that Kenyans were encouraged to take the risky plunge back into competitive party politics in the 1990s because their experience of mutually tolerant religious pluralism—within families as much as between neighbors—had taught them that difference did not necessarily invite mutual hostility (Thomas P. Wolf, in conversation). Moreover, whenever Kenya's public life has descended into violence, it could well be claimed that religious communities have done more to heal wounds than to inflame them, both after the Mau Mau war of the 1950s (Anderson 2005:338, 340; Elkins 2005:367) and after the electorally calculating "ethnic cleansings" of the 1990s (Githiga 2001:122–27; Sabar 2002:218–20, 247–48; Achieng 2005; International Theological Commission 2000). This combination of religious entanglement in political culture and the ability at times to stand apart from it is best explained by what appears to be a cyclical relationship between church and state in the building of a civil order in Kenya, governed by a local variation on a Christian theology of liberation. History has brought church and state together, complicit in the cause of civilization, development, and

nation-building, to cite successive names for Kenya's future; it has as often caused the one to criticize the other in the name of local or individual freedom and dignity.

### KENYA'S EMANCIPATION THEOLOGY

Clean contrary to Latin American liberation theology, with its biases toward the poor and against the structural sin inherent in the alliance between corrupt local states and international capital, Kenya's theology of emancipation is suspicious or contemptuous of the poor, or of African humanity more generally, with its supposed liability to indulge in violence and anarchy and is inclined to be indulgent of and respectful toward the state. It does not bear the sword in vain, as Paul put it (Romans 13:14), but justifiably, for the protection of the faithful, often emancipating them from the slavery of their own lower natures (Githiga 2001, and my Foreword thereto).

It was a peculiarly colonial theology of emancipation in origin, though it was not only colonial but also indigenous, as will be explained. British officials saw themselves as heirs to the Royal Navy's Indian Ocean crusade of freedom that lasted half the nineteenth century against the Arab slave trade. The first representative of British power on the East African mainland was the Imperial British East Africa Company, chartered in 1885. There was a rising sun on its escutcheon, with the motto beneath: "Light and Liberty". A Company shield still hangs in the Nairobi Club, a favorite watering hole for senior civil servants on their way home to the wife. Colonial officials believed in this redemptive, civilizing, mission. (Chenevix Trench 1993; Lovatt Smith 2005; Berman 1990: chaps. 3 and 5). White settlers believed in it as well, no matter how much that belief also served their material interests. While Arab slavery had humiliated and infantilized Africans, labor, even coerced labor on a white farm was, in their view, a salutary education in self-discipline and responsibility (Lonsdale forthcoming).

The missionary view of colonialism was strikingly similar. The first East African Christians were newly captured slaves fortunate enough to be recaptured at sea en route to their places of servitude and then emancipated, to be educated by the Anglican mission in India. These were the "Bombay Africans", who played a similar role in East Africa's Christian history as West Africa's "Sierra Leoneans". In the first, coastal mission stations they inevitably attracted slaves away from their Arab owners. Kenya's first Christian martyr, David Koi, also known as Abe Saidi, was decapitated in 1882 by Arab slaveholders, for leading a Christian community of fugitive slaves, *watoro* as they were known (those who had

run away) (Anderson 1977:16; Reed 1997:79–80). White missionaries, remembering David Livingstone's appeals on behalf of a suffering Africa, could scarcely find fault, in principle, with an avowedly Christian colonial rule that protected their evangelism, their teaching, and their healing against Africa's cruel uncertainties. In 1898, one year after the British decided they could not rule Kenya, as they had hoped, through the intermediary means of the Sultan of Zanzibar, there was a dispute over Christian converts at the coast who had run away ten years earlier, as *watoro*, from their Arab master. Slavery was still legal in the Sultan's dominions, and it was supposedly in his name that the British ruled the Kenyan coast. The Arab master demanded his slaves back. The local British magistrate ruled in his favor, as he was legally bound to do. The Methodist mission at the coast protested. The home government got alarmed. The Secretary of State thereupon ruled that should slaves succeed in liberating themselves, no British official could hand them back to their master (Mungeam 1966:60). The *Standard Swahili-English Dictionary* (Inter-Territorial Language Committee 1939), compiled largely by missionaries and with a Foreword by Thomas, Bishop of Zanzibar, chose to illustrate the meaning of *Toroka* (verb: to desert or run away from) with the phrase *mtumwa ametoroka bwana wake*, "the slave has run away from his master."

It is not difficult to see why the early missionaries at the coast should see colonial rule as providential, at least when it was called upon to be true to itself by superior authority back home. The same applied still more upcountry, where Africans appeared to allow barbarous tests of probity in their own legal systems, where polygamy ruled, where at the turn of the twentieth century famine and disease were rife, where Africans were seen as both a savage and at the same time a suffering people, for whom famine relief carried inland on the new railway was a clear blessing of British rule. It was also important that missionaries generally followed the flag. They did not precede it as in nearby Buganda, or in western Nigeria among the Yoruba. Such understandings as they reached with local African notables were negotiated under the tacit umbrella of colonial power. Officials indeed regarded mission stations, British ones at least, as an "auxiliary arm" of their rule. It was difficult for missionaries to criticize in any fundamental way a dispensation that seemed to have saved Africans from so much misery, barbarity, and ignorance and which made it safe for white men and, still more, white women, to preach the Gospel. One did not have to read Romans 13 to come to this conclusion (Oliver 1952, still essential reading).

This view left missionaries to get on with their vocation, evangelization and the nurture of Christian communities. They were in Africa to

build churches, not to engage in politics. Anybody studying the relations between religion and politics at any time in history or anywhere has to accept that conflict is most likely between the two when the institutional interests of church and state are at odds, rather than when theological, moral, or philosophical proprieties alone are under threat. That is certainly true of the history of Kenya.

Kenya's churchmen, whether expatriate missionaries or Kenyans, have rarely been systematic theologians. They have been steeped in the Bible, they have felt called on to create and serve local church communities in its light and to preach salvation. Kenyan churchmen are also heirs to stern traditions of self-reliant industry from their indigenous moral economies. They have viewed society and the state with these preoccupations in mind. Kenya did not exist little more than a century ago; it was a stateless territory. Commercial, fire-armed Islam had made some upcountry trading alliances that supplied ivory and slaves. Unarmed Christianity could make little or no impression beyond the few freed-slave settlements at the coast. To the outsider, warfare seemed to be the rule. After conquest, peace became the new order. Kenya's churches, missionary and indigenous, have from the start more often felt themselves to be militant against societal sin, perhaps original sin, than against political oppression. They have repeatedly felt that the sword of the state is properly allied with the shepherd's crook in rescuing God's children from slavery, literally and metaphysically, from the slavery of superstition, ignorance of a loving God, and disease (Okullu 1974:26–27). Even anticlerical African Christian revivalists, later in the twentieth century, took the *pax Britannica* to be a deeply religious presence (Welbourn & Ogot 1966:19).

What first roused the dismay of British Protestant missionaries, those enjoying a politically privileged, “established”, connection as much with the British government as with the colonial state in Kenya, was the way in which official support for white settlers subsidized that tiny minority by means of African taxes and coerced labor, before and after the First World War. In this most famous intervention by the churches in Kenya's colonial history, what angered them most was the way in which oppression was mediated through the state's local agents, African chiefs, many of whom opposed, as rivals, the “native catechists” who were more effective evangelists than white missionaries. Official economic policy sapped the energies of African peasantries and official practice factionalised African society. Both policy and practice hindered the self-sustaining growth of local churches. The redeeming promise of colonialism was betrayed. But the missionaries' practical emancipation theology was allied to a self-interested paternalism on behalf of their closest

converts. They even declared that forced labor was tolerable under two conditions: that it was supervised by upright British officials and that it excluded from conscription all those African men who could prove they had worked for themselves, and their families, for a season. All whites deplored what they assumed to be African male idleness at the expense of African women. Labor, even when coerced, would educate them out of, and would free them from, sinful sloth. It took the church in England, with the Archbishop of Canterbury in the lead, to argue that the whole principle of forced labor for private profit was wrong. This combination of local self-interest and critical overseas backing was as important to Kenyan church advocacy in the 1990s as to the missionary societies in the 1920s (Oliver 1952: chap. 5; Spencer 1975).

The cycle of church-and-state relations returned to mutual cooperation in the later 1920s when the colonial government responded to African discontent by conceding to Kenyans the most progressive form of local government to be found in British colonial Africa. New district councils gave subjects some of the rights and responsibilities of citizens—if at their own expense in local taxes additional to the taxes owed to central government—and placed some checks on the powers of those decentralized despots, the official chiefs (contra Mamdani 1996). Despite vigorous disagreements over standards and funding, African local councils went into educational partnership with the missions. Many of Kenya's leading politicians at independence had risen up the missionary educational ladder to its apex, the Alliance High School, Kenya's best, on local government bursaries—not by accident relieving central government of much of its own responsibility for African progress (Anderson 1970:136–39; Kipkorir 1969). Tension between local church and central politics returned before independence. First, some Gikuyu Christians were, in their churches' view, martyred by Mau Mau insurgents (Phillips 1955; Wiseman 1958; Smoker 1994)—less for their religious belief than for their obstinate courage as potential informers. Second, as Kenya's nationalist politicians (all of them alumni of mission schools) turned the Christian belief in equality into action: they acquired more power, more sophistication, more important external contacts, and seemed to attract more popular allegiance than the now pauper-looking churches they had left behind. Mission paternalism had given birth to African nationalism and was now overtaken, and for a time affronted, by its headstrong child (Lonsdale 2002b).

But what of church and state relations since independence in 1963? This has revolved through two further cycles and perhaps embarked on a third, with reference to the theological understanding and practice of Kenya's emancipation. The attitude of the churches to the state cannot be properly understood, however, without some prior discussion of the

strict sense of moral economy held by most Kenyans. Their parents and grandparents, whether from pastoral or agricultural communities, taught them that resolute self-reliance supported by self-disciplined labor, “holy sweat” as Ngugi wa Thiongo has called it, was the only route to personal honor and civic virtue. The prosperity of one’s household brought civic influence today and the respectful memory of posterity tomorrow. Since land was more or less a free good before the population growth of the past century, and since no Kenyan society bore a great weight of ruling structure, one’s success in life was judged to be in one’s own hands, no matter that one might start life as the client or tenant of another. Wealth was honorable, provided it was loaned out in influential support for others. While selfish wealth was sorcerous, poverty was more often a reason for scorn than pity. For Kenyan Christians, “abundant life” is not a matter of spiritual riches alone; and a bias toward the poor is not yet a majority understanding of emancipation. The poor first owe this duty to themselves (Anderson & Broch-Due 1999; Lonsdale 1992).

The mission-originated churches Africanized their leaderships almost as rapidly as the British transferred political sovereignty. They acquired still closer links with the hierarchy of state. The Anglican bishop, Obadiah Kariuki, was brother-in-law to Kenya’s first president, Jomo Kenyatta. One of his wife’s, Mama Ngina, brothers, Monsignor George Muhoho, was a Roman Catholic chaplain at the University of Nairobi (Thrup 1995:145). More generally, hope for a more abundant life for the children of God was placed in an independent government committed to their emancipation from the humiliations of colonialism. That hope was tinged with some relief that what many saw as the demonic force of Mau Mau would not bedevil (literally) the culture of independent Kenya, something much feared by Kenya’s last white Anglican bishop, and first archbishop, Leonard Beecher (Pastoral letter 1960).<sup>6</sup> Kenyatta’s Kenya appeared, initially at least, to facilitate the release of constructive energy. The new president’s own chief criticism of colonial rule had been that it enfeebled “the spirit of manhood,” removing from Africans the self-realising responsibility of choice in their lives (Kenyatta 1938:211). That such self-realisation must involve a search for prosperity was, as explained, accepted by all, provided that the wealthy person did not neglect his or her responsibilities, chiefly to their extended kin. The churches could have no moral objection to the “pact of domination” as it has been called, between the presidency, Kenya’s own aspiring elites, and international capital, provided that the interests of labor were recognized under the ideology rather loosely termed “African socialism” (Branch & Cheeseman 2006). The churches also saw evangelistic opportunity in cooperating as the local sponsors of the work of “development”—a new

term for emancipation from the shackles of poverty, ignorance, and disease—often funded from overseas through the channel of the NCCCK. Christianity was on the way to becoming the professed religion of a majority of Kenyans.

So Kenya's churches were slow to criticize increasing authoritarianism. No church leader questioned Kenyatta's decision in 1968 to ban the sole opposition party, the Kenya People's Union, although one or two junior clerics, notably the young Henry Okullu, did protest. Opposition did however stir in 1969 with the assassination of Tom Mboya at the instigation of persons still unknown but widely believed to be close to the President. There was great popular anger against Kenyatta's Gikuyu kitchen cabinet. Partly in reaction (there is evidence that the process had started before Mboya's death), Gikuyu were coerced into taking an oath of loyalty to the continued Gikuyu domination of Kenya. This was far too reminiscent of Mau Mau and its supposed opposition to Christianity. Many Christians, forcibly oathed and at least one martyred, felt that they had been exposed to the power of the devil. Kenyatta's authority with the churches never recovered from this confrontation between the saving blood of Christ, Lamb of God, and the supposedly demonic blood of goats intrinsic to the Gikuyu oath of political loyalty (Chepkwony 1987; Lonsdale, Booth-Clibborn, & Hake 1978; Githiga 2001; Sabar 2002; Knighton 2009).

The churches therefore renewed their hopes in the state when in 1978 Kenyatta was succeeded by Daniel arap Moi, a born-again Christian, and from the relatively weak Kalenjin people, naturally antagonistic to the concentration of wealth and power in Gikuyu hands. Moi released political prisoners, set limits to the accumulation of land, and appeared to set the Kenyan state, once again, on the path of freedom for its industrious citizens. Once again, too, it took the churches some time to realize that they must still be ready to prophesy against unjust power when Moi declared Kenya a one-party state in June 1982, with scarcely a murmur from Parliament, and centralized his own powers still further after those indecipherable "August disturbances," the attempted coups later that year (Widner 1992:143–47; Throup & Hornsby 1998:30–50). Kenya's ruling culture of order became a culture of fear, in the words of the Anglican Church's Justice and Peace Commission (Sabar 1997:25), in which only church leaders continued to enjoy the status of protected critics. The death, in August 1990, of an especially turbulent priest, the Anglican Bishop Muge, led many to doubt that even that limited, clerical exception to state intolerance would long remain.

When churchmen did speak out—and these were the years of Bishop David Gitari's most pointed sermons in defense of local communities

against state oppression (Gitari 1988b, 1996)—their spokesmen tended to be Presbyterian or Anglican. The former church was almost exclusively Gikuyu, the latter denomination strongest among Gikuyu and Luo. Both peoples felt unjustly excluded from power. Could their churchmen speak for the Kenyan people of God as a whole? That was certainly their intention and claim. Initially, the government too easily discredited them by reason of their ethnic partiality—and their peddling of allegedly “foreign” ideas of democracy—just as the Archbishop of Canterbury had argued from London against forced labor in the 1920s. Moreover, as in the earlier missionary protest, the churches spoke up partly in their own interest. What they opposed was the replacement of the secret ballot by “queue-voting” in the ruling party’s primary elections. And their grounds? That to line up behind any candidate would either show church leaders to have voted against some other member of their flock or else oblige them to act as party organizers in telling their emancipated people to act once again as political sheep (Githiga 2001:83). But in the 1990s almost all of civil society, save for the Conservative Evangelicals among the Kalenjin peoples closest to President Moi, followed the mainstream churches in arguing the case that liberty, and not just for clerics, could be assured only with the rebirth of multiparty democracy and, when that was thwarted by state-sponsored violence prior to the elections of 1992 and 1997, by constitutional reform that would drastically reduce the powers of the executive, give more independence to Parliament, and decentralize much administrative power and financial responsibility.

It was on this wave of popular anger and voter education, the latter conducted mostly by the churches—but exploited by high-political intrigue that constantly thwarted the purposes of the reformers—that Mwai Kibaki came to power in 2002. And once again, as at the outset of colonial rule, as in Kenyatta’s first years and in Moi’s, the churches have, by and large, been content to tend their own—and the succor of tens of thousands of displaced persons, even before the 2007–2008 crisis, was responsibility enough. When the very survival of a unitary Kenya is so very much in question, it is perhaps good for the churches to act on the advice of their founder when He first sent out His apostles “as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (Matt. 10:16), quoted to me by Bishop Stephen Njihia Mwangi of Nakuru. Nonetheless, there is clearly a need, once again, for Christians to reexamine their theological bias in favor of the state when the state and those contending so zealously for its power have proved themselves so terrifyingly able to wreak death and destruction, in sharp contrast to the mutual tolerance inherent in the normally transethnic social relations

of daily life. Formerly, where the stateless African society was seen as the threat to Christian emancipation, its domestic networks now look to be the people's only refuge from the Kenyan state.

Before ending this account of Kenya's cycles of emancipation theology, one has to add the essential rider that successive governments have returned the compliment rendered them by the churches. The colonial government welcomed missionary supervision of schooling as some insurance that African traditional disciplines, eroded by social change, would be replaced by religious restraints. While missionaries were wary of being seen as an economical substitute for a police force, their decreasing financial capacity gave them little option but to cooperate with government. The Kenyatta government agreed that while education was chiefly the responsibility of the state, church sponsorship of teachers and local parental support was a vital guarantee of seriousness of purpose. President Moi was often seen in church; and Kibaki makes no secret of his Roman Catholic Christianity, despite the embarrassment of a household complicated by the presence of what many see as a second wife. Christian Religious Education and, at the coast, Islamic Religious Education remain compulsory elements of the school curriculum.

Church and state in Kenya remain closely entwined, each to some extent complicit in the supposedly providential authority of the other. There is—in the growing fear of violence not only from the state but also from the poor, the ill-educated, and the unemployed—good reason why Kenyans should acquiesce in this close relationship while also doubting the purity of motive of either of the contracting parties. There is a similar ambiguity in the popular understanding of the social changes and challenges with which people, church, and state have had to cope—my third cause of Kenya's complexity.

#### BIBLE CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

In the beginning here, as elsewhere, are words, especially words in songs. They invite reflection on what sort of social, political, and religious transition, if such it may be called, Kenyans have undergone in the past century or more. Thirty years ago—ten years after her country's independence—one of Kenya's best-known woman poets, Micere Githae Mugo, wrote a lament for the lost songs of her people's oral tradition that once upon a time had imparted purpose and discipline to their lives: *Where are those Songs?* She asked what had become of the songs her mother had sung to fit the changing rhythms of life, whether tied to the agricultural year or to a child's passage through life, to warriorhood, womanhood, marriage, and death (Chipasula & Frank 1995:129–31).

Today, 30 years on, Kenyans still sing at weddings and funerals and as warriors. Kenyan weddings in which organizers are smart enough to have service sheets printed in English are made joyful or meditative with songs like “To God be the Glory, great things he hath done”, “Great is thy faithfulness”, and “Guide me, oh thou great Redeemer!” At funerals, the soulful words that give rhythm to the lives past and to come are, for example: “Abide with me”, “What a friend we have in Jesus”, “Rock of Ages”, “The Lord is my Shepherd”—Psalm 23, sung to the Church of Scotland tune Crimond, even in a Roman Catholic cathedral, and crooned to an electric guitar. The recessional hymn at funerals is almost always “God be with you ‘til we meet again”. This is also the modern warriors’ song, since it often ends the term at the most prestigious, mission-founded boarding schools, the oldest of which, the Alliance High School, is now over 80 years old (Kipkorir 1969; the author’s own visits to Nairobi churches, too few of them Pentecostal).

Such changes in popular song—and in the sites of their singing, from cooking stones to cathedral, or in their singers, from mothers or grandmothers to choir-led congregations—all invite the idea of *transition*: from tradition to modernity, from small-scale, simple societies, to large-scale social complexity, or from a formerly laborious self-sufficiency to an often unemployed half-existence today under the market rigors and inequalities of globalization. Micere Mugo’s lament and the hymns I have sung with Kenyan friends more recently suggest stark differences between an oral culture in which the symbols of meaning and rules of life were fragmented into different ethnic songs around the cooking pots, to an increasingly literate culture in which hymn-books and Bibles provide the rhythms of a life now bounded by the much larger community ruled over by the Kenyan state. But this may not be the best way to approach the history of modern Kenya’s religion and politics. How much of a transition has there been? How full is it of continuities and, if so, what discords have been stirred up? But if one needs to question the notion of transition, as one must, it is difficult to give another such simple name to the process that Kenyans have undergone. Most of them do indeed see it as a transition, and not necessarily for the better. Nor, in answering, must I forget the minority of Kenyans who do *not* sing when at public worship, because they are Muslim.

One distinguished Kenyan, one of the small number who are beginning to write autobiography, Professor Joseph Maina Mungai, has described this transition, if such it is, very well for my purposes. Mungai—a herdboys when young and then head boy at the Alliance High School in the 1950s; record three-mile runner at Makerere University College where his medical training reinforced his Christian faith; who

was awarded his London Ph.D for research into the brain's nervous system; was the first African dean of Nairobi's medical school and ended his career as Secretary of the Commission for Higher Education—has described the transition as one “from multiple simplicity to integrated complexity.” He saw such a definition of transition embodied in his own life, from herdboyc to vice-chancellor, used it as a method of teaching his medical students, and has observed it in the life of his country, from the multiple simplicities, so-called, of ethnic existence under alien rule to the integrated complexity of life in a self-governing, urbanizing, and now electronically networked, blogging, and texting nation (Mungai 2002).

That is one way of seeing the transition, and a helpful one since it is free of value judgments, free of teleology. There have been at least three other perspectives, both in African historiography and in Kenya's popular opinion. These are full of value-judgments, since those who lived through them, and provided historians with the evidence, were themselves of a teleological cast of mind, either Whiggish or premillennialist. White missionaries, the first African Christians, Protestant leaders since, and British officials were all convinced of their civilizing mission, and thereafter the nationalists were equally convinced of theirs.

Perhaps the most popular account of this transition among Kenyans, as I have suggested, is that of the breakdown and decay of traditional societies that are imagined, once upon a time, to have practised a communitarian ethic of care for all their members, an ethic that has now fallen apart, no longer at ease in a world corrupted by colonialism, capitalism, and now, globalization. It is the “Garden of Eden” theory of African history,<sup>7</sup> espoused as much by frustrated colonialists or alarmed anthropologists in times gone by as by disappointed Kenyan Christians today. “Where now are those songs?” asks an African Eve driven from the Garden. More insistently, many Kenyans ask, is this decay the main cause of their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS? Has there been no effective moral replacement for the lost sense of ethnic virtue, for the old disciplines that once taught responsible man- and womanhood in the sacred work of procreation? (Thomas 2003:17–18; Catholic Bishops of Kenya 1987; Ogot 2004:53–54; Geissler 2003: chap. 6; and especially Iliffe 2006: chaps. 8 to 11). Most would agree that their communities have double standards; even the law represents “a jumble of different traditions” (Macgoye 1996:22). Kenyatta summed up this view more than 70 years ago with this oft-quoted complaint about the fate of his Gikuyu people: “Religious rites and hallowed traditions are no longer observed by the whole community. Moral rules are broken with impunity, for in place of unified tribal morality there is now . . . a welter of disturbing influences, rules and sanctions, whose net result is that a Gikuyu does not know what he may

or may not, ought or ought not, to do or believe, but which leaves him in no doubt at all about having broken the original morality of his people” (Kenyatta 1938:251). Nor did he find it at all easy to see a way out of his people’s predicament (Berman & Lonsdale 2007).

But there is, or used to be, a more optimistic variant, a sense that transition might indeed entail the decay of old, small-scale, social obligations but only because they were supplanted by an enlargement in the scale of social and moral community as migrant labor, literacy, world religion, urbanization, and so on remade African selves and identities, from other-directed tribespeople into inner-directed citizens responsive to a capitalist ethic (Wilson & Wilson 1945). This transition used to be called modernization. Almost everywhere in Africa such expectations of modernity have been dashed (Ferguson 1999), not least in Kenya—but might it not be the case that the anger of dashed expectations provides the stimulus to political and moral reform? Kenya presents only equivocal evidence in support of that hopeful case, largely because of the continuities in value systems that have created double standards of moral judgment (Iliffe 2006).

But the weaknesses in Kenya’s theologies and traditions of political thought—if such they are—could also be explained by a third, more captivating, view of modernization that is associated with the Chicago anthropologists, Jean and John Comaroff, who studied the cultural history of the Tswana people of southern Africa in the era of missionary Christianity and white settler colonialism. On their reading of this history, African minds were colonized rather than emancipated by the seductive affinities to be found between Christianity, commercial capitalism, and comfortable domestic commodities. In the Comaroffs’ analysis of this “lop-sided conversation” (Stanley 2003), African subjects, Christians especially, found themselves inwardly much divided between what they imagined as traditional culture and the new individuality of Christian modernity (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991, 1997). This is a view that a surprising number of Kenyan ordinands themselves seem to take—to judge by the criticisms of their supposedly “too Western” Christianity that I encountered when lecturing at St. Paul’s United Theological College, Limuru. They thought that it was useless to expect much social energy from their churches until they came to know a more truly African, less materialist, Christ. Until that time came, the churches were bound to be seen as voicing the views of a deracinated, Westernized, and wealthy elite, not the earthier instincts of “Wanjiku”—the embodiment of an authentic womanly wisdom in her management of supposedly non-exploitative human relations.

I cannot accept that view of an anemic, “derived,” dazzled, still expatriate Christianity, removed from the practicalities of daily life. While

all these different approaches undoubtedly capture aspects of modern African experience—and are espoused, to differing degrees, by most educated Kenyans today—they all miss what I regard as vital, namely, the continuity in moral argument that has always existed between Africans, within the continuous social change that, together with all other people in the world, they have experienced through their history. This constant argument, always focused on the sacred materiality of existence—precapitalist as much as capitalist—has, until the last 40 years or so, been carried on mostly within ethnic groups, each possessing their own public sphere of argument, not within an all-Kenyan public sphere, since that did not previously exist. My definition of an ethnic group in fact is that group of people with whom you feel the greatest need to argue out the most important questions of life, all the time—most of these questions have nothing directly to do with one's own ethnic identity as distinct from that of another's, but are to do with moral obligations between near kin and near neighbors (Lonsdale 1992; Grignon n.d.; Katumanga 1998). *Other* ethnic groups will get drawn only occasionally into the argument, until they become, along with one's own, that community which we imaginatively call a nation. As Gikuyu say, "One has no need to quarrel with those you do not know."

The essential premise of my argument is that all Kenya's ethnic groups have always been in some kind of motion, geographically, socially, or economically, for as far as one can trace their history. They have always welcomed strangers (often as wives) or have cast off their starving failures, forcing them to seek a generous or enserfing asylum in some neighboring group. They were never static, isolated, self-sufficient societies. They lived in no idyllic gardens of Eden but were always experimental in their means of subsistence or in their religious or legal practices or in their means of defense. They had to be. They faced too many disasters *not* to look for new ways of doing things, if always with a simple toolkit. They were always hybrid in culture. They were always unequal in their social relations. There is nothing especially new about the present day, except perhaps insofar as the advent of literacy, print-capitalism, a much wider market for alienated labor, a greater social distance in the relations of economic exploitation, and broader religious and historical sensibilities have enabled Kenyans to imagine, as Benedict Anderson would say, their ethnic groups as pristine communities descending out of the mists of time, such as may be fondly conjured up in print, on the page—but that can never have existed in real history (Anderson 1983, 1991).

Those are the main questions and qualifications that occur to me when joining with Kenyans in speculating on the nature of their modern predicament. They have not undergone a transition. That is too neat and

tidy an image, too linear, too purposive, and with some final end in sight. That end never comes in real history. If there were a word like “complexification” that would fit, and I think Professor Mungai would approve. So, for want of anything better, complexification will have to do.

But to elucidate further the peculiarly Kenyan elements of this complexity, one must move on to its fourth element, suggested at the beginning of this chapter, namely, the competition between Bible and Qur’an for the Kenyan moral imagination, a contest that the Bible seems, for the foreseeable future, to have won. This has no doubt been due in large part to the close affinity between Christianity and colonial and postcolonial state power. But one cannot ignore the superior translatability of the Christian over the Muslim Word, and its ability therefore to infuse local narratives of history and destiny, both ethnic *and* national. Biblical texts and images give Kenyans a moral and political language that most of them share, so that no matter what their ethnicity, they can understand each other on matters of personal and public morality well enough to agree on what they disagree about.

#### ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY, QUR’AN AND BIBLE

To revert to and then deepen earlier reflections on the relationship between Islam, Christianity, and politics, these two world religions still compete for the Kenyan religious imagination. The former came to Kenya’s coasts in Islam’s first century. But until recently, it has been in a long-term decline of intellectual vitality and political power. In recent years it has come back to intellectual life, thanks to Arab and Iranian oil money expended on student bursaries rather than to Wahhabi extremism (Chesworth 2001, 2002, 2003). Christianity on the other hand made a late start in Kenya, but has never stopped growing and mutating as it grows, becoming ever more popular in its practices and beliefs.

This competitive religious history has certainly been of profound significance for Kenya’s politics. Ibn Battuta visited Kenya’s coastal towns, then the only towns in the region, in the fourteenth century. He was impressed by the rigor of their Islamic practice (Sperling 1988:18). He would find them perhaps 30 percent Christian in their population today, as Kenya’s upcountry peoples have come to the coastal ports to find work. This relative decline of Islam in the past century has deprived Kenyans of a potential source of religious and linguistic unity, even (possibly) of a sense of nationality. Swahili—the local language of Islam with around 50 percent of its vocabulary derived from Arabic, the language of the Qur’an—has never been so important to Kenyan identity as it has been to that of Tanzania, Kenya’s southern neighbor (Mazrui 1995).

Because of Islam's relative decline, the foundations of Kenya's nationalism have been Christian, and therefore linguistically and territorially divided, for Kenya's upcountry missionary Christianities were in their origins—barely more than a century ago—rural and, therefore, ethnically specific. Islam was preeminently the religious culture of Kenya's first towns and their trading networks. The coastal towns, Mombasa especially, have been there for centuries. But Islam also dominated African Nairobi, Kenya's first new town, probably until the 1940s. Rural Christianities did not come to town until the First World War. They consolidated their urban presence as recently as the 1950s, with the triumph of the African nationalism they had helped to inspire. Kenya's Christianities retain today all the energy of the late-comer, if with all the attendant risks of rapid disillusion.

These two world religions have provided Kenyans with contrasting visions of progress and civilization. Muslims called civilization *ustaarabu* (being like an Arab), which in Kenya meant to be a sophisticated townsman (Middleton 1992; Romero 1997; Strobel 1979; Swartz 1991; Willis 1993); or else *uungwana* (the state of being free, not enslaved), and it was of course on slavery that Islamic civilization in East Africa was founded. Non-Muslims, if not slaves, were known by Muslims as *washenzi* (barbarians). But the *washenzi* themselves, upcountry Kenyans, knew that townsmen despised them and returned the compliment. In many upcountry vernaculars Arabs and Swahili were urban strangers, *wacomba*, and Nairobi was known as “the place of heedless strangers,” *gicomba-ini* in the Gikuyu vernacular.

To follow such contrasts further, if coastal Muslims were strangers upcountry, Kenya's first Christians, in the late nineteenth century, were runaway slaves at the coast, refugees from Muslim power or from famine, the *watoro* to whom David Koi had dared to preach (Anderson 1977:15; Emerson 2002). There was good precedent for this: the Holy Family, parents of Christianity itself, had come down to Africa, Egypt, as refugees from an earlier power, Herod's (Sundkler & Steed 2000:7). As recently as 1993, when speaking at a national holiday, Moi publicly reminded Muslims that they had once enslaved fellow Kenyans (Gomes & Cussac 2004).

Unlike Muslims, Kenyan Christians rarely named themselves according to a sense of cultural or status distinction as “civilized” or “free.” True, early Luo Christians, in the far west of the country, called themselves *jo-ngwana*, free men like Muslims, but free from the authority of parents or chiefs, not of slaveholders. More commonly they called themselves *jo-nanga* or clothes-wearers, shockingly distinct from their parents (Hay 1992:15). They could as well have called themselves the dwellers in square houses or, in Gikuyuland, untainted grave diggers.

But this self-appellation according to cultural status was rare. Early Kenyan Christians more commonly named themselves for their peculiar skill: *wasomaji* if they were at the coast, *athomi* if they were from central Kenya, *josomo* if they were Luo speakers in the west, on the shores of Lake Victoria. They were all “readers.” Their missionaries wanted them to be able to read the Bible, but many African evangelists advanced the frontier of literacy on their own, with benefit of bicycle but without a missionary presence (Anderson 1977: chap. 12). Reading led to writing. Clerical skill was not only a catechetical requirement but also a political technology, as much a tool of imaginative new organization as a means to write petitions, as Derek Peterson (2004) has taught us. Mission education was also an apprenticeship to the administrative machinery of the state. In 1913, no less a person than the British governor of the colony acted as examiner for the standard African typists’ exam (Spencer 1983:10). This combination of political and bureaucratic skill gave a head start to Christians over Muslims, the latter only now fully awake to the need to repair their relative backwardness in modern educational skills. Christians may not have named themselves after a new concept of civilization (others did so for them, calling them tie-wearers or black Europeans), but *kusoma* (to read) was nonetheless to be modern, if in very Kenyan ways, given the narrative quality of their Word.

That the Bible is, above all, a storybook, is supremely important, as J. D. Y. Peel (2000), Adrian Hastings (1997), or Lamin Sanneh (1989) has rightly insisted. The technology of the Word was one advantage for Christians. The other was the character of their book. It was very different from that of the Muslims. By contrast with the Qur’an the Bible is more translatable, it tells a national history, it is full of heroic biography, of individual endeavor under the eye of God. Let me take those three points in turn.

Lamin Sanneh is surely correct to contrast the ready translatability of the Bible into many languages with the Islamic insistence that the Qur’an remain in its unpolluted Arabic for liturgical and expository purposes. He argues that polyglot Christianity, from its earliest days, has been a major influence on the formation of local cultural identities. Any people can make Christianity’s sacred text their own, to be ruminated on and elaborated on in their own familiar terms, something not so clearly true of Islam. The Bible has been translated into many of the world’s vernaculars. One third of its translations have been into African languages. By 1971 portions of the Bible had been translated into 28 of Kenya’s tongues, the complete Bible into nine, including Swahili. In that year alone, 73,000 New Testaments were sold in the country and 60,000 complete Bibles (Barrett et al. 1973:99, table 1).

I would go further, with Hastings (1997:3–4, 18, 195), to contrast the narrative *natures* of the Christian and Islamic words. The Bible is full of stories, Hebrew in origin but universal in appeal, all woven into the history of a suffering yet at times faithful people, a veritable primer in nationalism. The Qur'an, on the other hand, on my own inexpert reading, is for the most part a compendium of God's commands and of the moral behavior that should follow, more than the history of a community. Such heroes as it celebrates—Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and David—are in any case taken from the Torah or Old Testament, and they are heroes of an Israelite nation that lacks a destiny, thanks to its corruptions of belief (Dawood 1956). Until the 1950s, moreover, the Qur'an was available only in Arabic. Since then it has been translated into Swahili and three upcountry vernaculars, Gikuyu, Kikamba, and Dholuo, and moreover with the same Ismaili money that has run the English-language *Nation*, a wonderful (and by no means unique) example of Islamic money funding both national and local needs (Gomes & Cussac 2004:2). But one is told by Kenyan Muslims that the vernacular Qur'an holds less authority than the Arabic original.

By contrast with Kenya's Muslims, Christian scholars among Kenya's upcountry peoples found a book in which national and personal destinies were often gloriously intertwined and in their own language, a tongue that they themselves helped to standardize in print while sitting with their white co-translators on the mission verandah, and whose images and proverbial formulae found their way into Testaments Old and New, making the Bible very much their own ethnonational story. Some of these organic intellectuals have gone so far as to locate their people's origins in refugee migrations from *misri* (Egypt) even on occasion as one of the lost tribes of Israel (Kenyatta 1938:275; Ochieng 1972; M'Inyara 1992; Droz 1999:343). Gikuyu detainees during the Mau Mau war of the 1950s had particular reason to reflect on the similarity between their situation and that of the children of Israel when enslaved in Egypt (Elkins 2005:200). In the Gikuyu-language Bible, after all, Pharaoh's Egyptian taskmasters had become corporals of police or Boer farmers, *akaburu* as Gikuyu called them both (Exodus 1:11—or, in *Ibuku ria Ngai, Thama* 1:11). Local oppression acquired global significance—which may or may not explain why, in Nairobi's street slang Sheng, *kaburu* today means any European, whether slave-driver or not.

Missionaries, moreover, made Biblical biography the subject of school textbooks to inspire their young “readers” to emulate the moral endeavors of the ancients in their own lives (Peterson 2003a). One of the most popular gospel parables was the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15: 11–32). Many early Christians, often seen as delinquents by their elders, were

anxious to count themselves worthy sons of their ancestors (Lonsdale 1996), to put their own lives back into the imagined tribal story. Kenya's African churches have in many ways continued to strengthen the real and mythical solidarities of coethnic neighbors who might otherwise have found themselves estranged by social mobility, class formation, and the other complexities peculiar to modern life (Welbourn & Ogot 1996: Part. IV; Geissler 2003).

While Islam might possibly have united Kenyans, Christianity has tended to keep them separated—local, or indeed “tribal,” as Kenyans unabashedly call themselves. And Islam lost its opportunity very early, before there was more than a handful of missionaries in the country. The moment was 1897, when Sir Arthur Hardinge, British Consul-General in Zanzibar with responsibility for Kenya, then called the East Africa Protectorate, traveled upcountry with the Arab Sultan of Zanzibar for “a State *levée*” with local chiefs, most of whom were naked. The Sultan and the chiefs had nothing much to say to each other (Hardinge 1928: 153–54). There was no possibility of the British using the Sultan as an intermediary authority. Thereafter, the Christians could the more easily be let in.

The first task of missionaries was to learn the vernacular local to their mission-station, in order to preach. Their second was to reproduce it in print, in sample readers for the instruction of their adherents, who soon proved themselves so much better evangelists than their white teachers. Vernacular Bibles followed, starting in the 1920s. But the Swahili Bible had been available since 1889, before British rule. The Bible furnishes Kenya's shared *national* language of politics as much as it feeds its several *ethnic* imaginations. If Micere Mugo's mother sang her ethnic folktales, the Bible is a national storehouse of folktales. They may be told in different vernaculars but they are still the same stories. And it shows in everyday Kenyan culture.

In July 2004 the Bishop of Liverpool, James Jones, was reflecting on religion and the environment in BBC Radio 4's “Thought for the Day” in the morning's news magazine, the *Today* program. He remarked that the only place he had ever heard the Lord's Prayer said with the correct syntactical rhythm by a mass congregation was in All Saints', the Anglican cathedral in Nairobi, where, without a pause for breath at the end of the line after “be done,” the people prayed “Thy will be done / on earth—as it is in Heaven.” Bishop Jones speculated that that was because Kenyans lived closer to the soil than did Britons, who, not seeing the connection between God and the environment, leave an uncomprehending pause between God's will and the earth on which it should be seen to be done. I met the same holistic understanding of the Lord's Prayer in the Roman

Catholic Basilica of the Holy Family, half a mile from All Saints', when at the funeral of Dr. Pius Okelo in late 2004. It is not only in cathedrals that Kenyans get their religious syntax correct, or where they produce their religious imagery. It is everywhere, in the press, in daily conversation, in greetings and farewells. One could cite endless examples, but one or two must suffice.

In 1994 I was mugged by three young men who claimed to be in the police drug squad. They left me penniless, without my passport, without my three weeks' work in the archives, having driven me off to the slum area called Bahati, which means (generally good) luck. Certainly my luck changed there, since a kind young man, Wainaina, came up and led me to the nearest police station. I made a statement to the sergeant of police, ending with the account of my rescue by the young man. The sergeant read my statement back to me, ending with the sentence: "And then a Good Samaritan came by." Those were his words, not mine. He had translated my misfortune into a Kenyan story of salvation.

This pervasiveness of Biblical imagery raises the following questions: is this because Kenya is predominantly Christian, as it is? Or because the Bible has become the nearest thing to a national narrative, an archive of universally recognized moral and political images, akin to what anthropologists once said of oral tradition, or the songs that Micere's mother sang? Ngugi wa Thiongo, an avowed atheist, has complained that he simply cannot escape the Bible if he wishes to make himself understood in his novels. I think that the answer to my question is perhaps not vital for the issue of religion and politics. Politicians can be stung by being compared to the Emperor Darius, or to the Egyptian Pharaoh, or to King Ahab lusting after Naboth's vineyard, whether they are believers or not—all images taken from Bishop Gitari's sermons (Gitari 1988b, 1996b). For the vivid aptness of the simile, they will know all too well, will be equally apparent to all Kenyans, no matter from which corner of the country they hail. The Bible may not be taken by all Kenyans to be God's word, but its images are certainly at the center of their political culture—if in a rather ambiguous way.

Such ambiguity was displayed by Mburu from Muranga, who wrote to *The People* newspaper ("Fair, Frank and Fearless" as its masthead proclaimed) on 9 September 2002, shortly before the general election that ended 39 years of rule by the Kenya African National Union (KANU). He warned the Luo people that their leader, Raila Odinga, had made a mistake in taking his then party, the National Democratic Party, into a merger with KANU, which was widely, and correctly, forecast to lose: "You are being taken back to Egypt by your Joshua," he warned. "Your Joshua has feared to cross [the] River Jordan, unlike the Joshua of the Bible." But

Mburu had no trouble in switching to a less Biblical, more vernacular, political image in his next paragraph: "I am asking you not to be misled by Raila and his bunch of eaters while you have no bone to chew." In Kenya, as in most of the rest of Africa, political power is often expressed in the imagery of the belly, of eating and being eaten, or of being famished by political failure. The Bible and the belly are each as homely as the other.

But what does that mean? Are Bible and belly in conflict, as the New Testament surely insists, or in collusion as many heroic stories in the Old Testament would suggest, in which faith gives rise to prosperity and progeny? To this fundamental question one has to turn, for answer, to my fifth and final cause of complexity, the history of the conflicts and compromises between the local and the central in modern Kenya, where the local was the site of church building and the center was the focus of the state, colonial and national alike. One must also remember the laboriously honorable, even spiritual, materiality of local moral economies when now revisiting Kenya's emancipation theology from the point of view of the local churches that were in the process of growth.

#### LOCAL COMMUNITY AND NATIONAL STATE

Throughout Kenya's modern history there has been tension between the local and the national, between local church or mosque on the one hand and colonial or national state on the other, a tension that rests on the contradictory interdependence that has long existed between household authority over labor on household land, and the lost, alienated, migrant, labor that works in town, as often for the state as for the capitalist. Salaried urban workers still say that they live, in today's Nairobi, in a house rather than a home. Home is where one's umbilical cord is buried out in the rural areas, or where one was once circumcised, or where the spirits of the ancestors feel most comfortable, where everybody tries to return for Christmas and the New Year, and where one expects in the end to be buried, where productive rather than merely monetary social relations are gathered, handed down from the past, laboriously constructed in the present, and invested for the future (Cohen & Atieno Odhiambo 1992). A recent French publication on Nairobi characterized it, not wholly accurately, as a capital city without cemeteries (Droz & Maupeu 2003). Home upcountry is also where, until recently at least, one's church was almost bound to be—or one's mosque, if home is at the coast. The state, by contrast, is too often in the hands of strangers, once the British, and now politicians, most of whom are not of one's own people.

In these intertwined threads there are, perhaps, the makings of a critically alert Kenyan political culture—provided that one adds to them

the self-interest of clerical patrons who seek to protect and promote the interest of their own community of the faithful, whether they be a particular local church or the *'ummah*. It may be that here, without being overoptimistic, one can see the beginnings of a more healthy redefinition of the relationship between small-scale society and the state.

But first one has to explore, to the limited extent here possible, the degree to which vernacular Bibles stimulated lively local argument. It is also worth remembering that John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* was sometimes the second text, after the Bible, to be translated into African languages, with its heroic individual, Christian, casting off all that hindered him from his native society, in order to reach his spiritual goal (Hofmeyr 2003). There would be no point in conducting such explorations in the influence of religion upon politics unless one could be sure that Africans took their Bible, or Bunyan, seriously as inspiration for behavior or belief and made them their own. As already mentioned, some young Kenyans in training for the ordained ministry doubt if the Christianity they are hoping to serve is yet theirs, theologically speaking. Were that the case, the Biblical images that populate Kenyan public and private discourse would be of no existential weight, mere decorations on the outer walls of a culture that has not yet invited them in, has not yet domesticated them and become their intimates.

It is doubtless the case that the translatability of the Christian (or Islamic) messages has varied greatly among their hearers and readers. At one extreme, one might call it the extreme of *appropriation*, their messages, both belief and practice, were absorbed *into* existing Kenyan narratives of being and belonging while also expanding the latter in new ways—such as the range of comparative images and stories with which one could reflect on, and remake, one's own. At the other extreme, which one could call, with the Comaroffs and with my questioning ordinands, the “colonization of consciousness,” one would say that the world religions *transformed* moral images—so much so that they also transformed ways of moral thinking, at least for those few who were most captivated by them. On such matters I have sought enlightenment from the maverick Presbyterian minister Dr. Timothy Njoya,<sup>8</sup> who initiated the call for the “second independence” with his New Year's Day sermon in 1990. It was his view that Kenya's Muslims were better Muslims than its Christians were Christians, precisely because Muslims had not tried to colonize African consciousnesses but had allowed their Islamic faith and sense of moral community to be absorbed as and when their listeners chose to adopt one more of its injunctions or practices into their own lives. Christianity, by contrast, had in his opinion demanded too much too soon and too peremptorily to be fully absorbed.

That is an interesting observation from a knowledgeable observer. But it must surely be more generally true—or that is how I read the Kenyan evidence (more accurately, the evidence I have read of the Gikuyu, Luo, and Luyia peoples, about one third of the population)—that it was the *conflict* between new belief and old moral knowledge that constituted new communities of social argument, that gave people a new sense of what was really worth arguing about and with whom. In short, I would argue that churches or other communities of belief were formed in the same way as I argue *ethnic* groups became self-aware (Lonsdale 1992; Brayman 1999).

To argue in this manner is to take a position on the reception of Christianity somewhere between Peel's account of the Yoruba and the Comaroffs' account of the southern Tswana. With the former, one can agree that Christianity could be bodily transposed into argumentative African moral narratives about what sort of people they were or should be. With the latter, one can accept that the new images and material culture of mission Christianity could, and can, be astonishingly powerful, able to colonize consciousness. But I feel the more convinced that Africans could *domesticate* Christianity and make it their own, the more I learn how much they disputed its moral and cultural implications between themselves, between the generations, between the genders, and, perhaps especially, between different denominational valuations of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as I have argued elsewhere for the intimately different Christianities to be found among the Gikuyu people (Lonsdale 2002a).

