

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

Reflections on the East African Revival
and its link to Australia

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Introduction

Background to the Revival

The East African Revival was at heart an African movement. That was the strength of its appeal. Yet it also flowed within the mainstream of Evangelical Christianity and so shared the same beliefs and theological insights, but its expressions, its emphases and its outworking were shaped by Africa. What emerged is a glimpse into how the Gospel stays the same – yet changes. In other words, how the Good News of Jesus moves from one cultural setting to another without losing its eternal truth yet is expressed in ways that reflect the dynamic life of the local community. The Gospel answers people's needs, and God talks to them in their own language. The Christian Faith is universal in that it meets the needs of all human beings, but it is specific, particular to each different community in which it takes root. We shall look at how Western and Australian missionaries interacted with African Christians in the Revival in East Africa and also at some fascinating contacts between African Christians and Aboriginal people in Australia. Several African Christian leaders visited Aboriginal communities in Australia in these years, and a group of Aborigines went to East Africa.

We shall focus on these two aspects of the Gospel, its *universal appeal* and its *specific cultural impact*. This work, as is any work on the history of a Christian movement, is written against the wider background of the events and burning issues of the day and set in the contemporary understanding and mind-set of the times. It attempts to examine the East African Revival against the background of the political developments of the era and its particularity as an African movement, reflecting essentials of African philosophical and religious assumptions. It also seeks to demonstrate the universality of the movement, by drawing connections with resonating strands of theology and spirituality in the worldwide Evangelical movement, and especially Anglican Evangelicalism in Australia.

Australian Evangelicals were not isolated from the spiritual dynamic of what was happening in Britain. Australia still largely looked to Britain as its home base at that time, so we will look at

Evangelical Anglicans in Britain, Australia and East Africa and see how God was moving in these places and to see if there were any common dynamics of faith. Our main emphasis, however will be to observe the emergence of a new brand of Evangelical Christianity, deeply rooted in the familiar but uniquely African, and how it was that the Gospel was made 'at home' in East Africa.

Writers assessing the impact of mission have considered the Church, and more specifically, missionaries, as agents of change, for both good and bad. These have often been presented as participants in cultural imperialism, disrupting social patterns and traditional power structures and also as unwitting agents of empowerment against oppression.¹ Thus the analysis of the place of the churches within the wider political arena has been important. This debate will be touched on in this study. The Revival may be seen as a form of protest against Western influence and control within the church, or it may be seen as providing a context for Africans to exercise leadership and function in African cultural forms. The Mau Mau conflict in Kenya was a complex and violent reaction against Western domination. It was a civil war between some members of the Kikuyu and allied tribes and the British colonial government, but it was also a conflict between members of the Kikuyu people themselves. The Revival was in a sense also a reaction against European control, though this aspect of the Christian movement was largely unconscious, incidental rather than central. With its stress on unity and love among Christians it led to a reaction diametrically opposed to the violence of the Mau Mau.

Mission writers and historians have also shown a particular interest in the so-called 'African Independent Churches' in contrast to the mainstream denominational (or 'mission') churches. Their responses are viewed as arising from an African identity, incorporating the need to embrace change yet maintain continuity. In this connection, they have examined these churches as manifestations of the independence of African thought and the resilience of African culture, in their desire to find African forms of the Christian Faith and to break the hegemony of Western intellectual imperialism. The 'Independent Churches' are considered to be contributors to the overall energetic push for African autonomy, for political

independence. It is interesting to note that the Revival, which arose at the same time as many of these churches, had many of the same hallmarks, the same emphases and practices. Yet the 'Revival Brethren' deliberately chose to remain within the mission-founded churches. These will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

There was much in common between the two phenomena, the Revival movement and the newly founded African churches, suggesting that these arose from a shared wellspring of African consciousness and culture. To compare the two will help us to understand something of the 'Africanness' of the Revival as it shared much with these 'Independent Churches', yet remained within the mission-founded denominations in which it arose.

The Revival within some of the mainstream churches did much to prepare the Church for independence by providing a vehicle for African initiative and leadership. Yet after independence was gained, the Revival may have proved inadequate for the challenges of the new era, especially as its members largely disdained political activity. In the new Africa, Church leaders found a significant role in the total life of their nations, and were expected to participate in more than simply religious activities.

Many missionaries identified with the Revival because they found in it a deeply satisfying fellowship and of great spiritual benefit. Ironically, one of the attractions for them was the African nature of the movement. In identifying with the Revival they identified with the African people and their experience and expression of Christianity. But, paradoxically, in identifying with the Revival as an African phenomenon, they found its universal aspects. They discovered that it presented a familiar Gospel, not a new message, but with different emphases. It was familiar, but new, and it is this that they sought to convey to their Australian friends and supporters. They wanted Australian Christians to enter into something of the new spiritual enthusiasm and energy they discovered. We shall look at these issues and how Australian missionaries sought to share the excitement they felt at the Revival with the church 'back home'. They wanted to bring the fire of revival to their homeland. Some Australian church leaders had close connections with missionaries

in Africa, and on visiting the countries of East Africa became very interested in what was happening there. They too explored the spirituality (and the theology) of the Revival, and brought news of it to Australia.

Other missionaries chose not to identify closely with the Revival; perhaps that was because they saw its particularity, and failed to be caught up in its universality. For them it was essentially the style of the Revival to which they objected, rather than the theology or spirituality.

Later, in the 1960s and 70s, Evangelicalism began to fragment, and to lose its former coherence and its shared spirituality. Some of the new strands of Evangelical Anglicanism were no longer in sympathy with the spiritual emphases of the Revival and thus the Revival's theology came under criticism. However, by that stage the Revival was also losing its vigour, becoming institutionalised and also more fragmented. There was a paradigm shift in the spirituality of Evangelicals, and this change ran parallel to the waning energy of the East African Revival. The altered mood of Australian Evangelicalism was less sympathetic to the spirituality of the Revival. These changes will also be explored in this study.

An African expression of Faith

Part of the particular and valuable contribution in recent years of the West African writer, Lamin Sanneh, is his drawing attention to an oversimplification about the reasons that missionaries brought the Gospel to Africa. He says that it was not so much what missionaries brought, but what brought them that was of lasting value. In other words, for all their faults, missionaries were convinced and compelled by the love of Christ, and by the Word of God. They came with that compulsion, seeing their primary task as translating the Word of God and making it available to the peoples of Africa. This then empowered African people, giving them a confidence in their own culture and in their ability to communicate with God in that culture. Finally, the Gospel became an African religion, not a European import, as Africans interpreted the Word for themselves. Sanneh posed the question, 'of the two processes at work, the historical transmission and the indigenous assimilation, which one

is more significant?'² His answer was clear: what Africans have done with the Gospel has endured and become an indigenous Christianity. The missionaries played a part, certainly, and the final outcome, the vibrant African faith that emerged, drew on their contribution but extended beyond it. Under God an African Church emerged. Another author has said in summary of Sanneh on this point, 'The message transcended the messengers.'³

This study of the Revival will, hopefully, illustrate this truth. The desire of many current writers is to present the present reality of a Christianity not dependent on Western thought forms and historical debates, one not clothed in Western culture. Perhaps it is premature to speak of such a reality as one already realised. The debate is rather about the process. The current interest arises largely from Africans anxious to counteract the earlier emphasis on Christianity as a missionary activity, and to emphasise that Africans were not passive recipients, but claimed the Gospel, absorbed it and made it their own. This is, incidentally, a very helpful counteraction to put to those who present Christianity in Africa as a Western imposition and part of cultural imperialism.