While trained African theologians, therefore, have only recently addressed themselves to the supposed problem of Africanizing, or enculturating, Christianity, African lay Christians have been doing African theology all the time, largely due to the implausibility of enculturating Christ anywhere—or at least the Christ preached by Paul. How is it remotely possible, he asked (I Cor. 1:23–9), that any social establishment can take Christianity seriously? How can it not be seen as, if not foolish, then subversive?

But we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews, and foolishness to Gentiles... For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom; and God's weakness is stronger than human strength... But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong... so that no one should boast in the presence of God.

If therefore Christianity is taken seriously by any people, then it is bound to provoke conflict within any cultural tradition as of course its founder predicted. What some will see as its fulfilment of tradition others

will perceive as destruction. Christianity has certainly been received in that contested manner in Kenya: it has helped to stir up arguments that were always there, if expressed differently, between the generations—as John Iliffe (1979:216–37) showed 30 years ago in the early history of Tanzanian Christianity: “Most Tanganyikan converts accepted Christianity chiefly for what was new and different about it. They thereby determined it should be established through conflict” (1979:220; and Anderson 1977: chaps. 9 to 13). There were also fierce differences between the genders, as Peterson (2004: chap. 7) has documented for the Gikuyu and Emily Onyango (2006) for the Luo, and between individual salvation (or ambition) and family responsibility, as missionaries constantly observed. And Kenyan Christians of every generation and of both sexes have long argued over the implications of their faith with respect to the observance of the rites that mark one’s passage through life, for ideas of death, burial, the afterlife, and so on.

The clearest example of such local argument must be the so-called “female circumcision” crisis among Gikuyu in 1929–1930. What is most pertinent to my thesis here is the way in which the Christians who opposed clitoridectomy justified their stand as fully in accord with tradition, a living tradition, one that governed change but did not obstruct it. Gikuyu, their Christians argued, had known change throughout their remembered history. Each named generation had had the authority to change the norms of society. In opposing clitoridectomy in their own generation, they were fulfilling tradition, not destroying it. “We are at the beginning of a great building up of new customs and the forming of Christianity, the same as those who before us made ordinances for the generations after them.”<sup>9</sup>

Arguments carry most conviction when carried on within a living tradition. They not only create new or affirm old communities, they also have the power to make new ideas one’s own. That is why I disagreed with my questioners among the students at St. Paul’s United Theological College, and why I tend to side with Peel rather than with the Comaroffs. Kenya’s Christianities are Kenyan; they have become inextricably part of most people’s argumentative moral narrative. But what about Kenya’s Muslims?

Dr. Njoya believes that Kenya’s Muslims honor their Islam more than Kenya’s Christians honor their Christianity, especially Islam’s charitable demands on one’s purse. He should know; he often preaches at one or another of Nairobi’s many slum mosques—not at the central mosque because, he says, it is too bourgeois. Nor is it Njoya’s view alone. Analyses of the different forms taken by conversion to Islam also convince one of the inward struggles that Africans underwent to become members of the Islamic community.

Rural coastal communities have always taken their time in becoming Muslim. A first generation of villagers at the time of Islam's commercial spread inland in the middle or later nineteenth century will have practiced a socially convenient plurality of religions, offending none of their kin or neighbors. A second generation might then go to a Muslim *madrasa* or Qur'anic school nearby and acquire a sterner view of the faith's demands. Later still, a village might appoint their own imam and agree that all neighbors, not just some, should obey Islamic dietary laws. Their children's generation might then go so far as to obey Muslim laws of inheritance. But against this gradual, arduously negotiated process of societal conversion, one can also find overnight, "therapeutic," conversions to Islam by individuals tormented by and seeking escape from social envy and witchcraft accusations by claiming to be members of a new moral community (Sperling 1988: chap. 4; contrast Parkin 1972). It is this very variety that makes Kenyan Muslims argue about what their faith actually means, and why they are taking it increasingly seriously today, boosted perhaps by well-funded competition between Shi'a and Sunni, between Iranian and Saudi schools of learning, each with their own scholarship programs for young East Africans.

For both Christian and Muslim Kenyans, then, the "religious" side of the couplet, religion and politics, is something to take with all seriousness within their local communities. It is that which makes it necessary to take seriously the relationship between locality and center, local and central government, church and state, ethnicity and territorial nationalism.

Almost all church or Muslim property in Kenya was first given by local communities, whether on clan land or on *wakf*, Islamic trust, land—and therefore on the tacit, indeed often explicit, understanding that local interests remained paramount in determining the future uses to which the land was put. The labor of building was similarly provided locally, without charge, whether in colonial times or since, for the *local* common good. Many who contributed land or labor saw it as essential to the well-being of both their ancestors and their posterity. They were fulfilling local doctrines of laborious self-help. Moreover, the word taught in a clan or other community school was often put to use in arguing out land cases with neighboring communities. It was this connection between the mission churches and very local, African definitions of welfare that in colonial times was the most frequent stimulus to conflict between church and state. Missionaries sometimes took up the cudgels on behalf of this local African autonomy, their own community of the faithful whose tenants the missions were. It has been the same local concern that has stimulated religious opposition to secular tyranny more recently.

Two Anglican missionaries best remembered for their readiness to champion the local African community against white-settler demands on government for more African labor and tax were Handley Hooper in Muranga, Gikuyuland, and Archdeacon Walter Owen, called by the settlers the “Archdemon of Kavirondo”, of Ng’iya and Maseno in Central Nyanza. What perhaps also most distinguished them from their contemporaries was not so much their vision of a self-sustaining native church as their clear sense that it must have a foundation in the economically prosperous local society, demanded—as Hooper and Owen undoubtedly knew—by indigenous moral economy. Hooper in particular had a clear image of a peasant church, of building a new community on what he saw as the “slums of paganism”—and the comparability of mission in Africa to that in London’s East End was a common connection made in missionary minds. Hooper deplored any demand of the state that weakened an energetic local godliness. And in that conviction he lent his typewriter to the Kikuyu Central Association. Owen thought similarly among the Luo. His Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association paid great attention to the local agrarian and domestic economy, both at risk from the colonial government’s bias toward the white settlers. His hopes for African self-government in the mission church were derived from his earlier experience in Uganda, where church history was so much more mature than in Kenya (Casson 1988; Lonsdale 1964).

The same determination to protect the church’s service to local community was at the heart of the protests made by David Gitari and other churchmen against the centralized kleptocracy of President Moi’s *Njayo* state (Sabar 2002). It was always this local concern that governed the cycles of Kenya’s emancipation theology. Between the wars, the concerns of people like Hooper and Owen were met largely by the development of African local government. It was their schools’ easy relationship with African District Councils after the Second World War that helped to make the churches look askance at the central ambitions of African nationalism. And Kenyatta’s destruction of local government after independence was one of the reasons for the growing coolness between church and state.

What replaced the institution of local government was Kenyatta’s exhortation of “*Harambee!*” which could be translated as “Let’s all pull together in schemes of self-help.” In its first years, the 1960s, in the first flush of independence, self-help meant precisely that, in rather the same ways as churches and mosques were first built by local communities early in the twentieth century. Once schools or clinics were built, and their access roads, by local self-help, the central government would come in with trained staff, with shared arrangements for their pay and supply. This

was a relationship in which local autonomy and, with it, local churches and Islamic communities, continued to flourish, with fairly well understood boundaries of responsibility between locality and state.

This happy co-operation did not last long. Local energy was too tempting a political resource. Members of Parliament (MPs) and more senior politicians wanted to patronize it by donating money from above, and being seen, and praised, for doing so. As they competed among each other in what was still a competitive politics (even when it became a single-party system), so their cheques got larger and the sources of their money more dubious. Over time Harambee ceased to be a system that matched local and central energies and responsibilities. It was transformed into a system of central patronage of local clients, a humiliating state of local dependence on the factional intrigues of the center from which it was increasingly difficult to escape. This was not the fulfilment of local moral economies, since no one could tell the social origins of the politicians' largesse. Church communities found themselves sharing in the amoral economy of the state. John Iliffe quotes a Kenyan MP—and self-appointed archbishop—as commenting, in terms that recall Mburu's warning to the Luo people about their reluctant Joshua before the 2002 elections: "You [the locality] must have a Cabinet Minister so that when the meat [so much more Kenyan than "the national cake"] is cut you are seen... Otherwise you will chew bones" (Iliffe 2005:338). As the Moi government increasingly ate the meat itself, more and more Kenyans, more and more local communities, more and more church congregations, chewed bones.

As if that were not enough to fire demands for the "second independence," to renew Kenya's emancipation theology by reform of the state, to rid God's people of satanic oppression, the churches found themselves increasingly implicated in party politics. If the local community depended on extravagant political largesse, its church had little option to behave "like a party sub-branch."<sup>10</sup> This transformation in central and local relations, through the politicization of Harambee (Githongo 2008), made the churches complicit in the corruption of the state, just as the mission churches in colonial times became complicit in support of white supremacy. When Moi's regime appeared to be in league with the devil, wasting away the energy of Kenya's citizens, the clamor for reform became inevitable.

But what can one say with any confidence about the future? The growth of democracy in "the West" depended not so much on political theory or turbulent priestly theology as on competitive advocacy by self-interested and corporately organized social, professional, and economic groups. Historically, it was organized lawyers, not political theorists, who

eventually established a rule of law. Parliaments grew powerful not out of pluralist political theory but from their rulers' need to bargain with their most powerful subjects for cash. Workers established rights by frightening the comfortable classes, even if the guilty conscience fostered by Wesleyan Methodism also played its part.

In Kenya one may perhaps discern the beginning of the same sort of story, although it would be foolish to suppose that it must lead, ineluctably, to a similar conclusion. Kenya's churches first protested on behalf of their *clerics* and their flocks against the Moi regime's abuses of power in the "queueing election" of 1988, *not* on behalf of the Kenyan citizenry at large. In this they followed, if unknowingly, the example of the missionaries on the issue of forced labor 70 years before (Githiga 2001: chap. 5; Sabar 2002: Part 3). But the churches' self-interest was also propelled from *below*, by marginalized congregations who expected support from their institutional patrons. A combination of clients' expectation from below and their clerical patrons' self-regard from above can have quite dramatic effects in promoting a vigilant culture of critical democracy.

If to this conjuncture is added the outraged service ethic of Kenya's trained professional classes, telephoned in confidence to their bishops,<sup>11</sup> then the basis of a future Kenyan democracy looks as if it could be much the same as that of many democracies in "the West," many of them not more than over a century old. It is not easy to stand up to the divisive political patronage of the state. It is just as difficult to refute the tenets of an inherited moral economy with its labor theory of an individual's value and consequent contempt for poverty. But only if the professional classes—those vital supports on whom the state has depended ever since *kusoma* (reading) Christianity spread in the 1920s—face up to both these challenges will churchmen and theologians be able to turn to what preoccupied the Church of England in the nineteenth century, "the condition of England question", and then only if "prayers for cash" have also been purged from the churches. "The condition of Kenya question" must focus on the *poor and outcast* children of God, not any longer on their emancipation from inherited misfortune but, now, on their liberation from contemporary oppression. They are still waiting to take their place at the center of Kenya's moral economy and, with that, to emerge fully into the political arena.

#### NOTES

\* This chapter originated as the "Henry Martyn Lectures" of February 2005, given at the invitation of the University of Cambridge's Faculty of Divinity. For Henry

Martyn, see Kings (1997). For the original lectures, see Lonsdale (2005). I have been much helped by conversation over the years with bishops Gideon Githiga and Stephen Njia Mwangi, Prof. Esther Mombo and the Revd Emily Onyango, all of the (Anglican) Church of the Province of Kenya; Dr. Hassan Mwakimako of the University of Nairobi and Hamid Slatsch, Trustee of Jamiy'a Mosque, Nairobi; Revd Timothy Njoya of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa; the Revd Paddy Benson, Canon Graham Kings, and Dr. Ben Knighton, all formerly of St. Andrew's Institute, Kabare; my colleagues David Anderson, Atieno Odhiambo, Derek Peterson (who gave a critical read to an earlier draft), and Ben Kipkorir; and with Charles Njonjo and Tom Wolf, both expert in Kenya's politics. None bear any responsibility for my argument.

1. But it used to be said that President Kibaki needed the moral simplicities of P. G. Wodehouse as an antidepressant (Bloomfield, Adrian. "President Goes to Bed as Kenya Declines." *Daily Telegraph* London, 16 February 2005:15.)
2. See [www.disaster.ke.org](http://www.disaster.ke.org).
3. For God and Caesar in the same storm-tossed boat, see the Anglican Bishop David Gitari's sermon on Mark 12:13–17 in October 1988 (Gitari 1996b:71–6). For freedom and dignity, see the Anglican (bishop) Okullu (1984:chaps. 5 and 6). Dr. Timothy Njoya's Presbyterian sermons on human dignity in Njoya (1987a) are elaborated in Njoya (1987b).
4. Government of Kenya. (n.d). See <http://www.rickcross.com/reference/satanism/satanism58.html> (accessed 4 July 2008) for the (Nairobi) *Daily Nation's* summary report of 4 August 1999: "Devil Worship exists in Kenya: Commission says."
5. Leonard Beecher papers, file 39, National Museum of Kenya. Seen by courtesy of Derek Peterson.
6. A term I owe to Ronald Robinson, my first mentor in African history, well illustrated in that romantic ethnography, *Kenyatta* (1938).
7. At breakfast, Heron Court Hotel, Nairobi, Sunday 12 December 2004.
8. "The Opinions of Kiambu Kikuyu Natives on Female Circumcision," 12 September 1929, Appendix IV to Church of Scotland, 1931. Consulted at the Friends African Mission, Kaimosi, Western Kenya, 1962.
9. "Keep Traditions out of Church—Njoya," *Standard*, 1 August 1988.
10. Leonard (1991) and Iliffe (1998) for their professional experience. Information from Stephen Njihia Mwangi, Bishop of Nakuru.
11. Information.

## CHAPTER 3

# FAITH ENGAGING POLITICS: THE PREACHING OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

PADDY BENSON

Between 1978 and 1989 I worked in a privileged position with Bishop David Gitari's Diocese of Mount Kenya East. From close quarters I observed his engagement with politics in Kenya as he dealt with party apparatchiks, elected representatives, and also with the state's appointed functionaries. John Lonsdale has written elsewhere (2004, 2005) about the factors that allow religious leaders to have a national ministry in Kenya, and that also explain why their influence is limited. The present chapter arises from my own reflection on some of the themes that Lonsdale has proposed.

### **RELIGION IN KENYA: MALIGN OR INEFFECTUAL?**

The three principal religious groupings of Kenya are Christianity, Islam, and traditional religions; with substantial minorities of Hindus, Jains, and Sikhs. The last three are strictly confined within ethnic boundaries and rarely impinge directly on national life. However, Christianity (nearly 80 percent of Kenyans) and Islam (not more than 15 percent) have adherents within every ethnic group, although Islam has a strong geographical bias to the coast and in the north; the various mainstream Christian denominations are rooted in different rural areas.

An unkind observer of contemporary Kenya might say that from the beginnings of the modern state, religion has had a negative effect on the course of politics. The ancestral governing structures of ethnic communities were destroyed by the European colonizers, yet the values of traditional religion have continued to exert a profound influence on public life, preventing it from conforming to a modernist paradigm.<sup>1</sup> At times, the collision between old values and new has been very public.<sup>2</sup> However the continuing effect of religiously sanctioned traditional assumptions is usually less visible; it is part of a complex ethical and spiritual mixture.<sup>3</sup> There is a wide gap between such traditional-religion values as clan loyalty and fealty to a senior elder and the values required by a pluralist, democratic, and meritocratic modern state.

Kenya has not escaped the troubles created by expansionist and intolerant Islam. There have been serious bombings and attempted bombings in Nairobi (1998) and Mombasa (2002), while the conflicts in Sudan and Somalia have spilled over into refugee communities in Kenya. In recent years, the state has had to resist calls for the application of exclusively Islamic law in the Kenyan Muslim community. There is also a history of covert U.S. use of the Kenyan security apparatus to prosecute its struggle against al-Qaeda.<sup>4</sup>

Mainstream Christian churches have not engaged in violence against the state, but neither have they been successful in reforming Kenya's public life. The churches' greatest achievement was the part they played in bringing an end to the one-party state; but they have proved powerless to preventing the ensuing slide into new depths of corruption by the holders of public office. The last, post-Nyayo years (1991–2002) of the Moi government saw the rice industry falter and stagnate as its proceeds were misappropriated. There was a further bleeding of other cash-crop sectors as state purchasing boards channeled their profits into private hands. The election of the Kibaki government in 2002 led to initial guarded optimism: the appointment of Prof. Wangari Maathai<sup>5</sup> to a junior ministerial post seemed to betoken better days ahead. However, these hopes proved as delusive as the expectation in 1978 that the Moi administration would clean up the excesses of the late Kenyatta regime. The still-unresolved saga of the Goldenberg scandal<sup>6</sup> and the more recent Anglo-Leasing scandal<sup>7</sup> show how limited is the reach of the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission. John Githongo's inquiry into the latter scandal suggested that beneficiaries of the scam were to be found in the highest ranks of government. However Githongo had to flee to Britain in fear for his life, while civil servants and politicians closed ranks to prevent an effective investigation. For years, the churches have spoken against corruption: sometimes strongly, sometimes feebly. Their entreaties appear to have fallen on deaf ears.

In a European country such as Britain, this kind of gloomy assessment of religion, as either distorting public life or powerless to improve it, would be embraced by politicians, media, and public alike. Religion in Europe is commonly seen either as a malign influence on politics, or as (at best) ineffectual. Kenyans too are frustrated by the failure of religious faith to deliver public righteousness, peace, and prosperity. However, Kenyans, as individuals and in their institutions, remain happy to give a place to religion in the public sphere.

In this chapter my focus will be on the foothold of Anglican leaders in political life. As we shall see, there are historical reasons why Anglicans should be in a privileged position to exercise influence among politicians. However no claim is made that other religious leaders are unimportant.

#### **RELIGIOUS GROUPS AND KENYAN ADMINISTRATIONS: SOME HISTORY<sup>B</sup>**

The Kenyan state is the successor of a colonial administration dominated by Englishmen who were familiar with an established Anglican Church. English Anglican missionaries had themselves been brought up to interact with the civil authority. At a personal level, colonial administrators and Anglican missionaries were from the same social “drawer,” and had attended the same schools and universities. (This contrasts with home experiences of missionaries from other national and denominational backgrounds, such as American Presbyterians or English Roman Catholics.) As Kenya moved to independence, the new African elite had a similar shared experience of education, often in Anglican mission schools: the new cadre of politicians, civil servants and bishops had strong ties of affinity and indeed kinship to one another, comparable to those of their European predecessors. From the colonial era onwards, both the government and the Anglican Church in Kenya have expected the Anglicans to have influence in civil matters beyond what might be gathered from a reading of the Constitution.

The Anglicans were, then, handed a certain informal influence and responsibility by historical accident. It was not a foregone conclusion that they would welcome and make use of this opportunity. The Anglican Church was planted in Kenya largely by missionaries of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), and from 1930 by others from the Bible Churchmen’s Missionary Society (BCMS, now Crosslinks). The majority of Anglican missionaries sent to Kenya were Evangelicals. Evangelical Anglicans typically emphasize the importance of individual conversion to Christ and the development of personal spirituality

expressed in repentance, prayer, and study of the scriptures. They may feel closer to fellow Evangelical Christians from other churches, than to non-Evangelical Anglicans.<sup>9</sup> Crucially, Evangelicals have often defined themselves against liberal Christians who focus on social transformation.<sup>10</sup> To caricature this: Evangelicals have sometimes said that working to improve conditions in society does not save souls, and so is a distraction from the work of the gospel. Githiga (2001:22–24) gives examples from colonial times of Anglican missionaries responding to political events that bore on their work: for example, the protest of Archdeacon Owen against certain forms of forced labor, and the complaint of Harry Leakey concerning expropriations of Gikuyu land round Kabete. Nevertheless, the nationalist jibe “*Gutiri ngurani na mubia na muthungu.*” (“There is no difference between a settler and a missionary.”) was uncomfortably close to home.

Yet this missionary attitude is only one—and not necessarily the most significant—of the influences shaping the approach of Kenyan Anglicans to the state. John Lonsdale (1999) has provided a detailed case study of the interaction between Christian faith and Gikuyu ethnicity. No doubt similar case studies could be produced for other ethnic groups. Lonsdale agrees with Adrian Hastings that “Africans have had a large hand in making their Christianities,” and “many black Christians scarcely met a white missionary at all.” Of greatest importance was the vernacular Bible itself, which provided “an allegory of their own history, a story of national servitude, salvation, exile and return.” The Bible informed the inquiry and debate of Christian converts as they worked out their faith and their morality.

Christian converts in Kenya came from every section of society: established, wealthy families but also dispossessed and marginal people. In the course of time an immense variety of interpretations of Christian faith emerged. Some accepted traditional customs such as Female Genital Cutting (FGC);<sup>11</sup> others rejected them. Some honored the traditional structures of elders and clans; others lived outside them. Some withdrew from the world into prayer and ecstatic praise; others were inspired by the Bible to fight for land and morality. Within this variety, the Anglicans found their usual *via media*. Anglicanism, once planted, proved a suitable vehicle for the aspirations of the old establishment: order, respect, hard work that brings reward, and a world in which spiritual and material prosperity went hand in hand. Lonsdale (1992:442) says of the missionaries, “They preached salvation; but they encouraged improvement, including the stone houses that symbolized progress; their schools enjoyed state subsidy . . . They taught the power of the Word but were men of power in the World.” The African Anglican Church continued this spirit.

What all the converts shared was a need to work out their faith within a rapidly changing society, in which new institutions and new economic realities were subjecting inherited ways of life to intolerable strains. To adapt an observation by Lonsdale (1999:209–10), converts had been condemned by their parents as delinquent; but they came to see themselves as the ones who alone could save their own people from cultural or social extinction. “To missionary dismay, their Protestant adherents, a Christian establishment, continued to accept the old cosmic equation between wealth and virtue.”

Between the two World Wars the this-worldliness of mission-based Anglicanism was challenged by the impact of the East African Revival movement. From the 1940s onwards, the Revival had a profound influence on the Anglican Church and other churches. It associated individual conversion, confession, and testimony with the very meaning of “being a Christian.” The Revival had a difficult early relationship with ecclesiastical authority: missionary bishops were commonly suspicious of the Revival’s creation of its own, alternative governance. However, the Revivalists continued to attend church and did not officially dispute ecclesiastical authority.<sup>12</sup> In the fullness of time, Revival mores in effect captured the hierarchy of the church. Today, a man or woman can scarcely be ordained into the Anglican Church of Kenya without being able to produce at least a pastiche of a Revival testimony.

Revivalists vigorously rejected the idea that worldly possessions or position were of any value or conferred honor beyond that of being a man or woman in Christ. In particular, Revivalists regarded politics as being worldly and corrupt beyond all mending.

Given that the Revival became so important to Kenyan Anglicanism, the church might have turned its back on exercising political influence. In fact, this did not happen. In the first place, despite the economic conservatism of many Anglican converts the Christian agenda was from the first inseparable from social transformation. Those who preached in the early twentieth century called men and women to remodel their lives in accordance with the gospel. This brought Christians into conflict with the customs of the traditional societies from which they were converted. In many parts of Kenya, the touchstone issue was FGC. Christians who rejected FGC or other customs (such as polygyny or widow inheritance) brought the church into conflict with inherited practices. This was a highly political act, confronting fundamental tenets of traditional communities. Furthermore, converts typically learned to read in order to have access to the scriptures. Their new learning had the important side effect

of giving them access to employment and influence, and made them better able to deal with courts and other authorities as Kenyan society modernized. This in turn subverted traditional patterns of leadership: a 20-something literate, employed Christian was at an advantage over tribal elders whose experience of life had not prepared them for the modern world.

The preaching of the gospel had these accidental political repercussions. However, in some places, where traditional societies were strong enough to exclude and persecute converts, the missionaries deliberately encouraged the formation of Christian villages at the mission compound. These experiments were not necessarily shining successes, but they indicated the willingness of the church to engage in social engineering as a corollary of preaching the gospel. Even the Evangelical and pietistic missionaries were, in fact, ready to embroil themselves in “politics” when the stakes were high enough.

The border between “state’s responsibility” and “churches’ responsibility”—which is in any case fuzzy—falls in a different place in Kenya from the present norm in Europe. In Britain, for example, the church can claim to have originated systems of poor relief, of education and health care, but the core provision of all such services is now made by the state.<sup>13</sup> The churches of Kenya by contrast still have a holistic view of their mission. Long before the first Lausanne Conference,<sup>14</sup> the churches were engaged in medical work and education—spheres of action that in Europe long ago passed largely into the hands of the government. In independent Kenya, nationally funded health and education services took over most but not all of the church-planted institutions. However, the church continues to pioneer new initiatives in community development, including health, agriculture, water supply, and other services. International funding agencies often prefer to work with churches rather than government agencies: partly because of their better record in avoiding corruption and partly because the church has better grassroots “reach” into the community than the organs of state. Church and state agencies are intertwined and work closely together in the delivery of services to the population, especially in rural areas. When church and state address one another in Kenya, they do so as partners in hundreds of small, local everyday activities that affect the lives of citizens.

In summary, the Anglican Church in Kenya does not have a strong ideological bias toward interfering in government affairs; if anything, its pietist tendency might push it in the opposite direction. However in practice it is deeply committed to engagement with the state. It has a vision of social virtue, it is involved in development projects, its leaders have personal ties to administration officers, its members believe that part

of their Christian duty is to uphold a version of traditional society, and it has a Bible that tells of God's sovereignty over all human activity.

### RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE

Most Kenyans are religious believers, but no church or religious group is established in Kenya. Bishops and *imams* do not sit *ex officio* in its parliament. The government presides over a nation where many religions, with large numbers of adherents, can claim to be naturalized; but the state does not favor any of them. Rather, the state endeavors to make space for all the religions to be practiced. Even in such a sensitive matter as the administration of justice, the government attempts to allow religious believers freedom to order their own affairs. Islamic Khadi's courts and traditional tribal courts are both allowed a certain limited scope to settle disputes within their own communities. However, the state keeps a watchful eye on the activities of religious groups and will curtail their activities if they seem not to be in the public interest. The Kenyan state is secular.

Yet the Kenyan state is not secularist. John Mbiti's (1969:1) famous statement that "Africans are notoriously religious" has been set in a contemporary sociological context by Grace Davie (2002). She points out that Europe is currently unusual in a world context for its low engagement between religious faith and public life.<sup>15</sup> Kenya is nearer than Europe to the global norm. Readers in Britain have to make an effort to realize how far their society is from the atmosphere in Kenya. In Britain, the former prime minister Tony Blair's personal religious faith was a source of embarrassment to his spin doctors.<sup>16</sup> When General Sir Richard Dannatt was revealed to be a committed Christian,<sup>17</sup> there was agonized correspondence in the national press about whether it was suitable for the head of the army to be a person of faith. The local authority in Macclesfield wished to cancel the annual church service for the town's traders because they thought it inappropriate for the town thus to "favor" the church. (The service was reinstated when the traders protested.)

In Kenya, by contrast, religion and politics lie on a single spectrum of human response to the world we live in. The example of Mau Mau is instructive. The politicians who campaigned for independence in the 1940s and 1950s made a case deploring the alienation of African lands by European settlers. However, those who fought in the forest saw the settlers' actions as unjust for reasons that were specifically religious: for example, the land for which they fought had been given to Gikuyu by Ngai (God).<sup>18</sup> The most powerful weapon of social control in the Mau Mau armory was its system of oaths by which political assent was

enforced with a religious sanction.<sup>19</sup> The connections of Mau Mau were too specifically Gikuyu for them to provide an unambiguous foundation myth for the Kenyan state—and indeed the state is as much the successor of the Loyalists and Home Guard as it is of the forest army—but today the motivation and the courage of the fighters is widely admired even by those who would not have identified with them at the time. Mau Mau is often now remembered as an example of faith in action, seeking justice.

According to Lonsdale (1992:442) the Anglican strand of Christianity always had a particular resonance with the state's secular project. Writing of mission activity in the Gikuyu area, he describes a Christianity "of the Kikuyu establishment . . . worldly in belief and practice, conventionally Kikuyu in its estimate of wealth . . . Membership of a mission church gave entry to well-paid employment and, to judge by the growing number of Christian chiefs, to political office."

As Kenya came to independence, the Anglican Church had the potential to make a significant contribution in the public square. At its best, organized Christianity held an inclusive vision of society, and in the Bible's teaching it had a yardstick by which to measure it. The church was equipped to speak to the state. Yet, for most church leaders, addressing the state was not the first priority. John Lonsdale (2001) lists some of the controversies between church and state from colonial times to Moi's presidency and then comments that "in each of these eras the church was not only slow to learn, it was also aroused first in its own narrow interest and only later in the interest of the health of Kenyan society as a whole." Having said this, it is also true that individual bishops could find eventually that a large part of their energy was devoted to dealing with the state. Henry Okullu drew the conclusion most directly:

Okullu declared that he was a priest in the order of Melchizedek and "I will die a priest, when I die, I will be buried in my robes. I am also a politician and will die a politician." He said he was a priest by conviction; the same applied to politics.<sup>20</sup>

However, Lonsdale's point is well taken. With the possible exception of Alexander Muge, Anglicans who have engaged with the state often give the impression of doing so contingently rather than out of the belief that this is a core part of their task.

Even when Anglicans became embroiled in political matters, the church has neither become confused with the state nor attempted to supplant it. From the colonial era onwards, most church leaders understood that they should maintain a critical distance between themselves

and the political elite, and refuse to be co-opted as a kind of Ministry of Religious Affairs.<sup>21</sup> Thin-skinned government ministers interpreted clerical criticism as “politics from the pulpit,”<sup>22</sup> but in truth they were never subjected to a root-and-branch onslaught from Anglican clergy.

The Revival legacy also set a limit on church leaders’ freedom to embrace politics.<sup>23</sup> At the village level, the Revival constituency continues to hold that although there are good politicians as well as bad politicians, there are no saved politicians. Politicians are always outsiders from the Revival’s point of view.<sup>24</sup>

It should always be remembered that the vast majority of church interactions with the state involve local cooperation in development and are positive in tone. Inevitably, public pronouncements often relate to problems, though this is not always the case.<sup>25</sup> Church and state in Kenya have learnt to acknowledge and value one another. At some level, the interaction of religion and politics is taken for granted.<sup>26</sup> Yet the distinctness of the two spheres is understood. Given the closeness of the links that exist, it is perhaps surprising that so few individuals appear confused about their roles—so few churchmen are identified with political parties, and so few politicians see themselves as agents of the church.<sup>27</sup>

### INFLUENCE AND ITS LIMITS

Kenyans, then, believe that religion is part of life and, therefore, that there is a religious angle to national debates, which should not be ignored. This creates the conditions for religious leaders to speak and be heard. However, there is no institutional mechanism for religious input to be made. Church leaders who wish to speak on national matters have to find their own means of doing so.

Although almost all Kenyans have a formal religious allegiance, in many cases this seems to be quite lightly held. As individuals move around in search of work, they worship in and identify with the churches they find (so fulfilling the hopes of the Kikuyu Conference participants). It is common to find an extended family whose members belong to several different mainstream denominations, and maybe one or another of the independent churches or Pentecostal groups, and even a wanderer who has become a Muslim. Except in strongly Muslim areas, most families are able to accommodate religious variety with tolerance and mutual respect.

It may be that the same attitude, writ large, accounts for the manner in which the populace receives church leaders’ pronouncements on national matters. Religious authority is not recognized in Kenya solely on the basis of denominational loyalty—“my” cardinal, “my” bishop, or “my” *imam*. Rather, any person of faith may command a degree of respect by their

wisdom and their integrity, and may have an influence even on those who have no intention of joining their organization. In the last decades, Kenyan Roman Catholic leaders, such as the late Cardinal Maurice Otunga, and Nairobi's Archbishop Ndingi Mwana 'a Nzeki, have spoken out on national concerns, and their remarks have been widely reported: a rare occurrence with previous generations of Roman Catholic leaders. They have been heard because they were willing to speak, and because what they said made sense.

Conversely, when a religious leader appears to lack integrity or wisdom, he or she will be pilloried. Lonsdale mentions above the case of a prominent clergyman who accepted a large stipend for minimal duties from the Nairobi City Council and was given a severe pasting in the newspapers.<sup>28</sup> Clergy, in short, are admitted to national debate on terms similar to those on which politicians operate. They are given comparable scrutiny by the media, and are tested for signs that they are working toward some hidden agenda. I will argue presently that ethnicity is a defining factor in the workings of both state and church in Kenya. However, it appears in the media, at least, that there is also a national conversation in progress in which participants from any and every section of society can participate equally and in which contributions are not weighed first for ethnic origin.

As in the West, the media manage the debate; the contributors have to follow rules that others have set. One consequence is that church leaders who want to take part in national discussions have to become media savvy. Some, such as David Gitari and the late Henry Okullu, were: they understood the requirements of the media, they dealt with reporters and editors as human beings, and they knew how to craft a sound bite. Others, such as the Presbyterian Timothy Njoya and the late Alexander Muge, were less effective because they were less discriminating in their choice of targets. They attracted attention because they could always be relied on to say something controversial, but they sometimes allowed themselves rather than their message to become the center of attention.<sup>29</sup>

However, in engaging with and correcting the state, the Anglican Church has not addressed all issues equally. It appears to still embody the priorities that Lonsdale identified in the way in which the African Anglican Church grew: that is, it baptized and transformed yet embodied a traditional system of virtues. Hard work should lead to prosperity; human beings owe a duty of care to family and community; the land is held in trust to be worked and made to bear a yield. The ideal of the upright man in traditional society resonates with the version in Christian thought.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, the church has confronted most vigorously the evils that most directly assault these values.

The courageous and forthright sermons of David Gitari illustrate the point. One example among very many is a sermon (1996b:145ff) preached on 16 January 1994, in response to news that a plot of land on the edge of the Mwea rice scheme had been expropriated and sold to new owners, leaving homeless the family that had cultivated it for more than 30 years. Gitari took his text from 2 Timothy 2: "The farmer who has done the hard work should have the first share of the harvest." In the address that followed, he gave a detailed account of the course of the scandal; he named the guilty parties including the District Commissioner and three other officials; he examined the sorry state of the rice scheme, and he gave an account of the plight of landless people in Kirinyaga District. There was significant fallout in the following weeks, not least that local people physically prevented the new owners from taking possession of the plot. The Provincial Commissioner was eventually forced to cancel the expropriation, although other iniquities proceeded unchecked.

In other sermons, Gitari demanded justice and civic virtue at the national as well as local level, notably to criticize unconsidered constitutional changes (1988b:39), vote rigging and other forms of election fraud (1988b:17), and political violence (1996b:59). Gitari makes the wry observation that even among his own Anglican Christians, his call for even-handed justice was widely misunderstood:

The last time the Bishop had visited Mugumo Parish was in April 1988 when he got a very cold reception from the Christians. This was mainly because of an article in the magazine *Beyond* where the Bishop was quoted as having said that elections in Gichugu has been rigged in favour of Mr Kariithi, who apparently comes from St Mary's Church, Mugumo ...

In September 1988, Kanu grassroot and Branch elections were held, and Mr Kariithi was removed from the chairmanship of Gichugu sub-branch through vote rigging. The Bishop once again spoke firmly and openly against the rigged elections ... And so when the Bishop visited St Mary's Mugumo on 2nd April 1989, he received a VIP treatment for having upheld the principle that elections should not be rigged.

(1996b:82)

No reader of Gitari's sermons could doubt for a moment that his preaching arises from an informed reading of the Bible and its apt application to contemporary life. Yet we might also identify other ills in Kenyan society, which are at least as destructive and ungodly as those against which he inveighed, but that seem to receive less attention. The most glaring example is that within the canon of his published sermons, there is only one address specifically targeting ethnic rivalry.

Ethnic tension in Kenya is occasionally touched on in passing. The sermon collection *In Season and Out of Season*, for example, contains four or five mentions of the subject, of which one on page 143 is typical:

As peacemakers, bishops and pastors have to be involved in the quest for justice; after all, politics is so important that it cannot be left to politicians alone. Left on their own they have created the “Hiroshimas” of their world, which in our nation at this present time include West Pokot, Molo, Enoosupukia, Burnt Forest etc, where clashes have continued unabated. (And now we hear there are marauding youths in Kwale district of Coastal Province.) A bishop should never listen to those who tell him to keep quiet when the people are bleeding.

This passage identifies a serious and longstanding problem in Kenyan society: interethnic violence, especially that perpetrated by young men.

Young men in every society in the world have a propensity for violence. In Kenya, youthful folly is sometimes sanctioned by ancient custom. Among the Rendille of Northern Kenya, for example, a young man wishing to impress a girl may steal cattle from another group; if someone gets killed in the process, that will not diminish his allure. However, as Gitari pointed out, interethnic violence is particularly linked to the activities of politicians. The politicians “create Hiroshimas” by encouraging their supporters in their own ethnic group to attack the groups that might support their rivals. The catastrophic events of early 2008, when more than 1000 people died and hundreds of thousands of Kenyans became internally displaced, was an extreme case of this familiar evil.<sup>31</sup>

Gitari was always willing to challenge ungodliness wherever he found it, in the church as well as outside of it. He himself acknowledged that the church was not immune to ethnic tensions and misunderstandings:

This Diocese has made great progress during the last ten years. One of the secrets of our great success is that the Christians in this Diocese have been united behind their Bishop. The Gikuyu of Kirinyaga, the Wa-Embu and Wa-Mbeere of Embu District, the Wa-Meru of Meru District, the Wakamba of Karaba, the Gabbras and the Borans of Marsabit, all of us, have worked together to build a diocese where great things are happening. But we have not been completely free from elements of disunity.

Pockets of quarrelling by leaders have been found at parish and congregational levels. We thank God that these have not been widespread ... Nevertheless we still have some leaders who are like Euodia and Syntyche ... Church leaders can never succeed in reconciling quarrelling groups if they are already prejudiced against one group or the other ... Heed this: you cannot reconcile them if you are already biased.

(1996b:49)

In another sermon, Gitari spelled out the path of reconciliation a little further:

We must work to remove all that which divides us if we want to lay a deserved claim to *shalom*. Where there is division we need to work for reconciliation. True reconciliation does not come by sweeping problems under the carpet or by a mere shaking of hands in public places. We must find the root cause of our divisions and deal with it. The Christian must labour to produce right relationships between people . . . Christian reconciliation means reconciling people to God and reconciling people to each other. A reconciler must not take sides except when it is the side of the truth.

(1996b:89)

This is a worthy exhortation, but it does little to guide the process that Gitari himself says is essential: to “find the root cause of our divisions and deal with it.”

We must ask why it is that a gifted Biblical expositor, who is a clear-sighted and courageous leader in church and nation, finds so little to say to address what must surely be one of the most serious fault lines in Kenyan society. My belief is that it is not an oversight, and certainly not a lack of willingness to tackle a difficult issue. Rather, the problem is structural—the result of the organization of Kenyan churches.

#### **THE ETHNIC ARCHITECTURE OF THE KENYAN STATE AND THE KENYAN CHURCHES**

Lonsdale (2004:3) draws attention to the origins and structure of the Kenyan political elite as a whole. Typically, members of the elite are drawn from the leading families of particular ethnic groups. They often have homes or estates in the rural area from which their family sprang, but their life is lived elsewhere. Their privileged education and lifestyle distance them from the community from which they sprang; nevertheless, that home community and its church<sup>32</sup> are the essential hinterland to each member of the elite.

Lonsdale contrasts this elite of weakened ethnic roots with the growing phenomenon of urban dwellers who have no ethnic roots in a rural area. He particularly refers to the urban poor, the speakers of Sheng, among whom the Pentecostal churches have made progress. Lonsdale agrees with Timothy Njoya that Pentecostalism is “a survival strategy for the poor,” and has little interest in engaging with the political system.

We could add that there is also a growing urban middle class, which still acknowledges a family in the rural areas, but rarely thinks of it or visits it, and does not identify with it. This last group is represented in the congregations of Nairobi Baptist Church and All Saints' Cathedral, among many others. When it finds a distinctive political voice, this group may well change the landscape of governance in Kenya. But it has not happened yet. Kenyan politics is still dominated by the old postindependence elite and its children, which manipulates the ethnic block votes into shifting coalitions, as David Throup (1987) has explained.

Despite the weakness of the tie between elite and ethnic base, the alliance is essential to both parties. For the constituents, the success of their patron is their best hope of advancement—either bringing development projects to their district, or offering employment and other advantages. For the elite politician, the mass of supporters is his bargaining chip when he negotiates with his peers. The ebb and flow of support at the clan and subclan level is the stuff of Kenyan local politics,<sup>33</sup> and the fortunes of politicians in the ethnic heartland are intertwined with their opportunities on the national stage.

Lonsdale (1992:316) has offered an important insight into a conceptual weakness at the heart of the nationalist project in Kenya:

Empire did not foster the kind of nationalism that political scientists thought they ought to see. Structures that shaped political debate were not territorial but local . . . ; there was no coherent doctrine of modernization . . . Ethnic thought had long addressed issues of civic rights and duties, inseparable from those of gender, with more passion than the extramural class of territorial nationalism could ever have done before Independence. Kenya nationalism's chief tactician, Tom Mboya, openly admitted that his secret of success was political inanity.

Kenya has a flag, currency, sports teams, and national armed services; but the energies within the nation are located mainly within the ethnic communities. This is sometimes miscalled "tribalism." The hard-edged concept of "tribe" is a recent creation, formed in part by the vernacular Bibles and in part by the administrative convenience of colonial officials. Lonsdale (2005a) approvingly quotes Lamin Sanneh to the effect that "the vernacularisation of Christianity . . . has been a major influence on the formation of local cultural identities." Rather, the nation is shaped by the more fluid concept of "ethnicity," as different groups cooperate or compete, intermarry, or struggle for influence and resources.

Kenya's churches are not in some Olympian place above this exciting and varied ethnic stew. They are located within it. The old missionary comity arrangements sanctified the link between denomination and ethnic

group, and (as we have seen) the denominations came to be the bearers of traditional ethnic aspirations in the modern world. Consequently, it was always going to be difficult for the churches to develop a critique of ethnic competition, since ethnic allegiance was built into their foundations.

Yet such a critique is inescapably a Christian task. The task of the church is to announce the Kingdom of God. In the Kenyan context, this must include the Kingdom's bearing on interethnic relations. The Bible is particularly well-equipped to address this issue. Large parts of the New Testament wrestle with the problem of Jews and Gentiles within the church. The clear message of the Bible is that a Christian's identity as a man or woman in Christ has to take precedence over any other identity—whether ethnic identity, gender identity, or economic/social identity.<sup>34</sup> This is more than a pious aspiration. The New Testament contains evidence of a painful struggle to apply the insight in daily life. In matters such as ritual purity and food laws, sexual morals and the observance of holy days, let alone hot-button issues such as circumcision, Jews and Gentiles had to negotiate their different cultural presuppositions in the light of a common allegiance to Christ. They were not permitted to remain within a ghetto of Christians who shared their culture and ethnicity. They were required to learn unity with one another.<sup>35</sup>

But despite this treasury of Biblical material, Kenya's Anglican Church has only infrequently addressed the issue of ethnic relations in the nation. On the occasions when it has done so, it has generally failed to give clear guidance or practical leadership. The church is hampered not by a lack of courage or of insight, but by its own structure, for the church is cut from the same ethnic cloth as the rest of society. One outstanding example concerns the Gikuyu oathing at the time of Mboya's murder in 1969, and again at the time of J. M. Kariuki's murder in 1975. In each case, Kenyatta's government wished to protect its own authority by ensuring solid support in its Gikuyu heartland. The (largely Gikuyu) Anglican leadership was rather slow and muted in its response. One of the most outspoken critics of the oathing in 1975 was David Gitari—not yet a bishop—who in a broadcast address (1996b:18) said.

An appeal for national unity must be an appeal that we may be united in truth, but not in falsehood. It is quite possible for a tribe or a group of people to unite by entering into a secret superstitious oath. That kind of unity is founded on fear, not on truth . . . Once a person is set free from the bondage of superstition, he is freed from secret tribal oaths.

Gitari's protest was an act of considerable courage, and seems to have played its part in bringing the oathing to an end. Nevertheless, we must

observe the basis on which Gitari denounced the oathing: not that ethnic divisions are abhorrent to Christians, but that the oath being used to enforce them was superstitious. John Lonsdale (2006) has written that

It took the murder of Tom Mboya and the oathing crisis of 1969, designed to keep Kenya's flag in the House of Muumbi, to awaken Kenya's African church leaders to the extreme dangers of ethnocratic power, a too easy successor to racism.

However, I question whether then or subsequently the church leaders have truly awakened to the dangers of ethnocracy. They would certainly wish to moderate the manner in which ethnic competition works itself out. Violence, corruption, and traditional oaths are repudiated, because these all offend against the transformed traditional civic virtues that Anglicanism espouses. But the competition itself, and the underlying rivalry between clans and ethnic groups, is largely unchallenged.