Yet, if Christianity in Africa is African, it is also Christian and therefore standing within a universal, worldwide reality. That reality has been shaped by the Bible, the sacred text of the Christian Faith, and continues to be shaped by it. It has also been shaped by the church traditions and theological emphases brought by missionaries and accepted by an earlier generation of African Christians. African Christianity stands within the context of a Faith that has been explored and developed in history: it does not stand alone as a totally new phenomenon, nor can it. It is difficult, if not impossible, to identify features that could be classified as the 'essentials' of the Christian Faith transferable from culture to culture, for worldview, language and cultural presuppositions colour the totality of understanding. Therefore the interpretation of the Biblical narrative, as well as of subsequent Christian teaching, must be carried out within the context of a cultural understanding. What may seem obvious interpretations of a statement in one culture may be not at all obvious in another, and may bear a different meaning. Also, because of the different worldviews, an

idea that assumes great significance in one cultural setting may not bear the same weight in another. So a simplistic attempt to identify a central 'core' of easily transmittable 'Gospel' may well fail. Yet by the same token, because of the different understanding of the ideas, new insights can arise, so the very act of sharing, receiving and discussing the Gospel adds to our understanding of God's self revelation in his Word.⁴ Thus the assimilation of the Christian Faith into the African context by the African Church has inevitably contributed to the wider debates of the Church Universal. It has brought a richer contribution with the unique insights of an African vision. Yet, that does not deny the unifying nature of the essential Christian doctrines and experiences. Belief in, and experience of, the One Creator God, in his self revelation, in the incarnation of the Son and his saving acts, and in the indwelling of the Spirit of God may be understood and expressed in a variety of thought forms, but they must be understood and held central. For a Christian person or a church body to remain within the orthodoxy of the 'Catholic and Apostolic' Church, these must be core beliefs. To undervalue these doctrines is the path to a syncretic new religion.

Therefore, while we seek to understand the uniqueness of the African experience of God in Christ,

The central theme of theology from and about Africa is the search for the universal transcending both a created division between African and Western and the different African contexts.⁵

Another key feature of the Revival in East Africa is that it began during the era of a major debate within the Christian world over theological issues. This debate resulted in a clear division between Evangelical Christians and those of a more liberal outlook, and affected missionary work in East Africa. The two major issues concerned the authority and integrity of the Bible, the Holy Scriptures of the Christian Faith, and the divide over theological issues such as the Kingdom of God.

The Revival and Australia

Did the East African Revival have an impact on Australia? Yes it did, but this may now be largely forgotten, except by those older people for whom the Revival was a vital experience. Its effects on Australian Anglican Evangelicalism may not have been long-lasting, something common to the history of revivals, which revitalise the church and impact society for a limited time only. Few younger Christians now know who D.L. Moody was – one of the great influential figures of the religious renewal of the late nineteenth century. I once asked a class in a theological college in Australia who he was and no-one could answer, yet no one could argue that Moody did not have an impact that deeply affected society in his day with lasting results.

The East African Revival was a significant spiritual experience for many Australian missionaries. They wrote of it, they talked of it, they enthused about it. Its emphases became familiar in Australia. Missionaries used the awful yet inspiring sufferings of the Mau Mau to encourage commitment in Australian Christians. African visitors to Aboriginal communities certainly made a deep impression and helped to inspire Aboriginal people. They probably contributed to the development of an indigenous Aboriginal Christianity. This will be discussed in Chapter 11. The Revival could and did travel – it had something for people in Australia – the universal appeal of the Gospel.

The founding of the Anglican Church in East Africa

The story of the East African Revival starts in the 1930s, although the first missionaries of modern times were German Pietists. Dr Johann Ludwig Krapf and his wife Rosine, former members of the Basel Lutheran church, served in Ethiopia before joining the Anglican Church Missionary Society in 1844. Sadly, soon after their arrival in Mombasa, Rosine died after giving birth to a child who did not survive. Johann Rebmann, a fellow countryman, then joined Krapf and the two based themselves near Mombasa. Their principal contribution was their linguistic work. They also made journeys into what is now Kenya and Tanzania, where they reported on the suitability of inland locations for European missionaries to settle.

In 1864 CMS decided on a different policy for Kenya. The Society began to move to a more inclusive view of mission and away from the narrow evangelistic thrust of the German Pietists, one that would encompass education, health and community building. They decided to utilise Africans, choosing as missionaries former slaves trained in India by the CMS mission there, believing they would share this vision, which they did.⁶ Among the first group of Africans brought by CMS to start work at Mombasa were William Jones and Ishmael Semler. These two were to become the first African Anglican clergy ordained in Kenya.

First-hand news of the development of the mission in East Africa reached Australia almost from the inception of the work in Kenya. Although Australia began to send its own missionaries in 1892, CMS publications in the 1880s show that there were earlier missionaries with Australian links.

Publication of dramatic events occurring in East Africa, of assassination, executions and the acceptance of the Faith by young people of noble birth, all contributed to the public awareness of Uganda (or more precisely, Buganda, the land of the Baganda – a part of modern Uganda) in Britain. H.M. Stanley's visit to Buganda, and his subsequent letter to the *Daily Telegraph* of 15 November 1875 requesting missionaries for this kingdom in the centre of Africa also assisted and resulted in a new direction for the CMS-UK mission in East Africa. The first Bishop of Eastern Equatorial Africa, James Hannington, was murdered in a politically motivated killing as he approached the Kingdom of Buganda in 1885.⁷ After the killing of the bishop, the *kabaka* (king) of Buganda ordered the deaths of probably two to three hundred Christians, Protestant and Catholic, including a number of young men at his court. These young men, who had been critical of some of the king's actions, were later to be known as the 'Uganda Martyrs'. After this, the Christian Faith continued to grow rapidly in Buganda, but the insecurity of the situation meant that Catholics and Anglicans withdrew their small missionary bodies for a time.

To reach Uganda, Tanganyika (modern Tanzania) had to be crossed. We shall tend to use Tanganyika as that was the name used for most of the history recounted here. Hannington, was only the

second European to venture through Kenya, where the presence of the war-like Maasai people deterred most travellers. The normal route to Buganda lay from the coastal town of Bagamoyo through Tanzania along the trade route to the south of the great lake named by the British explorers after Queen Victoria, thence by boat to Buganda. The CMS established what were at first little more than stopping points along that route. Later, these developed into mission stations. These little stations always struggled with lack of funds and personnel. The first to be developed was Mpwapwa, then others further into the country.

Tanganyika was at that stage in German East Africa, a German sphere of interest resulting from the Berlin Conference of 1885. Because the CMS Committee in London was nervous about having missionaries in a German territory, this created further problems for the CMS missions there. They were at first part of the Diocese of Eastern Equatorial Africa until it divided into the dioceses of Mombasa and Uganda in 1899, and came under the Diocese of Mombasa. Following German annexation, several local wars broke out as the inhabitants in various places rose up against the invasion. This 'rebellion' led to German reprisals, with large areas laid waste as crops and villages were burned and captured leaders of the resistance hanged.

With the outbreak of the First World War, there was detention of British and Australian CMS missionaries. They were held prisoner in Tabora until liberated in 1916 as the war moved southwards. African Christians working with CMS suffered most, viewed as potential rebels and spies by the German authorities, with some suffering physical maltreatment or used by the army as porters. Following the surrender of the German forces in what is now Zambia, CMS missionaries took the opportunity to take leave. Tanganyika became a British mandate after the First World War, with the expectation that it would at some stage become independent.

There was little development of the mission's work in Tanganyika prior to and following the Great War, and afterwards, due to political instability and continuing shortages of funds, it continued to be starved of personnel.

The Diocese of Mombasa supervised the work in Kenya and Tanganyika. As well as the work at the coast, it opened seven 'mission stations' between 1900 and 1913.⁸ The first was in the homelands of the Kikuyu people, in Western Kenya at Maseno, near Lake Victoria. This area adjoined the Uganda Mission area. Other 'stations' followed.

From Buganda, the Anglican Church spread to the west, to the kingdoms of Toro, Bunyoro and Ankole, then to the Congo, and following the First World War, the CMS Rwanda Mission was established. Its missionaries worked in the south-west of Uganda, and then in Rwanda (then spelt as Ruanda) and Burundi. And in the north-west of Uganda, the Anglican Church was placed in the care of Anglican missionaries of the interdenominational Africa Inland Mission. This body placed a greater emphasis on evangelism than on education and other developmental activities.⁹

The CMS Australia connection

By the 1920s, CMS Australia missionaries were serving in three East African countries, Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika. The work of CMS-UK was strongly established in the coastal area of Kenya, near Mombasa and in the Taita country, also in parts of Kikuyland, and in areas around the north-east of Lake Victoria. The church was well established in Uganda, although this was largely formal adherence.