The church is in an even weaker position now than in the past to develop a critique of ethnocracy. Thirty years ago there were only seven Kenyan dioceses, each of which embraced a diversity of ethnic groups. In a large, ethnically mixed diocese, no bishop could for long get away with egregiously favoring one group against the rest. Clergy were posted where they were needed and often found themselves serving outside their ethnic comfort zone. There was a structural necessity to confront and overcome ethnic jealousies. In practice, however, the jealousies were contained rather than confronted; and rapid church growth rescued the church from the need to give unpalatable teaching. Even the best dioceses experienced stresses and strains (testified to in Gitari's sermon cited above). Gitari was unusual for trying to broaden the basis of appointments within his diocese.<sup>36</sup> As Archbishop he even, extraordinarily, encouraged the appointment of European bishops in Kenyan dioceses when they were the most suitable candidates. Nevertheless, like King Canute he could not hold back the tide. When his diocese of Mount Kenya East was divided in 1990, the desire for change arose from the belief of leaders of the Embu community that they were being neglected in the making of senior appointments. A prominent Embu layman said in synod that positions and resources in the diocese were being allocated principally to people from Gitari's own Kirinyaga District: what Embu received was "a drop in the bucket."<sup>37</sup>

As of early 2009 there are 29 dioceses, most of them coterminous with a tribe or sub-tribe. Three northern missionary areas (Turkana, Marsabit, and Wajir) have been taken away from the southern dioceses that were rather reluctantly hosting them, and have been added to All Saints' Diocese (the Archbishop's episcopal responsibility). The three southern

dioceses have thus been set free to pursue the “normal” path of ethnic homogeneity. I am aware of at least four more dioceses that are under active consideration in the next three years, and another ten in the five years beyond that. Presently, a diocese will gather just the Anglicans of a single clan. In those circumstances, no diocese has within it the diversity that compels the church to address the transethnic dimension of the Gospel. Bishops may continue to declare Christ’s saving grace and teach Christian conduct to the people, but they are locked into the minutiae of clan politics that dominate life in rural Kenya.<sup>38</sup>

The proliferation of dioceses has encouraged a perfectly proper pride in local achievements, and has released resources and encouraged energetic participation by Christians in the life of the church. However, it has also had negative effects. When there were few dioceses, becoming a bishop was not a realistic ambition for most clergy. Today, there are many more opportunities of preferment, and more still can be opened up whenever another new diocese is created. The moral authority of the church has been weakened by infighting among senior clergy as they maneuver for their chance to be bishop. In some cases, clergy have reverted to the client-patron model of ethnic politics, and have enlisted the aid of politicians from their locality to secure nomination to ecclesiastical office.<sup>39</sup> Finally, some of the smaller dioceses hover on the edge of financial bankruptcy, and their bishops must constantly seek subsidies from outside to keep them afloat. The best and most independent bishops will continue to hold politicians to account in local matters.<sup>40</sup> However, the bishops of small dioceses may be dependent on wealthy politicians, and certainly have no higher vantage-point from which to analyse and correct the conduct of interethnic relations within the nation.

In 2002, in response to the burgeoning number of dioceses, the Diocese of Nairobi too was subdivided. The city was made into a diocese with its own pastoral bishop; while All Saints’ Cathedral Diocese became the nominal metropolitan see of the Archbishop. This in effect set the archbishop free to exercise a national and international ministry. However, the ministry of one man, even if he be a gifted prophet, is no substitute for an entire church living out the gospel imperative to become one people of God, irrespective of ethnic origin.

In retrospect, the 1980s and 1990s look like a golden age for Anglican influence in national life. That is because the issues of the time—which centered on vote-rigging and the manipulation of the constitution within the one-party state—were ones which offended the traditional civic virtues that are at the heart of the Anglican project. Today, vote-rigging is an expression of the flux of ethnic politics, and Anglican leaders are on much less solid ground.

Anglican leaders continue to command respect in the government in such matters as resolving tribal clashes, but typically they do so as ethnic rather than transethnic figures. In 2006, the Anglican Church of Kenya suffered the tragedy of losing one of its most gifted young leaders. The Provincial Secretary, Rt Revd William Waqo, died in a plane crash in Marsabit. Bishop Waqo was one of a party of civic and political dignitaries who had gone to broker a peace deal between warring Boran clans. He had been invited to participate in the negotiations because he was a respected Boran ethnic leader.

An even clearer example of a churchman being an ethnic leader was Bishop Okullu. His retirement in 1994 coincided with the death of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga. According to Oluoch (2006:64), it was seriously mooted that Okullu could take over Oginga Odinga's old parliamentary seat, and that he could take on the mantle as senior Luo leader. His powerbase was insufficient to secure such a position, but the idea was not inherently ridiculous.

#### A THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR INFLUENCE

Lonsdale (2005a) mentions several different theological strands that inform church leaders as they engage with the state. They include:

- An incarnational theology that recognizes a division between the realms of God and of Caesar, and insists that Caesar should order his realm in a godly fashion—for example, maintaining consultative government, protecting human rights and allowing citizens to take personal moral responsibility. The churches see the power of the state as fundamentally beneficent, protecting society against violence and social disintegration. Lonsdale characterizes this as “a local version [some might call it a local subversion] of a theology of liberation.”
- A theology, as much traditional-ethnic as Biblical, that stresses individual rather than structural responsibility for wealth and poverty, and that emphasizes faithfulness to tradition and hierarchy as the guarantee of social discipline.
- Yet the Kenyan Protestant churches, with their roots deep in rural ethnic cultures, have a weak theology of class and nationhood. So while they may rebuke kleptocracy, they are unlikely to develop a positive call for redistribution. Lonsdale refers to “the weaknesses in Kenya's theologies” that set limits on the church's ability to guide the state.
- Lonsdale also refers to the theological environment into which the church speaks—the popular theology of the masses. “One suspects... that many laypeople judge politicians according to the

inherent quality of their personal power to *exploit* rather than to be *defeated* by unseen forces, curses, or the sorcery employed by rivals, that neither Christianity nor Islam seem willing to overcome.”

In another place (Benson 1995), I have suggested that during the time of President Moi, the Kenyan churches did not subscribe to an overarching theology of power. Their response to the state was pragmatic and piecemeal, the result of their reading of the Bible. They did not have a masterplan for the nation, but rather saw their task as reacting to the initiatives of politicians. They claimed that the Bible was a yardstick by which the state's actions could be assessed. Church leaders believed that they should weigh the contemporary deeds of politicians in the scales of God's requirements, discovered from a study of his acts and the prophets' words.

I now think that this position needs to be modified, and that the lack of a robust theological basis for national engagement is more apparent than real. Leaders of the Anglican Church and other churches possess a framework, a political metanarrative that integrates their interventions in national affairs—but they have often not articulated it clearly, to themselves or to their hearers. (David Gitari would say that they have not always been willing to do so; but that is another matter.) The consequence of this communication failure is that their pronouncements may appear to be rather random and moralistic, disconnected from one another and not contributing to a vision of godly society.

This metanarrative can be summed up as the Kingdom (or kingship) of God. If God is King, then other forces—once, Roman emperors, today, Kenyan presidents—are not. Their authority is diminished; their power is relativized. The kingship of Christ is far more than an obscure doctrinal formula. It is the heart of the apostles' message.<sup>41</sup> It declares Christ's lordship, explains God's purpose of redemption, and demands our submission to him.

Lonsdale's observation is valid, that the churches are not theologically equipped to demand more participatory democracy or a redistribution of wealth. They would deny that they are called to have such a program. However, the result of preaching the Kingdom of God is to change the terms of living in society. To take one specific case, it answers Lonsdale's point that “many laypeople judge politicians according to the inherent quality of their personal power to *exploit* rather than to be *defeated* by unseen forces.” The gospel contains the message that the ultimate unseen force is God himself; we cannot exploit him, but because of his kingship in Christ, he can protect us from all other forces.<sup>42</sup>

In David Gitari's preaching, this theme of the kingship of God was always close to the surface, and his preaching was effective for that very

reason. The sermons in his published collections (1988b, 1996b) and his many unpublished sermons share these characteristics: they take a Bible passage, seek to understand it in its context, and then show that God speaks through the passage to declare his will for how people should live today. The sermons show the implications for his hearers of the fact that God, in Christ, is Lord and King.

Of particular interest in this connection are sermons that Gitari preached at the consecration of new bishops and at the commissioning of other church officers: for they disclose his understanding of the root of a “prophetic ministry” and the way in which it should be carried out. So, for example:

Who knows but that [four new bishops] are becoming bishops at such a time as this in the history of Kenya: a time of multi-party democracy, ethnic clashes and economic hardships . . .

No leader is completely free from opposition and the best antidote is courage: God tells Jeremiah, “Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you . . .”

The Christian leader is called upon to destroy and overthrow the kingdom of Satan. The kingdom of Satan is the kingdom of darkness. At this time in the history of our nation we must not underrate the power of Satan.

(Gitari 1996b:131–35)

### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The church in Kenya has grown through its proclamation of the Kingdom or kingship of God, and it is the same central truth that shapes its engagement with the state. The good news is that God is King, and that all people everywhere can be free from sin and death. God’s blessings and promises are equal for all people.

This is not a political program, yet it has important political consequences. In the first century, the message of the Kingdom demanded that Jews and Gentiles accept one another as equals, and the seismic effect of this innovation is reflected on page after page of the epistles. The implications continue to be revealed: for example, the abolition of slavery and the emancipation of women, and the breaking down of class barriers. (To see an implication and to win the battle are different things.)

From my perspective as an outsider, it looks as if the Kenyan church should articulate the same gospel today by telling Kenyans that King Jesus has one people and that no discrimination according to tribe or clan can be tolerated among Christians.

If significant numbers of Kenyan Christians were to reject divisions based on ethnicity and if the church could model a community in which family loyalty and bonds of kinship did not result in nepotism or a

freemasonry of race, then the gospel of the Kingdom of God really would shape Kenyan society. There have been times in the church's past when it seemed as if this were about to happen. The Revival insisted on the equality of races and tribes in Christ. Its dogmas continue to receive lip service, but as the church has grown, it has become easier for people to have their whole Christian experience within their own cultural and ethnic ghetto. Many in the church, including many leaders, have lost sight of the urgent need to challenge inherited cultural ethnocentricity.

The New Testament shows how difficult it was in the early days of the gospel to reconcile Jew and Gentile in the church. (Jewish Christians today might well say that the task has still not been completed.) Although the letter to the Ephesians says that the "dividing wall of hostility" had been removed by Christ, the letters to the Galatians and the Philippians show that some people were busy building it up again. Nevertheless, with all its flaws, the testimony of the early church was powerful enough to capture the Roman world. Faith like a grain of mustard seed is enough to move mountains, said Jesus. Even the beginnings of ethnic reconciliation in the church could transform Kenya, and Africa as well.

As a bishop and archbishop in the Anglican Church of Kenya, David Gitari bore the responsibility for the spiritual welfare of many thousands of Anglican Christians. He created and oversaw a team of lay and ordained ministers, devised and implemented strategies for evangelism and pastoral care, and set a strategic vision for developing the physical resources of the church.<sup>43</sup> He carried out his duties by a mixture of exhortation, planning, prayer, Biblical teaching, and personal example. Yet, any Kenyan would confirm that his ministry and his influence went far beyond the boundaries of his own church (Keyas 2005). He was heard with respect by individual Kenyans who did not share his affiliation. Furthermore—and this is the point of this collection of essays in his honor—he deliberately addressed the Kenyan state and its officials, and they learned to listen attentively to what he had to say. He did as much as any Anglican churchman to call the nation to transform in the light of the Kingdom of God. The point of engagement between the Kingdom and the state is different now from what it was in his day, but the heart of the task remains the same.

#### NOTES

1. John Lonsdale (1992:328) has argued that the contrast between reactionary "tribe" and progressive "nation" are largely the product of an evolutionary myth.
2. Most obviously, during the Emergency. "In the forests of Mount Kenya and Nyandarua Mau Mau fought as much for virtue as for freedom." John Lonsdale (1992:317).

There is a powerful contemporary example of traditional religious values making a direct impact on politics. Muungiki, banned by the Kenya government as a “criminal gang,” regards itself as a religious sect: in effect, a New Religious Movement within traditional religion.

3. “Nationalist politics was conducted within a prophetic idiom that merged indigenous and Christian traditions” (Ambler 1995:236).
4. See, for example, *The East African* 1 January 2001; and *New York Times* 13 January 2001; see also the U.S. Public Broadcasting Service website, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/binladen/upclose/computer.html>
5. She is a Nobel prizewinner and champion of the environmental movement. In Moi’s time, she led a successful campaign to prevent developers from encroaching on Uhuru Park in Nairobi. She lost her seat in the 2007 election.
6. 1991: relating to export credits fraudulently paid for the export of non-existent gold.
7. 2002: relating to a contract for passport equipment that was priced at five times the actual cost.
8. For a chronicle of the Kenyan state and its interaction with the church, see the excellent summaries by Oluoch (2006:1–30) and Githiga (2001).
9. At the 1913 Kikuyu Conference, the Anglican bishops of Mombasa and Uganda wished to embrace a comity arrangement with missions from other denominations. The different missions divided up the region between them, and agreed not to plant churches across these mission boundaries. Each mission would also accept as members any Christian in good standing with another church who moved into its territory. These pragmatic arrangements sidestepped traditional Anglican requirements for confirmation and episcopal ordination. The High Church Bishop of Zanzibar accused the Kikuyu Conference participants of heresy, and the Conference did not (as it hoped) become the first step on the path to a united Protestant church of East Africa. However, it illustrates the willingness of Evangelical Protestant mission leaders to put the gospel before denomination.
10. This may seem strange to those who have recently celebrated the achievement of the Evangelical William Wilberforce in ending the transatlantic slave trade. However, the principal of my theological college was typical when he said that ministers were in the business of handing out either tracts or sandwiches; and that he was unambiguously in favor of tracts.
11. From the point of view of traditional communities, FGC was a sign of initiation into adult membership of society. The lengthy “catechesis” that preceded the operation was considered as important as the physical procedure. Traditionalists reacted angrily to the attack on FGC, not (as it is sometimes portrayed) because they wanted to control female sexuality and subjugate women, but because they saw FGC as integral to maintaining inherited relationships and values.
12. For an example of the tension between Revival leaders and the ecclesiastical authorities, see Oluoch (2006:45).

13. Individual European Christians continue to be actively engaged in social-care provision, such as founding and running hospices, schools, night-shelters and counseling services. But it is now rather unusual for Church of England dioceses, for example, to be directly involved in the delivery of social care beyond appointing an education officer.
14. A gathering of Evangelical Protestants held in 1974. The first Lausanne Conference produced a covenant that included a ringing endorsement of Evangelical engagement in social action for the sake of the Kingdom of God:

#### 5. CHRISTIAN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all. We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression. Because men and women are made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, color, culture, class, sex or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he or she should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive . . . [see also Chapter 1] When people receive Christ they are born again, into his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead. [*Acts 17:26,31; Gen. 18:25; Ps. 45:7; Isa. 1:17, Gen. 1:26–27, Lev. 19:18; Luke 6:27,35; James 3:9; John 3:3,5; Matt 5:20; Matt. 6:33; 2 Cor. 3:18; James 2:14–26*]

Within Evangelical circles, this affirmation did not go unchallenged. Some saw it as compromise with theological liberalism. However, the endorsement of elder statesmen such as Revd. John Stott created space for a new flowering of global Evangelical movements of social concern. Fresh respectability was conferred on Evangelical organizations such as World Vision (established 1950), TEAR Fund (1968), Mercy Ships (1978), and A Rocha (1983), which engage in social transformation rather than traditional preaching.

In the 1980s David Gitari's Diocese of Mount Kenya East (now subdivided into four successor dioceses) established a conspicuously successful Department of Christian Community Services, which assisted local communities in deprived areas in organizing themselves for development by identifying needs (a water project here, a health visitor there) and selecting community workers whom the diocese would train. This organization, Christian Community Services of Mount Kenya East, continues to function throughout the old territory of the now-defunct diocese that created it.

15. Davie claims that European sociologists have commonly assumed that religion belongs to premodern, uneducated societies, and that as societies advance, so religion will be privatized or marginalized. In conversation, Davie said that this axiom was so strongly held that European sociologists for long denied the evidence of the rapid growth of Pentecostalism in Latin America, in societies that were modernizing and becoming more educated.
16. Alistair Campbell batted away a question about his boss's beliefs with the comment, "We don't do God," (*Daily Telegraph* 3 May 2003).
17. This followed his public expression of disquiet about the government's handling of the conflict in Iraq, October 2006.
18. See, for example, Maina wa Kinyatti (1980). Gikuyu is the first ancestor of the Gikuyu people. Mau Mau was far from monolithic, and the precise role of religion—including Christianity in Mau Mau is the subject of controversy. However, Lonsdale (1992:442) concludes that "however vigorously missionaries would deny it, Mau Mau owed much to [established, Anglican] Christianity."
19. Oathing has, in secret, remained a means of creating strong political alliances at times of crisis within independent Kenya. Although the use of oaths is strongly deprecated by all public figures, and would often be considered illegal, there have been various occasions over the years when politicians, especially Gikuyu, were known or suspected to have used this tool.
20. *Nation* 10 April 1996; cited in Oluoch (2006:83).
21. During the Moi era, some of the AIC and Pentecostal leadership did indeed allow themselves to be co-opted by the ruling party, but no Anglican bishop was perceived to have capitulated to the same extent.
22. The Church of the Province of Kenya (as the Anglican Church of Kenya was formerly known) was sometimes denounced as "the Church of Politics of Kenya."
23. This is not to say that key Anglican leaders are cowed by the Revival. Gitari (1991), in particular, has written critically about the Revival's unwillingness to confront evils in society: "The brethren are so concerned about their own individual souls that they show little concern for the corrupt and sinful world around them."
24. It has been suggested that the role of a politician in Kenyan society is somewhat similar to the role assigned to a traditional healer (Swahili *mganga*, Gikuyu *mundu mugo*). Like the healer, the politician wields occult power, and his assistance is sometimes necessary. But he is remote from the usual ties of clan and age-set; ordinary people need him but do not trust him. The Revival's mistrust of politicians may have a sociological as well as a theological root.
25. "Shalom means welfare and well-being at their best and at their highest . . . When the President initiates the fundraising drive for the disabled in the country and helps to raise over 70 million shillings, he is a peacemaker. When he hears the cries of coffee farmers and directs that they be paid their long outstanding dues, isn't he a peacemaker?" (Gitari 1996b:88).

26. Although Gitari (1988:62) is quick to point out hypocrisy in this matter: "Sometimes politicians allow church leaders wide freedom to discuss "political" matters. In a recent sermon a bishop of an indigenous church touched on many political issues, including voter registration and loyalty to the government and to KANU. He even threatened to use his church's disciplinary machinery to expel any member who opposed the government and KANU. The bishop, as far as I am aware, has not been criticized as interfering in KANU affairs, or mixing religion with politics."
27. As Bishop of Mount Kenya East, David Gitari was faced with a dilemma. Jeremiah Nyagah, then a cabinet minister in Moi's government, was an Anglican lay reader in the church in Embu. He had also been a member of the search committee that selected the Bishop for his diocese. Bishop Gitari asked Nyagah not to act as reader while serving in political office; but he continued to invite him to "greet the congregation" in his capacity as a politician when he attended important church gatherings, which he continued to do until incapacitated in 2007.
28. See Chapter 2. This is one case among many. The stupidity and cupidity of the clergy is an entertaining subject for the media in Kenya as elsewhere in the world.
29. This is not a reflection on the forthrightness of the latter two. Wangari Maathai (2007:212) pays particular tribute to Njoya's courageous support.
30. It is suggestive that the Gikuyu term for freedom, *wiathi*, connotes self-mastery. The English word implies throwing off restraint while the Gikuyu word implies keeping oneself under control.
31. The outbreak of violence followed the disputed election of 27 December 2007. President Mwai Kibaki claimed to have been reelected; his challenger, Raila Odinga, was unwilling to concede defeat. Outside observers reported that the polls had been widely rigged by both sides. The margin of Kibaki's alleged victory was tiny.
32. This reflected the old missionary comity arrangements. Thus, most Protestant Gikuyu from Muranga and Kirinyaga are Anglicans, most Meru are Methodists, Rift Valley Province is the stronghold of the Africa Inland Church, and so on.
33. The arcane workings of local politics are chronicled in Kenya's daily press, though it takes time to break the code. Several of Gitari's published sermons give glimpses of the process, especially in Gichugu Division of Kirinyaga District.
34. "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).
35. Within Christian missiology there is a longstanding debate about the "homogeneous unit principle": the observed truth that it is easier to evangelize within a cultural group, than to insist on converts leaving their culture as soon as they receive the Gospel. The New Testament is scoured for evidence that the apostles would approve such a procedure. However, this is a separate discussion. Since the end of Apartheid, few Christians have openly suggested that the church should endorse ethnic segregation.

36. He briefly appointed a clergyman from Western Kenya to a senior role within his diocese; though the clergyman moved on before he had the chance to make much impact.
37. In 2007 a senior clergyman from Embu surprised me by saying that he thought there was more than a grain of truth in the old accusation. The argument is somewhat reminiscent of Acts 6:1.
38. Clan politicking in the church assumed scandalous proportions in the circumstances that led to the creation of Katakwa Diocese (separated out of Nambale Diocese in 1991). In the years before the creation of the new diocese, the infighting was regularly chronicled in Kenya's press. Since then, several other dioceses have been down the same road. David Gitari worked hard to mitigate the effect of tribalism (Keyas 2005).
39. A senior clergyman gave me a detailed account of a secret gathering of clan elders convened by a candidate for office in a new diocese and the steps that were taken to outsmart the rival clan from which another candidate came.
40. Many of Gitari's sermons are addressed to national political situations; but others concern local matters. See, for example, a sermon (1996b:102–10) on I Kings 21, "There was no Naboth to say No," which challenged the illegal expropriation of public land by politicians in Kirinyaga District.
41. N. T. Wright (1997) in an outstanding book has demonstrated how this theme energizes all Paul's letters.
42. Life is uncertain in Kenya, and most people believe that they are usually at the mercy of dark powers. Yet, the Christian message of God's unusual protection is received with enthusiasm. I heard a graphic example of this during the 1980s, when two of my students at St. Andrew's Institute, Kabare, were on placement in Meru. They visited the village of Uvariri, which was notoriously the dwelling of many practitioners of traditional medicine and magic. The people of Uvariri warned them of a curse that would fall on them if they walked around the village. The students prayed and boldly walked through the cursed area. The people of Uvariri were amazed that they were not struck down by the curse. The students then spoke about the Lord in whose name they had come and who protected them from curses. Many of their hearers believed their message of the power of God. Nevertheless, neither the students nor the converts thought they were now immune from all evils.
43. He led the church at a time of extraordinary growth and development. I worked in his Diocese of Mount Kenya East in the period 1978–1989. During this time, the number of Anglicans grew by about 150 percent. The comparable statistics for the increasing number of parishes and church buildings, ordained clergy, and clergy with university degrees, and the account of the development of a national theological training college and the department of Christian Community Services can be found in the papers of the diocesan synod.

PART 2

THE BISHOP MEDDLING  
IN POLITICS

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CHAPTER 4

“WAS THERE NO  
NABOTH TO SAY NO?”  
USING THE PULPIT  
IN THE STRUGGLE  
FOR DEMOCRACY: THE  
ANGLICAN CHURCH,  
BISHOP GITARI, AND  
KENYAN POLITICS

GALIA SABAR

Bringing God’s word to bear on our contemporary world is part of what is meant by a prophetic ministry.

(Gitari 1988a:ix)

If I keep quiet ... I’m a sinner in the eyes of God and in the heart of my people.

(Gitari, Kirinyaga, 1989a)

In his crystal-clear style, the Anglican clergyman, tMost Revd Dr. David M. Gitari, not only defined his role as a religious leader but also challenged those calling for the separation of church and state or for the exclusion of religion from the political arena. While the official position of the Most Anglican Church was carefully maintained to indicate that it was not a rival claimant to power but simply sought to “complement” the work

of the politicians, the political establishment regarded it as dangerous and treacherous, a view that helped push it further into opposition. Moi himself, careful to maintain the image of a devout Christian, tried hard to appear reasonable and conciliatory toward the churches, even while he came down ruthlessly on any and every form of criticism and opposition.

In this chapter we shall analyse the ways in which Anglican leaders used religious sermons in an attempt to challenge the regime of President Daniel arap Moi. We shall focus on the ways the sermons were used as a vehicle for political and social transformation in Kenya between 1982–1989, the first years of the struggle for political change, the re-introduction of multiparty system and democracy. We shall examine the issues they raised and assess their influence on the political processes taking place in those years. Though analysing several leading Anglican clergy, the focus will be on Dr. David Gitari who not only formed the political debate through the sermons but also led the struggle and set the path for others to follow.

This chapter is based on the understanding that religion is a strong force in the politics of all states, both those termed “modern” and those termed “traditional” (Ahanotu 1992; Haynes 1994; Huntington 1993; Norris & Inglehart 2004; Roberts 1988; Shore 2006; Ellis & Haar 1998; Wald & Calhoun-Brown 2006). Moreover, it joins the debate in the literature that claims that the interaction between theology, politics, culture, and society is an ongoing process the world over, with complex implications and consequences (Bax 1987; Haynes 1994; Keogh 1990; Mews 1989; Moyser 1991; Sahliyeh 1990; Shore 2006; Wolf 1991). In many Sub-Saharan African countries, scholars have shown that as government authority and legitimacy plummeted in the wake of corruption, economic failure, and political repression, people turned to churches and to other civil society organizations to champion their interests and to exert pressure on politicians.<sup>1</sup> Though scholars agree that civil society groups played a role in shaping social and political processes in Africa, the nature and effectiveness of that role is still in dispute (Holmquist & Ford 1987; Sabar 1996, 1997). Based on a rich variety of sources not previously tapped,<sup>2</sup> in what follows we shall highlight the debate between the church and the state 1982–1989 and demonstrate that while the debate became more acrimonious with every round, the basic claims remained the same throughout the decade. The representatives of the state sought to sunder the prophetic and the political realms. The churches’ rôle, as Moi articulated it, was to preach personal piety, resignation, obedience, and peace—and to avoid politics. The church argued, through its sermons and publications, its moral imperative to guide the politicians by speaking out against the evils in society (Gitari 1996b; Maupeu 1996; Okullu 1984).

Travel around Kenya, and every Sunday morning you see never-ending trails of men, women, and children making their way to church. Clad in long white robes with elegant white African head-cloths or in European-style outfits, the churchgoers fill city streets and dusty rural trails. They walk in groups, playing musical instruments and chanting hymns, stopping to collect additional followers. Whether they congregate in huge Gothic churches or in small huts, public gardens or busy roundabouts, the believers always end up holding a prayer service.

Talk to Kenyan men and women, and many of them will tell you their religious affiliation along with their ethnic background: the two anchors of their identity. You will hear stories about the congregation they belong to and about their work on church committees and organizations. As they speak, you will hear the joy in their voices and see the flame that lights up their eyes. Stop to listen to a sermon in one of the churches or prayer gatherings, and you will see more than depth of religious feeling. Listen to the preachers as they speak in English or Kiswahilli or any other Kenyan language. Some stick to the Bible story on which they have chosen to preach. Others go beyond it, using the story to comment on current affairs or as a metaphor to criticize Kenya's rulers.

For many years, open expression of political dissent was illegal in Kenya and even today carries risky implications. However, even in the 1980s when Moi's regime brutally reacted to any and every sign of protest, you could still hear skilful preachers circumvent the restrictions, and their congregates listening eagerly while talking to one another about the issues at hand. At times the prayers were small and tame and at others, large and provocative. Read the newspaper the next day and, if one of the sermons happened to be especially provocative and well preached, there was a good chance you will come across an article on it and then some other articles on the reactions of the politicians or maybe some international body.

You will discover what everyone in Kenya has known since the 1980s, if not earlier: that religion was a force to be reckoned with in Kenyan politics. Moreover, the churches were able to mobilize thousands of men and women to various sociopolitical causes. Both the readiness and ability of the churches to play this leadership role are anchored in the deep religious feeling of the Kenyan people and the place of religion and their churches in their everyday lives. Hence, in Kenya of the 1980s there was little, if any, separation between religion and the fabric of everyday life, between spiritual and material, God and politics.

The Anglican Church is one of the oldest and among the best established churches in Kenya.<sup>3</sup> Favored over the other churches, especially the non-British ones, by the colonial power, it developed over the years

a wide ethnogeographic spread and a wide net of social and economic services and activities. Since the arrival of the first Anglican missionaries in East Africa in 1844, this church has gradually become one of the major institutions in Kenya's social and political arena. Though its members numbered less than 10 percent of the Kenyan population, both the people and the government recognized it as a strong political force (Karanja 1999; Sabar 2002).

I have shown elsewhere that the combination of the spiritual authority that is the province of all churches, with the wide net of social, educational, health-related, and economic activities, gradually made the church an integral part of society, an instrument of its transformation, and a power that the government had to reckon with (Sabar 2002). Moreover, research has shown how over the years the Anglican Church utilized the multiple power bases it established through its initiation, organization, and funding of a wide range of educational, health, and economic-oriented activities to place itself in a pivotal position in Kenyan society (Barrett et al. 1973, 1974; Cole 1970; Karanja 1993, 2008; Sabar 1996, 2002).

Following Kenyatta's death in 1978, his loyal follower Moi was elected president. In the beginning, he portrayed an image of a loyal follower. To further this image and to bind people more closely to him, he authored a new rallying call. Whereas Kenyatta had mobilized the population under the pragmatic slogan of *harambee*, Moi chose as his slogan the term *nyayo*—the Kiswahilli word for "following footsteps." When he first came into office, he promised to follow in the footsteps of Kenyatta and demanded that, in return, Kenyans follow in his (Benson 1995). To counter complaints that the meaning of *nyayo* was vague and that it was not clear what he was asking the people to do, he declared that the meaning of *nyayo* was summarized by the three Christian values of peace, love, and unity.

As mentioned, by the time Moi was elected, the Anglican Church's extra-religious activities were well entrenched and its ability to mobilize both its followers and others to various sociopolitical calls was well-known and acknowledged. Moi saw in the churches, Anglican and others, the obvious institution to help him legitimize his rule. Going beyond Kenyatta's call for the churches to act as the conscience of society, Moi explicitly invited them to play an active role in managing the country. At a meeting with Anglican bishops at his official residence in January 1981, Moi urged the churches not to relax their efforts in preaching spiritual matters. He stated that their preaching of the Holy Scriptures helped the government maintain stability and stressed that the churches should regard themselves as part and parcel of the government (*Nation* 22 January 1981). In May 1981 the then Vice-President, Mwai Kibaki,

reaffirmed this stand, asserting, “Politics and religion are inseparable” (African Press Service 25 May 1981).

The extent to which the churches were alert to Moi’s efforts to co-opt them is beyond the scope of this chapter. There are no indications, however, that they did not initially accept Moi’s invitation at face value. Presenting himself as a loyal follower of Kenyatta, Moi seemed to offer himself as a less corrupt alternative, who had the will to spread the country’s wealth to those who had been neglected and underprivileged. The idea that a devout Christian, who respected the churches, would rule the country through the Christian philosophy of peace, love, and unity also had obvious appeal.

Between 1980 and the summer of 1982, Moi set on an increasingly oppressive course. He limited the freedom of debate in parliament by threatening to “take disciplinary action,” including police force, against Kenya African National Union (KANU) members who crossed the line between acceptable and unacceptable speech. He increased his personal control of KANU by promoting his supporters and not calling meetings of the party’s governing bodies. He undertook a campaign against dissidents and “political splinter groups” (Widner 1992:142), using tactics such as rumor-mongering, false accusations of corruption, and selective dismissals and appointments.<sup>4</sup> He threatened and harassed journalists and editors, university students and faculty, and leaders of the Law Society of Kenya and other professional organizations who criticized him. In June 1982 he set in motion the process of making Kenya a *de jure* one-party state to strengthen his fight against any and all opposition and to enable him to better dismiss local and international criticism that his actions were unconstitutional. The law was pushed through parliament in 45 minutes on 9 June 1982.

In spite of all this, for the first few years of Moi’s presidency, the churches seldom objected publicly to this growing coerciveness. As under Kenyatta’s regime, only a few lone voices were raised against the patent abuses, and then not very loudly. The turning point came in August 1982. On the first of the month, some Air Force officers and their allies attempted a coup. Moi crushed the attempt in two days using a massive exertion of force, and then proceeded to clamp down yet further on the few remaining freedoms that Kenyans had.

In early September 1982, the Anglican Archbishop Manasses Kuria called for the full participation of the churches in restoring peace and order. At the same time, though, he also spoke out against the widespread detentions and arrests and continued to speak out in the following months. On 10 September the Roman Catholic bishops published a pastoral letter calling for a more accountable leadership, a more just

division of wealth, the renewal of Kenya's commitment to socialism and democracy, and for the churches to assume the responsibility that Kenyatta had assigned them as "the conscience of the nation." Although politicians responded with angry demands that the churches stay out of politics, Kuria continued to call for the release of the detainees, while Anglican bishops Okullu, Gitari, Muge, and the Presbyterian Revd Njoya spoke out at every opportunity and in every possible forum against the abuse of human rights, detention without trial, the corruption in Kenya's leadership, and the evils of a one-party system.<sup>5</sup>

### THE SERMONS DEBATE

As mentioned, when Moi invited the churches to take part in a debate on the nature of the country, he hoped they would provide legitimation for his regime. In fact, by doing so he invited them to join him in a discourse on the way the country should be governed. In the aftermath of the coup, the discourse assumed momentum. It became an increasingly intense and nasty debate.

Gitari, as editor of the book *A Christian View of Politics in Kenya* (NCCCK 1984) and as a leading figure both in his own church and in the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), laid the theological groundwork for their assumption of the prophetic role, by which it meant the rôle that the ancient prophets had assumed in inveighing against the wrongs of the rulers in Biblical times.<sup>6</sup> Among other things, it argued that keeping silent about political abuses was itself a political act. In the mid-1980s it began to act on its prophetic ministry with increasing vigor, involving itself actively and persistently in more narrowly defined political issues. At this point it is useful to stress again that the Anglican Church as a whole did not speak with concerted or conciliar voices on these things, but with varying amounts of support from the silent to the outspoken.

The radicals within the Anglican Church fostered this debate and mobilized in it all the resources at its command: its various newsletters and the magazines *Target*, edited by Revd Henry Okullu, and *Beyond*, published by the NCCCK; its publishing house, Uzima; weekly slots for sermons and lessons on the state radio and television; the many forums it provided through its youth groups, women's groups, vocational training courses, religious classes in schools, and, of course, its pulpits. And, through its pulpits, it enlisted the broadcasting and print-media, both local and international.

The sermon was of course a long-used vehicle of protest in Kenya, as in the rest of Christian Africa. Since the Anglican Church had always

permitted its clerics to express their views freely, both in colonial times and under Kenyatta, churchmen who so wished had used their pulpits to criticize government actions. Under Moi, the use of the pulpit attained new heights. The radicalized higher clergy, especially Okullu, Gitari, and Muge made increasing use of it. These leaders were powerful speakers, who made skilful use of a long standing oral tradition, which aimed not only at arousing the interest of the congregation but also at stirring them up emotionally and engaging them intellectually.

The sermons of the church leaders were presented to huge congregations who flocked to their churches to hear what they had to say about the political issues. Their churches, which could seat over a thousand persons, generally flowed over when they preached, and loudspeakers were often placed outside to carry their message to the crowds there.<sup>7</sup> Their sermons were also geared to the media, whose power they consciously enlisted. In the early and mid-1980s, using either the “bushphone,” as word of mouth is termed, or in Gitari’s case, calling and inviting by letter when a significant sermon was to be preached, they made sure that reporters knew when and where they were scheduled to preach. By the end of the decade, both local and international reporters followed them around of their own accord, knowing that there would be something to report. The accounts of the sermons in the press, in turn, forced the government to respond.

The first direct conflict on ballot box issues came in June 1985 after the ruling party, KANU, adopted the queuing system, which required voters to physically line up behind their preferred candidate or his poster. The measure was introduced to turn KANU into a vehicle for transmitting the views of the president to the populace—to which end, only Moi’s parrots had to be elected and all disagreement within the party eliminated.

Leading Anglican clergy, though not in planned concert or detailed agreement, led civil servants, teachers, and clergymen of other denominations, along with some trade union leaders in written and spoken protests, arguing that one should not have to reveal one’s political preference publicly by queuing behind one’s candidate. Several church leaders, emphasizing their role as models and the need for clean elections, added that their queuing could lead to improper pressures and propositions by politicians.<sup>8</sup> There were also clerics who connected the queueing with the rampant corruption in the state’s political processes and emphasized the need to keep the voting clean and uncorrupted (Sabar 1997). Once again, it should be noted that while Okullu, Muge, and Gitari were speaking out on these issues, the church had little alternative leadership, since Kuria was not giving much in public.<sup>9</sup> KANU’s Secretary-General

promised the protesters that alternative arrangements would be found for the next elections. This did not happen. The following year, at the KANU annual delegates' convention in August 1986, the party's national executive put through a series of electoral revisions aimed at consolidating its power, obliterating all distinction between party and state, and ensuring that candidates for elective office would bear the president's stamp of approval. Among the various means to attain these ends, the most contentious were the decision to abolish the secret ballot and continue the queuing (Widner 1992).

The NCKK was the first to protest. It so happened that a conference that it had organized to discuss the role of the church in society was in session at the same time as the KANU annual delegate's conference. Under the chairmanship of Bishop Gitari, the 1,200 pastors at this conference signed a statement, which Gitari drafted, calling for the abolition of the queuing system and sent to the press.<sup>10</sup> Archbishop Kuria warned that politicians should not underestimate the depth of popular discontent and opposition to the abolition of the secret ballot.<sup>11</sup> Bishop Okullu delivered a similar caution, pointing out that the number of people who secretly supported the NCKK position was staggering. The more moderate bishops, A. G. Njuguna of Mount Kenya South and John Mahiaini of Mount Kenya Central, added their protests.<sup>12</sup> Bishop Muge of the Diocese of Eldoret strenuously demanded that Moi rescind the resolution. Addressing a Kenyan Anglican Youth Organization (KAYO) meeting, he urged the church to protest "when God-given rights and liberties are violated." He argued that in Africa, where there were so many one-party states, "it was the role of the church to stand up against the pressures of totalitarianism in the name of one party systems" (*Weekly Review* 29 August 1986).

The political response was strongly charged. In the early months of 1986, a new national disciplinary committee with broad discretion had been formed in KANU. This committee had the power to expel party members or otherwise impose sanctions on those who, in its view, committed "any act which in the opinion of KANU is not in its interest" or in any way undermined the president or the KANU government (Widner 1987). Most politicians lived in the fear of losing their positions through a party purge.

Scrambling to outdo one another in their excoriation of the challengers, Moi's people rushed to accuse the NCKK and its member churches, especially the Anglican Church, of disloyalty and of intentionally creating chaos. Nicholas Biwott, a powerful Kalenjin politician, urged those churches that disapproved of the NCKK's attitude to leave the organization. This call resulted in the withdrawal of some of the Conservative

Evangelical churches (the African Independent Pentecostal Church, the mainly Gikuyu Association of Baptist Churches of Nyeri, and the Gospel Church to name only a few). They came out for KANU and the new voting system, and their leaders railed against clerical involvement in politics (*Nation* 25 March 1986; *The Standard* 22 March 1986). The Bishop of the African Independent Pentecostal Church asserted that the NCKK was opposing African culture and suggested that it be investigated since it was trying to ruin the country (*Weekly Review* 29 August 1986). John Kamau, the General Secretary of the NCKK retorted that “the question of disloyalty does not arise ... debate is a healthy exercise. If a country cannot debate an issue of national significance, we shall be denying ourselves the very root of democracy” (*Weekly Review* 29 August 1986).

The charges and countercharges were exchanged within an extremely tense atmosphere, as extra-parliamentary resistance mounted on the state’s further encroachment of Kenyan’s political space. In addition to the Anglican Church and the other mainstream Protestant churches, the Roman Catholic Church, the Law Society of Kenya, large sectors of the business and farming community, intellectuals, and politicians in exile all joined in the attack on the queuing and other repressive measures. So did five Kenyan politicians: Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, a Luo; Masinde Muliro, a Bukusu; Charles Rubia, Kenneth Matiba, and Kimani wa Nyoike, all Gikuyu.

In effect, the only two safe venues left for speech were the lawyer-client relationship, which could be protected by confidentiality, and the churches, in which the members could speak among themselves and with their pastors. In this atmosphere, Archbishop Kuria hurried to assure Moi that the church supported the one party system and “would not act contrary to the interests of the government nor associate with those who aim to undermine the government.”<sup>13</sup> Okullu, Gitari, Muge, and others in the CPK, however, continued to use their pulpits to declaim against the restrictions on freedom and the corruption that it fostered.

In an effort to put an end to the discomfiting public debate, Moi promised that clergymen, civil servants, and members of the armed forces would be exempt from queuing (Throup 1995). However, only a few months later, in November, his Attorney-General, Muli, introduced the Constitution of Kenya (Amendment) Bill, 1986, to anchor the resolutions of the KANU delegates’ conference and other repressive resolutions in Kenya’s constitution. The Anglican Church supported the opposition to the bill led by the chairman of the Law Society (*Weekly Review* 21 November 1986). Such constitutional changes should only be made after a public debate, it stated (*Weekly Review* 21 November 1986). Moi, rather than relate to the issue, reiterated his warning that “religion must not be

dragged into politics and church leaders should confine themselves to the spiritual aspects of life, leaving politics to the politicians." Church pulpits, he insisted, "should not be turned into political platforms" (*Weekly Review* 28 November 1986).

Several months later, in March 1987, Oginga Odinga, following the church's lead, wrote an open letter to the President demanding respect for freedom of speech and calling for a democratic, multiparty political system (*Weekly Review* 7 March 1987).

### EXPOSITORY SERMONS, 1987-1988

The high-pitched public debate continued in 1987, when Kenyans' voting rights were further curtailed and their ballots sapped of even more of their meaning. As before, the criticism of government actions came from many church forums. The debate seems to have been fired, however, by the powerful use that leading Anglican preachers, and especially Gitari, made of their pulpits. The middle of 1987 saw what Gitari termed "a sermons debate." Four sermons preached by Gitari that were pointedly related to the current affairs of June 1987 are conveniently published, along with the political and media commentary they elicited, in his book *Let the Bishop Speak* (Gitari 1988b). In the foreword, Gitari explains that these are examples of the "expository preaching" that he favors. "Expository sermons," he explains, combine preaching and teaching. They take a Biblical passage and analyse it verse by verse in both its historical context and current application. "This process of bringing God's word to bear on our contemporary world is part of what is meant by a prophetic ministry," he explains (Gitari 1988b:ix). This section deals with two sermons and the debate they evoked.

The first sermon came in response to an announcement in a daily newspaper on 19 May 1987 stating that only those who produced evidence that they were members of KANU and had paid their annual dues would be permitted to vote in the general elections. The sermon was delivered on 7 June in the coffee growing area of Mutira in Central Province, on the occasion of the inauguration of the Mutira Archdeaconry. The listeners thus included many clerics, and the sermon was specifically addressed to them as well as to the lay attendants.

The sermon was based on Matthew 9:35f and tells of Jesus going out to the cities and villages to preach and to heal and of the compassion he had for the "harassed and helpless." The sermon criticized the KANU membership requirement as "unconstitutional," pointing out that it would deny the democratic rights of those who could not afford the dues,

and warning that rich politicians would pay the fee for them in exchange for their votes. It noted the low KANU registration in the district, queried obstacles that were put in the way of joining the party, and urged people to join up so that they could vote.

The most infuriating aspect from the government’s point of view was that the sermon urged the church’s evangelists and priests to “follow in the *nyayo* of Jesus Christ” and to go out and preach and teach in “every market, every secondary school, every primary school, every dispensary, and every village” in the parishes where they were licensed (Gitari 1988b). This was of course a general call for an active and involved ministry. But it was also a political call. The ministration that Gitari envisioned was not focused only on individuals. “We are called upon to be healers of broken societies and communities,” Gitari pronounced. It was a ministration, he told his audience, that required a priesthood who could “challenge the present generation” and who read the newspapers to keep “up to date in current affairs.” Moreover, in listing the “harassed and helpless” people that the clergy should visit with, Gitari specifically urged them to go out and mingle with the coffee farmers “and listen to their uncertainties as they ponder the implications of the dissolution of KCPU [the Kenya Cooperative Planter’s Union] and its replacement with a new union controlled by Moi loyalists” (Gitari 1988b). Delivered in a coffee growing area, this call raised among some the specter of the churches instigating revolt.

In the next few days, James Njiru, assistant minister in the Office of the President and local KANU branch chairman, called Gitari’s statements “destructive criticism” (*Standard* 8 June 1987), and Gichinga Muchine, the district KANU Organizing Secretary, commanded Gitari to “stop turning churches in the district into a political forum” and accused him of “misleading Kenyans” (*Kenya Times* 10 June 1987). In addition, according to Gitari, some local KANU leaders were evidently perturbed that he had invited a member of Parliament (MP) to speak at the inauguration sermon and sent a contingent of KANU’s rowdy Youth Wing, created in the early 1980s as an arm of the party’s social control, to his sermon the following Sunday to heckle him should he make mention of KANU there (Gitari 1988b).

Moi himself hedged. He initially asserted that he was “taken aback” by the Bishop’s urging his congregates to pray for the “oppressors” in the Kenya Planters Cooperative Union (*Standard* 9 June 1987). Then a day later he retracted the registration requirement, though with the recently legislated voting procedures, being able to vote in the general election meant little since most of the representatives were elected in closed primaries anyway (*Nation* 10 June 1987). The following Sunday, in his sermon on the prophet Jeremiah, given at a service to inaugurate the Archdeaconry of Kabare,

Gitari blasted the organized intimidation and criticism, not sparing mention of KANU and the Youth Wingers, and reaffirmed the Biblical injunction to preachers and prophets to “expose injustices in society” (Gitari 1988b).

The Bishop spoke his mind again on 21 June, in a sermon at St. Peter’s Church, Nyeri, where he had been invited to preach by the local Anglican bishop, John Mahiaini. The occasion was a civic service held in that church every June since the early 1960s, in which the local political leaders traditionally took part. The vicar had originally chosen Joshua 1 as the text for the sermon, but Gitari had already begun to prepare a discourse on Daniel 6, relating the episode of Daniel in the lion’s den, which he felt better suited his purpose.

Gitari’s name was not included on the invitation. His arrival was apparently a disconcerting surprise to the politicians in the provincial center, as the debate over his criticism of the voter registration was still raging. Before he delivered his sermon, the District Commissioner, the Mayor, the Chairman of the County Council, and the Party Chairman all gave brief addresses. The mayor reminded the church leaders not to bring politics into the church. The senior political leader, who traditionally read the Biblical passage on which the sermon was based, refused to read the text.

Gitari used the occasion to criticize the state’s abuses of power, from the 1986 change in the constitution through the widespread dismissals of persons—often of the Gikuyu Embu and Meru Association (GEMA)—civil servants from their jobs in and outside the government.<sup>14</sup> As Gitari interpreted it, the text describes a situation in which conspiracy and corruption were the order of the day and truth had to struggle. His sermon drew a pointed and explicit parallel between Daniel and the honest Kenyans persecuted by Moi’s representatives.

He presented Daniel, King Darius’ trusted advisor, as “a hard working civil servant, honest, capable [who] was removed unjustly from his position . . . due to tribalism and corruption.” As he told it, Daniel was a Jew “who spoke the truth” and was disliked by “the rest of the civil servants [who] could not deal with him.” His interpretation of the action of Darius’ advisors in getting the King to approve an ordinance consigning anyone who worships any god but himself to the lion’s den is peculiarly apt: “The method used to remove him was by changing the constitution.” To deflect the anticipated censure, he compares Darius’ ordinance to the “change [in] the constitution campaign of 1976,” which Moi and his supporters had thwarted. But his point that “King Darius made the mistake of allowing the constitution to be changed before this matter which affected fundamental human rights was thoroughly discussed by all concerned” obviously applies to the various constitutional changes under Moi’s regime (Kings 1996). In case any of his hearers missed the point,

Gitari hammered it home: “Daniel was in effect telling the king that when the constitution is illegally changed so as to interfere with a fundamental human right . . . that new law can be disobeyed” (Kings 1996).