Tanganyika was the poorest of the three and by 1926 was to be closed down. It was suggested that to prevent this and to revitalise the CMS work in Tanganyika, CMS Australia might form a new diocese separate from Mombasa and staffed entirely by Australians.¹⁰ The CMS-A Federal Council agreed to this suggestion and in 1927 the Diocese of Central Tanganyika was formed, with an Australian bishop, George Chambers, appointed. At the time he was Chairman of the CMS-A Federal Council, Vicar of Dulwich Hill in Sydney and the founder of Trinity Grammar School. With great drive and organisational ability, he rapidly raised missionary personnel and funds to take up the challenge of this struggling mission and for the next fifty years, Tanganyika became its major sphere of activity in East Africa.

Chambers was succeeded by Bill Wynn Jones, also an Australian bishop, and in 1951 by Alfred Stanway, an Australian missionary in Kenya. Stanway's great contribution was to prepare the church for independence with able indigenous leaders. Yohana Omari was consecrated in Kampala along with the first group of East African Assistant Bishops in May 1955. He was a committed member of the Revival. By this time, the Revival movement was well accepted. Following Omari's sudden death in 1963, Stanway appointed another Assistant, Yohana Madinda, who later succeeded Stanway as Diocesan.

The Diocese of Zanzibar was founded in 1892, and the UMCA Diocese of Masasi in 1926, predating Central Tanganyika by a year. Thus there was a demarcation of ecclesiastical responsibilities between the UMCA and CMS work.

In 1960, Uganda became an independent Province in the Anglican Church, with Kenya and Tanganyika forming a separate Province. The first African Archbishop of Uganda, Erica Sabiti, was a pioneer of the Revival in Ankole, again demonstrating the extent to which the Revival movement had penetrated the life of the Anglican Church. Ten years later, Kenya and Tanganyika became separate Provinces.

This brief background sets the scene for the story of the Revival, and its spread from Rwanda and south-west Uganda through the heavily populated areas of Uganda round Lake Victoria, to Kenya, west into the Congo and south-west into Tanganyika.

Achievements of the Revival

Never a planned program or campaign, the Revival, like all genuine revivals, was a powerful work of God through his people, a spontaneous response to God the Spirit. Nowadays the title 'revival' tends to be used of an evangelistic outreach or rally, especially in North American circles. But a real revival is something different, the activity of God, unplanned by humans, renewing the church, extending the faith to outsiders and reforming communities, as lives are changed by the Gospel.¹¹ So revival is the normal work of God, but happening with unusual intensity.

This East African Revival contained the normal marks of great revivals in history, with the added dimension of a strong African flavour that served (as revivals often do) to ground the faith in a local context. Its centre was Jesus Christ and its message above all, that of his great saving work on the cross for people's salvation. The overwhelming response was a deep sense of repentance, as the conviction of sin became almost intolerable, accompanied by open confession of sins, often with tears. The acceptance of God's forgiveness and grace brought a great sense of joy, sometimes almost euphoria, expressed in singing, in embracing (within the same gender) and in testimony of God's goodness. Every Christian was expected to have a living testimony, a story of how Jesus had saved them, and from what. Nor was it to grow stale, but expected to be contemporary, deriving blessing and guidance from God. New life was its theme.

The Revival was *communal*; springing up in the church and leading people into the church. Moreover, those united in its fellowship became part of a recognised body, meeting regularly outside of church services, but usually in a church building, becoming an organised community with its own leadership. It became a dynamic meeting of 'brothers and sisters' to share their testimonies, difficulties and joys, as well as their needs and resources.

The Revival was *evangelistic*. Groups of people went out from the fellowship to preach Jesus and to tell of all he had done for them, spreading the Gospel along the paths of Africa to scattered villages and along the roads as they hired trucks to take them to population centres. These teams were a vital part of the movement, and a key to the spread of its message.

The Revival *affected the wider society* with a moral perspective that often caused amazement as people returned stolen goods, confessed to crimes and sought reconciliation in relationships.

Such are the marks of revivals whether widespread or more localised. Its influence was far-reaching, covering a huge area of Eastern Africa and beyond Africa to Britain, Europe and Australia. It was also long lasting, a living force for some four decades, a long time as revivals go!

The East African Revival helped change irrevocably the Christian Church in East Africa; it made the Faith of Jesus its own, at home in an African homestead and city. Its beliefs and customs became part of the expression of faith that has lasted until today, even after the original fire has died down. More than that, it has poured its waters into the stream of world Christianity and so made a unique contribution to the whole life of the church.

Notes

- 1 For example, by E.A. Ayendele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria*, London, Longmans, 1966.
- 2 L. Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, New York, Orbis Books, 1995, p. 166.
- 3 G.H. Maddox, in *East African Expressions of Christianity*, Thomas Spear & Isaria N. Kimambo (eds), Oxford: James Currey; Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1999, p. 28, commenting on Sanneh's work.
- 4 K. Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1995, p. 214.
- 5 Maddox, in *East African Expressions of Christianity*, p. 27.
- 6 Aspects of this history are recounted in C. Reed, *Pastors, Partners & Paternalists: African Church Leaders & Western Missionaries in the Anglican Church in Kenya, 1850–1900*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1997.
- 7 E.C. Dawson, *James Hannington: First Bishop of Eastern Equatorial Africa*, London, Seeley & Co., 1887.
- 8 J.K. Karanja, *Founding an African Faith: Kikuyu Anglican Christianity 1900–1945*, Nairobi, Uzima Press, 1999, p. 10.
- 9 K. Ward, 'A History of Christianity in Uganda', in Z. Nthamburi (ed.), *From Mission to Church: A Handbook of Christianity in East Africa*, Nairobi, Uzima Press, 1995, p. 97.
- 10 Letter from CMS Victoria Branch Committee quoted in N. Sibtain, *Dare to Look Up: A Memoir of Bishop George Alexander Chambers*, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1968, p. 41.
- 11 A.E. McGrath, *The J.I. Packer Collection*, Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1999, article 'What is Revival?' p. 78; S. Piggin, *Firestorm of the Lord: The History & Prospects for Revival in the Church & the World*, Carlisle, Paternoster Press, 2000, p. 11.



Chapter 1

The beginning

The year was 1933, the place Gahini, an Anglican mission station in the tiny country of Rwanda and the event, a conference organised by the missionaries. Held just after Christmas and starting on 27 December, it followed the normal course of such events, with well-presented orthodox Bible teaching. There was little apparent response, though the participants appeared attentive. Because some of the missionaries and African Christians present were dissatisfied and hoped for something more vital, the event was extended for a further day, specifically for prayer. Unexpectedly, after somewhat formal prayers, the mood completely changed as one of the African Christians stood up and spoke earnestly of a personal conviction of his sinfulness, of God requiring changes in his life. He then began to confess openly what he saw as his sins. With tears, he publicly revealed the things that burdened his conscience. The atmosphere became electric, with person after person standing to follow suit. They confessed their perceived sins, with two or three speaking at a time sometimes, as a wave of spiritual conviction swept through the group.¹ A new dynamic had appeared in the church, with repentance as its central theme.

This was perhaps the first obvious event of the Christian revival that swept through Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Kenya, Tanganyika and parts of the Congo from the mid-1930s onwards. Later known as the East African Revival, it had points of contact with other contemporary Christian movements and with experiences and modes of expression similar to those of past evangelical renewal movements, while remaining theologically and spiritually in tune with orthodox evangelical Christianity. Yet as one missionary reported, it was without doubt ‘an African revival movement. The involvement, the rhythm, the jubilation, everything about it was genuinely African.’²

The events at Gahini did not, of course, arise in a vacuum. Some commonly observed precursors of Christian revival preceded them:

first, committed prayer; second, unity among Christians who might normally have little in common; and third, an expectation that God was about to do something unusual.³

The groundwork for revival

The East African Revival started in the areas of Rwanda under the influence of the Rwanda Mission.⁴ The Mission began in 1921 as a semi-autonomous body within the Church Missionary Society UK (CMS-UK). In 1927, the Rwanda group asked that a separate committee of people sympathetic to the views of the missionaries there be set up and in response, CMS formed the Rwanda Council. The Rwanda Mission became a separate entity in 1931, while retaining strong links with CMS. The split was made partly for financial reasons. Some British missionaries who had spent time in East Africa during World War I had a strong urge to return to start work in the small countries of Rwanda and Burundi. These former German Territories were now mandated to Belgium. Although CMS was short of funds after the War and not keen to fund new ventures, they gave permission to those with the new area of interest at heart, to arrange their own funding.

There was another element at this time that had roots in the pre- and post-War controversy that deeply divided the Christian world – the theological struggle between the ‘conservatives’ and the newer ‘liberals’. This struggle was easily discernible between the rival student movements in Britain – the Inter-Varsity Fellowship (IVF) on the conservative evangelical side and the Student Christian Movement (SCM) on the more liberal side. Those forming the Rwanda Mission, being of the ‘Conservative Evangelicals’ school, sought assurances from CMS that it would be free to operate on ‘Bible, Protestant and Keswick lines’ (see Chapter 3 for more explanation of the Keswick ‘holiness movement’).⁵ It is not easy to define precisely the various names used by ‘Evangelicals’: some simply used that name but as Evangelicalism became more diverse, some preferred ‘Conservative’ or ‘Conservative Evangelical’ to distinguish themselves from those of a wider, more liberal viewpoint.

The ‘Keswick’ movement also became a focus of the Evangelical party. At the heart of this divide between the conservatives and the

liberals was the argument about the authority and integrity of the Bible as the basis for Christian belief and life, and the divide over theological issues such as the Kingdom of God, the ultimate rule of Jesus Christ. The roots of the 'liberal' movement were in the nineteenth-century German school of 'higher criticism' of the Bible, using the methods of scientific investigation and contemporary scholarship. The conservatives were suspicious of apparent attempts to cast doubt on the veracity of Scripture and its direct divine inspiration.

To the liberals, the expectation was that through Christian endeavour in education, scientific advance and political action, the rule of God would be 'ushered in' in history, through humanity becoming attuned to it. The conservatives, in contrast, expected that God would intervene dramatically in human history through the return of his Son Jesus Christ. Some believed this would be in a new order of creation beyond the realms of this created world, in 'a new heaven and a new earth'. Others held that Christ would return to earth to establish his rule literally on earth for a thousand years prior to the culmination of history – judgment day and the end of all creation. This latter 'pre-millennialist' view was relatively new in Anglicanism; until the nineteenth century, the older 'post-millennial' position had been the norm.

The debate between the two camps in Australia, as elsewhere, was energetic and bitter.⁶ The missionaries of CMS-A shared the Rwanda Mission's position, while some of the missionaries of CMS-UK, however, especially in the north of Uganda, came from the liberal tradition and were less likely to be in sympathy with the conservative missionaries and the spirituality of the Revival.

Before the conference at Gahini there was a 'Keswick Conference' missionary gathering in Uganda, with participants stirred to a greater commitment to prayer. This was the first conference held for all the missionaries of the Rwanda Mission and the main speaker was the Rev. Arthur Pitt Pitts, a missionary in Kenya. The second conference, for Africans (in an indigenous language), led on from the 'Keswick Conference' (English speaking) and so the two were linked. Howard Mowll, the then-Archbishop of Sydney and a close friend of Pitt Pitts at Cambridge, visited the area at his invitation

to see the revival firsthand.⁷ Thus, right from the start there was a connection between people and events in Africa and Australia. Shortly after he attempted to travel to Australia to speak about the revival at Mowll's invitation in 1940, Pitt Pitts died of fever.⁸ His replacement as Field Secretary of the Rwanda Mission was Dr Algy Stanley Smith, who was also at Cambridge with Mowll.

After the conference, some of the Western Christians asked forgiveness of African colleagues for their sometimes arrogant and racially superior attitude towards them. This made a great impression, as such actions flouted the conventions of the day and the supposed superiority of Europeans – even missionaries were expected to maintain a psychological and social separation from the Africans among whom they served. This new relationship between the races was to become one of the hallmarks of the Revival.

However, the roots of the Revival can be traced further back to the arrival in Uganda in 1927 of Dr Joe Church, en route to work in the new little hospital at Gahini. Like most of the Rwanda missionaries of the era, he was a product of Cambridge University, and in particular of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union (CICCU), with all its overtones of revivalist ideals, and 'Keswick' holiness spirituality. The Union was a powerful force in the spiritual formation of many leaders of Evangelical Anglicanism of this era (and on the English Evangelical missionary movement for several generations). In the early years of the Rwanda Mission, most of the male missionaries shared this background – among others, doctors A. Stanley Smith and L. Sharp, and clergy such as J. Warren, L. Barham, H. Guillebaud and Arthur Pitt Pitts.

Church had been one of the founders of the University Missionary Band, a group dedicated to becoming missionaries or to actively support overseas mission.⁹ Some of the other European missionaries shared Church's desire for a deeper Christianity in Africa, and in 1928, some from the newly formed Rwanda Mission called on their British support group, Friends of Rwanda, to pray for God's Spirit to be poured out in Rwanda. They asked for a special ten-day period of prayer, and undertook to do the same themselves.¹⁰ Small groups of Western missionaries and African Christians increasingly met together for prayer and Bible study,

and experienced a close relationship previously unknown between white and black.¹¹ Church later recalled that 'There was a growing sense of expectancy'¹², of standing on the brink of a new era of spiritual experience.

In 1929, Church became dissatisfied both with his own spiritual state and that of the church. He prayed for and sought an African friend with whom to share prayer and mutual spiritual encouragement to live a life of dedicated service and 'personal holiness'. Soon after, in response to his prayer, he met Simeoni Nsibambi, a government employee in Kampala and a committed Christian. Whenever possible, they met for Bible study, prayer and mutual encouragement. They took specific steps to surrender themselves to Christ and seek the fullness of the Holy Spirit and together shared a spiritual experience that led to personal transformation. 'Suddenly all the answers he had known in theory blazed into reality for Joe.'¹³ Their partnership endured for many years, with Nsibambi in particular developing a significant leadership role, 'the father of the whole Balokole movement'.¹⁴ (The name *Abalokole*, the 'Saved Ones' in Luganda, became perhaps the most-used name of the group. Initially, they were sometimes called *Abaka*, 'those on fire', while missionaries often termed them the 'Brethren'.)

Church, with hospital worker Yosiya Kinuka, also began a popular regular Bible teaching class for the workmen of the Gahini mission. Initially hostile to Christian teaching, Kinuka went to Kampala at Church's instigation and through Nsibambi was converted to the Christian faith. Also working at Gahini was a young Rwandan (or Munyuruanda) called Kosiya Shalita.¹⁵ He was a refugee in Uganda along with his family, and came to the attention of Bishop J.J. Willis as a young man. Willis arranged for him to receive the best education possible at The King's College, Budo.

These people formed the nucleus of the leadership of the Revival. Kinuka and Church taught the class together, the African often reinterpreting the message of the missionary in a more culturally appropriate form.¹⁶ From these classes, Church later developed the book *Every Man a Bible Student*, a short handbook of Bible studies on the basic beliefs of Evangelical Christianity. It was used widely in many countries and ran into several editions. Published in Swahili

as *Kila Mtu Mwanafunzi wa Biblia* in 1940, by 1986 it had been reissued five times, its long life and widespread use testifying to its broad appeal beyond the original African audience.