Again, his sermon provoked a barrage of criticism. Moi, as before, pretended to stand above the dispute. Noting that the bishop had praised him in some previous sermons, he claimed that “it is beyond his understanding to see what is the bishop trying to say to us” (*Standard* 22 June 1987). But he let others do his criticizing for him. Thus, Nyeri’s Provincial Commissioner warned that the sermon bordered on subversion and that church leaders should make sure that “they did not appear to be waging a war against the state” (*Standard* 22 June 1987). The Assistant Minister of the Office of the President, who had not attended the sermon, demanded that he recall his statements (*Standard* 24 June 1987; *Nation* 24 June 1987). Okiki Amayo, the KANU national chairman, claimed that the Biblical story “has no parallel in Kenya” and accused Gitari of “seeking to create chaos, confusion, and incite *wananchi* against their popularly elected leaders.”<sup>15</sup> The charges were answered by Gitari, as well as by clerics who came to his defense.

Finally, about a week later, after Gitari delivered yet another sermon critical of the government, this time referring specifically to the criticisms of the Daniel sermon and rejecting the right of politicians to tell preachers what to preach, Moi again intervened personally to cool things down, asserting that since Kenya was a “democratic country” the bishop should be allowed to speak his mind (*Nation* 1 July 1987). These sermons, far from the only sermons that Gitari and others preached criticizing Moi’s regime, give something of the encompassing, uncompromising, and, at points, provocative tenor of the church’s censure of Moi’s regime in the mid-through-late 1980s.

#### EXPANDING THE DEBATE: THE SPILLOVER EFFECTS OF THE SERMONS

The sermons were not only a vehicle of debate, they also fomented the debate that the government had inadvertently started. The sermons were massively attended, with some of them having audiences of 5,000. Their messages were clearly understood by ordinary Kenyans, even where the Biblical abuses of power were discussed without specific reference to the local scene.<sup>16</sup> The sermons were also intensively reported, by virtually all of Kenya’s papers. On some of the sermons, including the one on Daniel, the coverage lasted for over a month, with the charges and countercharges flying back and forth.

The sermons served most of the press with a means of stirring up public opinion and conveying their own criticisms of the government. For example, the 8 June 1987 *Standard* article reporting Njiru’s criticism of Gitari’s statements on the coffee-growers’ problems is headlined,

“Gitari under Fire over KPCU”; terms his involvement in the matter “alleged”; goes on to present a most sympathetic account of how “Bishop Gitari ... urged clergymen to mingle with coffee farmers and listen to their uncertainty as they pondered” the dissolution of their union and its replacement with another one; and quotes his statement, “You cannot but have compassion for them.” In similar vein its 22 June article following the Daniel sermon opens with the headline, “Gitari Calls for Public Debate,” and highlights in large print that he “called for sufficient public debate before changes are made in the Constitution.” In both cases, the newspaper expressed its support for Gitari and its criticism of the government in its choice of what to report and what to highlight.

The use that the *Standard* and other papers made of the sermons enabled the press to circumvent the restrictions that the government had begun to place on the media in about 1984 and that had intensified in 1986, when it detained hundreds of newspaper reporters and editors and confiscated editions that dealt with issues of human rights, government corruption, and the increasing strangulation of democratic processes. The sermons were beyond this type of control, however. The use of sermons to express political discontent, barely cloaked in Biblical imagery, goes back to the colonial period in Africa, as does the reporting of sermons. Kenya was no exception. With all of the corruption and brutality of Moi’s regime, it would have been very difficult, if not impossible, for it to extirpate this tradition in a Christian country.

The debate that the sermons fomented spilled over to large sectors of the population, way beyond the Anglican churchgoers. The Evangelical churches lambasted the mainstream churches for interfering in secular issues (Maupeu 1996). The daily papers published letters to the editor both for and against the sermons. These letters related to the major issues that the sermons raised, foremost among them being the government’s corruption and misuse of power and the role of the church in politics.<sup>17</sup>

The public attention that the sermons brought to the abuses of the regime and their ability to muster sympathy made it necessary for the government to respond. Some of its response was in the form of direct intimidation, such as the despatch of the Youth Wingers. But, like the church, the government also used the press. For example, following the Daniel sermon, the *Kenya Times*, which was partly owned by KANU, conveyed the following warning and threat:

The laws of the land do not allow any churchman, or any foreigner resident on Kenyan soil, to indulge in any manner of subversion, and it is a penal offense to incite disaffection ... Dissemination of subversive literature, too, constitutes a penal offense and all those clerics who are nowadays

circulating written sermons among worshippers should be extremely careful lest they are caught red-handed breaking the laws of the land.

(*Kenya Times* 29 June 1987)

More subtly, the *Kenya Times* was used to drum up support for the government view, as is done for example in its 1 July, 1987, article “Former Freedom Fighters Hit out at Gitari” and its editorial of the same date, “Enough of All That, Dr David Gitari.” The titles speak for themselves. Parliament was also dragged into the debate. Various MPs challenged the right of the clergy to speak out, accused them of “serving foreign masters,” and advised President Moi to limit their freedom of speech.<sup>18</sup>

The sermons did not restrain Moi and his henchmen. But, through the newspaper attention they received and the public discourse they stimulated, they put the regime and its supporters on the defensive, forcing them to respond to the charges and engaging them in a debate that they doubtless would have preferred to have ended by this time.

#### EPILOGUE

It took the Anglican Church and other civil society organizations, as well as brave local politicians several more years of struggle until the political system underwent some major changes. The year 1990 was a turning point in Kenya’s political history. Due to international and internal pressure, a number of changes were implemented in the political system. The queuing system was abolished and a KANU Review Committee headed by the Vice-President was established to review the country’s political system. In 1991, the constitutional provision instating one-party rule was repealed and several opposition parties were registered. Finally, at the end of 1992, the first multiparty elections since independence were held.

On virtually all major issues prior to the elections, the opposition was split and much energy was wasted on internal power struggles. In seeking common ground for a united stand, these groups discussed with one another issues such as the current ethnic clashes, their common fear of election rigging, and the power of a united opposition. In addition, all opposition groups held joint discussions with the Attorney-General about the unsatisfactory election regulations. On 11 May 1992 the Protestant NCKK, with the active involvement of the Anglican Church, organized a two-day interparty symposium. The main purpose of the gathering was to discuss national issues. Since KANU representatives refrained from attending, the symposium turned into a meeting between the NCKK and its member churches and the various opposition groups.

In the absence of the ruling party, the gathering turned into a campaign by the churches to unite the opposition. The symposium named several senior government and KANU officials as the instigators of the ethnic strife,<sup>19</sup> and when a report on the ethnic clashes was delivered to the audience, the chairman said, "President Daniel arap Moi had lost control of the country, leaving a vacuum that had been filled by Rift Valley war-lords."<sup>20</sup> The report identified a "Kalenjin factor" in the ethnic clashes and linked the conflicts to political rallies held in 1991 by several pro-KANU political leaders. Although this information was common knowledge in Kenya, it had rarely been stated so explicitly.

The symposium had no concrete results but was nevertheless of the utmost importance in two respects. First, the NCKK and its member churches took an official stand to actively assist the opposition in its fight against the ruling party; and second, the churches created a new arena for the opposition to discuss political issues. *Inter alia* this caused various opposition parties to use the churches' vocabulary when dealing with explosive political issues. This first NCKK-opposition symposium led to more symposia of the same kind. In the following meetings, the stand of the NCKK closely paralleled that of the leading opposition parties. In fact, the NCKK, and especially the CPK and the PCEA clergy, basically identified themselves with the opposition parties. The Kenyan clergy calling for change cannot be seen as naive when regarding the political struggle and the nature of future Kenyan politics. Relating to the role of the churches in politics, Bishop Gitari quoted Studdert Kennedy: "When a country changes its government, it only pushes one set of sinners out and puts another set of sinners in. The most passionate idealists are never completely free from egocentricity and partisan bias" (Gitari 1986b:136). In fact, Bishop Gitari stressed that the Kenyan churches should not support one party or the other, rather "engage in a critical collaboration with any state which attempts to respect God's purposes" (Benson 1995:195).

The last months of 1992 were replete with mutual accusations on voting procedures among the various parties. Rumors about the President's intentions to cancel the elections caused riots in and around major towns. Nevertheless on 29 December 1992, and under the watchful eye of international observers and inspectors, the first multiparty elections since independence were held in Kenya. President Moi and KANU emerged victorious although the total number of votes cast for opposition candidates and parties was far greater.<sup>21</sup>

The reactions of the opposition to the proclaimed results were harsh. Declaring that the elections were a hoax and the results rigged, the opposition reacted to the president's call for a united postelection Kenya with great suspicion. Leaders of the opposition tried to unite ranks in

order to continue their struggle for change from within and without the parliament. The CPK clergy, together with the Roman Catholic and the PCEA leaders, hardly congratulated the president and KANU on their victory and called simply for peace and prosperity in what they described as a troubled country. Officially, the churches stated that as religious organizations they were neither affiliated with, nor was their work affected by, one party or another. Thus, their activities would not change. As expressed in nonofficial statements, however, the general feeling was one of great loss: “We shall continue to fight for what we believe is right. Freedom, justice peace and human dignity are at stake and not one candidate or another,” said a frustrated CPK clergyman in Nairobi on the day the results were published.<sup>22</sup>

In the months following the election, the clergy were seldom heard (in stark contrast to the period of 1990–1992 when hardly a day passed without a church member appearing on the news or releasing a statement to the press). Since early 1993 to about mid-1994 the churches had generally refocused on human issues, peace and justice. Most of the large churches have continued with their activities related to education, health, development, and welfare, making little or no effort to fit into the government of the country. It took the Anglican Church, as well as other leading churches, almost a decade until they regained their position as a vanguard force in generating and molding the debate on the actual nature and content of politics in Kenya. Years went by until the Anglican Church repositioned itself as an integral part of society, an instrument of its transformation, and a power with which the government had to once again reckon.

#### NOTES

1. The early literature tended to dichotomize state and society, and to view civil society as either engaging or disengaging with state and society, or exiting the state or voicing the grievances of society. The initial assumption, held by scholars in the 1980s, was that a vibrant civil society would, as a matter of course, bridge the gap between the people and the regime—engage them, incorporate them, and voice the grievance of the people to the ruling powers—and lead to democratic reforms. See, for example, Anyang Nyonga, 1983, 1989; Azarya 1988; Barkan & Homquist 1989; Pellow & Chazan 1986; Chazan et al. 1998; Harbeson 1988; Migdal 1991; and Widner 1992. When time proved this a vain hope in such countries as Cote d’Ivoire, Senegal, Tanzania, Kenya, and others, it became clear that the assumption would have to be reconsidered. The simple dichotomies were modified in favor of the understanding that the relationship between the state and civil society is a dynamic and

- multidimensional one, varying with the particular social group, conditions in the state, and the key players. Moreover, the limitations of the power of social organizations were better appreciated, as was the diverse nature and modus operandi of these organizations. See, for example, Bratton 1989; Bayart 1989; Comaroff and Comaroff 1997; Harbeson 1998; Mamdani 1990; and Mbembe 1989, 1992, 2001a, 2001b.
2. These include both published writings, such as magazines, local church newsletters, and official church brochures, and a wealth of unpublished materials in numerous archives, mainly the Kenyan National Archives in Nairobi, the Church Mission Society archives in London, and the Public Record Office in London. More extensively, it employs the abundance of unpublished material available at the central Anglican Church of Kenya archive in Nairobi and in the many church archives throughout Kenya's rural dioceses and parishes.
  3. The Anglican Church of Kenya, until 1999 titled *The Church of the Province of Kenya* (CPK), was established in 1970 after the Church of the Province of East Africa was split into two independent churches: Kenya and Tanzania. Even before 1970, however, it was regarded and managed as an independent Kenyan Anglican Church. The titular head of the CPK is the archbishop. While he can set the tone of the church, his formal powers are limited. He is elected by the bishops of all the dioceses. Major decisions are made by the Provincial Synod thus, the archbishop's power is a matter of his personal standing, while the bishops have a great deal of independence and formal authority vis-a-vis him. On the level of the diocese, the main theological, administrative, and operational unit of the church, the bishop has considerable formal authority and independence, while formally being constrained by a complex system of checks and balances. On the practical level, the Bishop oversees ordinations and controls budget disbursements to the parishes (these are rarely made: it is the parishes that should pay diocesan quota on top of their own projects, while the diocese takes care of clergy training and remuneration). On the moral level, he issues statements on behalf of the diocesan clergy on matters of public concern and interprets the church's theology at the diocesan level. Each bishop is free to comment on whatever matters he sees, whether they are issues of individual moral behavior or the conduct and policies of the country's rulers. Thus, while the bishop has many powers and a strong leadership role in the diocese, most of his workday decisions are made following discussion and voting in the synod and other diocesan bodies. This limits his power vis-a-vis the parish clergy, and allows them some degree of independence in turn. The important point is that the bishop does not need to seek reelection and in those days the rules about retirement were unclear, so the government could not unsettle a bishop.

Despite the diocesan oversight, the local parish clergy have some latitude both in the daily running of the parish and in expressing their personal views. Thus most parish clergy play it safe and do not try to be more outspoken than the bishop. Through their sermons and catechism

classes, the parish clergy are the primary interpreters of church traditions at the local level, and they have the freedom and opportunity to express their personal understanding on issues ranging from moral conduct through national politics subject to the above. The hierarchical organization of the clergy at the national, regional, and parish level represents only a portion of the institutional church. There are also positions that do not fall clearly into this hierarchical structure such as the newspaper editor and heads of a development cooperative to name but two. These non-parish positions provide the clerics who hold them with even further opportunity for independent expression and action.

4. On these restrictions, see *Weekly Review* from 1 August 1980, 8 August 1980, 22 August 1980, 12 September 1980, 17 October 1980, and 14 November 1980.
5. *Weekly Review* 9 October 1982, 15 April 1983, 13 May 1983.
6. It should be noted that it is difficult to attribute this attitude to the Anglican Church as a whole. Anglicans in the NCCCK were not typical, and more radical clergy set the pace (National Council of Churches of Kenya 1984).
7. The author joined very many sermons and diocesan events of Anglican bishops all over the country in 1988 and between 1989–1992 and 1995–1996. Gitari’s sermons in Embu and Kirinyaga as well as his church events in St. Andrew’s College of Theology and Development, Kabare in Kirinyaga District, for example, some of which were open to the public, were always overcrowded.
8. For some of the clerics’ statements, see *Weekly Review* 7 June 1985:3–5; and 28 June 1985:1, 7–9.
9. After Muge’s death and replacement, and especially as Gitari took over from Kuria as archbishop, Kalenjin bishops wanted less speaking out against the government and tribal motives were attributed to Gitari across Western Kenya.
10. Interview held with Bishop Gitari, Kirinyaga, July 1992.
11. Archbishop Kuria as quoted in Throup, “Render Unto Caesar” 1995: 15.
12. Bishop Njuguna in an interview carried out in Jerusalem, May 1987, and in Nairobi in August 1987. Bishop Mahiaini interviewed in Muranga, July 1991.
13. Kuria as cited in Throup 1995: 154.
14. For an excellent interpretation of Gitari’s sermons using Daniel 6, see Graham Kings (1996).
15. *Nation* 27 June 1987. See also the editorial in the *Kenya Times* 29 June 1987 accusing Gitari of misinterpreting parts of the Old Testament “in a vain effort aimed at justifying his own radical disposition.”
16. From many unofficial talks with CPK members in Kirinyaga and Nyeri, for example, John Ndungu Gathuo and Catherine Mburu Gathuo, Nairobi 1995–1997, on several occasions and St. Andrew’s Institute theological students (no names mentioned) in an open discussion held during my visit there in July 1992.

17. For "Letters to the editor," see *Nation* 23 June 1987; *Standard* 23 June 1989; *Nation* 30 June 1987; *Taifa Leo* 30 June 1987; *Nation* 1 July 1987.
18. The House of Parliament stated: "This is an eccentric Bishop, there is nothing wrong in the resolutions . . . [A]ll Kenyans should be patriotic and the bishop is serving external masters . . . [T]he CPK is a mere province of another church and it is possible the bishop is serving those masters" (*Nation* 30 September 1988). Concerning the right of the clergy to speak out, the Minister for Training and Applied Technology, Prof. Sam Ongeru, said: "Kenya recognizes Christianity and the power of God and that was why parliament allowed church leaders to attend Parliament and pray for the country during state opening of the house. What we heard from Bishop Gitari constitutes a rebellion. This is a rebellion activated by some politicians" (*Nation* 30 September 1988).
19. The key figures named were the Vice-President Prof. G. Saitoti, the Minister for Local Government William Ole Ntimama, N. Biwott, and several other MPs and key political figures. For the full list of names, see *Weekly Review* 19 June 1992.
20. Revd George Wanjau from the Presbyterian church of East Africa as cited in *Weekly Review* 19 June 1992:14.
21. Presidential votes: D, Moi 1,930,534; K. Matiba 1,402,069; M. Kibaki 1,012,569; O. Odinga 914,550; G. Anyona 14,048; Parliamentary Seats (total 178): KANU 94; FORD-Kenya 29; FORD-Asili 30; DP 22; KENDA 0; KNC 1; KSC 1; PICK 1.
22. Interview with Revd S. K. of the CPK in Nairobi, January 1993.

## CHAPTER 5

# MEDDLING ON TO 2008: IS THERE ANY RELEVANCE FOR GITARI'S MODEL IN THE AFTERMATH OF ETHNIC VIOLENCE?

JULIUS GATHOGO\*

In this chapter “Gitari’s model” refers to the boldness in church leadership that Archbishop David Mukuba Gitari displayed in his prophetic ministry. Can retrieving his approaches in ministry inspire a nation in general and its church leaders in particular? Are there lessons for the African churches to draw from Gitari’s model today? To address the above concerns, I will first attempt in this chapter to locate Gitari’s background and analyse his formative influences. I will then attempt to survey the approaches to ministry that he employed during its turbulent days. The chapter will then conclude with a critique on Gitari’s all-inclusive approach to church ministry (1986–1991). This critique is made by taking into account the general elections of December 2007 and the subsequent ethnically geared violence, which claimed at least 1,133 lives and left at one time 400,000 as internally displaced persons (IDPs). In other words, was Gitari’s message unheeded by his succeeding leaders in the church and the nation at large? The primary materials for this chapter were gathered through oral interviews and in participant observation by the researcher who was an eyewitness for a large part of Gitari’s ministry. An extensive reading

of some materials under discussion has also been done. The chapter is aimed at cautioning postcolonial Africa against squandering the gains of freedom. It concludes with the question, “Is Gitari’s model relevant to the post-December 2007 Kenya?”

### DAVID GITARI’S BACKGROUND

The retired Anglican Archbishop, David Mukuba Gitari, was born on 16 September 1937. In strict phonetic spelling, his names should be written as David Getare Mokuva. Obviously, African names have intended meanings. In Gitari’s case, his second name, Mokuva, is a Kamba name that may mean “a sewing needle”; while among the Gikuyu of Kirinyaga, it is written as Mukuba, but with the same Kamba meaning. Interestingly, the name Gitari may mean a doctor, a nurse (*dagitari*), or even a *mutari*, that is, a prophet-like character who advises or counsels people in times of need. David is the baptismal name that Gitari received from the church, and is taken from the Biblical King David, the son of Jesse (see Ruth 4:17–22; I Samuel 16; I Chronicles 2:12–17).

Considering the deep religiosity of the African people (Mbiti 1969:1–2) and bearing in mind that Gitari’s two African names, *Gitari wa Mokuva* (Gitari son of Mokuva)—which may be interpreted to mean, “the sewing needle that counsels, or prophesies,” or “a sewing needle that mends a wound,” or even “the sewing needle that nurses”—one wonders whether these names signaled prophetic insights into his future role as one of Kenya and Africa’s great prophetic bishops who courageously called for sanity when the nation had lost its conscience? Could he have been seeing something that others were not able to fully comprehend? Were his words of counsel, sometimes stinging remarks, meant to stitch up a torn nation? Does it mean that Kenya needed to have always listened and heeded his prophetic sermons and speeches?

### GITARI’S PEDIGREE AND ITS RELEVANCE

Gitari’s father, the evangelist Samuel Mukuba, was a Kamba by ethnicity. He was born in Kitui District, Mutongu-ini Location, in about 1882. But owing to the great famine that ravaged the district in 1899, Mokuva went to Gikuyuland, Ngiriambu in Kirinyaga District, with his mother Mutaa. As fate would have it, Mutaa and Mokuva were adopted by the family of Warui Gituku and became members of Ugaciku clan. Obviously, adoption by the Ugaciku clan means that they became heirs of the clan wealth. Subsequently, they were given portions of Ugaciku clan land to settle on like anybody else. As Mokuva grew up, he traveled

to the coastal city of Mombasa to look for a job in 1914, and while there, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionaries led him to faith in Jesus Christ. In 1919, he returned to Ngiriambu to share the good news with the people; and in so doing, he became the first missionary to ever preach the Gospel in the locality. Subsequently, the present day church, St. Matthew's, Ngiriambu, was built by the locals in memory of Samuel Mukuba, the pioneer missionary, evangelist, and teacher.

At the church where Samuel Mukuba taught literacy and the gospel of Jesus, he met Jessie Njuku who was one of his pupils. After falling in love with Njuku, their Holy Matrimony was solemnized by Revd Rampley at St. Andrew's Church, Kabare, about ten miles west of Ngiriambu, on 24 October 1924. Samuel and Jessie's marriage in 1924 has several lessons for the postelection crisis on 27 December 2007, which developed on tribal lines. This marriage was transethnic, and Kenyans need to just appreciate cultural diversity for their coexistence. In view of this, reports that some intermarriages among the Gikuyu and the Kalenjin are negatively affected when villagers were set on one another after the disputed elections along ethnic lines shows that Samuel (a Kamba) and Jessie (a Gikuyu) have much to teach us in 2008. Second, ethnic coexistence has been there in Kenya since time immemorial. For when hunger struck a community, a person could migrate to another one and be a blessing to the new community. Third, making a son of a Kamba a bishop in a predominantly Gikuyu-dominated diocese is in itself a lesson for ethnically cleansed Kenya. It shows that any good leader can emerge out of a meritocracy but not out of ethnic or other prejudicial considerations. It is for this reason that Gitari played his role with confidence and dedication, knowing that he was there by merit. Kenya has to learn from this experience.

Reportedly, Jessie and Samuel's marriage was the first Solemnization of Holy Matrimony to be celebrated in Kabare Parish, which was nearly half of the present day Kirinyaga District. They were later blessed with eight children: Hannah (1925), Harun Njagi (1930), Peninah (1932), Stanley Nzuki (1935), David Gitari (1937), Mary (1940), Eliud Njiru (1943), and Freda (1948). In my interview (3 March 2008) with Revd Marclus Njiru, Gitari's nephew, in the early stages of Gitari's lifetime, people in the family circle did not think he would make it in later life, especially due to his "conservatism" as a committed Christian. This view was however proved wrong, as God works with even the most unlikely people.

Samuel Mukuba passed away on 3 October 1970; Jessie followed on 2 January 2000. Jessie Njuku, who had a rare opportunity of seeing three centuries, by virtue of the fact that she was born in 1898, remained a widow for nearly 30 years. Like her husband, she also became an adult educator in the 1930s and 1940s. In addition, she doubled as a

traditional midwife. Indeed, even the Kenyan government recognized her by honoring her as a traditional midwife. In an interview, Gitari says: "I can remember her being woken up at the wee hours of the night to go and help women to deliver."

In his early upbringing, Gitari was taught by his parents not to fear the superstitious beliefs that had filled the community. In turn, Jessie and Samuel Mukuva rescued babies whose parents subjected them to death by exposure, either because they were twins or they grew the upper teeth first. As Gitari noted in our interview, his father would ring the church gong (bell) to call people for worship at 6:00 a.m. every morning and 6:00 p.m. every evening. This sound of the gong was believed to have driven the demons of Karumba valley away. People in the locality had long been disturbed by the noises that were coming from Karumba valley at odd hours. These mysterious sounds were believed to have been made by demons. With the coming of Christianity in the locality, the locals no longer heard them, or had reason to fear. Gitari grew up in such an environment, which had room for such beliefs, an environment that helps us to see some of his formative factors. With parents highly informed for those days, Gitari had an early advantage in modern Kenya.

#### **GITARI'S MARRIAGE, ORDINATION, AND SCHOOLING**

Gitari attended the prestigious Kangaru High School in Embu District of Eastern Kenya before attending the University of Nairobi for a Bachelor of Arts honors degree, in 1959. He married Grace Wanjiru on 31 March 1966 and God blessed them with three sons, Sammy, Jonathan, and Mwendwa (Keyas 2007). In his younger days, he was greatly involved in preaching in schools and universities all over Africa. From 1968 to 1971, he studied theology at Bristol as an external student of the University of London and graduated with a Bachelor of Divinity (BD). From 1972 to 1975, he served as the General Secretary of the Bible Society of Kenya and Chairman of Kenya Students Christian Fellowship (KSCF) (Keyas 2007).

Gitari was ordained into the priesthood of the Anglican Church in 1972 by Bishop Obadiah Kariuki. On 20 July, 1975, at the age of 37, Gitari was consecrated and enthroned as the first bishop of Mount Kenya East diocese, which covered a quarter of Kenya's landmass. In that position, Gitari founded St. Andrews College of Theology and Development at Kabare. Since then, St. Andrews has become a University campus of St. Paul's University, Limuru. Gitari served as the Bishop of Mount Kenya East, until the diocese was split into Embu and Kirinyaga diocese. He then moved to Kirinyaga, thereby becoming the first bishop of Kirinyaga.

In both his tenures as the bishop of Mount Kenya East (1975–1990) and of Kirinyaga (1990–1996) there was phenomenal church growth in these two dioceses. As evangelism was his first priority, he led many missions in African universities. These initiatives were creatively combined with development, theological education, liturgical renewal, and the encouragement of women's ordination (Kirigia 2002b). He served for many years as chairman of the Provincial Board of Theological Education in the Anglican Church of Kenya. He served four times as chair of the National Council of Churches of Kenya, and acted as a mediator between the international Evangelical and Ecumenical movements. He also served as chairman of the board of St. Paul's United Theological College, now St Paul's University, Limuru. He was a member of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission from 1983–1990 (Keyas 2005).

In 1983 he was awarded an honorary degree, Doctor of Divinity (DD), by Asbury Seminary, Ohio, USA. In 1997, he was elected as the third African Archbishop of the Anglican Province of Kenya and the Bishop of Nairobi where he served till 2002 when he finally retired (Gitari 1996b:10). During his tenure as the Anglican Archbishop of Kenya, Gitari revived training institutions, especially the Anglican Theological Education by Extension (TEE) program, which was floundering in many diocese, and with the help of grants from Trinity Church, New York, he helped set up the Anglican website so that all dioceses could have access to an Internet service. This made communication and networking easier. With such achievements it is no wonder that in his enthronement speech of 22 September 2002, Benjamin Nzimbi, the fourth Kenyan African archbishop and Bishop of All Saints diocese, paid tribute to his predecessor, Dr. David Gitari, for his bold leadership, vowing to follow in his footsteps. Archbishop Nzimbi also quoted a Kiswahili poem praising Dr Gitari: "*Gitari ni hodari. Gitari ni daktari. Gitari ni jemedari. Gitari ni hatari*" (Gitari is bold. Gitari is a doctor. Gitari is an army commander. Gitari is dangerous) (Keyas 2005). Following the regime change in December 2002, the new president, Mwai Kibaki, in 2003, gave him one of the highest state honors, the Moran of the Burning Spear (MBS), for his dedicated services to the Republic of Kenya (Gitari 2005).

#### **THE BISHOP OF MOUNT KENYA EAST (1975–1991) AND THE STATE**

Following his election as the Bishop of Mount Kenya East in 1975, Gitari concentrated most of his energies in bringing up his newborn

diocese, which had less than 20 parishes and clergy.<sup>1</sup> Following the death of President Jomo Kenyatta on 22 August 1978, the new president, Daniel arap Moi, appeared to have started well, encouraging the nation to preserve their environment by planting trees, telling the nation to use family planning, and encouraging respect and care for the elderly, children, disabled, and other marginals of society. He even introduced a new philosophy—the *Njayo* philosophy of Peace, Love, and Unity—which Gitari and other church leaders of the time found compatible with the New Testament.

However things took a turn for the worse when a fresh alertness towards government matters began to emerge after the constitutional amendment of 1982 that made Kenya a *de jure* one-party state not long after, the attempted coup of 1 August 1982. Subsequent constitutional amendments consolidating the power of the executive did not make matters any better—as the state became very intolerant of dissenting voices. As a result, some of these dissenters were abducted and killed, others were jailed or detained without trial.

#### **THE RELEVANCE OF GITARI'S APPROACH TO CHURCH MINISTRY**

Gitari's approach to church ministry was prophetic and contextual and hence was relevant. Gitari took the Bible as authoritative in his context where it is translated in the local Gikuyu language. Knowing his audience, which was liberally influenced by the Christian teachings, was a big plus for Gitari as he spoke his political mind through the use of expository sermons, faithfully interpreted from the Biblical texts. For example, when decrying the grabbing of Kamuruana Hill, a public property entrusted to Kirinyaga County Council, by two local politicians who called their company Jimka and Jaken, Gitari went to the nearby Holy Trinity Church, Mutuma, in 1991, and picked the relevant text of I Kings 21:1–29, and then asked his congregation, according to the title of his sermon, “Was There No Naboth to Say No?” (Gitari 1996b:16). As a characteristic method, such an approach would always stir his audience to think and apply the evil King Ahab to the land-grabbers of their day.

Another example is his decrying of a government crackdown on *Mwakenya* political dissidents—a group of people who were said to be releasing pamphlets that were criticizing the excesses of the state. Gitari noted that most of the suspects, who were taken to court at odd hours, were innocent Kenyans, who were tortured and forced to confess that they were involved in clandestine activities, were subsequently sentenced by compromised judges, and were finally jailed on trumped up

charges. In such situations Gitari, in his sermons, would urge people not to conform to the patterns of this world no matter the persecutions (cf. Romans 12:1–2) (Gitari 1996b:54). This reliance on the Bible confirms its centrality in African Christianity and is shown by its wide translation, being “the most widely read book in tropical Africa” (Mugambi 1995:142).

Gitari used an all-inclusive approach in his ministry (1986–1991). One day, in early 1991, he invited everyone who was interested to pray for a return to a multiparty political system to assemble at St. Thomas’ Church, Kerugoya. As I observed, the “prayer session” included a “who’s who” of the opposition politics of the time! I remember in 1987 when, as my bishop, he invited Hon. Nahashon Njuno, the then Kirinyaga East member of Parliament for what is now the Gichugu constituency, to speak to a congregation in my local Emmanuel Church, Mutira, and to greet the congregation even when the government had barred him through the local KANU Branch from speaking in public. By “breaking the law”, Gitari was trying to tell the Kenyan authorities that “no-one has a right to deny you the right to freedom of speech and association.” Gitari was trying to guard against any form of societal fragmentation, as being united is far better than being divided when we have a common cause.

Gitari saw to the production of a Christian hymnbook, *Nyimbo Cia Gucanjamura Ngoro* (literally meaning, “songs to warm the heart”), with ancestral melodies that clearly reflected the local context. In so doing, he led the Christians in owning the Gospel as their word that was delivered to them through their ancestors who used to sing happily. Gitari’s use of ancestral resources compares with Wole Soyinka’s proposal on the way forward with regard to handling reconciliation in Africa—where one of his resources is that of religious myth. Specifically Soyinka turns to his ancestral Yoruba pantheon and to their rituals and mythology. In this, the gods come down to the mortals to oversee the atonement festival, reminding them of the necessity for atonement and forgiveness (Soyinka 2000).

Gitari used antiphony to take his audience with him. To drive his point home, he had a unique way of keeping the crowd together. For example, whenever he made a “sensitive” comment, he would ask the crowd, “*Mugukiigua? Mugukionai?*” (literally, “Did you hear? Did you see?” or “Are you traveling with me?”). And the ever-enthusiastic audience would automatically note the seriousness of the matter under discussion and respond in unison: “*Tugukiiguai, Tugukionai*” (literally, “We have heard, we have seen”).

When the Pentecostal wave threatened to entice Gitari’s church members, and suspected government agents were releasing leaflets to

discredit him and the church in general, he responded by coining a sloganeering song that was sung thus:

<i>Ona ni kure mbura</i>	Even if it rains
<i>Ona ya kiboboto</i>	Even if it is heavy flooding
<i>Kana ya micumari</i>	Even if it rains nails
<i>Kanitha ndikoima</i>	I will never abandon the church
<i>Kanitha nii ndikoimai</i>	I vow never to ever abandon my church
<i>Kanitha ndikoma</i>	I will stick to my church
<i>Ona ni kure mbura</i>	Even if it rains
<i>Ona ya kiboboto</i>	Even if it is heavy flooding
<i>Kana ya micumari</i>	Even if it rains nails
<i>Kanitha ndikoima</i>	I will never abandon the Church

By the word “church” Gitari, though an Ecumenist, was referring to his own Anglican Church of Kenya. Raining nails referred to the state persecutions that the church was undergoing as a result of the uncompromising stand that he had taken on matters of social justice at the local and the national levels. Like John in his book of Revelation (1–4), Gitari was simply telling his audience (in Swahili), “*Vumilia mateso ya sasa. Ni ya muda tu! Tuzo la baadaye ni kubwa*” (Persevere through the persecution that you are encountering now. It is only for a while. You will be crowned with abounding victory later. So stand firm).

By Gitari cautioning his audience not to abandon the church, he was telling his local Kirinyaga Diocese first and the nation as a whole through the media, that they should not allow themselves to be carried away. So whether Pentecostal churches are making big waves with their “new gospel” should not make Christians lose their focus. And since some were supporting the government and arguing that Gitari was doing politics rather than “preaching the Word of God,” it made them increase in membership—as some were convinced that the church could never be involved in politics. In his retirement (since 2002), Gitari has watched some leaders of these Pentecostal churches declaring their intentions to vie for elective posts in the governance of the nation, after some of them had opposed his crusade for a *laissez-faire* society for all. Hence he used the Gikuyu proverb, *Murimi tiwe murei*, meaning, “He who tills the land is not the one who eats.”

Gitari would tell stories in the pulpit that were always relevant and compatible with his chosen Biblical text. In these stories, Gitari would use figurative and symbolic language. He would sometimes tell stories of personified animals. At other times, he would tell stories of natural objects, for example, the competition between the Sun and the Wind. In general, storytelling is a means of communication that links the history of a people from their origins to the present. It is also one of the major

forms of informal education in Africa, and is indispensable as a means of illustrating an important message in the context of Africa. Storytelling as a traditional art creates above all, a deep sense of friendship and community. This finds a parallel in the Bible, which is a collection of stories told about a people, namely the Israelites and the disciples of Jesus.

He would use storytelling in communicating the “sensitive” messages, because it was a way of educating the masses without necessarily causing lots of legal conflicts with the local government who were always trailing him for the wrong reasons. For as Anthony Balcomb (2000:50) says,

Stories are the domain of all human beings who want not only to make sense of life but [also] to open up all sorts of possibilities in life. This is because we do not only tell stories about what does happen but also about what could happen. We challenge ourselves to greater possibilities, unknown in practice but known in the imagination by asking ourselves the question “What if?”

His was a continuous story in instalments “told with even more frequent use of the copula than the Bible itself” (Knighton quoted in Gitari and Knighton 2001:247). Indeed, “the Bible is the only universal literature [that] Kenyans possess, telling the same stories, with all their contestable teleological possibilities, in all the main vernaculars” (Lonsdale 1999:222). Thus, Gitari’s prophetic approach is worth paying attention to, considering that the comparative silence of the church during the Kibaki era did not help in stopping the ethnopolitical violence after the 27 December 2007 elections.

#### CRITIQUE OF GITARI’S MODEL

By inviting everyone regardless of race, creed, religion, gender, faith, or color to call for the same national objectives during those turbulent days, Gitari risked making his church look like a mission without borders. In other words, was it church ministry that he was doing? Or was it a matter of inviting both Jews and Gentiles to build the wall (cf. Nehemiah 2)? By the heavy attendance of oppositionist politicians in his “political ministry,” could he have been implying that the gospel is with the opposition and not with the government, and was taking sides between two warring factions rather than reconciling them. Nevertheless, through his all-inclusive approach, the high-handed KANU yielded to the demands of the vast majority of Kenyans who had Gitari and a few church leaders to speak for them as the real voice of the people.

At this juncture, it is critical to appreciate that Gitari’s prophetic ministry is not in isolation, as history is replete with stories of church leaders’

involvement on matters to do with the governance of their respective countries. In Nicaragua, pressure from the Roman Catholic Church led to the collapse of the Sandinista regime. The church was so strong that Cardinal Miguel Obando Bravo, Archbishop of Managua, was a signatory to several peace accords during the 1990 transition. He also influenced the new education system that replaced the Sandinistas. The Roman Catholics also kept the new regime under surveillance. Several times, church leaders complained that the new government tolerated corruption and usurped the cause of justice.

In the Philippines, the Roman Catholic Church hastened the departure of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1987. Interestingly, it is two of Marcos' generals who requested Cardinal Jaime Sin to help topple their iron-fisted ruler, forever reducing the dictator's status from being one of the most powerful of men. Amid rising opposition both from within and outside the government, the national assembly ruled that Marcos had won the 1986 elections. Two of his top generals led a plan to oppose the government. That very night they learned that the government's security services were after them, they called Cardinal Sin, who immediately asked all parishes to support the rebel soldiers. Counting on U.S. support, Marcos staged his own installation ceremony as President, but he got it wrong. The message to the Roman Catholics had sunk in and the protest had become mighty and defiant. He had to leave the country, and yet another repressive regime succumbed to a faith-inspired movement. But Cardinal Sin would not take credit for the regime's collapse. He said simply: "The people cried, and their voice was heard in high heaven" (Sin, quoted in Gathogo 2001:95). A similar case in January 2001 of a popular uprising removed President Joseph Estrada allegedly for being corrupt, when Cardinal Jaime Sin also organized the protests.

To this end, it is critical to appreciate that due to Gitari's consistency in confronting the social injustice besetting the nation, he left an example among the Kenyan churches, which can be referred to as Gitari's model. This is a prophetic ministry where all sins of commission or omission are confronted by church leadership, irrespective of who, or which party, is ruling the country. This was conspicuously missing during the post-Moi era (2002–). Sadly, after Gitari's retirement in 2002, the once vocal church became silent, thereby leaving a huge gaping hole as the likes of the fiery, erstwhile General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Kenya, Revd Mutava Musyimi, resigned to join the government and is now an MP for Gachoka constituency on a ruling party—People's National Union (PNU)—ticket. Protestant church leaders went secular by becoming all manner of administrators and state functionaries. Indeed the church was now seen as supporting the government of President Mwai Kibaki in total disregard of Gitari's

model. But following the unprecedented post-27 December 2007 election violence in a country that has been relatively peaceful in a region that is characterized by conflict, various questions have cropped up.

First, if the church maintained its prophetic voice, as Gitari, Okullu, and Muge, among others, had set as a precedent, would they not have spared the tension that visited the country after the disputed December 2007 elections? Was Gitari's message unheeded by his succeeding church leaders and the nation at large? Is there anything that he failed to do during his time? Or were they expecting the old man to wake up from retirement and revive his model? Or were they waiting for directions from a certain church leader, somewhere?

Nevertheless, following the belated admission on 14 February 2008 by the once vocal Kenyan church leaders, through the umbrella of the National Council of Churches of Kenya, that "we erred as we did not speak with one voice" and "in fact, took sides on the basis of ethnicity", it is critical to appreciate that Gitari's model cannot be put away in Kenya without consequences. Gitari, in his heyday, would always advise his fellow church leaders not to "go very close or very far from the government of the day," as the middle course was "the sure" way of serving the society. In his view, when church leaders "get very close" to the government, their prophetic voice weakens, since they lose their moral authority to challenge injustices in the society, especially where the government was involved. The claims by the Orange Democratic Movement that the government rigged the elections in favor of the incumbent president is such an example, as the post-Gitari church found itself unable to speak either for or against the government. In view of this, Gitari's good news of freedom and social justice could easily be remembered. Thus, the failure by the Kenyan churches to uphold Gitari's model, by being vocal on matters in which politicians misled the nation culminating in the mass displacements after the general elections nearly rendered them irrelevant. One can imagine the outcome if Gitari were still serving as an Archbishop, as he would have continued with his stinging messages, which always called the nation back to its conscience. Gitari's example is thus still relevant in Kenya.

### CONCLUSION

The church in Kenya and Africa at large must thus learn to allow religion to play its prophetic role, as this is one way of avoiding malpractices and extremes such as genocide, which took a million people in Rwanda in 1994. As President Paul Kagame of Rwanda cautioned in early 2008, genocide does not start with a million deaths. It starts with five, then

ten, then fifty, shortly it grows to hundred, then it goes to thousands. By the time you realize what is happening, it has gained a momentum that is wiping out life in villages and communities and is quite out of control. Indeed this drives us to realize the relevance of Gitari's model in post-Moi Kenya, as he would not have watched silently as the nation went tribal.

In sum, this chapter has tried to demonstrate that Gitari's life and work are relevant to modern Kenya for several reasons. First, Gitari himself was a product of interethnic marriage that worked very well. Second, they also show that the post-December 2007 Kenya violence, which is engineered by ethnicity, can be overcome. In adopting Mutaa and her son Mukuva in the family of Gituku, and subsequently becoming a member of the local clan, these Kenyans have shown that they can adapt. Subsequently, Gitari grew up as a Kenyan first rather than being a Kamba or a Gikuyu. In turn, it helped him to appreciate himself as a citizen of the world. Third, a silent church does not buttress modernity. If the post-Moi and post-Gitari church was vocal enough, perhaps the country would not be the way it is today. Fourth, the family is useful for the nation, as its example concurs with the old adage, which says that "if one wants to make a great nation she or he has to focus on families first." Jessie and Samuel played their role exceedingly well, for they introduced Gitari to the God and Father of Jesus and cautioned him not to fear superstitious beliefs or the demons of Karumba valley among other things.

Gitari was inspired to exorcize the demons of Kenyan politics, which he did not fear even when he was threatened with dire consequences. If we strive to make good families that do not exalt ethnicity, the nation can have honest and courageous men and women who would always strive to work for the kingdom of God without "fear or favor". As we surge on towards the new challenges of the twenty-first century, we need to reflect on Gitari's ministry, as a valuable way of understanding the reality of Christian leadership in Africa today. Gitari's model has not been bettered in East African politics.

#### NOTES

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1. By 2007, it had over an hundred parishes and over a hundred clergy.

## CHAPTER 6

# THE CHURCH AND ISLAM: *VYAMA VINGI* (MULTIPARTYISM) AND THE UFUNGAMANO TALKS

JOHN CHESWORTH

### INTRODUCTION

Islam and Christianity have contested with each other in Kenya since Ludwig Krapf's arrival in Mombasa (1844). Krapf was sent by the Church Missionary Society, with a letter of commendation from the Sultan of Zanzibar to the governor. During the British colonial period (1895–1963), Christianity was regarded as having been favored by the colonial authorities and as having gained the ascendancy. Initially, because of their literacy and the decision to use Swahili as the language of administration, Muslims were employed by the British. However, they were superseded by those who had been educated at the Christian mission schools. At independence, Muslims felt that they were regarded as second-class citizens (Kheir 2007:158). On the coastal strip, which was under the control of the Sultan of Zanzibar until 1892, Muslims maintained their own legal system, Kadhi's courts,<sup>1</sup> throughout the colonial period. These were expanded under Jomo Kenyatta, the first president (1964–1978). He signed an agreement with the government of Zanzibar, for the continued existence of Kadhi's courts on the coastal strip. After independence Kadhi's courts were also established in all of

the provinces. Their existence became entrenched in the constitution of the Republic of Kenya. It is of interest to note that Julius Nyerere, the first president of Tanganyika, later Tanzania (1961–1985), also signed a similar agreement to keep Kadhi's courts on the coastal strip. After independence, all the Kadhi's courts on the mainland were closed, a current cause for dissent in Tanzania.

Under the first president, single-party rule was introduced, and from 1969 only members of Kenya African National Union (KANU) could become members of Parliament (MPs). Daniel arap Moi, the second president (1978–2002), became increasingly autocratic, but international pressure in the early 1990s forced the reintroduction of multi-party politics (Swahili, *Vyama Vingi*), by the removal of clause 2A of the current constitution in December 1991, allowing for the registration of opposition parties and multiparty elections in 1992. Moi and KANU retained power following elections in 1992 and 1997, but pressure was put on them by civil society and the churches as well as by international organizations to carry out a review of the constitution. This process was started in 1998 with the passing of the *Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (Amendment) Act*. Religious groups were not convinced that the government would carry the process through with impartiality and continued to speak out. They began the Ufungamano Initiative in 1999, when a coalition of religious groups, meeting at Ufungamano House in Nairobi, agreed to work together to help in the process of forming a new constitution for Kenya.

This chapter examines the attempts by one group of Muslims to register a political party, the Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK) and the actions of one of its major figures, Khalid Balala, and his interaction with the then archbishop, David Gitari, in 1997 at the service to cleanse All Saints' Cathedral, Nairobi. It also examines an aspect of the constitutional review concerning the place of Kadhi's courts in the constitution. The Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (CKRC) and the Ufungamano group were brought together and worked on a draft constitution, but the Muslims withdrew their participation in the process following the objections by Christians to the continued "entrenchment" of Kadhi's courts in the constitution. Archbishop David Gitari's involvement in the Ufungamano process, as well as in the National Constitutional Conference (NCC) held at the Bomas of Kenya, and his responses to the courts "crisis" are also examined. In conclusion, the situation following the contested results of the 2007 elections is examined, especially the purported Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Adullahi Abdi and Raila Odinga, its possible impact on relations between the church

and Islam, and the renewed attempts to create an inter-religious group, the Kenya Thabiti Task Force to examine the elections in the pursuit of truth.