Also significant were existing revivalist expectations held by the missionaries and the African Christians, that originated from mass movements in Uganda during the 1880s and 90s.¹⁷ Following the persecution of Christians and the martyrdom of the young men at the *Kabaka's* court already mentioned, the Christian faith spread dramatically, largely through the influence of the sons and daughters of chiefs attached to the palace, who became 'readers'.¹⁸ After learning to read the newly translated Bible, they then set up classes to help others to read. A little later in the 1890s, the evangelistic ministry of the CMS-UK missionary George Pilkington sparked another revival of faith among the Baganda. Although thirty years on the church had lost the fiery zeal of its early years, the memories remained.

In 1932 Church visited England, where he visited student groups and urged them to pray for the Rwanda Mission as well. He also met and spent time with Paget Wilkes, the well-known veteran missionary to Japan and a leader in the 'holiness' movement. Wilkes made a great impact on the young missionary, Church, and strengthened his pursuit of the 'victorious life' spoken of by the holiness movement.

The fire spreads

From 1933, expectation of a new burst of spiritual fervour became a reality, exciting for some, frightening for others, as the missionaries realised that 'the Christianity they had introduced was being radically revised.'¹⁹ The events at Gahini were repeated elsewhere as the new movement took shape and spread rapidly. The message of the groups of men and women that went out from Gahini was not so much verbal as an invitation to share in their experience of a lively new dynamic. They proclaimed their message of a renewed spiritual life²⁰ initially in the north of Rwanda and in the Kigezi region of south-west of Uganda. In 1935, Joe Church, Yosiya Kinuka and Blasio Kigozi led a mission at Kabale, in south-west Uganda, resulting from an unpremeditated invitation to lead the mission,

given almost at whim by the missionary in charge at Kabale.²¹ This was one of the first formal conventions led by the Revival leaders and set the pattern for many later events, with their style and content evolving over time.

This first convention, with European missionaries and Africans working together as a team, provides an informative cameo of the emergent movement, its evangelistic message and effects. There were daily Bible studies on separate topics, with members of the team keeping to the theme but with different emphases. In order, the five topics presented were on:

- sin
- repentance
- the new birth
- separation from the world (under the title ‘Coming out of Egypt’)
- the Holy Spirit and the victorious life.

The speakers outlined the steps expected of a convert. The content was not particularly distinctive. The theology, as in the whole movement of the Revival, was essentially that of the orthodox Evangelicalism of the day, with the exception perhaps being the changed emphasis in the final message. The Revival stressed the need for daily repentance and daily infilling of the Holy Spirit, rather than any ‘second experience’, such as normally presented in ‘Keswick’ teaching. Overall, what was different was ‘the ethos’, that intangible yet vital element of ‘call’, and points made in the lively illustrations given by the African speakers that made contact with the daily lives of the hearers.

But it was more than that. Festo Kivengere, a schoolboy at the Kabale convention, and later a leading figure in the Revival and in World Evangelicalism recalled:

There was power in what they said. We hadn’t seen that before. Those meetings were the beginning of an incredible movement of God. For most of us it was a remarkable and never-to-be-forgotten week. Our attention was riveted by

the shining faces of these men who obviously had spiritual freedom, were in love with God and at peace with one another.²²

Although this description was processed much later through the eyes of his faith, Kivengere's memory gives insight into the impact made by the team on those present. It was not so much the verbal message as its subliminal message that was effective – the visible love of God as shown in the relationships between the team members.

Kivengere was converted at the convention, but later withdrew from the fellowship of the 'Brethren' to become an ardent opponent of what he saw as their extremes and fanaticism. A few years later when a teacher, he was converted afresh at Kabale, again in a way expressive of the movement and its mood. He was rostered to take pupils to church and among them was his niece. Even before the service began, people stood to confess their sins. Then to his horror, during the service his niece stood and declared that God had revealed to her that that day Kivengere would 'come back to the Lord'. Angry and embarrassed, he went away and drank heavily. As he was going home, a close friend came to him and announced that he had 'met with Jesus' and received forgiveness. In Kivengere's words, 'My friend's joy overwhelmed me. His words shook me to the core.'²³ By the time he reached home, 'under tremendous conviction' he felt compelled to pray and, as he did so, 'suddenly, as if in a vision, in front of me was Jesus hanging on the cross, as clear as anything I have seen with my physical eyes.'²⁴ He was convinced that Jesus had died for him, for the expiation of his sins, as the expression of God's great love for him. Overcome with joy, he rushed to the gathered Christians and told them what had happened. 'They screamed, they clapped, they hugged each other, they nearly suffocated me.' One lifted him onto his shoulders and danced around with him. Such experiences and scenes were typical of the early years of the movement.

After the meetings at Kabale in 1935, reports came back of those who had gone to their homes fired by the meetings. Some suddenly wept; others cried out in gatherings and spoke of their conviction of sin or fell to the ground and trembled or spoke of dreams, especially

dreams of heaven²⁵, phenomena common to many religious revivals. Dramatic as the impact of these meetings was on those who experienced them and on their communities, needless to say, not all were sympathetic to the new movement.

Church, on returning to Gahini after attending the Synod of the Anglican Church in Uganda in 1936 found that similar dramatic events had occurred in Gahini, centred at the girls' school. Students wept copiously at a prayer meeting, falling on the ground and confessing sins with a deep sense of guilt. Some of the missionaries wondered if this was simply hysteria, but Church was convinced the girls were genuine because of the similar scenes occurring elsewhere in the area:

In huts, in church, in the school, and in hospital there were continual visitations of the Spirit in a way we have never seen before – twos, threes and more, continually during these days, going through experiences of dreams, visions, falling down in trances, and many claim to have entered a new life.²⁶

The outburst of this new spiritual life spread, with its emphases of open confession of sin, the need for a changed lifestyle and on how to experience this change. Other reports were noted of people falling to the ground trembling violently, apparently uncontrollably.²⁷

Singing played an important part, as in many similar movements. Sometimes early on in the Revival people sang through the night. Initially, there was a burst of spontaneous song-writing in the indigenous idiom, notable when the hymns normally sung were translations of European hymns. Tunes of these old hymns were often used, with new words expressing the emphases of the African experience, including specific examples of what the 'Brethren' regarded as temptations and sins. After analysing some of these, one theologian later commented, 'It is here that we find the source of the *Abalakole* revival life and faith.'²⁸ Old European hymns became subtly indigenised, with few regarding them of alien origin. This was especially true of what was to become the theme song of the Revival, *Tukutendereza Yesu*, based on one of Sankey's hymns, 'Precious Saviour'. It was sung frequently in Luganda, even in other language areas, and repeated over and over again with great fervour,

often accompanied by embraces among the 'Brethren' or by hand waving. The embraces were always man to man, woman to woman. Of the two Swahili versions, the more common one was a fairly direct translation of the old Sankey hymn, while the other was more specifically African and addressed the specific 'sins' condemned by the Revival. Starting with the words *Yesu ndiye mganga wetu*, 'Jesus is our healer' (though the word *mganga* generally refers more to a traditional healer than a Western-trained doctor), it claimed that Jesus saves from hatred, jealousy, cursing, domestic disharmony, evil desires (normally inferring sexual desires), and beer drinking.²⁹

Opposition and debate

From 1936, the new spiritual movement began to spread more widely. In that year, one of the young leaders, Blasio Kigozi, made a call to the Synod of the Anglican Church in Uganda to 'Awake'. He proposed in writing three questions to be put to the Synod, challenging members about the spiritual state of the Church:

- what was the cause of the coldness and hardness he discerned in the Church,
- why were Church members allowed to attend Holy Communion when they were known to be living immoral lives and,
- what could (and should) be done to correct these matters and to revive the Ugandan Church?

These questions express a typical view of the Revival enthusiasts: that although the church was formally correct, it had made little impact on the personal lives of members or on society as a whole. They saw a great need for change, and believed that the Revival could bring it about. Sadly, Kigozi died of a sudden fever on his way to the Synod, but his questions were still put and debated. Not surprisingly, the outcome was divisive: some felt threatened, while others were critical of the implied criticisms. Bishop Stuart (a British missionary) was quite sympathetic to what he had seen of the Revival and was to become a major force in holding the Church together. He feared that it would prove schismatic. That it did not,

owed much to him and leaders of the Revival, who were determined to stay within the mainstream Church.³⁰

As the Revival spread through south-western Uganda, and finally up to the capital, Kampala, so did the opposition to it and the controversy surrounding it. This came to a head in 1940–41 in conflicts at Bishop Tucker Theological College, Mukono, where clergy were trained. Controversy began at the college in 1936, when Bishop Stuart invited Joe Church there to lead a college mission.³¹ While some of the students embraced the new movement, some of the staff remained cynical and indeed offended by it. The Warden, J.S. Herbert, who had been in Uganda since 1904, is one example. He did not appreciate the overt enthusiasm of the 'Revived Brethren', nor their criticism of himself and others. (He was criticised for smoking a pipe, acceptable to Western Christians at the time, but anathema to the revived Africans.) He also had misgivings about the strong emphasis in the Revival on 'the blood of Jesus', believing that it was almost a sort of talisman to the Brethren, a source of power separated from Christ himself.³²

In 1940, lecturer in Theology John Jones retaliated to perceived criticism by banning meetings of the Brethren. This occurred during a period when the Bishop (who might have proved a moderating influence) was out of the country. He felt, with justification, that some of the Brethren's complaints of theological liberalism and 'high church' practices were aimed at him personally. When the Brethren refused to accept his ban³³, he dismissed twenty-six students and the college chaplain allied with them, the Rev. Benoni L. Kagwa Salongo.³⁴ Although offered reinstatement on the condition they signed an undertaking not to take part in any meeting without the agreement of the Warden, they refused.

The college thus lost some of its most able and enthusiastic members, and the church lost people who could have been very useful clergy. Among those dismissed was William Nagenda, brother-in-law of gifted leaders Kigozi and Nsibambi. After his dismissal he dedicated himself to the Revival and became one of its recognised leaders. He was a graduate of Makerere College, at that time the only tertiary-level institution in East Africa. Prior to this he was a

clerk in government service, a high and well respected position for an African during the period.³⁵) In addition, the controversy over the 'Mukono incident', as it came to be known, sparked serious debate on a wider front about the movement and its relationship with the Anglican Church in Uganda. However on his return, the mediation of Bishop Stuart helped resolve the debate satisfactorily, and the Revival was contained within the Anglican Church.

Australian missionaries were not involved in the Mukono affair, but it illustrates the type of issues that alienated Westerners from the movement. Some of these reasons arose from personal disposition. For example, Jones had 'a temperamental aversion to all excessive enthusiasm in religion springing from his own experiences in the Welsh revival at the beginning of the century.'³⁶ There were also reasons arising from personal criticism, and others pertaining to spirituality, as with Herbert's unease about the use of the term 'the blood of Jesus'.

In the initial years, opposition to the Revival came as much from African as it did from expatriate clergy; many resented the movement and openly opposed it. A major cause was the Brethren's consistent criticism of the church hierarchy. Enthusiastic members viewed the clergy as holding on to power and prestige and also, as lacking spiritual life. Another factor alienating many of the clergy and traditional leaders of society was the Revival's public rejection of many aspects of traditional custom. Chief Katungi accused his brother Erica Sabiti (later Archbishop) of inciting people to overturn traditional practices. Even a minor issue such as encouraging women to eat chicken was seen as subversive, as it went against tribal taboos.³⁷

Despite the opposition, however, the Revival gradually gained ground, and spread from Rwanda, through Uganda, to the western areas of Tanganyika, to Kenya and the eastern parts of the Congo.

Tanganyika – North-west Tanzania

The focus of the work of the Australian Church Missionary Society (CMS-A) was Tanganyika (modern Tanzania), although Australian missionaries served in the other East African countries.

The Diocese of Central Tanganyika was established under Bishop George Chambers under the care of the Society in Australia, so events and perceptions of the Revival movement among their missionaries and their leaders are of particular interest. The church in what is today the north-west of Tanzania was established by Australian missionaries not long before the Revival erupted and, as it bordered on Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, it spread first to that area. The mission station closest to the starting place of the Revival, Murgwanza, was on the borders of Rwanda and Burundi. The language of the area (Kihangaza) is closely related to that of Rwanda (Kinyarwanda) and there were natural links between both peoples. The Revival spread less quickly through Tanganyika than through Kenya and south and west Uganda, and some parts were never significantly affected by it.³⁸

So as the Revival lit its fires in Rwanda, it spread rapidly to Murgwanza. This mission was founded after Neville Langford-Smith, with some Tanganyikan Christians, went on a long safari on foot to the areas to the south-west of Lake Victoria, with a view to establishing new mission centres. Arising from his researches, Lionel Bakewell went and camped at Murgwanza and established a small centre there.³⁹ This later grew into a traditional mission station with a church, school and hospital.

Bakewell and Langford-Smith were both based in Bukoba for a while and established a school at Katoke, which later became a teachers' college. There were some areas of Tanganyika where the spread of the Revival was not purely spontaneous but the result of planned missionary endeavour from Uganda. For example, in 1940, Bishop Chambers invited revival teams to the Bukoba region and spoke enthusiastically of the outcome: 'God has literally visited his people, Europeans and Africans alike are simply staggered at the miracle that has occurred here.'⁴⁰ He spoke warmly of the renewal of church members and of the growth of the Church. Moreover, he drew attention to the moral benefits of the Revival. In western Tanganyika, as elsewhere, many people returned government property they had stolen, and started to pay taxes that they had evaded. People also burned charms and other symbols of witchcraft.

However, the Bishop soon became concerned by both the judgmental attitudes of the revived Brethren, and news of what some missionaries and clergy saw as excesses. As mentioned above, in the early years of the Revival there was a great deal of highly emotional behaviour in schools and church: church services were disrupted by people weeping as they expressed repentance or by praying fervently in an uncontrolled manner. Lionel Bakewell recorded unusual phenomena, such as people rolling on the floor and laughing, and in many places there were all-night meetings with a tendency to high emotion.

When the Bishop visited Katoke to see what was happening, he was distressed by what he perceived as scenes of near-hysteria. His answer to the over-exuberant expression of faith was to revisit the Katoke area a few months later to give teaching on the activity of the Holy Spirit and to come to agreement with local leaders. 'After that the excesses gradually disappeared and the true worth of the Revival began to be seen in the life of the church.' The more dramatic phenomena largely ceased, yet the Revival continued and flourished. This demonstrates that the focus of the East African Revival was not on what might be termed supernatural phenomena, but on the experience of a life-changing conversion to faith in Jesus Christ. When the more sensational elements were abandoned, the movement continued with as great energy as previously.

Among those not closely linked to the Revival, a major cause for dismay was the very critical and judgmental attitude of the 'Brethren' to those who did not join them. They could also be very critical of any of their own members who did not conform to their expectations, including Bakewell himself. Nearly sixty years later, Bakewell's wife recalled with sadness that some criticisms of her husband were over minor matters. Her criticism was that he gave too much of himself and too much time to the 'Brethren'. Early perceptions conveyed to Australia of the Revival were both positive and negative. Bakewell was to become one of its most ardent supporters and later dated its spread in the Bukoba area from the visit of the Revival team in 1940.⁴¹ Becoming part of the Revival teams that went out from Katoke to neighbouring areas, Bakewell wrote of the great joy of sharing the preaching with the African Brethren.⁴² Bakewell was an enthusiast

for the movement because of the dynamic changes he saw; 'Katoke is a new place since the Revival', he wrote, 'The change in many of the boys and the teachers (and we hope in ourselves) is amazing.'⁴³ This is a helpful reminder that the Revival was predominantly a power for good in the Church.

In western Tanganyika the movement gained wide acceptance in the Mennonite Church and also influenced the Lutheran Church, which in the opinion of one writer at the time, a Lutheran bishop, was 'dead as the bones in the valley of Hinnom'.⁴⁴ The Revival brought a breath of life.