### **VYAMA VINGI (MULTIPARTYISM)**

Following the gaining of independence in December 1963, the first government caused the opposition party, Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) to merge with KANU in 1964, making Kenya a *de facto* one-party state. However, in 1966 Jaramogi Oginga Odinga formed the Kenya People's Union (KPU) after losing the vice-presidency of KANU, returning Kenya to multipartyism, but KPU was proscribed by the government in 1969. Then on 10 June 1982, changes to the Constitution of Kenya were made resulting in a single political party, KANU and it became illegal to stand for the post of president or to be an MP unless you belonged to the party. These changes were enshrined in the Constitution as Section 2A, as well as Sections 5(3)a and 5(5)a, requiring that presidential candidates be KANU members and nominated by the party, and Section 39(1), requiring MPs who left KANU to vacate their seats (Sabar 2002:245).

During the term of the first president, Jomo Kenyatta (1964–1978), and for the first few years of the second president, Daniel arap Moi (1978–2002), the church generally supported the government, or was silent in the face of injustices. However, during the late 1980s, the Anglican Church, then called Church of the Province of Kenya (CPK), found a voice and several bishops, notably David Gitari, Henry Okullo, and Alexander Muge began to speak out. One of the areas that the church spoke out on was electoral procedures and the reintroduction of multipartyism. The 1987 elections had been conducted with voters standing in line behind a picture of their candidate, which was seen as neither free nor fair.

In 1990 under the chairmanship of Prof. George Saitoti, the Vice-President, KANU held an inquiry into multipartyism, the KANU Review Committee, and both Bishop Gitari and Bishop Muge appeared before it to make the case for multipartyism. The committee reported that there was no need for a change to the status quo. Within weeks Bishop Muge was dead due to a road accident and it was suspected that the government had undertaken a political assassination. I heard this accusation made in the presence of the Attorney-General by Mutava Musyimi, General Secretary of NCCCK in 1993, on the occasion of the First Annual Muge Memorial Lecture, given by Archbishop Desmond Tutu at Ufungamano House.

In 1991 the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) published a document, *Kairos for Kenya—The Right Time for Kenya*; Sabar reports that this document

presented as the organization's "reflection" on the KANU Review Committee's recommendations, called among other things for political pluralism and democracy, an end to detention without trial, restricting the president's power to dissolve parliament, limiting his tenure to two terms, speeding up the pace of political reform, and holding a national convention to discuss the future of Kenya ... the "reflection" refrained from calling explicitly for a multiparty political system. The text notes that all the Anglican members of the NCCCK committees who discussed and produced the document did call for multipartyism.

(Sabar 2002:240)

Sabar demonstrates that the Anglicans were still actively agitating for multipartyism, while other member churches of NCCCK were not. The multi-ethnic identity of the Anglican Church may well have propelled them into taking this stronger stand.

The relevant sections of the Constitution were deleted on 10 December 1991. This decision was forced on KANU following the outcry of the church, together with international pressure, notably the decision of the Paris Club (consisting of the leaders of major Western countries), which in August "deferred consideration of Kenya's request for financial support for six months pending the introduction of economic and political reforms" (Sabar 2002:245).

#### **THE ISLAMIC PARTY OF KENYA'S ATTEMPTS AT REGISTRATION<sup>2</sup>**

Following the legislative change, many groups attempted to register as political parties. The Registrar's office was dilatory in processing many applications and in some cases turning them down. Parties that seemingly had an ethnic, religious, or geographical basis, were consistently rejected, as they were perceived to go against the ethos of a secular nation-state.

One group that has never been registered is the Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK), which was started in Mombasa in January 1992, following the return of multipartyism. The founding members included Omar Mwinyi (a primary school teacher), chairman; Abdulrahman Wandati (a madrasa teacher), secretary; and Taib Ali Taib (a lawyer), a member, all from Mombasa. Esha Mwinyihaji reports that:

it was a popular movement in Mombasa island, especially in areas like Old Town, Majengo, Mwembe Tayari. That is in areas with [a] large population of Arab-Swahili descent. Especially in 1992, we had *da'wa* groups of men and women moving from one sub-location to another, or [in] mosques *da'wa* that were meant to sensitize people on the course of IPK. (Mwinyihaji 2008)<sup>3</sup>

The committee applied to the government for the registration of the IPK, but this was refused; according to Adams Oloo, it was “denied registration on the grounds [that] it was espousing religious fanaticism in Kenya’s secular state” (Oloo 2007:99). In May 1992, members of IPK attended an assembly of opposition parties and gained support from leaders, such as Oginga Odinga, who publicly supported their registration as a political party (Oded 2000:150). However, many Muslims viewed this public wooing of the IPK as a ploy to elicit Muslim votes for the opposition.

#### KHALID BALALA AND THE IPK

It was around this time that Shaikh Khalid Balala, a Muslim street preacher, began to be involved with the IPK. As it is Balala’s connection with Archbishop Gitari that is examined in this section, it is helpful to know something more about Balala. The following is drawn from Arye Oded who studied Balala in his book *Islam and Politics in Kenya* (2000) and from discussions with Kenyans who were present in Mombasa in the early 1990s, as well as an eyewitness account from the Service of Cleansing at All Saints’ Cathedral, Nairobi in 1997.

Khalid Balala was born in 1958 in Mombasa, the son of Salim ibn Ahmad and Fatuma Sadik bin Salim. His father was originally from Yemen and ran a butcher’s shop. Balala grew up in Madaraka, on Mombasa Island, and between 1965 and 1973 attended Serani Primary School and then Allidina Visram High School. In 1975 he went on a pilgrimage to Mecca and stayed in Saudi Arabia for the next ten years. While there he studied Islam at the University of Medina and made a living by selling religious books. In 1985 he left Saudi Arabia and traveled, first to Britain and then to India. In Britain he took a business management course and when he went on to India, he studied for a course in Islam and comparative religion. It seems that he then decided that he wanted to use the knowledge of business and Islam that he had acquired to “sell” and disseminate Islam (Oded 2000:149; Oluoch *The East African* 1 November 2005). Fred Oluoch further reports that in the years that Balala was away from Kenya, he

worked out of the country, mainly in Yemen and Saudi Arabia, where he held various positions—as a salesman, an administrator and a preacher. But because of his rapport with Islamic teachings, Sheikh Balala in between got the chance to travel to other countries such as Japan, Germany and the US as a preacher, though he maintained that he used to visit his extended family in Kenya every year.

(Oluoch *The East African* 1 November 2005)

It should be noted that Oluoch's claim that Balala worked in the Yemen disagrees with a statement by the Yemeni ambassador to Kenya, made in June 1997, that Balala had never visited Yemen (*Weekly Review* 13 June 1997:11).

In 1990 he returned to Kenya and became a street preacher based at Mwembe Tayari on Mombasa Island. Initially, very little notice was taken of him. His preaching included the following themes:

- Strict observance of Islamic practices, especially daily prayers
- Islamic education and the setting up of Muslim Schools
- Tourism corrupted the morals of Muslims, who were imitating foreign attire and frequenting bars and discotheques
- Women should dress modestly and keep themselves "pure"
- The importance of *shari'ah*, but only for Muslims
- Islam does not differentiate between religion and state

(Oded 2000:150)

With the advent of multipartyism, Balala argued for the registration of IPK and his preaching became more political and critical of the government. He also criticized Muslims who involved themselves with KANU.

It was around this time that he joined the IPK. Oded regards his arrival as having sidelined the party's founders as Balala becoming the focus, his charismatic presentation bringing him many followers (Oded 2000:150). The IPK became more radical with its supporters, especially the youth, clashing with security forces. Oded suggests that Balala exercised control through threats and violence and that he received financial and moral support from Sudanese and other Arab sources as well as from Iranian sources (Oded 2000:152). In August 1992, Balala and the IPK youth were involved in protests during the President's visit to Mombasa. These protests were vigorously put down by police and General Service Units (GSUs). Multiparty elections took place in December 1992, and IPK's support for the opposition was seen in the results in Mombasa. IPK publicly backed the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy-Kenya (FORD-Kenya), who subsequently won two seats out of the four

constituencies on and adjoining Mombasa Island, while KANU and the Democratic Party won only one seat each.

In 1993 the government began a strategy to woo Muslims back to KANU and in May the United Muslims of Africa (UMA) group was founded. Its leaders were black African Muslims and included Shaikh Swalih Ali and Omar Masumbuko from the KANU Youth League and Emmanuel Maitha (Oded 2000:159). The response from Balala and the IPK was to call a general strike in Mombasa, which is reported as having been largely effective.

During this time it seems that most Christians were suspicious of Balala and his activities. However, Kenneth Maina,<sup>4</sup> who was working as an evangelist, with the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) in Mombasa during this period reports that when the government was applying particular pressure on Balala, he received support from a PCEA pastor in Mombasa. This has not been substantiated from Muslim sources in Mombasa, who regarded the churches as being suspicious of Balala and IPK, and thought that the churches saw IPK as an attempt at “Islamizing” Kenya (Mwinyihaji 2008). During 1993 Balala became more extreme in his pronouncements and began to issue *fatwas* against people including KANU MP Sharif Nassir and Emmanuel Maitha of UMA (*Nation* 17 May 93). Maitha went into hiding, but both he and Balala were arrested and held for questioning for a few days (Oded 2000:156). This was followed in June and July 1993 by unrest between members of the IPK and UMA and a further demonstration against the planned visit of the president to Mombasa. Tensions mounted and the *Weekly Review* reported that Balala had announced that he had recruited suicide bombers (*Weekly Review* 4 June 1993:13–14). Oded reports that IPK youth threw petrol bombs at the KANU branch in Mombasa and that the UMA youth demonstrated and threw petrol bombs at Balala’s house (Oded 2000:156).

Balala became increasingly outspoken against the President and “the only person to give the president nightmares” (Oded 2000:149). In May 1994 a planned demonstration to remember the May 1992 riots was banned by the District Commissioner. However, despite the ban, 200 activists attended, and were dispersed by rubber bullets (*Nation* 25 May, 1994). In June 1994, Balala was expelled from the IPK and in September, the IPK supported a fatwa issued by the UMA against Balala.

In late 1994, Balala traveled to Germany where, in April 1995, he presented himself at the Kenyan Embassy to renew his passport. He was informed that his passport was canceled by the Kenyan government as he held a Yemeni passport, and dual citizenship was illegal in Kenya. Balala appealed against the decision but this appeal was rejected.

With elections due at the end of 1997, Balala wanted to be in Kenya. In early 1997, having been given documents by the German government (Oluoch *The East African* 1 November, 2005), Balala flew to Nairobi. However, he was recognized at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport and was deported to Germany. Balala took legal action and the High Court raised doubts over the cancellation of his passport. This was supported by a statement from the Yemeni ambassador to Kenya in June 1997 that although Balala's father was from the Yemen, Balala himself had never visited the country (*Weekly Review* 13 June 1997:11). Mounting international publicity and increasing public disorder may have been factors in the government's allowing Balala to return in July 1997.

Groups in opposition to the Moi regime called for a rally at Uhuru Park in central Nairobi on 7 July 1997.<sup>5</sup> When they tried to meet, despite all such rallies having been banned, the police and GSU attacked them, firing rubber bullets and beating people with their batons. Many people fled for sanctuary to All Saints' Anglican Cathedral on the edge of the park, but the GSU then went inside the cathedral, fired tear gas, and continued to beat people.

Police threw tear gas canisters inside the Cathedral and then moved in wielding truncheons. An elderly opposition MP and several dozen other individuals bled profusely as other victims groaned with pain in the pews.

The provost of All Saints, Peter Njoka, who was conducting a prayer service when police stormed the Cathedral, described the police action as "the height of moral degeneration."

"This is hardly the action of a government that professes Christianity," he said.

Altogether, it has been reported that ten people died, including one policeman, and scores of others were injured in various parts of Kenya as police using tear gas, truncheons, rubber bullets and live ammunition broke up demonstrations calling for democratic reform.

(Anglican Communion News Service [ACNS] 11 July 1997:1285b)

Images of the violence inside the cathedral were shown by media throughout the world and caused an international outcry that brought about widespread condemnation.

Canon Enos Ashimala, the Provincial Secretary of the Church of the Province of Kenya, said that as a result of the attack, the Cathedral had been desecrated, and all services [were] suspended until Sunday 13 July, when a ceremony of cleansing will be held.

(ACNS 11 July 1997:1285b)

When the “cleansing service” was held at All Saints’ Cathedral on Sunday 13 July 1997, it was reported by Jonathan Njeru,<sup>6</sup> who was present at the service, that Khalid Balala was in the congregation and that Archbishop David Gitari acknowledged his presence to applause.

At that point in July 1997, following the brutal suppression of anyone in opposition to the government, it could be said that Balala and Gitari were in accord as to the need to unite against a common foe. That is to say that both Muslim and Christian activists saw a greater danger in the corrupt nature of the state and the abuses of power by the President than in their mutual antipathy.

### THE UFUNGAMANO INITIATIVE

Resulting from the pressure that the church and civil society had put on the government, during the 1997 election campaign, which led to concessions being made. Following the elections of 1997 the Government of Kenya announced that the Constitution of Kenya would undergo a comprehensive review. The new parliament subsequently passed the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (Amendment) Act of 1998. This established the CKRC, with a membership appointed by a Parliamentary Select Committee. As the process was parliament-led, the establishment of CKRC was viewed with suspicion by many organizations in civil society (Andreassen & Tostensen 2006:1).

The President was defensive about the Constitutional Review process and in February 1998 attacked church leaders.

The Kenyan head of state was addressing a public meeting in Eldoret on 20th February, ... he said the churches had been on a smear campaign against the government and were now “curiously joining the many shady and illegal groups opposed to the formation of a Constitutional Review Commission”. He said that that this was a betrayal of Christian doctrine. President Moi’s attack came closely after several church organisations had issued a hard-hitting statement which criticised the Kenyan government.

(ACNS 10 March 1998 1545)

In December 1999 various civic organizations initiated the Ufungamano Initiative. This was a “faith-based” group, named after the building where the initiative was launched, Ufungamano House (the Christian Students’ Leadership Centre), which is jointly owned by the NCCCK, the umbrella organization for the Protestant churches, and the Kenya Episcopal Conference (KEC), the umbrella organization for the Roman Catholic church. The membership of this group was drawn from different faith groups, including

the Catholic Church, member churches of the NCKC, the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) and the Hindu Council of Kenya. In June 2000 they announced the formation of a People's Commission, which would draw up its own proposals for the Constitution.

It could be said that the establishing of the People's Commission impelled the government to start the long-expected process of establishing an official commission. The Parliamentary Select Committee on Constitutional Reform guided an Enabling Act through Parliament in October 2000, the Constitution of Kenya Review Act, under which the 15-member Constitution of Kenya Review Commission headed by Prof. Yash Pal Ghai was established (CKRC 2002b:2).

### **SOUTH "B" RIOTS AND ARCHBISHOP DAVID GITARI'S INTERVENTION**

At the end of 2000, there was an outbreak of violence in a suburb of Nairobi. On Thursday 30 November, fighting broke out when Muslim youth objected to hawkers (street traders) setting up their kiosks too close to a mosque. In the ensuing fight, the mosque was burned down. On Friday 1 December, Muslim youth from all parts of the city arrived in the suburb and surrounded a Roman Catholic church, Our Lady of Peace, and attacked it and then burnt it down. As this confrontation developed, Archbishop Gitari visited the site together with other religious leaders in an attempt to calm things down. When the visitors were identified, they were pelted with rocks and the Archbishop was injured; at this point the Muslim leaders surrounded him in order to protect him and allow him to be taken to hospital for treatment (ACNS 4 December 2000, 2319).

The government was implicated in supporting the violence. Cathy Majtenyi reported it as follows:

The conflict in South "B" actually started when Muslim officials and youths attempted to put a fence around land they owned near their mosque, telling traders from the nearby slum, who had built their kiosks in the area, to vacate the land. The traders, in turn, claimed that the government land office had allocated the plots to them. A mob of traders and slum-dwellers gathered and surrounded the Muslims, and threatened to burn the mosque. But police blocked the youth attempting to guard the mosque while traders broke into the mosque and started the fire, says [Zein] Abubakar [Ufungamano commissioner]. "When the mob burned the mosque the police were watching and laughing." And [the next day], when the driver of Gitari's car ran to police standing nearby to tell them that the mob was going to kill the Anglican archbishop, a police inspector said, "What did he come to do here? Let him be killed," reports Abubakar.

“We think there was a third force,” says Abubakar. “This third force was organised by the Kenyan Intelligence.” He says he recognised one of the main inciters of violence on the Muslim side as being a policeman attired in Muslim dress. At first, government and political party leaders appealed for calm and told people not to interpret the conflict as a religious war. However, several days later, Cabinet Minister Shariff Nassir told Muslim youth to “hit back with greater force if they are provoked.”

(Majtenyi 2000)

This incident did not develop into further violence, showing that the Muslim leaders, in protecting the Archbishop from further injury were showing unity in the face of violence and attempts to disrupt the united front of the religious groups. Two weeks after the violence, the Archbishop issued a clarification, emphasizing that the violence had been between the hawkers and Muslim youth and that Christian youth had not been involved as had been originally claimed (ACNS 14 December 2000, 2328).

#### **JOINT PROCESS BETWEEN CKRC AND THE PEOPLE’S COMMISSION**

Yash Pal Ghai, as head of CKRC, insisted on a joint process with the Ufungamano Initiative’s People’s Commission. In March 2001, agreement was reached on the merger of the commissions, and in June 2001, the Constitution of Kenya Review Act was amended to increase the membership of the CKRC by including ten members from the People’s Commission and two nominees of the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Constitution (CKRC 2000a:2).

The report of the CKRC published in September 2002 explained the processes of public hearings held throughout Kenya from December 2001 to August 2002:

The Commission began Listening to the People public hearings in Nairobi and provincial capitals in early December 2001. Hearings continued in Nairobi until the end of July 2002. From late April to early August 2002, the Commission visited every constituency for hearings, in panels of five or three commissioners, spending two days in every constituency and three days in the larger constituencies. Altogether 35,015 submissions were received, many from organised groups, like political parties, religious communities, professional organisations, trade unions, NGOs, and ethnic communities, so that through formal hearings and memoranda, millions of Kenyans, throughout the country and overseas, have spoken to the Commission.

(CKRC 2002b:4)

David Kanyoni, now an Anglican priest in the Diocese of Nyahururu, whilst undertaking research for his Master of Arts in Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations at St. Paul's University, Limuru, made an examination of the submissions made by Muslims and he reports:

During the constitutional review process, the CKRC received a number of submissions expressing the need for the expansion and reform of the jurisdiction and structures of the Kadhi's courts, primarily from the Muslim communities. Muslims claimed that they should be properly integrated into the national legal system. Most specifically, the Muslim Communities asked the review commission to ensure that there were enough Kadhi's courts; and that the jurisdiction be extended to civil and commercial matters. These recommendations received considerable opposition from some Christian quarters.

Regarding their proposals to expand the Kadhi's courts, the Muslims cited a number of inadequacies in the current constitution, which needed redress. They felt, for example, the role of the Kadhi or the Chief Kadhi as an assessor in the High Court is not given the weight that their contribution deserves. The procedure of appointment of Kadhis was also questioned. The Muslims also expressed the need to codify into legislation the Muslim personal law on marriage, divorce, inheritance and succession. They also disputed the need for the Kadhis to observe the guidance of the Evidence Act and the Civil Procedure Act, which according to them contradict the Muslim evidentiary law. The Muslim's also advocated the need to legislate relevant terms of service for the Chief Kadhi and all the Kadhis.

(Kanyoni 2006:6)

The publication of the report and a draft constitution was followed by a series of National Constitutional Conferences (NCCs) held at the Bomas of Kenya on the outskirts of Nairobi. Because of the location, they became known as Bomas I–III. These three conferences produced the Bomas Draft Constitution.

The Bomas I conference lasted from April to June 2003, Bomas II from August until September 2003 and Bomas III, which finalized the "Bomas draft constitutional Bill", lasted from January until March 2004. Around 630 representatives from locally elected bodies, members of selected non-governmental organizations and all members of parliament attended the Bomas conferences.

(Andreassen & Tostensen, 2006:2)

The proceedings became increasingly acrimonious and it was during Bomas III that some of the members nominated through the Ufungamano

Initiative withdrew and Mutava Musimyi, General Secretary of NCCCK, resigned as a commissioner. One contentious issue led to the collapse of the multi-faith aspect of the Ufungamano Initiative, that is, the place of Islamic Law within the Constitution of Kenya.

### KADHI'S COURTS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE<sup>7</sup>

*Shari'ah* has a long history in East Africa as the system of dealing with legal decisions, which led to the formalizing of the Kadhi's courts during the British colonial period. In the Islamic world-view, religion and politics are regarded as being inextricably intertwined and inseparable. This means that from an Islamic perspective, the legal system is closely linked with both politics and religion. The basis of jurisprudence is known as *usul al-fiqh* (the roots of the law). The two primary sources are the Qur'an and the Hadith, followed by *qiyas* (analogy), *ijma* (consensus), and *ijtihad* (reasoning). Within Islam, various schools of law (*maddhab*) developed. Within Sunni Islam, there are four. These schools of law developed their own means of interpreting the basis of law. Within East Africa, most Sunni Muslims follow the Shafi'i School. However, with numbers of Muslim students studying in Sudan, Morocco, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, the ideas of other schools are being introduced into East Africa, notably of the Maliki and Hanbali Schools.

Increasingly, Wahhabist ideas are being introduced; these have been drawn from the premise that the schools of law are a late innovation and that Muslims should follow what the Qur'an and Hadith expound more closely. In particular, Muslims should observe how Muhammad, as both a spiritual and temporal leader, lived and dealt with issues. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia follows Wahhabi ideas, as do many revivalist or reformist groups such as *tabligh* and the Taliban, seeking a return to the ideal Islamic State of Muhammad's Medina.

In Kenya, the *'ulama* tries to create a conformist society, following the teaching and practices of the Shafi'i School of Law. The postindependence government made decisions that were based on retaining the status quo in certain aspects of law. Arye Oded summarizes the history of Islamic law in East Africa in colonial times as follows:

As early as the 1895 agreement between the sultan of Zanzibar and the British government, which laid out the arrangements by which the British would rule the coastal strip, the British promised to preserve the "Islamic way of life." Therefore, during British rule in Kenya, a law was proclaimed (the East African Order in Council, 1897) under which a triple court system was set up: common courts, native courts, and

Islamic shari'a courts. When both parties to a dispute were Muslims, Islamic law was applied, but when the case was between a Muslim and a non-Muslim, common law was used. In the 1931 Court Ordinance, the authority of the shari'a courts was limited to matters of personal status of Muslims—inheritance, marriage, divorce, and waqf affairs. On the eve of independence, Governor Sir James Robertson was sent to Kenya to examine the prospective arrangements after independence and, following his recommendations, an agreement was signed in 1963 between the British government and the sultan [of Zanzibar] that would maintain the authority of the chief qadi and the shari'a courts in independent Kenya as in colonial times, with Islamic law applying in matters of personal status when both parties to a dispute were Muslims, and common law when only one party was a Muslim.

The subject of Muslims and the law was raised at the Constitutional Conference in London. Muslim leaders feared that in independent Kenya, under a Christian government, they would not be able to continue to live under Islamic law. On the coast, a political movement, the Mwambao United Front, was formed primarily to protect Muslim religious interests. The movement sent two prominent Muslims to the conference in London, Shaikh A. Nasir and Q. S. Basadiq. These representatives emphasized in their arguments before the conference that Muslims should be regarded as a "distinct social group," and they even requested that [they] be granted autonomy or be allowed to join Zanzibar.

(Oded 2000:89–90)

At the time of Kenyan independence, Kadhi's courts were in operation on the coast—the 'ten-mile strip' that the Sultanate had ceded to the British in 1895.

A. A. An-Na'im, in *Islamic Family Law in a Changing World*, summarizes the legal situation of Islamic law in East Africa as follows:

Under the British Protectorate, Kenya had parallel legal systems with African courts applying customary law, and appeals lying with the African Appeal Court, then with the District Officer and then a Court of Review. Muslim personal law was applied by Courts of *Liwalis*, *Mudirs* and *Qadis*, with appeals lying with the Supreme Court (renamed the High Court after independence). The process of integrating the judicial system began in 1962, when powers of administrative officers to review African Courts' proceedings were transferred to magistrates. The process was completed by the passage of two acts in 1967. The Magistrates' Courts Act 1967 abolished African Courts and the Court of Review and established District and Resident Magistrates' Courts and a High Court. The *Qadis*' Courts Act 1967 established six *Qadis*' Courts for the application of Muslim personal status law.

(2002:54)

He then goes on to explain the decisions made by the Government of Kenya since independence. The 1967 Kadhi's Courts Act established the present system of courts, extending them to all the provinces of Kenya.

Islamic law is applied by *Qadis'* Courts, where "all the parties profess the Muslim religion" in suits relating to "questions of Muslim law relating to personal status, marriage, divorce or inheritance." There are eight *Qadis'* Courts in Kenya, presided over by a Chief *Qadi* or a *qadi* appointed by the Judicial Services Commission. Appeals to the High Court, [are conducted] sitting with the Chief *Qadi* or two other *qadis* as assessor(s).

(An-Na'im 2002:55)

An-Na'im also refers to the place of Kadhi's Courts within the Constitution and the constitutional status of Islamic law in postcolonial Kenya:

The Constitution was adopted on 12 December 1963, and has been amended several times, most notably in 1964, when Kenya became a republic, and in 1991, when a multiparty system was restored. The Constitution does not provide for any official state religion. Article 66(1) to (5) provides for the establishment of *Qadis'* Courts.

(An-Na'im 2002:55)

This sets out the present situation concerning Islamic law in Kenya. From this, it is clear that much that is proposed in the draft constitution is already in existence either within the present constitution or under the 1967 Kadhi's Courts Act.

If this is the case, what is the cause of the discord and concern within the Christian community? Tracing the relevant paragraphs in the Constitution of Kenya (1992) and the various drafts that were produced during the review process, it is possible to see the significance of the place of Kadhi's courts as one of the factors leading to the rejection of the new constitution in the referendum held in November 2005. The Constitution of Kenya (1992) contains several paragraphs that set out the place of Kadhi's courts within the judicial system of Kenya:

**Constitution of Kenya—Revised Edition (1998) 1992**

66. Kadhi's Courts.

1. There shall be a Chief Kadhi and such number, not being less than three, of other Kadhis as may be pro-scribed by or under an Act of Parliament.
2. A person shall not be qualified to be appointed to hold or act in the office of Kadhi unless—

- a. he professes the Muslim religion; and
  - b. he possesses such knowledge of the Muslim law applicable to any sect or sects of Muslims as qualifies him, in the opinion of the Judicial Service Commission, to hold a Kadhi's court.
3. Without prejudice to section 65 (1), there shall be such subordinate courts held by Kadhis as Parliament may establish and each Kadhi's court shall, subject to this Constitution, have such jurisdiction and powers as may be conferred on it by any law.
  4. The Chief Kadhi and the other Kadhis, or the Chief Kadhi and such of the other Kadhis (not being less than three in number) as may be prescribed by or under an Act of Parliament, shall each be empowered to hold a Kadhi's court having jurisdiction within the former Protectorate or within such part of the former Protectorate as may be so prescribed: Provided that no part of the former Protectorate shall be outside the jurisdiction of some Kadhi's court.

The jurisdiction of a Kadhi's court shall extend to the determination of questions of Muslim law relating to personal status, marriage, divorce or inheritance in proceedings in which all the parties profess the Muslim religion.

The Ufungamano Initiative attempted to involve the religious communities in the process. It did serve to sensitize the religious community, although it also encouraged the divisive strategy of the government of the time, with some religious leaders being recruited by the government to its cause and others being outspoken in criticism of the government and the need for constitutional change.

#### **REACTIONS TO THE CKRC DRAFT**

When CKRC began to discuss details of the place of Islamic Law within the Constitution of Kenya, various church leaders began to question its presence there. The CKRC draft stated<sup>8</sup>:

The Kadhis' courts

- 199(1) There are established Kadhis' Courts the office of Chief Kadhi; office of Senior Kadhi and the office of Kadhi.
- (2) There shall be a number being not less than thirty, of other Kadhis as may be prescribed by the Act of Parliament.
- (3) A Kadhi is empowered to hold a Kadhis' court called a District Kadhi Court, having jurisdiction within a district or districts as may be prescribed by, or under, an Act of Parliament.

The appointment of Kadhis by the Judicial Services Commission had been a point of contention for members of the Law Society of Kenya,

as they could not be certain that those who were appointed as Kadhis were sufficiently trained in the law of Kenya, so as not to infringe on the rights of people appearing in the Kadhi's courts. This was addressed in the CKRC draft in which it was stated that new appointments to the bench of Kadhis would have to be doubly qualified in both Islamic law as well as in the law of Kenya and to have practised law for at least five years. This was seen by some Muslims as being biased against them when compared to ordinary lawyers who were only required to qualify in one discipline.

Some Muslims had doubts about the presence of Kadhi's courts in the constitution. The reason for this is the Kadhis and the courts are funded by the government, through the Judicial Services Commission, leading to the view that they must also be controlled by the state. This idea can be taken further, arguing that as the state is secular, the courts cannot be truly Islamic.

The amount of detail that the CKRC draft goes into seems to have been to ensure that the standards of procedure in the courts were raised by ensuring that Kadhis were doubly qualified in both Islamic and Kenyan law; it could perhaps be said that the very great detail actually raised awareness of the existence of Kadhi's courts in the constitution and led to the strong reaction by some groups against its inclusion.

When the Constitutional Review process began, the church seemed to be surprised at the presence of the paragraphs concerning the Kadhi's court in the constitution. When they began to make pronouncements on them they were seemingly unprepared and ill-informed. In early 2003, a meeting was held for clergy of the ACK, at St Stephen's Church, Nairobi, as part of a regular series of meetings organized by Revd Colin Smith, to discuss the proposed constitution. Speeches raising various issues on the draft constitution, including the presence of the Kadhi's courts, were made. I had been specifically invited in order to respond to these concerns. I was able to do so in general terms, primarily referring to the nature of the function of the Kadhi's courts. They deal with family law, that is, cases concerning divorce, custody of children, and inheritance. I was able to emphasize that they had no jurisdiction in criminal law and that they were not, in my opinion, a precursor to the full implementation of *shari'ah* law as had happened in the northern states of Nigeria, beginning in 1999. However, I was also able to raise concerns about the calls for Majimboism (Federalism), which was being promoted by Prof. Ali Mazrui among others at the time, as this could lead to a situation where an individual province within Kenya could opt for introducing a fuller form of Islamic law.

It was also a concern that the NCKC, as the lead player of the Ufungamano Initiative, did not seek advice from the expert sources available from institutions connected to them. Neither Johnson Mbillah, the general adviser of the Program for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa

(PROCMURA), nor myself as the Islamicist on the staff of St. Paul's United Theological College (now St. Paul's University), Limuru, were approached for our views or opinions. When I asked him about why advice had not been sought, Mutava Musimy, then General Secretary of the NCCCK responded, "How could I be sure?" (that he had not consulted with experts for advice on the matter). Sadly, the responses made by the churches showed that they had not been fully briefed, which was surely an opportunity missed.

#### **COLLAPSE OF UFUNGAMANO: THE RISE OF THE KENYA CHURCH AND THE WITHDRAWAL OF MUSLIMS**

Christian leaders had become increasingly uneasy about the place of Kadhi's Courts within the constitution, and one group comprising largely of Pentecostal churches, calling themselves the Kenya Church, published a statement in 2003 attacking the place of the Kadhi's Courts in the constitution and making their recommendation to the Kenya government on this issue. At one point, they said that although these courts were in existence in the current constitution, they could no longer be accommodated, as the draft clearly states the relationship between the state and religion, that there is no state religion (Kanyoni 2004:21). Christian leaders' opposition to Kadhi's courts resulted in the members of SUPKEM resigning from the Ufungamano Steering Committee and withdrawing from the Ufungamano Initiative (*Nation* 23 April 2003).

When the NCC met at Bomas, it reviewed each of the paragraphs in the CKRC draft and drew up its own draft of the constitution. The clauses concerning Kadhi's courts now read:

##### Kadhis' Court

198. (1) There is established the Kadhi's Court.  
 (2) The Kadhi's Court shall—  
 (a) consist of the Chief Kadhi and such number of other kadhis, all of whom profess the Islamic faith; and  
 (b) be organized and administered, as may be prescribed by an Act of Parliament.

##### Jurisdiction of the Kadhis' Court

199. The Kadhis' Court shall be a subordinate court with jurisdiction to determine questions of Islamic law relating to personal status, marriage, divorce and matters consequential to divorce, inheritance and succession in proceedings in which all the parties profess the Islamic faith.

David Kanyoni reports that the discussions on the Kadhi's Courts held in September 2003 were heated:

There have arisen so many conflicts between the Christians and the Muslims. As evidenced in *The People Daily's* article with a subheading: "Kadhi's Courts causes Tension." This tension was raised high amongst delegates as the articles on the Kadhi's Courts got underway with the majority of them opposing the entrenchment. This went even to an extent when the convenor of the technical committee Prof. Kibutha Kibwana warned members against personalising the debate (*People* 19 September 2003:24). On the same article, Hon. Kihara Mwangi, MP Kigumo, fuelled the fire by terming the proposal as discriminatory, confusing and aimed at creating a parallel judicial system. This made a delegate Mustafa Ali to take him head on accusing him of misleading the committee as he argued that majority had proposed the entrenchment.

(Kanyoni 2004:27)

The situation continued to be very tense and on 23 September 2003, a motion was put before the NCC to have the sections concerning Kadhi's Courts deleted from the draft constitution. The motion was put forward by Hon. Kihara Mwangi that it should be deleted from the constitution and created by Act of Parliament. As he presented the motion it is reported that he said:

The MP from Lamu and a spiritual leader had threatened him. They told me that if the Kadhi's Courts is not entrenched in the constitution then the country will be plunged into turmoil and I will be put to shame.

(*People* 23 September 2003:11)

This attitude was seen as provocative and David Gitari interceded to cool tempers, saying "that Muslims are religious as they pray in parliament but the fear was the 1990 [*sic*] Abuja Declaration which planned to make African countries Islamic by the year 2012" (*People* 23 September 2003:11).

Following the completion of the Bomas process, David Kanyoni interviewed David Gitari concerning his views on the Kadhi's Courts issue:

He cited that the issue of Kadhi's Courts is contradictory to Article 10(3). Stating that the word Muslim, Islam or Kadhi appears in the draft constitution sixty times, Hindu appears once while Christians, Buddhists, Jews, Sikh, and others appears zero times, though the article 10(3) states that all religions will be treated equally. He continued, "We Christians have Christian Marriages and Divorce Act and this is not in the constitution of 1963, it was an Act of Parliament, thus if we are to be treated equally why not have Kadhi's Courts dealt with by the Act of Parliament?"

(Kanyoni 2004:24)

The Ufungamano Initiative group caused further contention as the Bomas process came to a close by publishing an alternative draft constitution. This removed any specific reference to Kadhi's Courts and made the following reference, in Paragraph 111, to Religious Courts:

- (3) The jurisdiction of Religious Courts must be limited to matters of personal law to which the parties are subject.

Following the acrimonious ending of the Bomas III consultation, the government took back the process and, following meetings held in Naivasha and Kilifi, an agreement was reached in July 2005.

In August 2005, the Attorney General Amos Wako produced another draft constitution known as the "Wako Draft," which was then voted on by the people of Kenya in a referendum held in November 2005. The sentiment in the Ufungamano draft concerning Kadhi's Courts is also found in the Wako draft:

179. (3) The subordinate courts are—  
 (a) the Magistrates' courts, Christian courts, Kadhis' courts, Hindu courts and other religious courts

The Wako draft appeared to want to retain the Kadhi's Courts while creating other courts for other religions without apparently taking note of whether there was a tradition of such courts or indeed a need for them. Paragraph 195<sup>9</sup> gave a detailed framework for the workings of the religious courts, Clause 4 stated the areas of jurisdiction:

To determine questions of their religious laws relating to personal status, marriage, divorce and matters consequential to divorce, inheritance and succession in proceedings in which all parties profess the respective faith, as may be prescribed by an Act of Parliament.

("Wako Draft" Para 195[4] 2005)

It appears that the government was trying to please both groups: Muslims, by retaining Kadhi's courts, and Christians, by the creation of Christian courts. This pleased nobody and was regarded as an empty gesture.

#### **THE BANANAS AND ORANGES REFERENDUM, 21 NOVEMBER 2005**

With the publication of the Wako Draft, President Mwai Kibaki announced a referendum so that the people would have their say. The campaign was launched using a banana to indicate approval for the new

Table 6.1 Results of the Referendum for Each Province

Province	Registered voters	Yes	No	% yes	% no
Nairobi	961,295	161,344	212,070	42	56
Coast	967,518	64,432	269,655	19	80
North Eastern	237,321	12,401	39,028	24	75
Eastern	1,977,480	485,282	494,624	49	50
Central	1,795,277	1,023,219	74,394	92	7
Rift Valley	2,668,981	395,943	1,218,805	24	75
Western	1,322,604	240,582	358,343	39	59
Nyanza	1,664,401	114,077	822,188	12	87
Total	11,594,877	2,532,918	3,548,477	43	57

Source: *Nation* 23 November 2005

constitution and an orange to indicate rejection. The debate over whether to vote “Yes” or “No” became polarized around certain key paragraphs in the Wako Draft and politicians mobilized their people, mostly on ethnic lines, to accept or reject the proposed constitution. The Kadhi’s courts’ place in the constitution and the “invention” of religious courts for other faiths became an issue, among many others, that was used by opponents of the proposed constitution to urge people to reject it.



Figure 6.1 An Orange rally led by Musyoka Kalonzo, now Vice-President, at Kapenguria, Transzoia District, on 10 October 2005

The results of the referendum, issued on 22 November 2005, showed a resounding rejection of the proposed constitution. Nationally, the “No” side received 57 percent, and the “Yes” side 43 percent.

When the votes on a provincial basis are analysed, we see that only in the home province of the president (Central) was there a majority in favor of the constitution, with 92 percent voting “Yes,” whilst in the home province of the leader of the “No” campaign (Nyanza), 87 percent voted against it. This indicates that many people voted on ethnic lines. The two provinces with a majority of Muslims (Coast and North Eastern) also heavily rejected the draft constitution, 80 and 75 percent, respectively, also indicating that Muslims were not in favor of the proposals.

For both Christians and Muslims, the place of Kadhi’s courts in the constitution were regarded as a significant factor for their rejection of the Wako draft of the constitution.

**THE 2007 ELECTIONS AND THE MEMORANDUM OF  
UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN RAILA ODINGA AND THE  
NATIONAL MUSLIM LEADERS FORUM (NAMLEF)**

Following the referendum, the group who opposed the constitution continued to be identified as being in opposition to President Mwai Kibaki. Calling themselves the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), they contested the 2007 elections, with Raila Odinga as their presidential candidate.

In September 2007, an MoU, between Raila Odinga and NAMLEF was “leaked” by the Evangelical Alliance of Kenya (EAK). This document was purportedly signed on 29 August 2007. It pledged the support of Muslims for Raila Odinga and ODM and, among other things, it stated that they would:

- (v) (b) Within 6 months re-write the Constitution of Kenya to recognize Shariah as the only true law sanctioned by the Holy Quran for Muslim declared regions [Elsewhere identified as being Coast and North Eastern Provinces].
- (g) Within 1 year facilitate the establishment of a Shariah court in every Kenyan divisional headquarters.

(2007a)

In November 2007, NAMLEF issued an official version of the MoU, which is very bland and does not include these precise sentiments, rather, pledging support for Raila Odinga and ODM, in return for the expectation that he would:

- b) ii. Accord NAMLEF both an **advisory and partner** role in his government on all Muslim affairs.

- iv. Initiate, within the first year, **deliberate policies and programmes to redress historical, current and structural marginalization of Muslims in Kenya.**

(2007b)

Various groups, including the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), were accused of propagating the earlier version of the MoU (ACK 2008b) while questions were asked as to why NAMLEF took until the end of November to issue the official version.

The story of two versions of the MoU are reminiscent of the so-called Abuja Declaration, when two different statements were circulated. One containing highly provocative language was issued immediately after the “Islam in Africa Conference” of 1989, differing radically from the official version, which was issued as an appendix to the official proceedings of the Islam in Africa Conference, published in 1993. The Abuja Declaration was being used in Kenya in 2004 by a Christian radio station, Hope FM, to create disagreement between Christians and Muslims in an apparent attempt to alarm Christians about the existence of Kadhi’s courts that would inexorably lead to implementation of full Islamic law (Mwakimako 2007:304–306; Chesworth 2007:122–123).

During the 2008 presidential campaign in the United States, the MoU was used by Republicans and right-wing web-sites to discredit Barack Obama with claims that he is a cousin of Raila Odinga, and raising fears that as president, Obama would be pro-Muslim (Jonsson 2008). In January 2008 another Ufungamano Initiative was announced, the “Kenya Thabiti Task Force,”<sup>10</sup> set up by the Inter-Religious Forum whose membership comprised of Supreme Council of Muslims, Seventh-day Adventists, Organization of African Instituted Churches, National Council of Churches of Kenya, Methodist Church, Kenya Episcopal Conference, Hindu Council of Kenya, Evangelical Alliance of Kenya, Christ Is The Answer Ministries (CITAM), and the Anglican Church of Kenya. On 17 March 2008, it released a document that set out its purpose to:

1. Provide an opportunity for inquiries into the failure of religious and moral values to avert the crisis and why places of worship were attacked and destroyed.
2. Provide an opportunity for religious organizations and Kenyans to develop a common vision of a stable Kenya and define their role towards it.
3. Identify critical issues facing the country, study them and propose durable approaches to address them.

4. Provide material that will be used to enrich the ongoing national reconciliation processes.
5. Prepare a roadmap for construction of a peaceful, united and stable Kenya where people live in harmony with one another.
6. Map out the different stakeholders involved in similar processes, highlight their aspirations, critique them and develop a common way forward.

(ACK 2008b)

This new initiative can lead us to hope that, despite politicians “using” religion to raise fears, religious groups will be able to co-operate in order to put pressure on the government to allow freedom of religion in a secular state.

### CONCLUSION

This chapter has looked at how the church has responded to Islam in the Kenyan political arena, examining Khalid Balala and the IPK the start of the multiparty era, the political machinations of the Moi regime with the attacks on a mosque and a church in South B, and the way that the Ufungamano Initiative began as an interfaith attempt working together to create a just constitution. The Initiative was brought down by factional differences among Christians, notably the appearance of the Kenya Church group, leading to the situation in which some sections of the church continue to attempt to work with Muslims in order to help in the development of Kenya as a nation and to educate people that they all share a common humanity, as is seen in the work being done by the Thabiti Task Force.

Other groups within the church continue to be suspicious of any display of accord between faiths and see it as a betrayal of the task of Christian mission to tell others the good news and to raise doubts about Muslim plans, as broadcasted on Hope FM. These different approaches continue to cause tensions within the church and reflect similar attitudes among different Muslim groups.

Disturbances continue between Christians and Muslims, and all too often these are later found to be disagreements of ethnic origin in which religious differences have been used as an excuse. The group that benefits from these internal and interfaith disagreements continue to be those politicians who use the presence of Muslims or Christians to instigate disturbances.

Different faiths can work together in Kenya, following the example of Archbishop Gitari, who fought for justice and constitutional rights for all, regardless of ethnicity or religious beliefs, against the machinations of politicians. His successors in the church should take his example and work together for justice for all against the injustices of politicians.

## NOTES

1. Khadi's courts: the spelling of this term varies in different official documents and reports. E.G. *Qadis'* used by An-Na'im in his 2002 survey of Islamic Family Law; Kadhi's (Paragraph 66, Constitution of Kenya, 1992; Paragraph 179, Wako Draft, 2005); Kadhis' (Paragraph 199, CKRC draft Constitution, 2003; Paragraph 198, NCC Bomas Draft, 2004; Paragraph 179, Wako Draft, 2005).
2. Details concerning the founding of IPK and Khalid Balala and his involvement with IPK are partially based on Arye Oded's *Islam and Politics in Kenya* (2000:135–162), and with reflections of people who were in Mombasa at the time.
3. Esha Mwinyihaji, "Memories of Khalid Balala and IPK," e-mail correspondence, April 2008.
4. Kenneth Maina, "Experience of being a pastoral assistant in Mombasa in the early 1990s," shared in discussions during a lecture on Khalid Balala and IPK, St. Paul's United Theological College, Limuru, March 2004.
5. This date, the seventh of the seventh month is called *saba saba* in Swahili, literally seven seven.
6. Jonathan Njeru, "Attending the cleansing service at All Saints' Cathedral," shared in discussions during a lecture on Khalid Balala and IPK, St. Paul's United Theological College, Limuru, April 2002.
7. The section on the history of Kadhi's Courts is developed from an article by the author that appeared in *The Voice*, October 2004. This journal was published annually by St. Paul's United Theological College, Limuru.
8. The details of the functioning of the Kadhi's Courts are given in Paragraphs 200 and 201 of the draft and deal with their jurisdiction and the qualifications and method of appointing Kadhis.
9. The clause in the Wako draft that gave some explanation on the role is:

## Religious courts

195. (1) There are established Christian courts, Kadhi's courts and Hindu courts.
  - (2) Parliament may, by legislation, establish other religious courts.
  - (3) Christian courts, Kadhi's courts, Hindu courts and other religious courts shall respectively—
    - (a) consist of Chief presiding officers, Chief Kadhi and such number of other presiding officers or Kadhis, all of whom profess the respective religious faith; and
    - (b) be organized and administered, as may be prescribed by the respective Act of Parliament.
  - (4) Christian courts, Kadhi's courts, Hindu courts and other religious courts shall have jurisdiction to determine questions of their religious laws relating to personal status, marriage, divorce and matters consequential to divorce, inheritance

and succession in proceedings in which all parties profess the respective faith, as may be prescribed by an Act of Parliament.

10. *Thabiti* is Swahili for truth.

**PART 3**

**THE CHURCHES'  
INVOLVEMENT IN  
CONTEMPORARY  
ISSUES**

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## CHAPTER 7

# THE NCCK AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST “ETHNIC CLASHES” IN KENYA

JACQUELINE KLOPP

Recent violence in Kenya left over a thousand dead from police bullets, fires, and machetes. Around 500,000–600,000 people were displaced and thrown into poverty.<sup>1</sup> Such “ethnic clashes,” as this politics of violent displacement is sometimes called, are not new; in fact they follow patterns of police brutality and forced displacements that reach back into the colonial period. However, Kenya’s ethnic clashes emerged within the revival of multiparty elections at the end of 1991, peaking around elections in 1992, 1997, and to a much lesser degree, 2002. Such violence generated over 400,000 displaced people, even prior to the latest displacements from 29 December 2007 to February 2008.<sup>2</sup> These ethnic clashes threaten civil society, democracy, moral life, and possibly the very idea of Kenya itself.