Central Tanganyika

In 1945, Canon Banks, CMS Education Secretary in Dodoma and commissary to Bishop Chambers, visited south-west Uganda on holiday and was asked to speak briefly at a service. He drew a picture of the church in Tanganyika as 'rather sleepy and stuck' in a dry spiritual state, and urged some of the Brethren present to go there as missionaries.⁴⁵ Significantly, Festo Kivengere and his wife Mera, along with friend Erisa Wakabi and his wife Apofia, offered to go to Dodoma to teach at the newly established Alliance Secondary School, specifically as a means of spreading the message of the Revival. The headmaster was CMS-A missionary George Pearson. The Kivengeres were to spend nearly thirteen years in Dodoma, leaving only because Bishop Alfred Stanway arranged for Kivengere with Yohana Omari to visit Australia and speak of their faith and of the work of God in East Africa. (Afterward, Kivengere moved on to a wider international ministry, and also eventually to serve as Bishop of Kigezi.)

Initially, the Rwandans met with much opposition from both African church leaders and missionaries. Kivengere was officially banned from preaching by the cathedral in Dodoma, but gradually gained acceptance. While the ban was never dropped, it did not stop him travelling widely in the country and speaking in many places. The CMS missionaries in Dodoma, among whom Australian evangelicals were predominant, were initially suspicious, again not of the Revival's theology which essentially was in accordance with

their theology, but of its emotionalism: 'they had heard enough stories ... to frighten them. They wanted no hysteria, no excessive emotion and no confession of personal sins in public.'⁴⁶ There had been scenes which could be interpreted as hysterical, and accounts of these had flavoured people's presuppositions of the movement. There was always a subjective element in missionaries' perceptions of the Revival, with some alarmed and alienated by such emotional occurrences, but not all missionaries felt this way. For example, an Australian doctor working in the hospital at Mvumi one night, found some of the staff standing with arms raised, crying out loud 'my sins, my sins'.⁴⁷ He did not record this as a negative experience, for after hearing their explanations of the great spiritual and emotional relief arising from the sense of repentance and forgiveness, he was able to see its benefit.

The major issue with which some missionaries felt themselves out of sympathy with the Revival was the open confession of sin. Some felt it to be intrusive, the expectation that they would share personal negative feelings and thoughts. Others felt that there was too much emphasis on sexual sins, and on the dramatic rather than on the smaller failures of everyday life. Despite the emphasis in Evangelical circles in Australia on personal salvation and on personal testimony, there had not been a tradition of public personal confession. Public confession therefore appears to be a uniquely African feature of this Revival, without roots in missionary spirituality. It was not a part of the English Evangelical tradition or of Australian Evangelicalism. Overall, though, many missionaries accepted public confession of sin as an integral part of the Revival and as such, a part of the cultural expression of Christianity it embodied. They saw it as helpful within the particular context of Africa. Some found in it a personal release for themselves and a means to closer relationships with fellow believers. Others found it offensive and off-putting.

Over the years several missionaries were drawn into the fellowship of the Revival through attending meetings in homes where Kivengere was teaching. He was a person of tremendous ability and with great personal charm, whose impact is still recalled by many who worked in Dodoma at the time. Florence Shellard commented

that 'Festo Kivengere was a positive influence'.⁴⁸ Her husband Jack, who served on the staff of the Alliance School and then became headmaster, was an enthusiastic supporter of both Kivengere and of the Revival.

Others were influenced by teams from Katoke. The Rev. Neville Langford-Smith and his wife Vera worked in western Tanganyika in the 1930s and were in Dodoma in 1940. Lionel Bakewell and a team were invited there to bring the life and fire of what was happening in the country's western areas. Afterward, Langford-Smith wrote enthusiastically that for the first time Africans were spreading the Gospel spontaneously 'gripped and empowered by the Holy Spirit'.⁴⁹ 'To us at Dodoma', he went on, 'the message came as light and hope where before things had seemed dead and useless.'

Though the Langford-Smiths were sympathetic to the Revival, they nevertheless did not become personally involved at this stage. Langford-Smith 'realised the emptiness and powerlessness of [his] own work', but rejoiced in the participation of Africans rather than in the potential of receiving benefit himself. This gives insights into the vital difference the new movement brought, and the sense of personal inadequacy, something not often mentioned by the missionaries in publications. Nor did they usually acknowledge their sense that the African church was largely nominal and lacking in spiritual dynamic.

After the visit of the Katoke team, Langford-Smith wrote of the change the Revival made, from formal acceptance of Christianity to personal conviction and acceptance of salvation. He expressed sadness and surprise that, following the visit of the team from Katoke, the whole of his confirmation class admitted that they 'were not converted' and the confirmation was cancelled. Yet some of the group did then experience conversion. This highlights the clear distinction the Revival drew between committed yet formal acceptance of an imposed cultural and religious system and committed personal response to a spiritual dynamic. Here is evidence of the Revival as a truly contextual movement, taking people from one stage of acceptance of Christianity to another, rooted in terms effective in African life.

Some years later, after World War II, the Langford-Smiths were 'directly challenged,' 'in a very loving way,' about their reluctance to throw their lot in with the Brethren.⁵⁰

Kenya

In Kenya, the Revival spread through a combination of planned strategy and informal expansion – supported by the missionaries, but fired by the local African people. It was initiated by a team of seven Brethren that visited in 1938 to speak at conferences⁵¹ at the instigation of Joe Church's brother Howard, who was working in Kenya. The first Revival Convention in Kenya was small, with only about two hundred people attending, but it sparked off the spread of the Revival in Kenya. Many of the leading figures in Uganda and Rwanda were in the team: Joe Church, Canon Lawrence Barham, Simeoni Nsibambi, and Canon Erisafati Matovu (a Muganda).⁵²

Early in 1939, an account of the two meetings in Kenya – the Keswick Convention in Kenya for Europeans and the Convention for Africans – appeared in CMS-A publications, mentioning the team's messages about what had 'brought about such wonderful results in the Rwanda Revival'.⁵³ (An interesting reflection on the dynamics of colonial society is that there was not total segregation, but a one-way form: European missionaries attended the Convention for Africans, but Africans were not expected to attend the Keswick Convention for Europeans.) Tellingly, the article pointed out the danger of the African church becoming mechanical and formal, 'a matter of following rules and regulations rather than the vitalising of their whole lives.'

During this first convention, theological debate arose over whether the teaching of the Brethren was of a 'second experience' or 'second blessing'. There was a fear of abandoning a Calvinist stance. Joe Church's response was to refer to Pilgrim's Progress:

Christian had this deeper experience of the Cross when he lost his burden and his heart became 'glad and lightsome', and ... this deeper experience of the blood of Jesus results in the finding of the 'rest to the people of God' of Hebrews 4:9 – rest from guilt and works. This is the age-long quest of

the pietist and the 'end of the struggle for righteousness' as Phillips translates Romans 10:4.⁵⁴

Here, despite an attempt at ambiguity, was a fairly clear statement of a position very close to that of classic Keswick Holiness, if not identical to it. Church drew attention to the Pietist roots of the theology; Bunyan's Puritan understanding may have been somewhat different: one of a long struggle for assurance of salvation. It was a pilgrimage, with high points along it as well as the sloughs of despond.

Despite Church's attempt to resolve the issue, it continued to cause concern, but some while later the leadership discussed it and concluded that there was 'no fixed false doctrine' in the teaching of the Revival. In other words, they decided that the teaching was not currently in error, but that there was no guarantee that error would not emerge in the future. However, if it did, they were confident they could counter it 'prayerfully and scripturally'.⁵⁵

The Revival spread spontaneously, and Conventions played an important part in its life. In Kenya it gained strength predominantly among the Kikuyu people and in western Kenya, two areas of strong CMS, that is, Anglican activity. The other denomination which took enthusiastically to the Revival, the Presbyterian, worked almost exclusively in Kikuyu areas. Areas predominantly evangelised by other missionary agencies were not so receptive. However, the huge increase in attendance at the conventions after they began to be organised by Africans, rather than missionaries, shows that the main energy certainly came from the indigenous people.

Not only did attendance increase, but also the whole method of organising and running the events altered.