Currently, a culture of impunity dominates and few forces are aligned that can prevent future ethnic clashes and cater to the displaced and their traumatized communities.<sup>3</sup> The moral leadership and organization of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) is one of the few key counterforces to this dangerous politics. This chapter briefly reflects on the nature of Kenya’s ethnic clashes and the link between the politics of violence and religion. It then examines the role of the NCCK and its leaders in fighting against violent displacement, providing aid to its victims, and healing violence torn communities. In doing so, it reveals

how the moral courage of many of its leaders and its interethnic networks of faith created a "civil society" where urban NGOs fail to reach. It also shows how the NCKK helped to create one of the most durable local relief and advocacy organizations for Kenya's displaced. Finally, it argues that the extent to which NCKK and its partners succeed in countering a politics of violence and displacement will play a key role in whether Kenya's future will be peaceful and prosperous.

### RECURRING ETHNIC CLASHES

Recent violence follows some established patterns. Human rights organizations and the government itself through its commissions have amply documented the fact that throughout the 1990s, a group of key politicians in the then dominant party, the Kenya African National Union (KANU), funded and orchestrated violence.<sup>4</sup> These politicians used hate speeches and fear in a campaign of "purification" by expelling "migrants" from "KANU zones." The violence also came with opportunities to grab land and other property for those who remained behind. As in Rwanda, dissenters were threatened as ethnic traitors; fear and collective guilt bound the rest into loyalty and support for the politicians who organized the violence. These politicians not only pay but also protect perpetrators from the law, creating cascades of impunity. In this way, the violence helps the big men consolidate power. They in turn use their delivery of such violently created ethnic block votes to gain power at the center. Such strong "big men" are expected to bring resources to their ethnic zone. Their corruption and self-enrichment then becomes cleverly masked as redistribution. This is a dynamic that is not unique to Kenya or Africa.

In the 1990s, the most powerful political opponents of KANU and President Daniel arap Moi were from among the Gikuyu, Kenya's largest ethnic community. KANU hawks argued publicly that, under a multiparty system, minority groups needed protection from "Gikuyu domination." These ideas of "domination" were given some force by the fact that the first (Gikuyu) president and his close associates engaged in massive land accumulation.<sup>5</sup> However, the actual political "threat" lay in the fact that Gikuyu politicians were leading the opposition at the time. Another key concern was the Gikuyu diaspora in the Rift Valley, where KANU had its political base. Besides being vectors for opposition ideas, Gikuyu residents also represented swing votes in many key "KANU" constituencies.<sup>6</sup>

Beginning in 1991, as a counteroffensive against such "threats," a constellation of KANU members of Parliament (MPs), ministers,

and local officials associated with the Rift Valley parliamentary representative to the KANU governing council, Nicholas Biwott, launched a new counteroffensive against multiparty advocates. In a series of 1991 rallies in the Rift Valley, KANU stalwarts overtly threatened multiparty proponents with violence. For example, on 21 September 1991 at the Kapkatet rally, MP Chepkok implied that being Gikuyu meant being a dissident, and he encouraged the audience to "take up arms and destroy dissidents on sight."<sup>7</sup> The cabinet minister Biwott appealed to Kalenjin pride (the president and Biwott's ethnic group identification) by arguing, "The Kalenjin are not cowards and are not afraid to fight any attempts to relegate them from leadership."<sup>8</sup> The rally participants also countered the idea of multipartyism by painting it as Gikuyu project of domination and a plot to control Rift Valley land. By ethnicizing the multiethnic opposition as Gikuyu and playing on fears of Gikuyu domination in particular, the speakers asserted that all those Gikuyu settled in the Rift Valley would have to pack up and go.<sup>9</sup>

Kenya's first wave of violence began shortly after the rallies at the end of October 1991. "Kalenjin warriors" began attacks on multiethnic "migrant" families on Meteitei farm in the Rift Valley province and this spread to Western and Nyanza provinces.<sup>10</sup> Violent displacements peaked before and after the elections in December 1992 and 1997 because they were intimately linked to electoral politics.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, this violence by creating an atmosphere of profound intimidation, displacing and hence disenfranchising voters and creating "emergency zones" that prevented campaigning, assisted President Moi and KANU to win elections in 1992 and 1997. The Commonwealth observer group monitoring the election in 1992 noted that as a result of the violence KANU won 16 Rift Valley parliamentary seats unopposed.<sup>12</sup>

Those who experienced these initial attacks in the 1990s pointed to the rallies and hate speeches as the start of the trouble. Testifying before parliamentary committees on the "clashes," witnesses in the 1990s implicated prominent political figures including the key organizers of the rallies. They suggested that these MPs had encouraged local people to fight through "utterances urging the Kalenjin to remove *madoadoa* ([spots]) from the area"—the exact rhetoric used in 2007, unsurprising since many of the same people appear to be involved.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, they claimed that these politicians transported warriors to the area and paid them for each person from an "outside" community killed. These accounts would be repeated and corroborated throughout the decade in human rights reports, parliamentary debates, another government commission, and an independent study by the Law Society of Kenya.<sup>14</sup>

The violent attack on multi-ethnic communities, first in the Rift Valley, Western, and Nyanza provinces and later on the Coast, constituted one of the most decisive and dangerous breaks in Kenya's independence politics. In particular, this violence ripped apart communities and families and strained the social fabric among Kenya's communities. It also generated a plethora of informal militias, including the Gikuyu Mungiki. These militias were never properly de-mobilized or held to account although some members experienced an acute "crise de conscience."<sup>15</sup>

The victims of Kenya's violence, including in particular the many displaced, were then rendered politically invisible even with the change of government in 2002. In the run up to the historic 2002 election, which at last Daniel arap Moi and KANU, the National Alliance of Rainbow Coalition (NARC) led by Kibaki made the choice to include many of the former KANU politicians responsible for the violence in exchange for their ability to deliver block votes. Some were even elevated to high positions.

This meant that such a government would not address one proximate cause of violent displacement, which lay in impunity. No one was ever punished for the violence and the government for years denied the existence of the internally displaced within its borders. Most critically, very little to nothing was done to address the simmering problems linked to the violence, including multiple claims to land and other property and recurrent violence continued in many "hotspots" like Kuresoi/Molo, Burnt Forest, Laikipia.<sup>16</sup>

The only surprise about the violence in 2007–2008 was that it was a surprise to so many. Indeed, some of the violence in the Rift Valley appears to involve the very same culprits in the very same locations as it did in the 1990s. However, one aspect that did change was the severity and spread. As former chairman of the Kenya National Commission for Human Rights, Maina Kiai, remarked, more people were displaced in the recent two months of violence than in all of the previous cycles of violence combined since 1991.<sup>17</sup> Many of the displaced complained that it was their third or fourth time experiencing this violence and refused to return to their old homes. This suggests that, with complete impunity and amnesia towards the displaced, the problem has very clearly gotten much worse.

The disputed presidential election on 27 December 2007, was the immediate trigger of the latest round of violence. Results of a closely contested presidential election were delayed and manipulated (as were many local elections and the nominations processes).<sup>18</sup> The delay in the release of the results of the presidential race evoked enormous and understandable frustration among opposition supporters who were

encouraged to believe that they were the winners even prior to the election. This resulted in some spontaneous violence and rioting.<sup>19</sup> Yet there was a spectrum of political tactics available as a response to the delay and concerns about rigging. Indeed, many citizens exercised their rights to peaceful mass demonstrations, although in some notorious cases as in Kisumu they faced severe police brutality. However, if the violence was contained to this dynamic then the opposition very well could have prevailed in their demand for transparency in the election results with the support of the majority of Kenyans and the world.<sup>20</sup>

Instead, in line with their campaign tactics and promises, some key opposition politicians reactivated the old KANU politics of "political tribalism" in which they were trained in the 1990s. They encouraged and organized attacks on the property and lives of people considered "traitors" by virtue of their Gikuyu ethnicity that they shared with the incumbent President Kibaki. This started the politically motivated ethnic cleansing of supposed Kibaki supporters out of core zones like the Rift Valley where key opposition politicians wished to entrench their supremacy. In response, Gikuyu politicians harnessed Muingiki to organize counterattacks in Central Province and in the South/Center Rift Valley causing the mass flight of those deemed opposition supporters also by virtue of their ethnicity. Core parts of the country and the capital Nairobi were in this way violently torn into ethnically homogenized regions.

Many commentators have pointed to the enormous concentration of power in the Kenyan presidency that makes competition over the position such a high-stakes game. For some on the opposition side, the use of violence against anyone including innocents was a legitimate response to the perceived shenanigans of an Electoral Commission appointed by President Kibaki that they perceived as depriving them of power. They also tried to encourage the sense of grievance against "settlers" from other ethnic communities claiming their access to land and business success was achieved immorally through the power of their ethnic leader in the presidency. Thus, in this view, evicting these "foreigners" seen as moral impurities or "spots" is a form of land reform and economic redistribution as well as punishment for what was seen as the unwillingness of a Gikuyu "mafia" to let go of power.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, then rather than protest in a principled and disciplined way, parts of the opposition resorted to this Machiavellian politics of displacement against people they perceived as People's National Union (PNU)/Kibaki supporters.<sup>22</sup>

In this way, the ethnic clashes are produced by a combination of deeply flawed constitutional order that generates land inequities, distrust, and poverty, increased electoral competition within a repressive order,

the particular moral choice of political strategy on the part of politicians and a persistent problematic political culture that shapes the way serious problems are approached. As Bishop Gitari has written:

Now when we come to those priorities of the government poverty, ignorance and disease, why has the battle been lost? It is because of selfishness of leaders, it is because they have concentrated on things which were really not that important, mainly to retain their own positions. They have destroyed what we call constitutional checks and balances. Many of them have also concentrated on destruction of opposition. In other words, instead of really fighting the enemies that we set to fight, we are fighting other things. As a result the battle has been lost.<sup>23</sup>

This big-man “selfishness” and the violence that protects it is reinforced by public acceptance of the powerful regardless of their past deeds. It relies on an idea that a big man from an ethnic community somehow empowers, “protects,” and benefits that community, even when he is encouraging violence that disrupts community life and leads to great suffering. This “big man” politics often reinforces the idea of collective ethnic punishment and purified ethnic territories, an idea that is at odds with cosmopolitan realities and a dynamic modern economy. It is also, as we shall see, at odds with the professed religious worldviews of most Kenyans.

### RELIGION AND VIOLENCE

The struggle against ethnic clashes is central to prevention of future violence and perhaps Kenya’s survival. It is a moral struggle that will determine which principles will dominate as Kenyans attempt to solve their deep problems, problems made even worse by the violence. As the then NCKK leadership, Dr Eliud Wabukala, elected Archbishop in 2009, and Revd. Canon Peter Karanja emphasized after the recent violence:

That the core of this unfortunate development is a wrong value system. As a people we have not upheld the values that would promote human dignity and nationhood. This is worrying as it reflects a moral breakdown, which is beyond the realm of political engagement and current efforts at resolving issues may be unable to address it.<sup>24</sup>

Will aggrieved parties on all sides continue to institutionalize informal militias and perpetrate more violence? If so, they may embark on a continued chain reaction of injustices against ordinary people,

unraveling the country through violent displacements. Alternatively, will a new politics of accountability and moral view emerge that will reconstitute the basis of power and politics? Can the NCCK and other churches and mosques play a role in this?

As this book emphasizes, Kenya is a self-consciously religious country and like much of Africa, local "ideas about the moral nature of power are rooted in a religious world-view."<sup>25</sup> As such the struggles against ethnic clashes in fact are seen not just as political but of competing moral orders and differences over the question of what constitutes an acceptable basis of power. A good example of the tensions between an exclusionary and ethnic based vision of political authority and Christianity can be seen in the words of James Bett, the chairman of the Emo Foundation, an interdenominational Christian organization that also aims at promoting "Kalenjin" unity.<sup>26</sup> The Emo Foundation includes prominent members of the Kalenjin community including MPs, some of whom may have supported and organized the displacement of Gikuyu and other "settlers" in the Rift Valley.<sup>27</sup> Shortly after the recent ethnic clashes, in a March 2008 meeting at the Africa Inland Church, the Emo chairman read to the crowd from the book of Ezekiel 47:21–23:

You are to distribute this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. You are to allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the aliens who have settled among you and who have children. You are to consider them as native-born Israelites; along with you they are to be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. In whatever tribe the alien settles, there you are to give him his inheritance."<sup>28</sup>

The implication seems to be that the Kalenjin communities are Israel and the Gikuyu are aliens among them. Bett appears to be attempting to counter a "majimbo" rhetoric justifying the expulsion of "foreigners" and the appropriation of their land by using Biblical language that reinforces their right to "inheritance." However, he raises a serious problem: "aliens" do not seem to follow community "rules" in supporting the same political authorities as the locally dominant ethnic community. Hence, he continues by drawing on quite a different book from the Bible, Numbers 15:13–16:

For the generations to come, whenever an alien or anyone else living among you presents an offering made by fire as an aroma pleasing to the LORD, he must do exactly as you do. The community is to have the same rules for you and for the alien living among you.

(Num. 15:14–15a)

Bett then follows by asking the question, "Could it be that people cannot properly integrate as one community because of applying different values such as political preferences even when they live in the midst of others?" Retired Archbishop David Gitari might have retorted in regard to the apparent use of Ezekiel to endorse one of the common justifications for the violence, "Whoever does wrong has to be challenged, whether that person is your brother or tribesman."<sup>29</sup> As Archbishop Gitari fearlessly asserted in a sermon prior to the 2002 election, "Why should there always be ethnic clashes, especially in the Rift Valley, instigated by politicians? A government that did not protect its people had no reason for being in power and those who ascend to power through 'blood votes' were sinners."<sup>30</sup>

As a moral problem the struggle against ethnic clashes cannot but evoke religion and the involvement of religious allegiances. At the most basic level, the deepening politics of violence makes a mockery of the religious principles of love and tolerance that are often preached in the churches and mosques and professed in public by politicians who are intimately involved in funding, organizing, and encouraging violence in their mother tongues. Further, many of the church's flock have become victims of the violence and supplicants for assistance. Others have engaged in it. Some were both victims and perpetrators like the marginalized early members of Muingiki in the early 1990s. They opted out of Christianity altogether, forming their own religious understanding of their pain-filled universe and reconstituting their Gikuyu identities that have seemed to have created so much strife for them in new ways that offer a kind of coherence.<sup>31</sup>

This dominance of "political tribalism"—the manipulation of ethnicity for political ends—over religious principles of love and tolerance came to a head in the latest round of ethnic clashes. Many within the opposition utilized an anti-Gikuyu strategy reinforcing in the other political camp a sense of Gikuyu solidarity. On the other side, Gikuyu chauvinism, nationalism, and determination to hold onto power reinforced opposition suspicions about "Gikuyu domination." There was a tremendous degree of polarization but, because religious organizations like the Emo Foundation, the Africa Inland Church, but also the NCKC and the Roman Catholic Church appeared to play partisan politics, the religious network against violence was seriously weakened. This was exactly what Archbishop Gitari had feared and it had enormously negative consequences.<sup>32</sup>

The clearest sign of this erosion of religious based "civil society" was that the churches no longer served as places of sanctuary in a number of cases. This was signaled in the most horrific way imaginable by the burning of the Kenya Assemblies of God church. Over 35 women and

children who were sheltering there died. This along with the burnings of the Redeemed Gospel Church and the Miracles Assemblies of God church, prompted Rt. Revd. Eliud Wabukala and Revd. Canon Peter Karanja (NCCK general secretary) to note that "even the respect and fear of God has been lost among some of our people."<sup>33</sup> This happened in part because of the morally corrosive politics of mass impunity, but also because civil society, including many of the churches, played partisan politics and were no longer seen as neutral reconcilers. This was reinforced in the public's eyes by the "exodus" of clergy into politics. A record 23 clergy vied for political office.<sup>34</sup>

Further, some churches allowed themselves to appear ethnicized and divided along political party lines. The Roman Catholic Church, the church of President Mwai Kibaki, for example, was perceived as pro-Gikuyu and the Africa Inland Church, the church of former president Daniel arap Moi as pro-Kalenjin.<sup>35</sup> One reason that the Roman Catholic Church and also the NCCK were perceived as pro-Kibaki was that key members agreed to serve on government task forces (for example, the Resettlement Task Force) and commissions (the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission). Further, when the Roman Catholic Church made a statement against the "*majimbo*" or federal system, it was slammed publicly by the opposition as progovernment.<sup>36</sup> The NCCK too got implicated in this partisan politics. The choice by the former general secretary, Mutava Musyimi to run for parliament under a PNU ticket exacerbated the perception that it was pro-Kibaki and confirmed to many that the whole organization at the national level had lost its neutrality. The NCCK itself acknowledged the failure:

We regret that we as church leaders were unable to effectively confront these issues because we were partisan. Our efforts to forestall the current crisis were not effective because we as the membership of NCCK did not speak with one voice. We were divided in the way we saw the management of the elections; we identified with our people based on ethnicity; and after the elections, we are divided on how to deal with the crisis.<sup>37</sup>

Interestingly, despite the politicization of the churches, the legitimization for ethnic clashes seems rarely to have drawn on religious analogy or text. It has been primarily built around the idea of power hoarding, economic and ethnic injustice and uses the more secular notion of rights. Violence has been justified as a means to redress abuse of power by the Gikuyu, marginalization, the lack of minority or indigenous rights or, in the case of police violence, necessary for "law and order". This has provided a key opportunity for counter voices to tap into a

Christian worldview and its language to challenge violent political action as illegitimate. It is thus perhaps not surprising that church leaders throughout Kenya's history of ethnic clashes have been at the forefront of articulating the most powerful case against the destructive politics of ethnic clashes and the abstract rights that legitimate them.<sup>38</sup> These leaders draw on the formidable power of religion to aid their cause. Sadly, as the NCKK has acknowledged in a recent soul-searching meeting in the Rift Valley, the failure to retain a public perception of neutrality particularly through the involvement of NCKK clergy in politics at many levels, muted its "prophetic voice". This voice was badly needed during the last round of violence and once again in its aftermath. A struggle remains to rejuvenate the former NCKK role in the fight against ethnic clashes.

Despite the more recent ethnicization and politicization of religious organizations in Kenya, these organizations must continue to form a key part of a "civil society" or an organized space between the family and state that can resist tyranny, an old idea that itself emerges from religious struggles in Europe. In fact, the progressive churches within the NCKK have the potential to reconstitute themselves as a key bulwark against violence, perhaps more so than the more secular, suave, and urban civil society favored by donors. This is because of their potential multiethnic national organization, strong rural reach, and ability to evoke a powerful religious language to shame supporters of violence and challenge power-brokers. They also often have international support for their stance from global religious networks that can also apply pressure.<sup>39</sup>

The reach of NCKK church networks is worth emphasizing. In rural areas, there are few associational forms that generate interethnic trust and hence can "constrain the polarizing strategies of political elites" that very often generate ethnicized violence.<sup>40</sup> The NCKK, with a constituent membership of 6 million people can be a key actor in generating interethnic associational life in rural areas. At the grassroots, in many places like the South Rift Valley, they continue to play a strong role calling coreligionists to public discussions across ethnic lines and entrenching peace-building programs that are themselves positive legacies of the attempt to deal with violence since the 1990s to which we now turn.

### **THE NCKK AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST ETHNIC CLASHES**

From the very beginning, the NCKK along with a constellation of other churches and mosques were thrust into a central role in the struggle against the "clashes" in the 1990s. The wounded and displaced immediately took shelter in church compounds across the country and the NCKK secretariat became a prominent voice criticizing the government,

backing its claims with evidence, providing relief, and, in the aftermath of the violence, promoting reconciliation and peace-building.

It is important to emphasize that in the repressive context, it was courageous of the NCCK to be the first organization to document the nature, dynamics, and human consequences of the violence. The first reports on ethnic clashes as well as those on the politically motivated violent urban displacements were both done by the NCCK.<sup>41</sup> The NCCK would continue to provide information about the violence in its Ethnic Clashes Update throughout the 1990s. In the process, it played a key role in exposing the political dynamics of the displacements to the press and countering government propaganda about the "clashes" as tribal warfare.<sup>42</sup>

Based on strong firsthand evidence and moral courage, the leadership of the NCCK came out as influential critics of the government's role in the violence using prayer as a means to resist. For example, the NCCK held a special executive committee meeting on 31 January 1992, in which they decided to draw national attention to the violence through a countrywide day of prayer for the victims. The organization also set up a mechanism for an investigation of the violence. By March 1992, the NCCK roundly criticized the government, demanding in a press release that "the Government stops forthwith the unnecessary spilling of innocent blood and the wanton destruction of property."<sup>43</sup> Similarly, immediately after "the clashes" started, the Roman Catholic bishops, Zacheus Okoth (Kisumu), Ndingi Mwana'a Nzeki (Nakuru), and Cornelius Korir (Eldoret) demanded government assistance for the internally displaced, insinuating that the government was complicit in the violence. In a March 1992 pastoral letter, the Roman Catholic bishops urged reconciliation and assistance for the victims and noted that the government had failed in its responsibilities to protect its citizens: "So far only the churches and non-governmental organizations have taken care of the victims of the clashes."<sup>44</sup>

Before any official international assistance found its way to the displaced, the NCCK, along with the Roman Catholic Church, were also thrust into the immediate and central role of directly assisting thousands of people. Marshaling resources and assistance from local communities, many of its churches took up the responsibility of feeding and sheltering people in their compounds, ferrying people to hospitals in their vehicles and serving as firsthand witnesses to the violence. Without the role of the NCCK, no doubt the number of deaths from wounds, malnutrition, and disease in the makeshift camps would have been far greater.<sup>45</sup>

At the time, few involved in relief thought the violence would persist past the December 1992 election. When the violence continued and

even escalated in some areas, and the government by and large obstructed efforts at reconciliation and possible resettlement, the situation became desperate. For example, in 1993 the NCKK was spending 16 million Kenyan shillings (\$200,000) each month just to feed the displaced. One Roman Catholic official involved in these efforts alongside the NCKK speculated that the government was in fact eager to keep the churches bogged down in relief efforts to drain their resources and keep them from fighting for political change.<sup>46</sup>

When the violence subsided, the government was unsurprisingly hostile to the displaced and uninterested in providing security in former "clash areas." The NCKK and other religious organizations were left to assist the displaced. In this environment, the NCKK turned towards peace-building, which was necessary to create enough reconciliation for the eventual return of some of the victims or at least to allow some of the victims to use their farms during the day. As the situation of the displaced became a chronic condition in Kenya, church activists also took a more vocal role in promoting the rights of the displaced, including their right to vote.<sup>47</sup>

In 1992, with some financial assistance from Dutch Interchurch Aid, the NCKK set up a "Peace and Reconciliation Programme" that began as a relief program. Over time, as the government and much of civil society failed to address the issues of the displaced, it moved into reconciliation and peace-building. Hundreds of "Good Neighbourliness Workshops" were held and continue to be held in an attempt to promote reconciliation. These workshops involved influential local elders, leaders, community workers, government, and local organizations and provided a neutral space for people to talk about their problems emerging from the conflict. The philosophy in these workshops, as articulated by North Rift Coordinator Raphael Lokol's recent speech, is to "work with communities to build peace and harmony, not to impose 'ready made' peace on the people."<sup>48</sup> These workshops incorporated local government officials and involved "silent diplomacy" aimed at getting their support for reconciliation and assistance for clash victims.<sup>49</sup>

This new peace-building focus did not mean that the basic needs of the displaced for food, shelter, schooling, and health care were being met. The displaced continued to live in poverty beyond the means of the NCKK to address in a comprehensive manner. The Norwegian Refugee Council described their living conditions as follows:

The majority of IDPs in Kenya continue to live in urban areas in dire conditions such as streets and informal settlements. Displaced who live in camp-like conditions in schools or church compounds and abandoned

buildings lack access to clean water, food and sanitation. Over 70 percent of the heads of households interviewed in the cited UN commissioned report of 2002 were single mothers with up to eight children by different men. These women, in addition to the tremendous burden of putting food on the table for so many children, are often exposed to physical and sexual violence. Coping mechanisms include petty trade, charcoal burning and commercial sex work.<sup>50</sup>

The NCKK helped the displaced to organize into a network to improve their voice and political clout. On 21 June 2003 at St. Mary's Pastoral Center in Nakuru, survivors of ethnic violence in Kenya officially launched their network with representatives from 11 different zones in the country and support from the Kenya Human Rights Commission, the NCKK, and the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission. In a statement on 28 September 2003, a representative of the new clash survivor network stated his vision:

We as survivors of ethnic clashes have resolved to channel our efforts to establish a formidable national network of survivors of ethnic clashes. The network will represent our key organ for articulating matters concerning us. We anticipate that all related government agencies, intergovernmental organizations, religious organizations, development organization, human rights organizations and other stakeholders, will co-operate with us in our struggle.<sup>51</sup>

The NCKK moved towards an advocacy role on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of displaced, a role it has played ever since. Sadly, with hundreds of thousands newly displaced people, many increasingly moving into slums or back to their home areas where little reconciliation has taken place, this role is now more critical than ever, especially as international humanitarian relief organizations have largely pulled out while deep problems remain.

Despite this remarkable legacy and the continuing importance of the NCKK role, one of the sad facts in the 2000s was the failure of the NCKK along with other churches to play their role as a strong and united critic of the violence and as a neutral advocate for peace at the national level. The NCKK was a key partner of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-funded "Chagua Amani Zoia Amani" violence prevention program. However, one reason this program failed was the lack of courage to confront the powerful and counter hate speech. Further, the lack of perceived neutrality in the churches more generally might have made the conditions of the displaced worse, since churches lost some of their force as spaces of sanctuary. The displaced were often

attacked in churches and instead eventually had to seek protection at police stations.<sup>52</sup> However, throughout the violence various local NCCCK chapters played key roles in protecting and providing relief to the displaced. Even at the height of the violence, this helped provide a way for people across sharply divided lines to continue a dialogue. Many believe that without this mediation and advocacy, the violence might have been even worse.

### CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

As the Kenyan government falters once again in its support for the displaced and as impunity appears likely to persist, the NCCCK, the Roman Catholic Church, and other religious organizations will once again need to take a key role in reconciliation and the politics of transformation. The NCCCK is trying to rejuvenate its previous strong role as a peacemaker and position itself once again to intensify the fight against ethnic clashes and impunity and help repair the “national and social fabric that has been torn asunder.” Part of this process is a healthy critical self-reflection on what went wrong and a reassertion of principles, as well as a reformulation of the rules of engagement with the world of politics.

This time there is no doubt that the fate of Kenya as a peaceful and prosperous country is hanging on such leadership in civil society. The struggle against ethnic clashes will require the skilful mobilization of shared religious sentiment to counterbalance Kenya’s toxic politics of displacement and support the demand for an end of impunity for those involved in fomenting violence.<sup>53</sup> Of course, the complete impunity of the powerful and their use of violence can tear asunder networks of peace on the ground, hence the need for a strong voice to end to impunity. The strength of that public voice has been weakened, but as this chapter has tried to show, the NCCCK has a formidable worthy legacy of which Archbishop Gitari’s work and prophetic voice were a critical part. If the NCCCK leadership can return to this proud legacy then, moving forward, it will be able to play a critical role in civil society. In some sense, in the absence of a strong liberal nationalism it is the shared religiosity of Kenyans that may help revive the idea of Kenya as a nation tied together by shared history, economic, and social transactions and identity and bonds of friendship and love.<sup>54</sup> Even with the weakness linked to the loss of NCCCK neutrality in politics, local networks for peace and dialogue existed and were active even in the darkest moments of violence.<sup>55</sup> This alternative politics challenges the culture of the “big man,” impunity, and violence and provides hope that, together with serious lobbying against impunity, the politics of displacement in all its cruelty and inhumanity might yet end.

## NOTES

1. See Human Rights Watch (2008); and Republic of Kenya (2008b).
2. Kamungi and Klopp 2007.
3. Klopp 2001; and Kamungi and Klopp 2007.
4. See Human Rights Watch (1993); Kenyan Human Rights Commission (1996); Kenya Human Rights Commission (1998); Law Society of Kenya (2000).
5. See Government of Kenya (2004) and Namyaya (2004).
6. See Klopp (2001).
7. *Weekly Review* 27 September 1991.
8. Ibid.
9. On the historical roots of the idea of "Gikuyu domination", see Atieno Odhiambo (2004).
10. The key instigator of the Meteitei violence appears to be Henry Kosgey, Minister of Tourism and Wildlife at the time, along with other KANU officials. See *Nation* 25 February 1999; and Republic of Kenya (1992b).
11. For more details, see Médard (1996, 1998); and Klopp (2001).
12. See Commonwealth Observer Group (1993:18).
13. See Republic of Kenya (1992b:51; 2008:52).
14. See Human Rights Watch (1993); Kenyan Human Rights Commission (1996, 1998); Law Society of Kenya (2000).
15. See Klopp and Kamungi (2007–2008).
16. See IDP Network of Kenya (2007).
17. See Maina Kiai's comments (2008).
18. Republic of Kenya (2008b).
19. See Lynch (2008b); and Government of Kenya (2008).
20. Although the opposition party, ODM, had its own issues of transparency including the well-known manipulation of the party nomination processes (Lynch 2008b).
21. Lynch 2008b.
22. This use of displacement was also part of Kenya's violent colonial experience. Scholars have documented how entire villages were punished for the acts of Mau Mau supporters or how, in 1954 in Nairobi, colonial officials evicted Gikuyu wholesale to rid the city of resistance. Displacement then was part of the British colonial administration's counter-insurgency campaign.
23. Gitari and Knighton (2001:252).
24. See National Council of Churches of Kenya (2008).
25. See Ellis and Haar (2004:192).
26. Lynch 2008b:555.
27. See Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (2008:65). Unattributable interview by author, Nairobi 17 August 2008.
28. EMO 2008.
29. Onyango, Dennis. "Church's Worrying Slide to Silence," *Standard* 27 January 2008:24.

30. "Anglicans in Zimbabwe and Kenya address upcoming elections." Episcopal News Service 4 December 2002. See also LeMarquand (2000: 89).
31. See Wamue (2001a); and Kagwanja (2003). Sadly, the rank and file of Muingiki once again have been manipulated and bought by some in the PNU side to attack innocents in the name of revenge, perpetuating the politics of violence they have suffered and initiated so much themselves.
32. Interestingly, some of the main mosques and churches on the coast did better at countering politics and violence, and this is one factor in the dampening of the violence in that region. See Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (2008:108).
33. "Call to Peace and Political Justice," NCCCK Press Statement 3 Jan 2008.
34. "Kenya Exodus: From Pulpit to Parliament," *Standard* 27 July 2007.
35. The AIC was a founding member of the NCCCK but broke from the NCCCK under Moi's influence.
36. "Leaders ask Catholic Church to be Non-Partisan," *Nation* 27 October 2007.
37. See National Council of Churches of Kenya (2008).
38. See Gitari (1996b).
39. See Klopp (2008b:309) for an example.
40. Ashutosh Varshney (2002: 4). Compare with Morris MacLean (2004).
41. National Council of Churches of Kenya 1991, 1992b, and later 1995.
42. Many of the newer Nairobi-based NGOs that were seen as most emblematic of civil society played a role in this resistance, but not always a key role. Under the auspices of the National Council of NGOs, 120 organizations formed the "Ethnic Clashes Network" in August 1993, helping to document the "clashes" and assist with creating local capacity for peace-building. One prominent member, the Kenyan Human Rights Commission, also played a fundamental role in documenting, analysing, and publicizing the violence and its cause mostly through site visits. The impact of most urban-based civil society organizations favored by donors, however, was much more restricted.
43. NCCCK Press Release 12 February 1992. For the results of the investigation, see National Council of Churches of Kenya (1992b).
44. Kenya Episcopal Conference (1992).
45. Many children and the elderly did die as a result of worsened health conditions linked to displacement. See the excellent study by Francis Lelo (1996).
46. Author interview with Revd Murimi, Roman Catholic Diocese of Nakuru, 26 October 2000.
47. For example, the Roman Catholic Church in Mombasa encouraged the displaced to vote, going so far as to rent 600 houses for them to avoid the government harassment at the church compound (Kagwanja 2002:108).
48. Raphael Lokol, NCCCK North Rift Coordinator, Speech.
49. Interview with NCCCK Peace and Reconciliation Coordinator for Nakuru, Labon Korellach, Nakuru, 25 October 2000.
50. Norwegian Refugee Council 2003:7f; Kamungi 2001.

51. Oyugi et al. (2003).
52. Interview with Dr. Raphael Kinoti, South Rift NCKK, Nakuru, August 21, 2008.
53. See the recently concluded Waki Commission Report ("Waki Commission: Kenya voices," BBC News Africa 17 October 2008); Republic of Kenya (2008a).
54. See Klopp and Kamungi (2007–2008).
55. See Klopp 2008a.

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## CHAPTER 8

# CHRISTIANITY CO-OPTED

PAUL GIFFORD

Since independence, Kenya has been a classic neopatrimonial state, approaching the level of Abacha's Nigeria or Mobutu's Zaire. A neopatrimonial state makes little effort to function through legally defined structures for publicly acknowledged aims, through institutions of bureaucracy. Subordinate officials do not have defined powers and functions of their own, but are retainers whose position depends on a leader to whom they owe allegiance. The system is held together by loyalty or kinship ties rather than by a hierarchy of administrative grades and functions. Such a system has two particular qualities: corruption and clientelism. Corruption is the use of public office to achieve private goals—officials exercise their powers as a form not of public service but for private gain. (That is, the point of “neo”; in a classic patrimonial structure, like that of a father in a family, there is of course no distinction between public and private, the very distinction that underpins this categorization.) Clientelism is a relationship of exchange in which a superior provides security for one lower down the line, who as a client then provides political support for his patron. In Africa, clientelism usually functions to mobilize ethnic support, which thus protects ruling interests, and at the same time effectively prevents the rise of class as a political factor.

Christianity has been an important element in Kenya's personalized patronage system. Around the time of the reintroduction of multiparty democracy, some Kenyan churchmen did play this role of challenging the system—the Anglican bishops, Muge, Okullu, Gitari (belatedly, perhaps, Archbishop Kuria), the Presbyterian Njoya, and eventually the Roman

Catholic hierarchy. This much-celebrated contribution should not hide the fact that nearly all branches of Kenyan Christianity have been fairly easily manipulated, even co-opted, by the political elite.

### MOI ERA

During most of his rule, Kenya's state media continually portrayed Moi as a God-fearing leader guided by his Christian principles of "Peace, Love, and Unity". In the early 1990s, every Sunday evening the first item of KBC television news (sometimes taking half the time devoted to national news) was Moi's attendance at church that morning. Sometimes he was just shown singing hymns and listening attentively to the sermon; at other times the exercise was far less subtle. One Sunday in February 1992, at the height of the debate over the reintroduction of multiparty democracy, Moi attended the Redeemed Gospel Church (RGC), and that evening KBC news carried lengthy coverage of the sermon of Bishop Arthur Kitonga, the church's founder. He was shown preaching: "In heaven it is just like Kenya has been for many years. There is only one party—and God never makes a mistake." He continued: "President Moi has been appointed by God to lead the country and Kenyans should be grateful for the peace prevailing . . . We have freedom of worship, we can pray and sing in any way we want. What else do we need? That is all we need."<sup>1</sup>

Kenya has always had an institution of community mobilization called *harambee* (let us pull together). In a much-quoted speech delivered around the time of independence, Kenyatta urged: "We must work harder to fight our enemies—ignorance, sickness, and poverty. Therefore I give you the call *Harambee!* Let us all work harder together for our country. *Harambee!*" In the following years, communities came together to work on projects like schools and clinics, or to raise funds for communal projects, in a spirit of self-help. However, before long the practice came to be abused. In rural areas, some chiefs would call *harambees* every week and force people to contribute and then treat the funds raised as their own. More significantly, candidates for political office would use the occasions to flaunt their wealth and effectively buy influence. During the Moi years, *harambees* became the embodiment of the patronage system.

I have just mentioned Bishop Kitonga preaching in support of Moi. In return for such preaching, Moi attended an RGC *harambee* a few weeks later. An enormous Kenya African National Union (KANU) flag flew over the platform, dwarfing the Kenyan flags elsewhere around the ground. The church leader again delivered the standard KANU denunciation of Kenya's radical clergy. According to the party daily, the import was that "some churchmen masquerading as bishops and reverends had

turned into rebels and were preaching their own Gospel and not that of Christ. Some churchmen were drunk with the spirit of evil politics.”<sup>2</sup> The bishop told his flock to stay out of politics, to shut up, accept the present leadership, and prepare to go to heaven.<sup>3</sup> Moi then spoke for 15 minutes, stressing the freedom of worship he allowed in Kenya, and noting that some of the newly formed opposition parties would not allow this because they believed in witchcraft: “Others visit witchdoctors, while we in KANU believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Other gods do not appeal to KANU.”<sup>4</sup>

After the politicking came the fundraising. Moi contributed 400,000 shillings (then \$13,000), and—from the entourage he brought with him—the Vice President and Minister of Finance George Saitoti gave 20,000, four cabinet ministers and the Nairobi KANU chairman and the Nairobi police chief each gave 10,000, and three assistant ministers and the Attorney-General, 5,000 each. Few seemed to question how robust was the rule of law where the police chief and attorney general could regularly contribute thousands of shillings to “good causes”; or how the nation’s finances were controlled when the minister of finance could make similar contributions.

Bishop Kitonga became a cheerleader for Moi. Just after Moi had threatened to ban the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) for advocating political reforms, Kitonga issued a statement lambasting religious leaders “ganging up” in “a conspiracy against the political leadership.” He stated that “church leaders should not use the house of God to hatch rebellion and scheme.” He criticized them because they had “deviated” from the original teachings in the Bible and the practices of the early church. Their agenda seemed “to have changed from winning souls for Christ to a fight for materialism,” and he detected in them “a spirit of rebellion” and found a large part of the church “embroiled in political controversies that have no spiritual or theological basis at all.” He threw in Romans 13:1, “Let everybody be in subjection to authority.”<sup>5</sup>

Under Moi, *harambees* became an unavoidable and fixed instrument of manipulation. For example, Moi gave 270,000 shillings at a Taita/Taveta *harambee* where he took the opportunity to denounce the opposition: “Who are they to tell me to resign? They should understand that power is derived from God.”<sup>6</sup> At an Africa Inland Church *harambee* in 1990, he took the opportunity to denounce “people preaching human rights” and churches “overstepping their bounds and propagating evil,” donating half a million shillings of the 4.6 million raised.<sup>7</sup> At a special interdenominational service in Nyahururu, Moi must have been gratified to hear the pastor preach that “the devil was behind the introduction of a multi-party system in Kenya.”<sup>8</sup>

Co-option became the order of the day. Support for Moi was forthcoming from a wide sector of churches. Independent churches, lacking the resources of mainstream churches, were particularly prone to manipulation. In the crucial years of the multiparty agitation, the Africa Church of the Holy Spirit held a special service in Nairobi to pray for the government. During the service, over 1,200 followers registered as KANU members, and the leader, Bishop Kisanya, registered as a KANU life member. The church resolved to support KANU and President Moi.<sup>9</sup>

The newer American implants, needing government goodwill to establish themselves, were just as vulnerable. At the same time, amid the agitation for multiparty democracy, the pastor of the Potter's House<sup>10</sup> received great publicity for preaching: "As an American citizen who has lived in Kenya, I do not believe that a multiparty political system will work at this time in Kenya." Claiming that Kenya was the fastest developing of the many developing countries he had visited, he continued: "I believe that this is the result of good leadership. I want to thank President Moi, Vice-President Saitoti and the rest of the leaders of Kenya for the outstanding job they have done."<sup>11</sup> The President of the Seventh-Day Adventists (SDAs) visited Kenya, and paid a courtesy call on Moi (to considerable publicity). Moi took the opportunity to thank the SDAs for preaching the gospel and contributing to peace in the country (at the time, that was the standard, coded attack on Muge, Okullu, Gitari, Njoya, and the NCCK). In his reply, the SDA president commended Moi as a champion of religious freedom, a renowned world mediator, and peacemaker, and assured Moi that the SDA would continue supporting the government.<sup>12</sup> Around the same time, in November 1992, the United Evangelical Churches of Kenya (UECK), a group of about 250 pastors affiliated to the Revd Charles Hardin of Georgia, held a convention. Hardin and his colleagues paid the usual courtesy call on Moi, when Moi took the occasion to advise them to avoid ungodly behavior, to defend the faith without compromise, to have no antagonism to the state, and to stay out of politics (the usual coded message against the mainstream church leaders). Moi went so far as to say how the World Council of Churches had betrayed the full gospel message by accommodating to the world, and then spontaneously promised six buses from his Nyayo bus company to ferry participants to the UECK convention. Not surprisingly, the ensuing convention became something of a promotion of Moi, even leading to a UECK declaration challenging statements of the NCCK.<sup>13</sup>

Crusades were equally co-opted. Korea's Paul Yong-gi Cho came to Nairobi for a crusade during 23–31 March 1993. He had a well-publicized reception from Moi at State House, where Moi praised his preaching as "a blessing for Kenya." The media printed pictures of Moi

and his entourage attending the closing day of the crusade. A report noted that Cho preached on “the blind man healed by Jesus (Mark 10:46–52) and called on Kenyans to have faith in God in order to be delivered from the economic crisis facing the country. He said that Kenya was a blessed country, because it had a God-fearing leader. The South Korean preacher urged Kenyans to trust in Jesus in order to prosper . . . The President who acknowledged the preaching with an occasional nod, listened attentively as the preacher told the crowd that with God all things are possible . . . [Dr Cho said] that God gave the President wisdom to lead the country.”<sup>14</sup>

To appreciate just how supportive that was, recall that this was at the height of the economic meltdown caused by the Goldenberg scam.<sup>15</sup> Precisely that week Moi had had to reverse Kenya’s economic program, showing, according to London’s *Financial Times*, “the stranglehold corruption has over” the Kenyan economy and “the power wielded by a handful of politicians who have stolen millions of dollars by manipulating economic controls in their personal favour.”<sup>16</sup> At a time when foreign and even the Kenyan press were pointing out that the root cause of Kenya’s parlous economic situation was the unbridled corruption of the ruling clique, a visiting “man of God” was preaching to thousands, broadcast by the state, that Moi was ruling with wisdom given by God himself, and that it was only the deficient faith of Kenyans themselves that was preventing a glorious and prosperous future for Kenya.

### KIBAKI ERA

When Moi stepped down and KANU was voted out in 2002, Kibaki, especially after his moving inauguration speech promising a clean break with the past, was given an extensive honeymoon. However, it eventually became evident that fundamentally little had changed. Kenya’s political system persisted, with Christianity still a key element. As Moi did, Kibaki visited churches on Sundays and used the opportunity to burnish his image as a Christian statesman; visiting the Nairobi Pentecostal Church at Karen, he told the congregation that he would continue to lead Kenya according to the teachings of the Bible, insisting, “All we [are required] to do is let the Word guide us and we will be blessed and happy.”<sup>17</sup> As Moi did, he continued to give out public land; when he visited the headquarters of the African Brotherhood Church in 2005, he turned to the Minister of Lands in his entourage and directed him to give the church five acres.<sup>18</sup> As Moi did, he continued to appoint senior clerics to the commissions that in Kenya seem little more than a conduit of government funds to the elite.<sup>19</sup> Anglican bishop, Bernard Njoroge, sat full-time, for years, on the commission drawing up the new constitution, earning

as the other members, a reported 600,000 shillings a month (\$10,000), housing, a vehicle, fuel, entertainment and responsibility allowances, and 8,500 for every day he traveled out of Nairobi.<sup>20</sup> Anglican bishop, Horace Etemesi, was a member of Moi's Commission into Devil Worship as well as Kibaki's commissioner into the exploits of two dubious Armenian brothers, who in 2006 flouted the law with seeming impunity. Neither of these reports was ever released to the public or acted on.

Politics continued to be carried on at church functions, not least funerals. It was still politically advantageous to be seen at high profile crusades (Uhuru Kenyatta and Raila Odinga were conspicuous at the TD Jakes crusade in 2005). Above all, the political use of the *harambee* continued, though with less prominence. The Roman Catholic bishops, citing pressing needs to fund their seminaries, staged a big *harambee* in April 2006, at which Kibaki was the guest of honor and where he contributed one million shillings (\$16,000).<sup>21</sup>

His wife, Lucy, was a regular at *harambees* in all sorts of churches; at a Presbyterian *harambee* in late 2006 she donated 500,000 shillings out of 800,000 raised; at a Roman Catholic AIDS orphanage *harambee* a few months later she gave another 500,000, all the time politicking in favor of her husband.<sup>22</sup> More colorfully, Mary Wambui (widely regarded as Kibaki's second wife) was just as bountiful: for example, she raised 3.8 million shillings at a Roman Catholic *harambee* in Limuru, giving 400,000 shillings herself, with her daughter providing another 60,000.<sup>23</sup>

Other prominent figures operated in the same way. Kibaki's Vice-President Moody Awori gave 150,000 shillings (of a total of 720,000 raised) for a proposed Roman Catholic church (while urging Kibaki's reelection).<sup>24</sup> Presidential hopeful Kalonzo Musyoka gave 100,000 at an Africa Inland Church where the pastor lauded him as the "anointed President in waiting" and "the fund raising was turned into a forum to drum up support for (his) presidential ambitions."<sup>25</sup> Another presidential hopeful Raila Odinga, later to be Kibaki's main challenger in the 2007 elections, donated 100 bags of cement and 100 iron sheets at an Anglican *harambee*, which he was permitted to turn into a political meeting.<sup>26</sup> On such occasions—indeed on ordinary Sundays—politicians took the opportunity to further their interests. At a Nairobi Pentecostal church, Raila Odinga was allowed to promote his cause, and was anointed by the bishop, who announced that it was now time for a born-again and a Luo to lead the nation.<sup>27</sup> In his own heartland in Nyanza Province, over 50 senior clerics from various religious organizations (including the Anglican bishop) declared a "divine anointing" on Raila Odinga at a day-long rally, and he had the opportunity to declare those causing trouble in his party to be like those Israelites opposing Moses.<sup>28</sup>

Such practices are widely accepted, abuses commonly overlooked. In a famous case, William Ruto, another 2007 presidential hopeful, widely viewed as tainted through land-grabbing, was the principal guest at a *harambee* for a Roman Catholic church at Mumias; the clergy refused to accept the 231,000 shillings he raised (with 120,000 as personal contribution), only to have the congregation insist that they would boycott church offerings until the politician's money was accepted.<sup>29</sup> This attitude is lamented by social commentator Barrack Muluka:

Even in the church of Christ the moths have eaten our values . . . The holy father greets the looter of public coffers with an outstretched arm. He even leans forward and lowers his head before the looter in respectful and humble obeisance. The looter is given a special seat at the front of the holy shrine of Christ. The flow of events in the shrine is hurried and rushed so that the looter "greets the people". The looter "greets the people" with his mouth and with his pocket. With his mouth, he mumbles assorted abracadabra. Then comes the moment everyone has been waiting for. The looter doles out more solid "greetings" from his pocket. And the whole congregation goes up in an uproar of clapping and praise for the looter. With that the moral and ethical pillars of society are shaken at source and with the total and conscious complicity of and express encouragement by the guardians of Christian ethics and morals . . . The church is simply in love with money, like everyone else.<sup>30</sup>

Church services and Christian rhetoric are thus an integral part of the political system. Christianity is one more element in the neopatrimonial structures.

#### NATIONAL PRAYER DAY

Significantly, Kibaki reverted to Moi's use of Christianity when in 2006, with floods, insecurity, ethnic clashes, and then a plane crash in which prominent community leaders died, he declared a holiday for a "National Prayer Day." Prayer services took place in all main centers on Friday 21 April. The Nairobi ceremony illustrated a mixture of themes. Prayers were said for the victims of the plane crash, for the floods, decrying the corruption exemplified in scams like Goldenberg, and the lack of trust among leaders. However, overall, the motif was that the people of Kenya had to repent. This is the logic of Psalm 51, David's contrition after his sin with Bathsheba (read by 2002 presidential contender Uhuru Kenyatta). The message was that the nation must turn to God. Among the scriptural readings was II Chronicles 7:14, which calls on the people rather than

their leaders to repent.<sup>31</sup> In a lengthy prayer of repentance read by the senior pastor of the Nairobi Baptist Church, four areas for confession and repentance were named: recourse to “witchdoctors,” broken covenants (from Kibaki’s broken promises to the partners of his victorious 2002 coalition, to unfaithfulness to spouses), neglect of the poor (evidenced in scams like Goldenberg), and—more remarkably—showing disrespect for President Moi when he left office: “We humiliated your servant . . . We needed to give him honor. Father forgive us . . . forgive us our humiliation of our former president.” On all these scores, “Father we are guilty . . . we deserve your judgment.”<sup>32</sup>

Kibaki took the chance to play the role of father of the nation standing before his people in relation to God. In his ritual condemnation of corruption, he took the opportunity to defend the government’s record. This theme was furthered by Presbyterian Moderator David Githii, representing the NCKK, choosing to read from Romans 13:1–13 (“All authority is from God and must be obeyed”).

There was wide coverage of the occasion in the media. A few realized that religion had been manipulated. So many of the nation’s problems were government responsibility: even air accidents could be avoided if the right planes were bought and they were adequately maintained, and landed on properly maintained airstrips.<sup>33</sup> The impression of manipulation was reinforced when reports from other venues were added. In Iten in Keiyo District, Nicholas Biwott, Moi’s close associate, read II Chronicles 6:24–31, because, “We are a praying nation and I know that Kenyans are God fearing people. Let us do like the Israelites did. Seek God in every difficulty.”<sup>34</sup> Moi had been out of the country on the day of prayer, but on his return expressed the view that the continuing calamities were evidence that the country “had completely forgotten God,” and he reminded all that Kenya had no solid base without God’s guidance and protection.<sup>35</sup> A few observers were sharply critical. Gabriel Dolan, Catholic Justice and Peace activist, wrote to the papers declaring: “On Friday, the only prayers I could mutter was for our country to be rid of looters who pose as leaders.” He hinted, however, that the prayer day might be “an inspired moment when we began to believe that we could be rid of crooks, looters, con-men and gangsters.”<sup>36</sup> The most telling comment was by a figure in a cartoon in the *Nation*: a couple of ordinary citizens are observing the leaders exhorting the huge crowd: “Kenyans should ask God for forgiveness . . . Kenyans should ask God for forgiveness.” The man remarks to the woman: “What have we done?” And the woman replies: “This is the only country where leaders steal, loot, grab from you and kill . . . and then come to you and tell you to ask for forgiveness!”<sup>37</sup>

### WHY SO LITTLE PROPHEMIC CHRISTIANITY?

The question is unavoidable: why have the churches, at least some of the time, been so uncritical of the dysfunctional system of which they are such pillars? Some reasons suggest themselves.

The mainstream churches are essentially service providers. Their role in education and health is well-known, and is in fact increasing. One estimate gives 64 percent of all Kenya's educational institutions as church-based.<sup>38</sup> Now, crowning the acknowledged contribution in primary and secondary education, is the opening of Christian universities. In Kenya there are seven public universities, but they are now outnumbered by private ones, nearly all Christian. Involvement in health is diversifying too. The Roman Catholic Church alone had over 700 AIDS projects in Kenya in 2006. In recent years, too, we have the added phenomenon of Christian NGOs proliferating in Kenya. These vary from the giants like World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, and the Lutheran World Federation, to small, almost private bodies like the Rafiki Trust for educating poor Kenyans, founded by the Methodists of the London suburb of Wimbledon. The contribution of the mainstream churches in Kenya is virtually incalculable, but it is in such development work that their efforts are concentrated. Also, their leaders sometimes resemble chiefs protecting the interests of their tribal church, in comparison with which issues of good governance are rather subsidiary.<sup>39</sup> This became very evident in the run-up to the 2007 general elections, and was the primary reason why church leaders had so little credibility to provide leadership in the chaos after the 2007 elections.

Kenya's countless missionaries likewise are not given to speaking up. Their position is rather paradoxical. On the one hand, they bring in enormous resources that enable the churches to function as they do, yet on the other they are aware of the resentment toward them that they keep their silence. The resentment stems from a dominant attitude in Kenyan Christianity, indeed among the Kenyan intelligentsia more widely, that their plight is caused by the West. This view is pervasive in Kenyan theology. Let Mugambi's *Christian Theology* illustrate this. Africa has suffered, after colonialism, from institutionalized racism, and ideological manipulation during the Cold War, and economic strangulation.<sup>40</sup> According to Mugambi the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Bretton Woods institutions have deliberately exploited Africa; globalization is another ploy to dominate Africa,<sup>41</sup> and the whole democratization movement is yet another attempt to keep Africa subservient.<sup>42</sup> In fact, everyone and everything Western seems bent on this, even NGOs and the promoters of Millennium

Development Goals.<sup>43</sup> Western Churches, too, since they now get most of their funds from their exploitative governments, are an integral part of this onslaught.<sup>44</sup> All these Western institutions are responsible for the subjugation of Africa; in fact, there are no references to what might be considered African contributions, apart from one allusion to African “shortcomings,” which is immediately followed by the qualification: “even though those shortcomings were the result of policies imposed on Africa by multilateral and bilateral institutions.”<sup>45</sup> Most of Kenya’s theologians are so convinced that the reason for the plight of the nation is exploitation on the part of the West that they direct little attention to Kenya.

The Pentecostal churches, too, with their stress on success, supports this uncritical attitude to the political elite, because in Kenya real success, status, and wealth come from politics; Kenya’s politicians are the ultimate symbols of the success the Pentecostal churches aspire to. Hence, the political ambitions of Pentecostal pastors like Bishop Margaret Wanjiru of Jesus is Alive Ministries and Pastor Pius Muiru of Maximum Miracle Centre, both of whom stood in the 2007 general elections, the former successfully.

Sociopolitical analysis can be seen as simply irrelevant to the one thing necessary. Bishop Kitonga and his RGC exemplify this. Kitonga has always been involved in relief work, especially in Mathari Valley with help from World Vision and his North American networks, but has little interest in anything further. We have already mentioned Bishop Kitonga offering Moi unconditional support. For him, Moi’s depredations were not important: “There is no country which is better than the other ... There is joblessness everywhere. It is only in heaven where there are no poor people.”<sup>46</sup> This continued with Kibaki. When Kibaki visited Kitonga’s Redeemed Gospel Church, Kitonga attacked Kibaki’s critics: “Those opposed to your leadership might not even get eternal life.”<sup>47</sup> Two of his RGC pastors visiting victims of politically-inspired tribal clashes, told them the devil was their only adversary: “Don’t even blame the government for failing to act swiftly to avert the skirmishes if you want God to be on your side.”<sup>48</sup> Wilson Mamboleo, a senior RGC cleric, can see nothing but “divine direction” in Kenya’s post-independence history; he now sees signs of “spiritual decay,” but this is attributable to Muslim and Hindu prayers on public occasions.<sup>49</sup> For that mindset, sociopolitical structures are simply irrelevant.

The African Instituted Churches (AICs) have their own reasons for the lack of a prophetic dimension. Padwick has argued that the Roho churches share the same gulf between those with access to the benefits of office and those without, and patronage and clientelism characterize relations

between the two groups. Accountable bureaucratic administration is less important than personal influence and persuasion. Hence the emphasis on skills like oratory, cultivation of patron-client relationships, organizing and motivating supporters, “building a name,” mobilizing clan solidarity, and displaying loyalty to a leader (evidenced by attendance at major public functions). Equally influential are postcolonial political models. The increase in the power of the executive that took place under Kenyatta and increasingly under Moi, legitimated a form of leadership that became standard in the Roho churches, with leaders frequently ignoring their own constitution. The common talk of a “life president” in the 1980s certainly led many church leaders to think of themselves as leaders until death. Thus, challenging structures does not come easily to AICs.<sup>50</sup>

There is another form of Christianity in Kenya, one that sees spiritual forces at work everywhere. Without doubt Kenyans are confronted with all sorts of ills: corruption, institutional decay, mass poverty, AIDS, AIDS orphans and street children, insecurity, ethnic clashes, domestic violence, carnage on the roads, and rank indiscipline. Confronted with all this, of course many see Satan unloosed. In the words of a *Nation* editorial: “Can they be blamed for seeing the devil abroad when they ponder the ambience of greed, criminality and amorality which surrounds them?”<sup>51</sup> This conceptualization of evil actually gave rise to a Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Cult of Devil Worship in Kenya.<sup>52</sup> The church now most associated with this “spiritual causality” is the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), especially through its Moderator David Githii.

In Githii’s Christianity, the causality is exclusively spiritual.<sup>53</sup> Kenya’s plight no less than the state of the church is caused by spiritual forces. The country is under satanic control, through symbols and ancestral covenants. Satan controls the economy (the national crest inscribed with “harambee” on the banknotes has ensured that the economy has been handed over to the Indians, because the word is an invocation of the Hindu goddess, “Ambe”). Satan controls legislators through the symbols adorning the walls in parliament; the snake makes politicians twist the truth; the tortoise makes them lazy; the frog makes them croak meaninglessly; the crocodile leads them to attack each other; the rhino makes them sexually promiscuous; witchcraft drawings makes 60–70 percent of them pursue witchcraft.<sup>54</sup> These symbols were put there deliberately by the colonial authorities (the colonial powers no less than the missionaries were determined to keep Kenya enslaved and prevent development). Every aspect of national life is affected; even hospitals display the sign of caduceus, which is satanic and acts to prevent healing. Githii is undoubtedly concerned with ills within Kenyan society and seeks to cure them. He claims Kenyans are poor because “Harambee” is inscribed on their

currency; by contrast, the United States prospers because Americans have “In God we Trust” written on theirs.<sup>55</sup> It is on this spiritual level that Githii focuses, not Kenya’s sociopolitical structures.

Even the “spirit-Christianity” that sees lesser spirits as pervasive seems to divert attention from more mundane causality. I attended the German evangelist Reinhard Bonnke’s Mathari Valley crusade in March 1991. Bonnke finds spirits responsible for all ills: cancer, heart disease, ulcers, skin disease, fevers, lung complaints, paralysis, and countless others. The fact that this Mathari slum lacked toilets, drains, resources, and education was never mentioned. The realities of life in this slum were completely obscured by the persistent attribution of every sickness to spiritual forces. One of the books on sale at this crusade drew what might be considered the logical conclusion. After explaining at great length that everything evil was to be explained by spiritual agency, it concluded: “[Those] who do not know the cause . . . blame the government and their leaders.” In other words, no Christian who properly understood spiritual causality could possibly blame Kenya’s ills on the government. It is quite in keeping with my argument here that the preface to this book was provided by “Daniel T arap Moi, President of the Republic of Kenya.”<sup>56</sup>

One other comment can be made about the lack of “prophetic Christianity” in Kenya. In giving an interview about his missionary techniques, comparing them with North American techniques, Pastor Oscar Muriu of Nairobi Chapel, one of the biggest of Kenya’s new middle-class Pentecostal churches, distinguished the American from the African personality: “Americans are problem solvers . . . The rest of the world, even Europe, isn’t so intent on solving inconveniences. We tend to live with our problems.” Another distinguishing mark of the American personality arises from education. “Your educational system teaches people to think and to express themselves. So a child who talks and asserts himself in conversation is actually awarded higher marks than the one who sits quietly.” He continues: “Those two things that are such great gifts in the home context become a curse when you go into missions. Americans come to Africa, and they want to solve Africa. But you can’t solve Africa. It’s much too complex for that.” When pressed to say how Americans could communicate with Africans, he continues:

When we communicate in Africa, we are very guarded in what we say. We don’t want to offend . . . From our perspective, every engagement between two people always has the potential of leading to a lifelong relationship, or preventing a lifelong friendship. Africa is a very relational continent. It’s the relationships that make society work. In the US things work irrespective of relationships; in fact, if you have a relationship, it can sometimes work against you. In Africa it’s the opposite. So we are always guarded and gracious

in our communication. We want to guard the relationship ... I cannot tell you the total truth until I am secure in this relationship with you, until I know that the truth will not hurt this relationship. You do it differently. Speaking the truth has a higher premium in your context, so you are unguarded. You speak the truth, call a spade a spade, at whatever cost. And if the relationship suffers, well, that's too bad, the important thing is that the truth was spoken. We never do that.<sup>57</sup>

That interview sheds some light here. Africans “live with their problems,” because “you can't solve Africa”—engendering what some might call fatalism. Africans do not express opinions, especially if they might offend. So things tend to be accepted as they are, and leaders who plunder, brutalize, and destroy are often left unchallenged.

### CHRISTIANITY-INDUCED IMPUNITY

When Kibaki replaced Moi there was some talk of a South African-style “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” to investigate abuses of the past, but the elite soon stopped that. Moi, far from being tried at The Hague for human rights abuses, easily slipped into a new role, using Christianity to rehabilitate himself as a Christian elder statesman. He continued to use the *harambee*; in December 2006 as chief guest at a *harambee* for a radio project of the Roman Catholic diocese of Nakuru, Moi gave 600,000 shillings (nearly \$10,000) of the 3 million he helped raise.<sup>58</sup> He never missed a chance to flag up his profound Christianity. Dispensing diplomas at the Africa Inland Church Bible College, he told the Maasai to be warriors of God: “I myself fully benefited from the missionaries’ work, and I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal savior in 1934.”<sup>59</sup> After a car accident, he was quick to thank God for saving his life: “Now that I am alive, I will continue serving God.”<sup>60</sup> This image is promoted by his Africa Inland Church. A booklet produced for a service to commemorate the life of a woman who protected Moi when young comments: “It is possible that Moi’s subsequent deep spiritual faith owes its origin to that time.”<sup>61</sup> Even Mary Wambui, perhaps Kibaki’s second wife, has claimed: “God gave Moi the blessings to lead the country for all that time. Some say he messed up with the economy, but if those close to him messed, the blame should not be on Moi.”<sup>62</sup>

He has never missed a chance to urge others to live up to his own high Christian standards. He told 3,000 delegates at an international conference that Christ needed “to transform our thinking as Africans.”<sup>63</sup> Likewise in an Africa Inland Church, he claimed it was time for politicians to turn to God for help.<sup>64</sup> Again, he appealed to parents to bring up their children in a Christian and responsible way.<sup>65</sup> Again, he urged

faithful to turn to God to have “stronger faith to distinguish between good and evil.”<sup>66</sup> He lamented the decline of morality: “Many Christians have abandoned the right path and are pursuing wayward lifestyles that do not please God.”<sup>67</sup> He even created his own private Christian university in his home town, and continued his Christian rhetoric, as on the first graduation day: “I established Kabarak University with the intention to create a private institution where young people could access quality and holistic university education, an institution that would inspire its students to adopt a way of life characterized by fear of God, humility, honesty, hard work, quest for knowledge and high moral and academic standards.”<sup>68</sup> The next year he repeated: “My prayer to our graduands is that you move into a Christ-centered future, prepared to keep God first in every sphere of your lives.”<sup>69</sup>

These professions of and exhortations to godliness seem accepted by the general population. At one church service he stressed the importance of the constitution that “ensures the government does not trample on the rights of the citizens but caters for their interests and property.”<sup>70</sup> No-one brought up his own record in relation to the rights, interests, and property of his fellow citizens. He was even asked to launch the new *Africa Bible Commentary*, where he took the opportunity to celebrate Africa’s faith and spiritual dynamism, citing the continent’s fast-growing churches to show that Africans believed people mattered more than material wealth: “We believe things are made for the benefit of people and not vice-versa. When Jesus said the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, he was speaking as an African.”<sup>71</sup> No one suggested that if he and his sons had plundered \$1,500,000,000 of the nation’s resources, it was rather inappropriate to claim that people mattered more than wealth.<sup>72</sup> He, at the very least a close associate of the architects of ethnic cleansing, could tell Kenyans to shun tribalism: “Let us be like Christ who loved everyone while he was on earth regardless of race or creed.”<sup>73</sup> When he declared his support for Kibaki in the 2007 elections, he gave the reason that “I am a Christian and believe in peace ... (I am not angry with anyone because) I am a Christian and love is blind.”<sup>74</sup> The collective amnesia reached its peak when Kibaki appointed Moi as special envoy of peace to the war-torn Sudan. Only ex-dissident Koigi wa Wamwere publicly questioned the appropriateness of appointing a beneficiary of intra-ethnic violence as a peace envoy and drew fire for his remarks.<sup>75</sup>

Many other controversial politicians similarly use Christian rhetoric to their advantage. George Saitoti, the Vice-President and Minister of Finance at the time of the Goldenberg scam, when finally declared by the courts unprosecutable for the offense, stated: “It is indeed the hand of

God that has guided the judges through those proceedings to make this verdict . . . I wish to firmly thank the Almighty God for giving the judges wisdom.” Shortly afterwards, Saitoti gave thanks at a Presbyterian church in his constituency, proclaiming: “O God I worship you because you have saved me, and because you did not leave my enemies to finish me.”<sup>76</sup>

A cabinet minister implicated in, and forced to resign over, the Anglo-Leasing scandal, began his eight-page defense with Ecclesiastes 9:12: “Like a fish in a cruel net, like birds in a snare, so the sons of men are snared in an evil time when it falls suddenly upon them.”<sup>77</sup> When after nine months he returned to the cabinet, religious leaders from his Meru area staged an interdenominational service in a stadium to celebrate his return, and to pray for a similar return for the other minister to lose his job over Anglo-Leasing; the religious leaders present urged them both to forgive those who “unjustly” condemned them and prayed that the minister still out in the cold would soon be reinstated to his “rightful place” (who somewhat spoiled it by condemning the whistle-blower who exposed the scam as a liar “who cannot be forgiven by anyone on earth”).<sup>78</sup>

William Ruto, another serious 2007 presidential hopeful always presents himself as a devout Christian, one of the Fathers of Milimani Africa Inland Church, close friend of the Africa Inland Church bishop, Silas Yego, and a pillar of the Nairobi Pentecostal branch church in the elite suburb of Karen. He attributes it all to a father “up there” who made him the figure he is, both materially and politically. However, the Ndungu report into land grabbing lists him as one of those who came into wealth and power through illegitimate land-grabbing under Moi.<sup>79</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Prominent churchmen in the early 1990s led the struggle for political liberalization, and the churches won considerable moral authority from this involvement, as several articles in this volume show. Even then, though, the protagonists of multiparty politics did not represent all branches of Kenya’s Christianity. Since then, the mainstream churches have tended to involve themselves in development rather than continue their challenge to the political system. This concentration of focus has facilitated their co-option by politicians, and they have frequently been viewed as succumbing to the ethnic power-plays that characterize Kenya in general. This became obvious in the November 2005 referendum for Kibaki’s proposed new constitution; the proposed constitution was rejected by every province except Kibaki’s Central Province heartland, with ethnic considerations preventing any united Christian voice. Between the

referendum and the December 2007 general elections, co-option of churches by political factions continued apace. The elections took place peacefully, but gross anomalies were evident in announcing the results, and after Kibaki was declared the winner, the opposition began mass protests that swiftly escalated into destruction, displacement, and death (in the next two months, over 1000 dead, and 300,000 displaced). The response of church bodies was delayed and halting. As the violence took hold, however, all came to issue statements advocating reconciliation.<sup>80</sup> Some churchmen offered themselves as mediators and clearly expected to perform such a role. As international mediators like Desmond Tutu and Kofi Annan flew in, some veterans like Gitari and Njoya lamented that Kenya no longer had locals who could play the role they themselves had played in the early 1990s.<sup>81</sup>

Kenya's public intellectuals, on media talk-backs, in newspaper articles, in letters to the editor, roundly condemned religious leaders for their complicity in the social fragmentation, and made it clear that the churches had forfeited their authority to perform any such function. Editorials appeared with titles like "When the Shepherds led their Flock astray," and "Church embedded [i.e., partisan] long before Elections."<sup>82</sup> Many commentators included church authorities among the nation's failed institutions generally, but other contributions singled them out specifically.<sup>83</sup> A cartoon actually showed John Cardinal Njue in the confessional, confessing to Wanjiku (the cartoonists' common woman): "Forgive me, Wanjiku, for I took sides during the last elections" (and the cartoon showed media and business and other faith leaders lining up to confess in their turn).<sup>84</sup> Attempts on the part of church bodies to assume some role in the escalating chaos were frequently given short shrift; another newspaper editorial stated: "The Church's current attempt to reinvent itself is part of a dangerous trend where leaders and institutions fail to read the signs or to accept that their time is up, because citizens have lost faith in them."<sup>85</sup> The common perception that the churches had allowed themselves to be co-opted foreclosed any role like that of the early 1990s.

#### NOTES

1. Service covered in *Kenya Times* 3 February 1992:1.
2. *Kenya Times* 24 February 1992:1.
3. *Nation* 24 February 1992:1.
4. *Standard* 24 February 1992:1.
5. *Kenya Times* 29 June 1991:1. Obedience and respect constitute almost a refrain in the RGC. Thus Josephine Kitonga preaches: "The Bible tells us we must give our masters full respect, so the name of God and teaching of God may not be slandered by those who know us. I've seen in the Christian

world today there is that feeling of equality ... We don't respect ... In the nation today you can hear a little man talking evil against the Head of State, with no respect whatsoever" ("Grace Hour" 24 March 2006; the same theme *Kenya Times* 9 June 2006).

6. *Nation* 18 February 1992:1.
7. *Standard* 2 December 1990:1; *Kenya Times* 2 December 1990:1. His Vice-President Saitoti likewise worked the *barambees*, donating 193,000 shillings (out of 1.9 million raised) at a Methodist church in Meru (*Nation* 25 July 1994:1).
8. *Nation* 10 February 1992:26. Illustrating the same thinking, Bishop Bonifes Adoyo of the Nairobi Pentecostal Church was clear that those who had "joined the bandwagon of economic and political freedoms" played into the hands of the devil worshipers, so those pushing for political reform were linked to Satan (*Observer* 8 Oct 1996:22).
9. *Standard* 30 March 1992:4; for Moi's buying independent churches, see Gideon Githiga 2001:134.
10. The Potter's House is a denomination founded by Wayman Mitchell of Prescott, Arizona.
11. *Nation* 2 July 1991:3.
12. *Kenya Times* 1 December 1990:2.
13. Referred to in *Target* 15–31 January 1993:4.
14. *Nation* 1 April 1993:26.
15. A scheme whereby a Goldenberg company was granted a monopoly to export diamonds and gold, with a huge government subsidy. It appears no gold or diamonds were exported, but the sums paid out in the period 1991–1993 to Goldenberg and other beneficiaries were so huge that they almost wrecked the economy.
16. *Financial Times* 24 March 1993:6.
17. *Standard* 30 July 2007:4.
18. *Nation* 4 April 2007:14. The churches were major beneficiaries of "land grabbing" during the Moi years. The Ndungu Report recommended that all such land be returned. The Anglicans expressed willingness to comply, but the Catholics claimed that all land given is still public land, for colleges and hospitals serving the public, so refused (*Standard* 13 March 2006:5; *Standard* 9 April 2006:2).
19. "The inescapable conclusion is that apart from being conduits for legally passing on public funds to a select few, all the commissions are not intended to achieve anything" (*Nation* editorial, 3 August 2006:8).
20. *Nation* 8 January 2006:7; *Nation* 10 January 2007:3–6.
21. *Nation* 30 April 2006:2.
22. *Nation* 23 Oct 2006:7; *Nation* 26 March 2007:7; *Standard* 10 April 2006:4; *Nation* 6 August 2007:44; *Nation* 31 August 2007:4.
23. *Nation* 18 June 2006:13.
24. *Nation* 3 Sept 2007:6.
25. *Standard* 3 April 2006:5.
26. *Standard* 24 April 2006:9.

27. *Nation* 2 April 2007:7.
28. *Nation* 29 July 2007:52; *Standard* 29 July 2007:3.
29. *Standard* 2 Oct 2006:5; *Standard* 5 Oct 2006:5; *Nation* 21 August 2006:6.
30. *Standard* 9 June 2007:6.
31. "If my people called by my name will humble themselves and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." This is a common text in all sectors of Kenyan Christianity, except Catholicism and Anglicanism. It was used at the Fourth National Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast (27 May 2006); Presbyterian Moderator Githii used it in his address to the Eighteenth General Assembly of the PCEA, and three times in his *Exposing and Conquering Satanic Forces over Kenya*, Nairobi; the author 2007:51, 71f; see also retired Moderator George Wanjau, *Missioner* 6 2005:6; Lucy Muiru (see *Maximum Miracle Times*, February 2007:27f); Prophetess Joyce Mugambi in her "Prophecy for Kenya" (*Nation* 30 April 2007:28f). The text can be understood in different ways, but almost invariably it seems to be understood to mean that Kenya's woes are the people's fault, not the leaders'. Thus, Wilfred Lai of Mombasa's Jesus Celebration Centre says: "Listen and don't ever forget this: the healing of this land will not come from politicians. The healing will come from the Lord." Citing this text, he "rebuked believers for pointing accusing fingers to politicians for the things that go wrong in the nation" (*Revival Springs*, Oct 2005:7; he also uses the text in *Revival Springs*, November 2005:20 and in *God's Army*, October 2005:7).
32. Few "new" pastors were involved at all, with the possible exception of Mark Kariuki of the Deliverance Church, who gave the final prayer. It may be that as they had proved instrumental in the rejection at the referendum of Kibaki's constitution, he ignored them to fall back on his faithful mainstream leaders, who had "firmly put their lot with the Government" (*Nation* 23 April 2006:9).
33. See, for example, *Nation* 24 April 2006:8; *Standard* 21 April 2006:12; *Standard* 21 April 2006:13; *Standard* 24 April 2006:13.
34. *Standard* 22 April 2006:2.
35. *Standard* 24 April 2006:4. Moi also noted he had forgiven those who "dishonored" him when he handed over power (*Standard* 23 April 2006:32).
36. *Nation* 26 April 2006:10; *Standard* 26 April 2006:14.
37. *Nation* 22 April 2006:8. Another such prayer meeting took place in Nakuru in June 2007, at a time when insecurity reached its peak, when Christians wearing sackcloth spent a weekend imploring God's forgiveness, addressed by politicians, civil servants, and pastors. The theme was Hosea 6:1: "Come let us return to the Lord for He has torn us, that He may heal us. He has struck us down and He will bind us up" (*Nation* 7 June 2007:3). The Second National Prayer Day took place in September 2007, with Kibaki taking the opportunity both to thank God and to outline his government's achievements (*Nation* 9 Sept 2007:14f).
38. *National Mirror*, July 2006:10.

39. Thus, the leaders of the Africa Inland Church during the Moi years. The former Methodist leader, Lawi Imathiu, in 2006 led a delegation to get two cabinet ministers, who had lost their jobs over a scam called Anglo-Leasing (similar in kind to Goldenberg, in which money is paid out for nonexistent services), reinstated. He claimed that the Meru people felt slighted, and that they would be totally forgotten if the two were not reinstated or replaced with any two other MPs from the region (*Standard* 18 June 2006:10). In other words, issues of corruption were simply immaterial when compared with ethnic interests narrowly conceived. For the tribal nature of individual Anglican bishops, see Githiga 2001:152.
40. Mugambi 2003a:27, 28, 29, 37, 54, 163.
41. Mugambi 2003a:127, 145.
42. Mugambi 2003a:163f.
43. Mugambi 2003a:193; also 2004:28, see also 24–28; 1995:164; and 2006:5–8.
44. Mugambi 2003a:160, 181, 193, 195, 197ff; also Mugambi 2003b:141. See also Mugambi 2004:28.
45. Mugambi 2003a:216; there is one other passage where the Western responsibility has the qualifier “largely” (Mugambi 2003a:79). Mugambi distinguishes between liberation and reconstruction theology in that the former tries to find blame, whereas the latter does not (Mugambi 2003a:48, 74, 176). However, his own theology lays the blame for Africa’s situation insistently on the West.
46. *Nation* 24 February 1992:1.
47. *Nation* 30 Oct 2006:3.
48. *End Time Christian News*, Oct 2005:12.
49. *End Time Christian News*, Nov 2005:6.
50. Padwick 2003:232f. Maurice Onyango (1997:10–11) makes the additional points that, if before they had been characterized by resistance to colonialism, after independence African Instituted Churches tended to regard politicians as their own people; also, since their chief concern was to relate their Christian faith to their own traditions, they tended to neglect issues of modernization.
51. *Nation* 22 July 1994:6.
52. Government of Kenya nd. The report was never published, though copies have become available through unofficial sources.
53. Githii 2008. See also 2006.
54. One commentator praises Githii’s raising the “archaic, dangerous, harmful and retrogressive beliefs” of witchcraft, without realizing that at least from one perspective, Githii’s spiritual causality is perpetuating that mindset (Ngovi Kitau, “The Belief in Witchcraft widespread in Continent,” *Standard* 25 Sept 2006:13).
55. *Nation* 10 April 2006:3, and Githii 2006.
56. Mamboleo 1991:22.
57. “The African Planter; an Interview with Oscar Muriu,” *Leadership Journal*, Spring 2007.

58. *National Mirror* December 2006:1.
59. *Nation* 23 July 2006:4.
60. *Standard* 28 August 2006:5.
61. *Standard* 28 December 2005:8.
62. *Standard* 28 April 2007:3.
63. *Nation* 30 December 2006:2.
64. *Standard* 12 December 2005:4.
65. *Standard* 4 June 2007:3.
66. *Standard* 25 May 2006:3.
67. *Standard* 5 August 2007:3.
68. *Standard* 22 December 2005:3.
69. *Standard* 17 Nov 2006, supplement.
70. *Standard* 3 April 2006:5.
71. *Standard* 6 July 2006:10.
72. A leaked report by Kroll Associates, a forensic investigation firm, has claimed that Moi, two of his sons and two acquaintances had plundered Kenya to the tune of \$2 billion. See *Guardian* 31 August 2007:1; *Nation* 1 Sept 2007:1.
73. *Standard* 7 April:2007:3. For another example of his deploring the advent of tribalism, see *Nation* 26 August 2007:44.
74. *Standard* 29 August 2007:4; *Nation* 29 August 2007:1.
75. *Standard* 29 July 2007:2.
76. Also Psalm 23, saying he always believed that he would be vindicated one day (*Standard* 1 August 2006:1); *Standard* 14 August 2006:2; *Nation* 14 August 2006:1.
77. *Nation* 15 February 2006:6.
78. *Standard* 11 December 2006:9.
79. Government of Kenya 2004; *Nation* 11 May 2007:11; *Nation* 15 August 2007:11; "Herdsboy from Kamagut who Rose to Fame," *Standard* 12 August 2007:22f.
80. Some of these revealed a partisan stance: the Anglican bishops of Nyanza produced a statement very close to the position of the ODM (*Standard* 9 January 2008:11).
81. *Standard* 24 February 2008:15; *Standard* 20 February 2008:5; *Standard* 27 January 2008:24f.
82. *Nation* 15 February 2008:10, *Standard* 15 February 2008:12. The former concluded: "The religious leaders (have turned) a blind eye to evil, and by so doing, they have lost the moral ground to preach about God's Kingdom. It is encouraging that NCCK, and hopefully, all other religious groups, now appreciate this and are seeking forgiveness for leading the sheep astray."
83. See, for example, Erick Wamanji, "Ethnicity in the Church comes of Age," *Standard* 27 February 2008:1 & 5 supplement; Dennis Onyango, "Church's worrying Slide to Silence," *Standard* 27 January 2008:24f; Henry Makori, "Is the Catholic Leadership facing a Credibility Crisis?" *Nation* 12 March 2008:10; Elias Mokua Nyatete, "Political Bishops

- betraying the People,” *Standard* 23 January 2008:7; Edwin K. Too, “To resolve the Crisis the Church must tell the Truth,” *Standard* 25 January 2008: 13; Evelyne Ogutu, “Kenyan ‘Prophets’ who won no Respect,” *Standard* 5 March 2008:6; Okech Kendo, “Clerics are caught in a Partisan Time Warp,” *Standard* 27 March 2008:6.
84. *Nation* 20 February 2008:10. Njue had even been publicly denounced for “supporting Kibaki” by priests in the ODM heartland (*Nation* 4 February 2008:7).
85. *Standard* 23 February 2008:6.

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## CHAPTER 9

# MUINGIKI MADNESS

BEN KNIGHTON

David Gitari and the generality of the mainstream Protestant churches in Kenya hold modernist assumptions and ideals. They see the future in terms of strengthening modern institutions, including of course the church that the missionaries had overwhelmingly presented to the Kenyans as a modern alternative, one associated with Western education, modern medicine, bureaucratic work practices, democratic citizenship, and generous roles in worldview and practice for contemporary science and technology. Combined with the conservative Gikuyu achievement-oriented and accumulative work ethic, it is easy for this position to become thoroughly middle-class. Indeed in the rural areas, though the bonds of sub-clan and extended family still persist, if atrophied, there is little provision in either society or church for those who do not fit in the social structure built around the central axis of kin and land, *mbari* and *githaka*. However densely populated the ridges are, there is no land, no property, no permanent home for those who do not have a place with their kin. All they can do, assuming they have not the capital to buy property from the minority who will sell, is to rent a concrete walled room in a town or move to Nairobi or the large commercial centers.

Gitari's social conscience is alive to the needs of his culture, and so fulminates to effect against land-grabbing and would have local government allocate its unoccupied land to squatters and the landless. Yet, he works with the dominant social structure rather than trying to overturn it to provide for the poor. He has even succumbed to the utility of encouraging the young to go to the West and find employment there so that they can make remittances back to their family in Kenya, rather than for sons and brothers to stay at home and fight

over diminishing plots for agriculture. He would like to see industry and commerce thrive within the law to provide more employment and thus improve the infrastructure to enable growth as well as personal opportunity and mobility. Not to be so oriented, to balk at Western education as the means to progress, is for many church people to be backward, primitive, and several other such terms that Gitari would not himself use.

#### THE ISSUE: CATEGORIZING A DISSIDENT GROUP

Modern progress has been Gitari's social goal, and for many respectable Gikuyu as well, Muingiki is a madness best avoided and not spoken about. Muingiki (or the Anglicized "Mungiki" used in the media) is a militant politico-religious movement that has grown from 5,000 members in 1998 to between 500,000 and 2,000,000 in 2008. *Muingi* in Gikuyu means the masses, the public as a whole, and *ki* means, ambiguously, brimful or hush, complete silence, both these involving the complete solidarity of membership and suggesting a socio-religious force with an undeniable political potency. It is a secret association attempting to co-opt the Gikuyu as a whole to attend to the values and interests of its members, who are mostly marginalized males under 30 years of age.

As Archbishop, Gitari simply "dismissed the Mungiki threat, saying his church would not want to engage in petty politics with a violent and unregistered group" ("Religious Bodies trade Accusations over Devil-Worship" Panafrikan News Agency 3 October 2000). He is all too aware that modernity has been inadequately realized, and he puts this down in a well-worked Gikuyu way to the selfish corruption and nepotism of those who have temporal power. If people made good use of their time, were prudent and generous, and were indubitably Christian in faith, then progress would be achieved. Economic growth of over 6 percent a year under President Kibaki's first term has given a glimpse of at least the economic aspect of that vision, and tantalizingly, much more could be realized with just marginal reductions in public corruption.

The fact is that the wide-bottomed bell distribution of Kenyan demographics,<sup>1</sup> which pours out ever more youth on to a fragile labor market that typically does not value or invest in skills, means that modern progress has failed to deliver its promises to many.<sup>2</sup> Worse than that, it is felt that ethnic identity and solidarity have been prostituted in the process. In colonial times, Nairobi, as the urban creation of the Europeans, was seen to be somewhat beyond the pale of moral

economy, the home of vagrancy and women who could dubiously find a way to economic and social independence (White 1990). Presently, Nairobi is an obvious economic necessity for the landed and landless to achieve accumulation. Therefore, masses both live there and commute to work there, at least for many years. It is the pursuit of the West and of the occidental that is seen by the losers in a world of socioeconomic development as morally destructive of the social and agrarian bonds that they idealize, because they have been denied them. The marginalized do not see the vision of progress, for there are many of each generation who have tried climbing the ladder of schooling or labor to success and it has failed them (Kagwanja 2005:106).

To have to admit that what is local is bad is to overturn the axis between kin and land, and as yet there are too few to take this step into a detribalized proletariat. If the route to augmented social status is blocked, it is preferable to be poor with dignity and purpose than without them. This is why the turn away from a gospel of social progress, or of magical personal wealth accumulation of personal wealth, is not merely a material reaction here but also a spiritual one. Just as pragmatic Gikuyu of colonial times mediated their social and political changes through their church adherences (Lonsdale 1999), so it needs to be asked whether a comparable situation is not occurring now. This is not just an academic question, for the churches themselves—as potent actors in society—need to address it if they are to embrace and minister to the poor for whom bourgeois and transnational dreams have no real place.

Dr Grace Wamue was commissioned by the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) to research Mungiki. When it was discovered that her research led her, despite being a highly educated middle-class professional herself, so far from their allegiance to the mainstream Gikuyu churches as to appreciate some of the movement's efforts, she fell out of their favor (Wamue 2001b). The NCCCK initially promoted her report in 2002, "Mungiki Movement in Kenya: Religio-political analyses," which commended its conservative Gikuyu values of self-reliance, hard work, and independence (as in Wamue 2001a:466), but this coming less than four months after the formal banning of the movement was too much for the media and the churches (Mathangani, Patrick "Church Report Praises Some Mungiki Ideas" *Nation* 29 July 2002; Ayieko, Francis "Americans got it All Wrong on Mungiki" *Nation* 28 December 2003). Although church leaders over the years have frequently ministered, and given platforms, to professional politicians of varying repute, Mungiki appear to have had a leprous uncleanness for the mainstream churches. Despite a common resort

to prayer, both their social premises and religious beliefs are headed in opposite directions.

It is easy for the social scientist or historian to see only the materialism and opportunism in Muungiki, but given their persistence and growth over a decade, the question now has to be asked whether the secular approach is sufficient to understand them. David Anderson (2002) and Peter Kagwanja (2003), a Kenyan working in South Africa, like to categorize them as urban vigilantes and racketeers. However, Kagwanja (2005:106) sees a constructive side: "The road to democracy in the future lies in strengthening the social movements of the youth and a break with the prevailing powerlessness and marginality of the youth in politics." Listening to his Kenyan contacts Kagwanja prefers to see Muungiki benignly as a potential source of youth mobilization, but this is still set in a standard politico-socio-economic framework. Grace Wamue (2001a; 2001b), a Christian Gikuyu, researches them as a religion, so zeroes in on their sacred places, rituals, and leaders. As often in Africa, and hence the need for this volume, the key is to see how religion and politics intertwine. Africans may often claim that all human issues must be approached as a whole, but this leads to dogmatic and unsubstantiated assertions that hardly look as though they will stand up in the complexity of life.

It must be acknowledged that it is only when there are different religions to compare, or religious-secular polarity,<sup>3</sup> that religion becomes a necessary concept to distinguish. In the traditional society imagined by those never fully enculturated into them by dint of their very education, all aspects of culture formed a seamless whole. A holistic approach is more suitable than a compartmental one, yet it is more constructive to differentiate the various aspects of culture to appreciate the particular concatenation of factors, pressures, and motivations at play. To dismiss the economic motive as the religious one is an equally one-eyed product of the Kantian university, but to assume that they are motives of identical or indistinguishable nature is a categorical error.

It is true that Kenyans have questioned Muungiki as a religion in the media. Like the church, the media's starting-point for viewing Muungiki is its "madness," for spurning the decencies and sophistications of modernity and progress. It was, in short, defined as a "craze" ("Police Lethargy and the Mungiki Craze" *Nation* 29 October 2000).

Thus it is possible to say that no sane Kenyan can sympathize with or admire the Mungiki cult, given that many of its activities are so unhealthy.

Okay, so members of the Mungiki movement were arrested as they invaded a police station to release colleagues. Such derring-do can only be described as lunatic, given that the perpetrators are familiar with our policemen's gun-happiness . . .

Between the Mungiki men who raided the police station and the prison warders who raided the hospital, who is more mentally deranged? You would say that their degree of madness is the same. Both are gung-ho.

(Ochieng, Philip "Mungiki and Police: Who is more Insane?" *Nation* 24 April 2000)

The nation is dying and our youths contracting a madness we must cure. What person who is not mad or thoroughly dehumanised will behead and skin the head of another or kill an innocent citizen he is paid to protect?

(Wamwere, Koigi wa "Mungiki Deaths: The Hard Questions" *Nation* 1 July 2007)

For the state-persecuted Koigi wa Wamwere to label a dissident Gikuyu movement as "madness" is serious business (Wamwere 1997).

#### METHODOLOGY

Between 23 September 1999 and 3 July 2008 I have collected 585 media articles referring to Mungiki, 262 of the 459 pages (57 percent) being published in the last two years of that period. The Anglicized term, "Mungiki," was named 2,646 times, a mean of 4.5 times an article. Despite the anathema and the repetitious police crackdowns, Mungiki had increasingly engaged the attention of the media, both because of government attempts to suppress it and because of Mungiki's capacity not only to survive these but to bounce back, thus making it an ever-present factor in those parts of the country on which the media report more frequently. About 100 media organizations report out of Nairobi (World Association of Newspapers 2007:424). Reports were chosen because they mentioned Mungiki and added information to the existing stock.

In 2003 the *Daily Nation* had a daily circulation of 184,000 as against the second most popular newspaper, the *East African Standard*,<sup>4</sup> with 54,000 (Obonyo 2003). Both publish subsidiary print-media and interests in television and radio. In 2008 the *Daily Nation's* daily circulation had extended to a range of about 180,000 to 230,000 and the *Sunday Nation's* to as much as 250,000, with most literate Kenyans only being able to gain access to a newspaper once a week. More advertising expenditure went the

way of newspapers than any other sector of the media at least until 2000, demonstrating an unusual prominence of print-media (World Association of Newspapers 2001). Moreover, 75 percent of people surveyed considered newspapers as a source of credible information (World Association of Newspapers 2001), though I am told that Kenyans are now treating radio as their main source,<sup>5</sup> which is a tribute to the penetration of new FM and radio channels broadcast in their mother tongues.

The *Nation* claims that its total readership is now about 7.6 million, rising from 3 million in 1999 (World Association of Newspapers 2001), and that 90 percent of all newspaper readers in Kenya read the *Nation*.<sup>6</sup> The Nation Media Group had 62 percent of the print-media market to the *Standard's* 25 percent (Nairobist 2008), but its 2006 survey claimed a greater dominance in the daily market.

*The Nation* was the source of 75.73 percent of my selected reports, which very slightly exaggerates its claimed share of the market for national newspapers. There are two main reasons for depending to this extent on *The Nation*. First, no media institution has lent Muingiki so much attention, or sent so many reporters to investigate it; I have counted 90 different reporters and commentators who have had copy published as well as 32 reports written by a "Nation Team." A disproportionate 38.9 percent of those cited had Gikuyu names, when the proportion of Gikuyu in the Kenyan population is put at not more than 22 percent (Yin & Kent 2008). Journalists would communicate better when talking to uneducated Muingiki in their mother tongue, though that is hardly a strong feature in any of the reporting, but the involvement of non-Gikuyu would at once temper ethnic solidarity with the subjects. Second, the *Nation* is the newspaper of choice in Central Kenya, even when the others are freely available. Hiding the fact that it was founded by two British newsmen in 1959, it benefits from the *Standard* being associated with the colonial government, and latterly a business group associated with former President Moi. A single copy of the *Nation* will be read by several. None of the media sources, though perhaps a few of the reporters or

Table 9.1 Market share of Kenyan national newspapers

Daily title	Percentage	Sunday title	Percentage
<i>Daily Nation</i>	74.2	<i>Sunday Nation</i>	74.6
<i>Standard</i>	23.4	<i>Sunday Standard</i>	23.4
<i>People Daily</i>	1.6	<i>People on Sunday</i>	1.6
<i>Kenya Times</i>	0.8	<i>Sunday Times</i>	0.4
Total	100	Total	100

Source: Adapted from: Nation Media Group cited by World Association of Newspapers 2007:424

commentators, have reason to be sympathetic to the movement because of the civilized-primitive polarity that will continue to become apparent.

No reporter can communicate the movement's rituals from the inside, but instead the universal media interest in allegations of crime and violence. Therefore their external views will be balanced by an insider's experience of an initiand taking the movement's secret oath. In this way, politics and religion are counterbalanced. The media are of course never entirely neutral intermediaries, for their staff hold on to their own enculturations, educations, positions, and interests; moreover they write for an ownership and a readership. Media discourses have to be analysed carefully, for all that is in popular daily print is not the unvarnished, multifaceted truth. In fact, what was said about racial stereotypes in the *Sun* may fit like a glove for a very different subject here.

Its narrative structure privileges and silences certain "voices" in the narrative, and uses what these voices say to support its key thematic template. The discourse of the story is schismatically organised around this template, which deals in long-established binary conceptions of civilisation and primitiveness.

(Pickering 2008:363)

There are East Africans too who like to oppose "civilization and primitiveness," if from unlikely quarters, like former Member of Parliament (MP) Shem Ochuodho (Khisia, Nancy "A-G Orders Arrest of Mungiki Followers" *Standard* 22 August 2002), and now such terms are more often used in oral discourse than in the politically correct West.<sup>7</sup> Terms like "primitive Mungiki thugs" go down well (Abdulatif, Yusuf "Eternal vigilance is the only way to beat agents of terror" *Nation* 24 May 2007), indicating their "primitive, barbaric and heinous activities" ("Fury at Attacks against Women" *Nation* 24 October 2000). This is mainly because of its stance against modernity and the churches, against schools and Western progress. The general bias of the media must always be taken into account when interpreting its reports.

### ORIGINS, BELIEFS, AND EVIL

Understanding the origins of Mungiki is a minority pursuit, evidenced by the continual Anglicization of the very name, yet its beginning is understood as having originally contributed to its power. Thus, there were posters on a Mau Mau march stating, "Mungikis are real daughters and sons of Mau Mau" (Kadida, Jillo. "Police Arrest Rowdy Members of Banned Sect" *Nation* 5 October 2003).

We had even been “adopted” by former Mau Mau fighters who had seen in us a bit of themselves,” he recalls. “they started coaching us, instilling in us the ideals that they stood for, and slowly by slowly, we became even more defiant.

(“We Lost Control of the Group, Ndura says” *Nation* 15 May 2005)

It is typical, however, that contemporary politics is seen as having a greater causative effect than historical factors. Though for radicals, Mau Mau has all the appeal of the anticolonial freedom fighter, there remains, as in early independent politics, great hesitancy about lauding Mau Mau, tainted as it still is with primitive images of shedding of blood. Ngonya wa Gakonya’s Tent of the Living God was a small politico-religious movement with which Muingiki became entwined in the 1990s and so should be included in any account of its early history (“Mungiki: Tracing the roots of a mysterious sect” *Nation* 19 February 2006). However, as one of Kenya’s major political parties in power, the Kenya African National Union (KANU) has been more reported in terms of day-to-day political interaction with Muingiki.

Religion is a term that has long had very positive associations for Kenyans, both as regards their African heritage and as progressive Christians, but the high valuation of religion means that the media can be loath to ascribe it to Muingiki, however much they see them pray. Even the churches recognize Muingiki as a religion when exercised by Islam, “Some of the placards read: ‘No religion is above others, why Muslim and not Mungiki’” (*Nation* 9 March 2004). As Kenyan professionals, media personnel tend to belong to urban churches, or mosques for a small minority. A word that carries a strong flavor of religion, but in a pejorative sense, is one that fits the bill. By far the most common categorization of Muingiki is as a “sect” to the extent that the movement has become the prime example of one to Kenyans. Muingiki are not regarded as a political party, or even as a political movement, however hungry they might be for involvement; rather they are portrayed by the media as a disreputable religion. However even this signifies a more substantial entity than their more newsworthy attributes might imply. As such, it is a religion comparable to others. Referring to the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, “sect” is primarily religious (Onions 1983), and is wholly so following the typologies of Ernst Troeltsch and Max Weber, as English thought has done so. First and last, “religion” is defined as the obligation of an oath, while a belief system is not mentioned, only a system of faith and worship, which involves cultic ritual rather than creed.

Traditional religions and New Religious Movements are known for not articulating doctrinal systems, as these are a feature of world

religions when depending on scripture and literacy (Sutherland, Houlden, Clarke, & Hardy 1988; Knighton 2005a). Even in modern Christian religion, doctrine may not be emphasized above all. The widely followed systematic theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher, emphasized in *The Christian Faith* (1928) the primacy and centrality of a feeling of dependence, not a belief system. In regard to African religion, even the word belief has been deconstructed as a Western term with a Christian history (Ruel 1997; James 1998; 2000). African religions in particular and religion in general then should not be expected to be primarily characterized by belief systems. Despite the attempts of David Anderson to trounce Grace Wamue (the select media reports mention both their names four times) with a materialist representation of Muingiki, it is freely granted by Kenyans that Muingiki have beliefs, there being no dispute on this score.

Waruinge is not new to contradiction, spiritual or otherwise. He persistently fought the state, for example, but he is also the same man who has numerously said that Cabinet ministers, civil servants and police officers subscribe to the doctrine of his sect.

(Namwaya, Otsieno “Mungiki Sect Leader Sees the Light” *Standard* 29 March 2003)

Of course this report is based in Muingiki self-representation, yet the reporters are not skeptical, even if they would not dignify them with the term “doctrine.” A police raid captured “literature on the sect’s beliefs and items used in oathing’ (‘Police Arrest Mungiki Sect Leaders” *Standard* 16 April 2004). Whenever government is not courting Muingiki, they ask church and media to denounce it because of the nature of their beliefs, not because they had none. When Muingiki leaders sought tactical support from Islam,

Joseph Kamotho renewed calls for the Church to help counter Mungiki ... The Local Government minister added: “The time has come for the Church to condemn the practices of the sect which has been promoting outdated cultural beliefs.”

(“Exposed, Terror Gang of Kayol” *Nation* 25 October 2000)

Yet plural religious belonging has been a feature of African practice since the beginning of modern Christian mission, however contradictory. If the back-to-the-roots creed seeks traditional authority, no-one should be surprised if it is anti-modern in tone:

The quarrel they say they have with modern society is, well, about just that: modernity, westernisation, “aping foreign ways” which can be quite

an elastic term. They like to advocate a retreat back to traditional lifestyle, traditional beliefs, traditional ways of doing things.

(“Police Lethargy and the Mungiki Craze” *Nation* 29 October 2000)

The discomfort felt by the educated is that Mungiki is not good religion, at best it is “backward,” at worst “Satanic” or “devilish.” Simply because a religion and its adherents have political, military, or criminal expressions or consequences does not in itself disqualify it as a religion. The religious motives of the Spanish Inquisition, Assassins, *sati*, and *Thuggee* are taken for granted, even when their taking of life is condemned. Many a murderer has had a Christian name, or even confession. “Bad” religion should not be confused with irreligion when it appears as a rival, as Mungiki certainly is for the hearts and minds of the mass of Gikuyu youth when they construct placards saying, “*Mungiki* Most High, Enemies of the Wicked” (Orlale, Odhiambo “Police Disperse, Arrest ‘Mungiki’ Members,” *Nation* 12 September 2004). Unlike the mainstream and Pentecostal churches’ commitment to modernity, Western education, and development, the Mungiki believe strongly that these have let them down badly, so should be opposed. This dichotomy means that most Christians find what the Mungiki stand for deeply threatening to their own values, so tend to demonize it.

#### VIGILANTES, GANGS, EXTORTION, AND CRIME?

“Vigilantes” has certainly caught on as a concept, one often encountered in Africa and so-called “weak states” that cannot enforce a monopoly of violence. Sen and Pratten (2007:12–19) are correct in noting that vigilantism is a function not merely of the fragmentation of state sovereignty, but also of a relationship between state institutions and vigilantes. In Nairobi it must be remembered that the term not only includes references to Mungiki but also to their rivals, such as the Luo “Taliban.” What makes the news stories is their rivalry rather than Mungiki’s inherent nature. The gaps in the state machinery leave that kind of role to be filled by an organization that wants to maintain some kind of discipline and control, as well as one highly alert to the possibilities of opening an income stream by doing so. If they contributed only to a violence that filled a space left by the state, however, Mungiki would disintegrate every time there was a police “crackdown” and their income stream was shut off. This is by no means the case, as they have their own “culturally specific logics of being a vigilante” (Atreyee & Pratten 2007:12).

A trend in designation is the rising media use of the term “gang” and its cognates. In the two years preceding July 2008, this usage has increased 223 percent. Some Muingiki members are often associated with gangs involved with vigilante work and extortion or protection activities. In this they are not alone and many references are to other groups.<sup>8</sup> “Gang” is a far more pejorative word in Kenya, having a history in the British propaganda used to saturate Mau Mau. They thought they had platoons like the British Army, but in the media they were all gangs. It is a readymade term to encompass every shade of evil atavism that British propaganda used to paint Mau Mau (Corfield 1960:52f). As security forces have raised the stakes, Muingiki has put its roots down deeper still, the chattering classes like to vituperate against their gangs, which Muingiki consider platoons. “Ordinary members in one area are organised in groups of 10, called platoons” (“Kangaroo Courts that Order Death” *Nation* 5 April 2004).

Muingiki are dubbed as archetypal criminals, because they often pit themselves directly against the state and its law enforcement agencies. The criminal law is the first tool of the modern state for social control, and this is deliberately countered. The state is threatened with impotence and the media is usually only too willing to respond by notionally criminalizing the threat and designating Muingiki as responsible for all violent offenses in Nairobi, Nakuru, and Central Province. The only drawbacks are that prosecutions of Muingiki, according to the law, are relatively few, not least because of Muingiki’s penetration of the state itself. Muingiki regard themselves not as criminals, but as the shock-troops of a new order that will sweep away the degeneration, economic theft, corruption, and two-timing of the West that has afflicted Africa. One person’s criminal is another’s political hero of a religious vision.

#### **STATE AUTHORITIES: POLITICS, POLICE, GOVERNMENT, AND LAW**

The leaders of Muingiki would have a much securer bastion in politics than they are allowed. It is not because they are politically powerful that they can organize people; political parties in Kenya have seldom been effective in such a way. Rather it is because they are able to organize and mobilize their membership that they have a potency immediately recognized by politicians, cabinet ministers, the Luo Prime Minister himself despite his previous longstanding enmity, and in Moi, even a president. Yet the politics are always divided and ambiguous when it comes to Muingiki. The attraction of a new youth wing to elicit a mass vote is balanced by the moral opprobrium generated by other politicians not in

a position to benefit from their support, by the media, and the churches. Members of the Moi and Kibaki governments have toyed with Muungiki as an electoral tool, but when the election has drawn near, these leaders decided that it was too hot to hold. The consequent passionate complaints from within and outside Kenya would be unmanageable, it is felt in high places, a rare tribute to the power of the press, whose tone against Muungiki is encouraged. Thus, much of the politics around Muungiki is not about their participation, but what to do about them so as not to alienate the middle class or non-Gikuyu voter. As with their Mau Mau grandfathers, it is easy for Muungiki to underestimate their ethnopolitical isolation.

The reason why the religious element of Muungiki is obscured in the public space is that they hit the news for reasons not normally compatible with quiet professions of faith. The term “police” occurs on about 200 occasions more than “Mungiki” itself. It must be noted that the media reports draw far more from police sources than Muungiki. Except where the police are portrayed as not doing their duty by the public, they and Muungiki are positioned as mutual enemies, with not the slightest love lost between them. They are rivals for the allegiance of a certain public: one supposed to uphold law and order, the other dedicated to anarchy and lawlessness; one the agent of the state, the other the enemy of the state.

The government is cast as a major actor, because the disorder that Muungiki represents sets up an agenda that the government is expected by its citizens to resolve: why should they be obliged to anyone, except those who are given constitutional powers? The latter form a sufficient problem on their own. The government is emphasized, because it is a political player, and *ipso facto* interesting, while the state is a more abstract concept. The legislators are not half, even collectively, as important as the President. Muungiki is not to be dealt with by complex or long-term policy, but by executive action. Already the media mindset appears, which proved so reluctant to condemn the police’s shoot-to-kill policy effected by government and enjoyed by the main opposition.

Many of the reports involve the criminal justice system, and even the British mantra of the “rule of law” is mentioned 15 times. Muungiki are seen as a direct threat to the rule of law and those who administer it, and as such are paradoxically subject to arbitrary, sometimes mass, arrest and incarceration: “And Internal Security minister, Prof George Saitoti, differed with Raila on how to deal with the Mungiki sect. He told the followers of the banned sect to respect the rule of law or be dealt with ruthlessly. (Ochola, Abiya, Ombati, Cyrus, & Ratemo, Hames “Debate

on Amnesty for Poll Chaos Rages On” *Standard* 30 May 2008). However such high-handed official responses are not sustainable in Kenya. Perceptions of official corruption and the intimidation of witnesses and even security forces mean that the term “arrest” outnumbers “prosecute” more than 22 times. The judiciary, for good reasons of law, may frustrate police action, where evidence is seldom objective, so “bail” and “bond” occur five times more often than the term “sentence.” “Escape” and “release” occur nearly 11 times more often than “sentence.” Justice is seldom seen to be done by an angry Nairobi public, which gave a political reason for Kibaki’s government to become really tough with Muungiki before the general elections of 2007.

### RELATIONS WITH WORLD RELIGIONS

Muungiki are also counterpoised against the two main world religions in Kenya. The contrast is not so marked, because they have no responsibility for the security forces and are not themselves an arm of the government. Also the natural antipathy between them on issues of modernity and globalization is moderated by the Muungiki leadership’s thoroughly opportunistic refuge by conversion into Islam and then Pentecostalist churches when government suppression made life too difficult for them. However, these moves do not hide the fact that, as with the police, Muungiki is a rival operating in the same space, this time the market for souls, spiritual allegiance, and unitive symbols. Should Gikuyu be worshipping Mwene Nyaga, Ngai, or Allah? When it seemed police shot Njenga’s wife dead, Gikuyu church leaders welcomed dialogue between government and Muungiki:

“When the Prime Minister Mr Raila Odinga said that he was ready to dialogue with the Mungiki and other youth militants, there was a sigh of relief but a few days later, some of these youths were assassinated on their way for a meeting in Naivasha,” said Bishop David Kamau, Auxiliary Catholic Bishop Archdiocese of Nairobi.

“This killing was a betrayal of trust from the people that are searching for a ray of hope and a peaceful solution,” said Bishop Kamau in a statement signed by the head of Catholic Church John Cardinal Njue [*sic*] and Rev. Timothy Ranji ACK Mount Kenya South Diocese among others.

(Ombati, Cyrus “Mungiki Set to Storm City as Talks Collapse” *Standard* 29 May 2008)

These churchmen and the Religious Leaders Consultation Group urged sincere talks based on Muungiki leaving criminal activity, and the government prosecuting them, rather than summarily executing them.

### VIOLENCE AND FORCE

Now it is revealed why Muingiki attract so many column inches. They are pictured, often literally in photographs, as violent. They force their own people and members of the public to do things without their personal consent. The authorities need to use force against them. Violence meets violence, sometimes sensationally so. The greater force wins, and it does not have to be the security forces. However, as Muingiki continue and as reflection deepens, the shallowness of sensationalist reporting and its political responses are exposed, interestingly by television rather than the press:

The KTN documentary on the origins of the Mungiki sect aired last week was well researched and insightful ...

The documentary was also a wake-up call to the political leadership, making it clear that force alone will not solve the myriad problems that the youth face.

(Wanderi, Collins (Letters) "Mungiki Film was Brilliant" *Standard* 27 June 2008)

Of course injuries far outnumber deaths, especially when the *panga* (machet ) and the *simi* (Gikuyu sword) are the common weapons, but words implying fatalities outnumber those that indicate the wounding by a factor of 4.3. Nothing is seen as safe from Muingiki, neither business nor body, home nor property. People's nameless or subconscious fears are, rightly or wrongly, projected on to Muingiki, for they are depicted as a threat to order and a menace to society, perhaps more than any other social institution or movement. Kenyans do not think that religion should be this. Muingiki acts are often considered evil in the media, or just plain wrong. Professional reporters try not to pass judgment, but they may quote those who do, while comment and letters to the press may be much more forthright.

### SECRET MYSTERIES

Secrecy is a dominant feature of Muingiki belonging, especially its sacramental behavior, so that hardly any eye-witness accounts of members' rituals have been reported, just the police displaying the remaining paraphernalia left behind when a rite has been interrupted. Secrecy means that there is not much that the outsider can say about Muingiki rituality, and the insider will fear, being oathed on pain of death, to disclose anything. To give away the secrets of the tribe is to act as a traitor. Vigilantism connotes a "concept that is veiled in secrecy and serves as a

cloak of deception” (Sen & Pratten 2007:12), but Muigiki are more than borderland shadows, for their secrecy is a deliberate instrument to gain power. The term “mystery” has almost doubled in frequency in the last two years, showing that Muigiki has become increasingly mysterious in the public forum as its persistence invites questions to which there are few known answers.

Being dubbed as destructive masks a very serious Muigiki intention: to bring discipline to a rough life, even if some of their actions are inconsistent with it. Kagwanja (2005:97) points to a highly successful “crusade against drunkenness, drug addiction, broken families, prostitution, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, and HIV/AIDS”. There is an ideal vision of putting right a society broken by Western modernity. References to peace have more than doubled from 61 in the last two years, reflecting perhaps the feeling that all-out war against Muigiki has not worked and will not. Moreover, there is a recognition that Muigiki does hold the religious value of peace, even if, like the state security forces, it goes an odd way about it.

It is a commonplace that Muigiki emphasize and appear to practice traditional Gikuyu prayers, for they will do this in their mass demonstrations. The media might not want to dwell on this too much due to the very high valuation and emphasis given to prayer in all Kenyan religions. Muigiki are not known generally as youths, vigilantes, men of violence, or rogues, or even criminals, but simply and consistently over the last decade as “members”. Of what are they members? A sect, that is, a religion gone wrong, one that does not draw together the whole community, even if this be the Muigiki vision.

#### **AN OATH OF INITIATION ON PAIN OF DEATH**

Kenyans recognize initiation as highly significant to becoming one with a community, and therefore of great social benefit. However “oath” is the more sensational and historically significant term for initiation in Kenya, because with Mau Mau and the Kenyatta oathing controversy (Knighton 2008), the Gikuyu earned a wide notoriety for secret oathing. Again, its occurrence in reporting has more than doubled in two years. Interest in the technicalities of the oath, perhaps because it is secret and swears to secrecy, is on the increase, which cannot help but to categorize Muigiki in Kenyan minds as a new movement of traditional religion.

Though reports of some Muigiki events were highly sensational accounts of a threat to forcibly cut women’s genitals in certain localities, it is interesting that Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), the pejorative Western term, is used much less than circumcision, including “female circumcision”, the common English term in Kenya. This shows that it

is not just some outlandish Gikuyu who stress the practice, and that the media have not completely adopted the impassioned Western reaction to the practice. The primitive-civilized dichotomy begins to break down here. Circumcision is no bad thing in itself for the majority; it being forced on unsuspecting passers-by may just prove the Muingiki to be uncouth.

That Muingiki have adopted “baptism” certainly aligns it with well-known religious practice in Kenya, but here it is the media’s term for ritual bathing in the river before circumcision. Either way, it connotes a highly religious act. Sociologists of religion normally like to emphasize belonging over believing in religious adherence and identity (Davie 1994). Thus, the usual discourse is to say that one is a “member of Muingiki.” Such membership is defined in terms known well to both traditional African religions and world religions, namely initiation, ritual forms of oath-taking, and participation in meetings or assemblies. The following report refers to a Muingiki defector from Githurai who was reported missing: “One of the rules of the outlawed sect, they said, was that one does not leave once he/she joins, otherwise they would be killed, on the pretext, ‘it is God who has given us courage to do so’” (“Six ‘Mungiki’ Defectors Arrested” *Nation* 9 February 2004). The Christian sacraments perform entry and allegiance to the body of Christ. Membership is constituted thus for probably hundreds of thousands of Gikuyu, while joining in a gang for the purposes of protection and extortion is at most an ancillary activity of a minority of those initiated. Were it otherwise, the movement would have folded in the enforced periodic absence of these income-generating activities. Every member is expected to pay an individual subscription, which is not very different from the expectation on church members to give to their local congregation.

In sum, Muingiki are often credited with having the usual features, dimensions, and activities of a religion, despite the media’s lack of sympathetic and internal perspective: a “Holy Priest” sprinkles water and oil on member’s heads, raises his arms to face Mount Kenya in prayer, and sings, “I place my hope under your wings [God].” Only God has the power to ban the movement, which they claim is 3.5–4 million strong, irrepressible, and redemptive (“Kenyan Sect Banned by State but Defiant” *Nation* 19 April 2002). The salvific flavor of such a trust in God and the destiny of the movement are not characterized here by politico-legal facts.

#### POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE IN 2008

Even without this analysis it is clear to students of religion, if not secular political scientists, that Muingiki is a politico-religious movement in succession to many others in Kenya over the last 60 years.<sup>9</sup> Indeed they were called *dini* (religion) by the British administrators and their leaders were

often incarcerated for their subversion (Mahone 2006)! Most Kenyans refer to Muungiki as a sect, a religious category, accepting its religious attributes, if with disapproval. Another Christian Gikuyu tells me that unless people see the spiritual aspect of Muungiki, they will never be able to deal with it politically. Such politico-religious movements, with many others, are part and parcel of Africa's response in history to the invasions of the modern West. In Africa, there is seldom any Enlightenment separation between religion and politics, which in Europe anyway is a matter of glass walls. All religions, if vital, are politically potent.

Muungiki members are able to infiltrate the police or local centers of authority, since Muungiki is the current expression of a "true Gikuyu," even if this is contested by zealous churchmen and bourgeoisie. Since it enjoins the secrecy of the oath, its underground, metamorphosing structure is hardly visible for long and little more can be said definitively about it, but where there are Gikuyu, there are potential Muungiki and more who can be pressurized by Muungiki through kinship or exchange networks. If a Gikuyu has taken an oath, then there is a deep bond to keep solidarity and assist fellow jurors, even if strangers, just as intended in Mau Mau and in the 1968–1969 oath-taking crisis (Knighton 2008). Very little has been published about the contents of the oath, for media reports give an almost entirely external view, passing on police discoveries of oath-taking paraphernalia after the event.

Prosecutor Raymond Malele told the court that the three suspects were found with paraphernalia associated with Muungiki at Mgongeni Village in Mombasa last Saturday.

The court heard that the three were arrested after police received information that they had performed a ritual the previous night and smeared the walls of their house with the contents of animal intestines.

"Upon searching the room, items associated with the Muungiki sect were found, which included one kilogramme of snuff (tobacco), nine packets of incense, three fly whisks, and green plant leaves in a black polythene bag," the court was told.

(Kibirige, Amina "Three in Court over Links to Muungiki Sect" *Nation* 21 May 2008)

Muungiki pride themselves on their traditional African snuff with its rejection of Western-style manufactured tobacco products. The incense here is unusual, so is probably a local religious borrowing from Hindu Asians in Mombasa. Holding a flywhisk was one of Kenyatta's characteristic symbols of power when in office. Herbs are used in the concoction consumed in oath-taking ceremonies. A nocturnal oath-taking in Nairobi's Omega estate in was curtailed by police at 9:00am.

“They have confessed that they were brought here from Murang’a and Maragwa for the event,” he said.

In the house, they slaughtered seven sheep,<sup>10</sup> whose blood they used in the oath-taking event.

Also recovered were several paraphernalia, 37 pangas, literature that showed where they planned to attack, five knives, sheepskins, sufurias<sup>11</sup> full of fresh blood and seven head of sheep whose eyes had been gouged out.

Some of the youth confessed that they were brought there to take an oath.

(Ombati, Cyrus “37 Mungiki Suspects Arrested”  
*Standard* 18 February 2008)

This is a very different collection, due to immediate political purposes, but there are similar connections to certain Gikuyu traditions: blood is usually the main constituent of the oathing concoction (“Man Jailed for Taking Mungiki Oath” *Nation* 7 August 2002; “Kenyan Jailed for Taking Mungiki Oath” BBC Africa News 7 August 2002), and Mau Mau oaths could involve pricking a goat’s or sheep’s eyeball seven times, or the biting of raw goat’s meat and drinking the concoction seven times, while taking seven vows. This was probably an additional, special oath for commissioning lethal activity.

Cyrus Ombati added points of considerable political import for the post-election crisis in Kenya; three weeks later Gikuyu, using Muungiki, hit back at those who had been targeting them ethnopolitically in Nairobi and the Rift Valley. Oathing of youths aged 14 to 28 had been going on for two days with the purpose of taking them to an undisclosed “event” in the Rift Valley. A youth confessed that the pangas, chopping tools commonly used in a range of everyday labor from forestry to horticulture, were for arming, forced by the chaos “witnessed in parts of the country.” Each of the youths arrested had a panga, and over 200 escaped.

Similarly, in Muranga District police interrupted an alleged Muungiki ceremony with a gun battle against 50 participants: along with oathing paraphernalia they recovered a G3 rifle, an AK-47, a pistol, three pangas, and an axe (Njagi, John & Njeru, Mugo “Seven Muungiki Members Shot Dead by Police” *Nation* 7 February 2008). Again, each oath-taker had an arm at the ceremony, suggesting its ritual consecration. At the same time, the Kwekwe Squad, formed by an Assistant Commissioner of Police based at the Nairobi area CID headquarters in 2007 to crack down on Muungiki, had been disbanded “in unclear circumstances” (Ombati, Cyrus “37 Mungiki Suspects Arrested” *Standard* 18 February 2008). The Kenyan reader would take from this that there had been a deal with Gikuyu in government: protection of “our people” in danger in return for the removal of police harassment.

## TAKING THE OATH

Despite its frequent political failures and extreme treatment meted out by the police, Muingiki persist due to factors others than worldly success, prime among which is religion. Even after the police shooting more than 400 Muingiki leaders and followers, oath-taking as a means of recruitment was continuing in houses in Muranga North and South Districts. The oath requires not only loyalty and obligation, but also secrecy, thus enabling it to expand even in the midst of the worst that the security forces can do.

In Nyandarua where the Mungiki spiritual leader Maina Njenga's rural home is, young men occasionally avoid police roadblocks and patrols to attend ritual baptism and oathing to bind them to the movement.

(“Ritual Baptism and Oathing Still go On” *Nation* 4 February 2007)

“It is only the leaders who are supposed to administer the oath who knows [*sic*] about it and they will never disclose it to any one. Even those going to take the oath are never informed what they are going to do,” the 33-year-old man, who deserted the sect this year explained . . . And it is hard for one to resist taking the oath given the force and coercion used by those administering it.

“The new recruit must first be caned and warned of death if he resists the move to take the oath. And since most of them are young people in the village, they usually comply,” the man explains.

However, those who defect or disclose the oath are the ones who are beheaded.

“This is the danger that I am facing today,” the man laments.

(“Mungiki Targeting Students and Pupils to Ensure Oath-Taking Continues” *Nation* 16 July 2007)

An oathing ceremony is surrounded by a ring of scouts a kilometer in radius with 500 meters between each group. They appear innocuous, while cultivating or herding, but by the time the police arrive at the ceremony the participants will have dispersed. The coercion<sup>12</sup> is similar to the oathing using in Mau Mau<sup>13</sup> and the 1968–1969 oathing, with the expectation that the taker will be transformed by the oath as his status and identity is changed by the sacramental ritual. Whether the takers are completely convinced or not, the ceremony is most effective in binding them to complicity and secrecy, which is why the defector speaking to the press is very rare.<sup>14</sup> He claimed he was in a predicament, believing that he would be killed by both police and Muingiki<sup>15</sup> if he fell into their hands.

One of the people embroiled in Muingiki, with whom I have communicated, gave me the vows that she was required to swear on her

own initiation into Muungiki in Thika District in 2001 (R1, telephone interview, 5 June 2008).<sup>16</sup> I asked her to write down the oaths just as she was required to say them. She admitted voluntarily that she was not sure of the spelling of the Gikuyu language,<sup>17</sup> which is quite natural as most contemporary Gikuyu have little call to write their language.<sup>18</sup> So the spelling has been corrected where it is obvious, and the accents added. Then her translations into English (second line) are compared with those (third line) of a consortium of female Gikuyu of similar age to the contributor, who are much more educated than her, but have not been initiated into Muungiki.

1. *Ngūtūra nūmītie ūhinga wa Gīkūyū na Mūumbi nginya tūkanina ūkombo wa cieko na meciria ma nyakerū.*  
(I will stay determined to end white domination and exploitation)  
I will remain faithful to the secrecy of the Gikuyu Adam and Eve,  
until the end of the slavery of the white man's thoughts
2. *Ingekanahikira mūfuu ndothūrwo ni ariū a maitū a rūrīrī.*  
(may I be killed if I marry an uncircumcised)  
If I get married to .....,<sup>19</sup> may I be hated by all generations!
3. *Ingikehuumba cumeka kana migutho ndothūrwo ni rūrīrī.*  
(may I be punished if I wear short skirts or trousers)  
If I ever dress in ..... or trousers, may I be hated by all generations!
4. *Ingikanarega kūhingia watho wa njamba cia rūrīrī ndothūrwo ni ariū a kiama.*  
(may I be punished if I fail to deliver on a mission)  
If I ever fail to fulfill the rules of the warriors of all generations,  
may I be hated by the sons of the clan!
5. *Ingigatiga mītugo ya Mūumbi ndothūrwo ni tīrī ūyū.*  
( ... if I divert from the ways of my culture and tradition)  
If I ever leave the ways of the Gīkūyū Eve, may I be hated by this soil!
6. *Ingikaruta thirī cia njamba cia rūrīrī, ndothūrwo ni thakame.*  
( ... if I disclose the secrets)  
If I ever let out the secrets of the warriors of all generations, may I  
be hated by blood!
7. *Ingikagarūrūka kana ndiganirie kiama kia njamba cia rūrīrī ndorio ni muma ūyū.*  
( ... if I ever defect or turn back)  
If I ever turn back or abandon the council of the warriors of all  
generations, may I perish by this oath!

8. *Ingikagarūka na thutha njokere mītugo ya nyakerū ndironinwo ni muma ūyū.*  
 (... if I ever follow West way of life—drinking, smoking, religion etc)  
 If I ever turn back and follow the ways of the white man, may this oath finish me!

Such vows have never before been revealed in print. As the sixth vow makes plain, secrecy is invoked on pain of death wrought by the blood that the initiand drinks—to her damnation if she breaks it.

The vows are rarer still, being for female Muingiki, specifically at least numbers 2, 3, and 5. They are highly reminiscent of the Mau Mau oath that I have researched in the field, especially vows 4, 6, and 7, and the self-imprecations. Indeed the first vow has no self-imprecation, and in her first version in English (given in brackets) has been expressed as number 5 out of seven oaths. If originally separate, it was probably an assertion required in the introduction to the vows proper, which all have a self-imprecation involving being cut off, excommunicated, outlawed, killed, or cursed that amount to the same thing in African cosmology. The accursed become marginal in every sense to the land of the living, so that it would be better not to have been born, hence the general reluctance to set these things out, when that itself involves invoking the curse of the oath. After each of his vows Mohamed Mathu (1974:11) had to say, “If I violate this sacred pledge, may this oath kill me.” Swearing seven vows mirrors ritual practice in Mau Mau oaths. Karigo Muchai (1973:19f) records the seven vows of the *batuni* oath in detail, each followed by a fourfold imprecation:

And if I fail to do so:  
 May this oath kill me  
 May this *thenge* [sacrificial he-goat] kill me  
 May this seven [vows] kill me  
 May this meat kill me

Furthermore the language is not ordinary Gikuyu, but antiquated and stylized, just as might be expected from a sacred ceremony. There were two words the educated could not translate at all, and others which they struggled to put into English, such as *rūrūrī*. The use of *nyakerū* (European) is as Mau Mau used it, instead of *muthungu*.

Given the unique evidence presented above, it is beyond doubt that the contributor has been inducted into the secrets of Muingiki. Her responses to my requests were quick and spontaneous enough to come from her own memory. She has transgressed by revealing the secrets of her people, and worst of all to Europeans, so is susceptible to the curses

of the initiatory oath of Muungiki, but had already broken it in various ways, immediately and supremely by escaping their required sacrament of Gikuyu initiation, FGC. In Muungiki eyes, she is therefore liable to punishment by the oath and, if identified, by those that would enforce it, whether by social pressure, threats, or violence. The most significant content of the oath concerns the self-imprecation. The first five (numbers 2 to 6) invoke hatred from society, soil, and blood. All imply a slow death by excommunication, starvation, and sickness. The last two emphasize a more direct death caused by the oath itself for disobeying the due authorities in Muungiki, who are made to stand for the whole tribe, and for following Western ways, as many Gikuyu do. It is not surprising that Gikuyu, who have undertaken the oath, do not let out the secrets of their people and are susceptible to leverage by Muungiki to assist them. The calls to ethnic solidarity in such a ceremony can be sovereign and do much to explain the persistence, influence, and fear of Muungiki.

#### MUUNGIKI PENETRATION OF THE STATE

It is easy to conceive of many local police being implicated with Muungiki, just as many “Loyalists” were implicated with Mau Mau during the Emergency.

Elements within the Police Force are allegedly supporting the *Mungiki* sect members in their nefarious acts. That chilling revelation from [*sic*] the Nairobi Provincial Commissioner Francis Sigei, in his capacity as the provincial security committee chairman.

(“Police-’Mungiki’ Ties Chilling” *Nation* 18 June 2004; “Turncoat Police Slow Down War on ‘Mungiki’” *Nation* 17 June 2004)

It is interesting to note that most of the police action against Muungiki has been in Nairobi under two successive Luo police commissioners and now under a Somali one. In fact, Kiambu police had advance knowledge of Muungiki hacking to death a carpenter in Githunguri while on their way to bury a 17-year-old member of their sect who had been killed by villagers over a week before.

Mr Cheserek said that police in the area had been warned of impending violence during the burial of the sect member at his father’s home, and were on stand-by but it was not immediately clear why they did not avert the violence and arrest more raiders.

(“Police Chief Warning over Mungiki Sect Menace” KBC 17 December 2002)

Police complicity, usually due to ethnic solidarity or the desire for a quiet life or a bribe, makes the normal press polarity between police and Muungiki more complex.

A common complaint of Kenyans has been the lack of control of Muungiki. Such media pressure has led to many arrests at select moments when a perceived atrocity or public disorder has been blamed on Muungiki, but in most cases the police have not been mobilized either to prevent, or even stop, the meetings of an unlawful society. Police and the provincial administration are said to be involved with Muungiki (Kihali, James O "Firm Action Needed to End Emerging Cycle of Violence" *Nation* 19 November 2006).

Politicians are repeatedly tempted by the powerful mobilization of people that Muungiki represents, capable as it is of providing many a cause with youth-wing militants at the drop of a hat. Two Thika MPs patronized a Muungiki March for Uhuru Kenyatta before the 2002 general elections (Khisia, Nancy "A-G Orders Arrest of Mungiki Followers" *Standard* 12.8.02). Eleven Army officers, one top official still in the Office of the President, and the security team of former President Moi had ten army landrovers reconditioned and fitted with high-tech communications equipment, registered to the National Security Intelligence Service, handed over from Kahawa Barracks to the "Presidential Escort", and then to Muungiki one week before the election. Afterwards one was seized at the home of Ndura Waruinge, again acting as a leader, but the investigation was blocked by senior army officers, despite the change in government ("Army Given" *Nation* 1 February 2003; Kihali, James O "Firm Action Needed to End Emerging Cycle of Violence" *Nation* 19 November 2006). Cabinet ministers consorted with Ndura Waruinge over the constitutional referendum (Njenga Karume) and a Parliamentary nomination for the general election (Norman Nyagah, whose own constituency result had to be declared null and void in 2008 due to indefensible irregularities) (Kihali, James O "Firm Action Needed to End Emerging Cycle of Violence" *Nation* 19 November 2006).

The government knew it had a problem within when it arrested the Deputy Mayor of Nairobi on a demonstration in support of Muungiki: according to the state prosecutor, "Mr Chacha said the deputy mayor had already demonstrated his association with, and support for, the banned Mungiki sect, which was behind cases of violence in Nairobi and other areas" ("City's Deputy Mayor in Court after Demo" *Nation* 9 January 2007). Even after the return of President Kibaki, who has had little sympathy for Muungiki, they succeeded in taking over a school fund-raising event from the Cabinet Minister Uhuru Kenyatta, proclaiming their agreement to support the ruling party (Maina, Mohammed "Rag-tag Group backs Kenyatta" *Nation* 4 March 2008).

The powerful leader of the Orange Democratic Movement, Raila Odinga, used to complain repeatedly of the “godfathers” of Muungiki in government and of the former leader, Ndura Waruinge, who speaks for rather than denounces Muungiki as being a “Government project.” The government then had a political incentive to charge him without bail yet again (“Violence was Sponsored by State, claims Langata MP” *Nation* 18 December 2006; “Stop Creating a Tiger out of a Pussycat” *Nation* 19 December 2006). This was not an idle accusation when senior politicians such as Daniel Moi, Uhuru Kenyatta, and Chris Murungaru, as well as several MPs were implicated in covert agreements in the past.<sup>20</sup> It is even less idle when the Prime Minister in the Grand Coalition himself makes a complete u-turn, opportunistically mollifying Muungiki at a press conference by announcing that talks with Muungiki would commence. Some Gikuyu politicians, whom Odinga had regularly denounced before as godfathers, also called for the release of the Muungiki chairman, Maina Njenga (Ombati, Cyrus “Mungiki Set to Storm City as Talks Collapse” *Standard* 29 May 2008).

Thus, Odinga was using Muungiki and their political supporters to drive a wedge into President Kibaki’s block Gikuyu vote in Central Province. Given such political space, Muungiki’s political wing, the Kenya National Youth Alliance (Kenya), has suddenly become a founder-member of the Progressive Parties Alliance, launched at Ufungamano House, and its Secretary-General, Gitau Njuguna, has been photographed in the news with longstanding lawyer and politician, Paul Muite. “‘We want all the young people of Kenya to unite and take over the leadership through the ballot’ Mr Njuguna said” (Njuguna, Michael “Act on Ndung’u Land Report, Orengo Told” *Nation* 4 September 2008). With their two founding leaders in prison, Muungiki at last has a formal foothold in mainstream Kenyan politics, which they mean to use to the full. They have few models of electoral ethics to constrain their revolutionary religious drive for power.

### CONCLUSION

Quite aside from the police and politicians, who have their price, it can never be assumed that Muungiki are excluded from government. The Gikuyu are omnipresent in the offices of state at every level in Nairobi and around the country. It can never be guaranteed that any particular government officer has never taken a secret and secretive Muungiki oath and so is not susceptible to intense social pressure and the threat of blackmail, curse, or force to assist the movement at least once. In this same way, Mau Mau had extremely good and immediate intelligence

and an amazing capacity to absorb from the system, as by osmosis, a proportion of the arms and ammunitions intended to be used against them. This means that the state is compromised not only in its capacity to protect a person under the threat of Muigiki, but government's internal information and communications could actually alert them to what they did not know about the person. Thus, to use Chabal and Daloz's (1999:5) terms, the Kenyan state is unable to emancipate itself from the Gikuyu society to which it has been so often close, whether it be the material privileges of their elite, or the hunger for autonomy of the marginalized Muigiki masses propelled by a ritual potency.

Mainstream Christian religion has been wrong-footed by these sudden moves, having sided with the middle-class and ethnic outrage against Muigiki in the media. Compromised in the public eye, because of the churches' party political affections in the run-up and outcome of the 2007 general elections, the media have chosen to be the sole bearer of the nation's standards, and cold-shouldered those who would be prophets.<sup>21</sup> Churchleaders have attempted to join in the call for reconciliation, indeed prayer, with Muigiki, but this has only confirmed their ethnically biased image.<sup>22</sup> The Anglicans' offer of the high kudos All Saints' Cathedral as a venue to talk with the Kenya National Youth Alliance had to be embarrassingly withdrawn because of resistance within and police opposition (Shiundu, Alphonse "City Church Distances Itself from Mungiki" *Nation* 5 June 2008). Gitari pronounced afterwards, "We must realise that something is very wrong in our collective conscience when Church leaders begin to associate with illegal and criminal gangs like Mungiki" (Thatiah, Peter "Archbishop Gitari: The Conscience of Society is Wounded" *Standard* 8 July 2008). Now Muigiki can talk with politicians as they bid for ethno-religious power in Kenya. Meanwhile the mass media continue to try to imagine the nation of Kenya constructed against its shadow of Muigiki (Anderson, B 1999). It will need a new generation of leaders to shoulder the modernist mantle passed on to David Gitari, when dealing with a secret politico-religious movement is more unpredictable than with government or media, and the contest this time is direct rivalry for spiritual allegiance.

#### NOTES

1. A massive 42 percent of the whole Kenyan population is estimated to be under 15 years of age, compared with only 2 percent over 65 (Yin & Kent 2008).
2. The mainstream Protestants of the NCKC were well aware of the problem of unemployment among primary school leavers, for in 1966 the Council

started the Village Polytechnic movement. The movement was formulated after the NCKK undertook an extensive research on the future of children who finished primary school, which led to the publishing of a report titled "After School What?" Under the leadership of the late Rev. Andrew Hake, Village Polytechnics offered school leavers an opportunity for training in technical fields enabling many young people set up [*sic*] their own businesses. The concept was adopted by the government and in 1973, the government took over the management of all Village Polytechnics.

(Musyimi 2006)

The NCKK was also early into the approval of Cottage Industries in 1980, when it promoted the idea of small-scale industrial ventures. This is now widely recognized as the *Jua Kali* sector.

3. Cannell (2006) argues convincingly that the secular only makes sense in its Christian history, but of course the greatest oppositions may occur in families of ideas.
4. Not to be confused with Nation Media Group's weekly, *The East African*.
5. Graham Mytton, personal communication, 17 October 2008
6. Information direct from Nation Media Group: Kyaka, Kenneth. E-mail, 29 August 2008.
7. Muranga district security team led by area District Commissioner. Obondo Kajumbi, "described the sect followers as 'primitive and militant'" ("Mungiki Followers Arrested" *Nation* 30 September 2000).
8. Ruteere and Pommerolle (2003:600) found that the police are capable of operating "an extortion racket": "The monthly average bribe expenditure per person paid to the Kenya police is Ksh.1270 (about US\$17)" (2003:602).
9. I was invited by Prof. Peter Clarke (2005) on his initiative to submit an entry for Muingiki to the Routledge *Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements* alongside Maji Maji, Karinga, the African Orthodox Church, and Mau Mau.
10. According to the court report these were goats:

Also produced before the court were items including roasted meat, 15 goat hooves, five goatskins, and four goat heads, a bunch of bananas and blood in *sufurias* ... The prosecution also produced before the court tobacco, 15 pangas, cooking fat, animal waste, lotions and literature allegedly belonging to the group.

(Kilgat, Sam & Mwaniki, Mike "Mungiki Suspects Charged"  
*Nation* 19 February 2008)

11. A *sufuria* (Swahili) is a handleless saucepan.
12. "While administering oaths to members, the leaders are said to mete out savage beatings to the converts" (Kinyungu, Cyrus "Group Could Be LRA in the Making" *Nation* 6 April 2004).

13. An 87-year-old man witnessed the similarity: "Just like in Mau Mau days, the oathing ceremony takes place in hidden valleys or isolated river banks" (Maina, Waikwa "Mungiki Catches Them Young" *Nation* 6 July 2007).
14. "Mr Mwangi, a former member who is now a preacher-musician, said he feared for his life as the sect's penalty for desertion was death. When one took an oath to join the sect, he was expected to be a member for life, the witness said" (Kadida, Jillo "Witnesses in Mungiki Case get Security" *Nation* 29 October 2004).
15. Mungiki were said to have their own courts to deal with errant members:

Offences include refusing to pay regular contributions, breaking the oath, defying orders from superiors and betraying the sect by collaborating with government officials. Former insiders say sentences vary from a day's confinement without food or water to death for the more serious breach.

("Kangaroo Courts that Order Death" *Nation* 5 April 2004)

16. Initiation, when it is called *kuhagira*, which confers the change of identity, is not the only occasion for an oath. Others oaths are more functional: *horohio* for repentance; *mbitika* to prepare for combat; "exodus" for a victory; and "Valentine" to protect couples from HIV and strengthen their marriage (John Ngirachu and Casper Waithaka "How Mungiki Became 'Most Serious Internal Security Threat'" *Nation* 11 March 2009).
17. ("Please forgive my kikuyu [*sic*] spelling, I don't know how good yours is but am better at talking than I am reading and writing.") For obvious reasons the contributor's name is withheld (R1, e-mail 6 June 2008).
18. I found it impossible in the Text Book Centre in Nairobi in December 2007 to buy a children's book printed in Gikuyu.
19. The two blanks indicate that Mungiki are generating terms unknown to educated Gikuyu. It is to be expected that a secret society mostly comprising youths would construct their own language-game, so there is no alternative but to accept the initiate's translations of an uncircumcised boy and (in point 3) short skirts.
20. Kigumo MP, Mwangi Kihara (NARC), admitted that 15 MPs from Central Province were abducted by Mungiki and he was himself taken to a room, but denied reports which quoted him saying they were forced to take an oath ("Raila Links Officials to Mungiki" *Nation* 22 June 2007)
21. The NCKC has tried to tackle Kenya's ethnicization in 2008 by issuing press statements (Oliver Simuyu, personal communication 29 September 2008), but the media had little time for them.
22. Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Presbyterian churches under the umbrella of the Religious Leaders Consultation Group had declared support for the prayers.

“Our intention is to expose the youth’s social, religious and economical needs to the general public. Observers may challenge us; that is why we shall be ready,” said Bishop David Kamau, Auxiliary Bishop of Nairobi.

“Mungiki and other annoyed youth militias are also our children, children of God and citizens of this nation,” added Kamau.

Quoting from the Bible, the prelate said, “Even to the fight for the truth, and the Lord your God will battle for you.”

“As religious leaders, we shall see to it that the churches we serve offer a solution to the youth’s problem. They (youth) are the preferred people of God and some of them need rehabilitation, which the church is capable of spearheading.”

(Ombati, Cyrus “Police land in Park to Bar Mungiki from Prayers” *Standard* 1 June 2008)

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#### NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS, WEEKLIES, AND MONTHLIES

CITED FROM NAIROBI

*East African Standard*  
*End Time Christian News*

Abbreviated to *Standard*

<i>Sunday Standard</i>	Abbreviated to <i>Standard</i>
<i>Daily Nation</i> *	Abbreviated to <i>Nation</i>
<i>Sunday Nation</i> *	Abbreviated to <i>Nation</i>
<i>The East African</i> *	
<i>Business Daily</i> *	
<i>God's Army</i>	
<i>Leadership Journal</i>	
<i>Maximum Miracle Times</i>	
<i>Newsweek</i> *	
<i>Kenya Today</i> *	
<i>Kenya Times</i>	
<i>Missioner</i>	
<i>National Mirror</i>	
<i>Observer</i>	
<i>People Daily</i>	Abbreviated to <i>People</i>
<i>Revival Springs</i>	
<i>Target</i>	Suppressed
<i>Weekly Review</i>	

\*Titles published by the Nationmedia Group owned by the Aga Khan. It also runs *Daily Metro*, *Taifa Leo*, Nation TV (NTV), Nation FM, and Easy FM radio stations, as well as the mass media in Tanzania and Uganda.

## ELSEWHERE

<i>Christian Century</i>	Chicago, IL
<i>Christian Today</i>	London
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	London
<i>Financial Times</i>	London
<i>The Guardian</i>	London
<i>The Namibian</i>	Abbreviated to <i>Namibian</i>

## OTHER MEDIA

## RADIO

British Broadcasting Corporation	Abbreviated to BBC
Kenya Broadcasting Corporation	Abbreviated to KBC

## INTERNET

Anglican Communion News Service	Abbreviated to ACNS
Panafrican News Agency	

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