Africans did not count beds – they cleared classrooms and laid down banana leaves, so that visitors could sleep wall to wall. They organised great kitchens, collected food and cooks, dug latrines, and took in three to four thousand people. They were able to reach five to ten times as many people as missionary-organised events could have.⁵⁶

The first African-run convention in Kenya was held at the old CMS mission station of Kahuhia, in the heart of the Kikuyu homelands,

in 1947. It was attended by 3000 people. This was followed by others, all in the Kikuyu areas: Kagaari in 1948, with 5000 people; Kabete in 1949; and Thogoto in 1950. Both these last two were attended by no fewer than 15,000 people.⁵⁷ The movement then spread into the other strong CMS areas of Kenya, and conventions were held in the west of the country: at Butere in 1961 (with 7000 people) and at Mumias in 1971 (with 6000). In 1964 there was a huge convention at Mombasa, also an area of old CMS activity, with 20,000 people.⁵⁸

Behind these great conventions lay the steady spontaneous expansion of the Revival for over twenty years. In the Kikuyu areas, it was based largely in educational establishments: the teacher training college at Kahuhia, St Paul's Theological College at Limuru and the schools under the care of the Anglican Church. 'A definite pattern of dispersal developed': a student in an institution would be saved through a Brethren gathering and would invite a group of Brethren to the school or college, through which others would join the new movement.⁵⁹

Two leaders made the atmosphere at both the teachers' college and St Paul's particularly conducive to the spread of the Revival. Canon Martin Capon of CMS-UK, the principal of St Paul's until 1950, was the first. He specifically shaped the spiritual life and the teaching of the college to reflect the Revival's message.⁶⁰ Concerned that much of the Christianity in the churches in the area was nominal, he was anxious to see this replaced by 'real Christianity within the church'.⁶¹ Capon's emphasis in shaping the course at St Paul's was on what he called 'the five pillars': repentance, faith, new birth, growth in grace, and the work of the Holy Spirit. The second person of influence, Dr Keith Cole of CMS-A, served first in the Teachers' College (or 'Normal School', as it was called) before succeeding Capon at St Paul's, from 1950 to 1964.

Northern Uganda

CMS-A did not have many missionaries in Uganda at this time, but there were a few in the northern areas of the country. These areas were much less affected by the Revival than the south, at least in

the early years.⁶² The Revival had spread initially from Rwanda and Baganda leaders from the area around Kampala also espoused it. But generally, the more theologically liberal missionaries of the British CMS were sent to the north of Uganda, with the more Evangelical to the south, so church life tended to be different in the two areas. It was ironical then that of the few Australians there, most were sent to the north.

In the northern parts of Uganda there was considerable antagonism between the established church and the revived Brethren, as the Mukono incident discussed earlier showed. This can be attributed to a number of causes. First, the area is predominantly peopled by non-Bantu peoples, who resented the spread of a movement that seemed predominantly Bantu – ‘many parts of the North and East felt themselves victims of Kiganda sub-imperialism at the beginning of the century.’⁶³ There was a tendency to see this new movement as a fresh form of domination by the Baganda from the south. Second, the Bishop of Upper Nile, Lucien Usher Wilson, had a more liberal background and was unsympathetic to the Revival. A third factor was that an active breakaway faction from the Revival was in the north of Uganda and when some Australian missionaries encountered them, they were regarded as typifying the Revival. This group were followers of a man named Lubulwa, who became known as the ‘Trumpeters’ because they used loudhailers to preach their message. Often they stationed themselves outside churches, using their ‘trumpets’ to preach loudly during services, claiming that theirs was the true Revival message, and criticising those who did not join them. This was hardly designed to create positive relationships. One missionary, Mrs Callon Moore, recalled them climbing a tree at dusk and dawn, then using loudhailers to proclaim their message.⁶⁴ Sometimes their singing went on throughout the night.

For all these reasons, in the early years few missionaries in the north of Uganda became involved in the Revival. However, this later changed as the mainstream of the movement gained the ascendancy and the leaders insisted on curbing enthusiastic excesses. Some of those who had been involved in the Trumpeters eventually transferred their loyalty to the mainstream of the movement and to the Anglican Church. One such was Janani Luwum, later to become

Archbishop of Uganda.⁶⁵ Those who remained within the rival group finally became a separate church.

In northern Uganda, the chief fear of the missionaries was of the open confession of sins, which was, in Callon Moore's words, 'out of this world'. The missionaries especially disapproved of the open and sometimes explicit confession of sexual sins. On their part, the Brethren viewed the missionaries with suspicion, precisely because they were reticent about confessing, especially about sexual matters. The Brethren, as elsewhere, also tended to be critical of little points in the missionaries' demeanour and dress which did not conform to their norms. This did not endear them to their European colleagues. The Rev. Ben Moore, for example, was criticised by a pastor's wife for wearing an elephant-hair bracelet he had been given, and told it was sinful. It may be that she simply disapproved of personal adornment, but more likely she suspected the bracelets were some form of charm imbued with spiritual forces. In any case, Ben and Callon Moore were not impressed by what they saw of the Revival – and naturally missionaries with negative experiences spoke of these to their fellows and so extended the atmosphere of suspicion. Thus the experiences of the few missionaries from Australia who served in northern Uganda were sometimes very different from those in the neighbouring countries.

No missionary who served in East Africa between the 1930s and the 1970s could be indifferent to, or ignore the Revival; it was simply an integral part of church life. Some missionaries felt uncomfortable with it, as they were not at home in a very African form of Christianity. Some felt threatened by it, as their attitudes of racial superiority and their leadership position were questioned. Others entered it wholeheartedly, and found in it deep Christian sharing and friendship, and a spiritual renewal and liberation.

Notes

- 1 H.H. Osborn, *Fire in the Hills*, London, Mid Africa Ministries (CMS), 1991, p. 71.
- 2 B. Sundkler, *Bara Bukoba: Church and Community in Tanzania*, London, C. Hurst & Company, 1980, p. 115.
- 3 See S. Piggin, *Evangelical Christianity in Australia: Spirit, Word and World*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 158–165, where he has drawn attention to the factors that often precede revival.
- 4 Then known as the Ruanda Mission, although historically inaccurate, we shall use the modern form, Rwanda.
- 5 R. Anker-Petersen, *A Study of the Spiritual Roots of the East African Revival with special reference to its use of Confession of Sins in Public*, MTh thesis, Aberdeen University, 1988, p. 21.
- 6 W.J. Lawton, in *The Better Time To Be: Utopian Attitudes to Society among Sydney Anglicans 1885–1914*, Kensington, University of New South Wales Press, 1990, explores this and its effects in Sydney.
- 7 J.E. Church, *Quest for the Highest: A Diary of the East African Revival*, Exeter, The Paternoster Press, 1981, p. 105.
- 8 Church, *Quest for the Highest*, p. 177, quoting a letter from Pitt Pitts to the Rwanda Prayer Notes, 22 March 1940.
- 9 P. StJohn, *Breath of Life: The Story of the Ruanda Mission*, London, The Norfolk Press, 1971, p. 59.
- 10 Osborn, p. 54.
- 11 Church, *Quest for the Highest*, p. 81; also StJohn, p. 47, the latter mentioning especially the Rev. H. Guillebaud.
- 12 Church, *Quest for the Highest*, p. 83; also p. 113 quoting Rwanda Notes August 1935.
- 13 StJohn, pp. 69, 70.
- 14 Z. Nthamburi (ed.), *From Mission to Church: A Handbook of Christianity in East Africa*, Nairobi, Uzima Press, 1995, p. 114, in the article by Ward, 'The Balokole revival in Uganda.'
- 15 Shalita was eventually to become Bishop of Ankole.
- 16 Church, *Quest for the Highest*, p. 58.
- 17 C.E. Sahlberg, *From Krapf to Rugambwa: A Church History of Tanzania*, Nairobi, Evangel Publishing House, 1986, p. 121.
- 18 Buganda refers to the territory of the Baganda people, part of the present country of Uganda.
- 19 W.B. Anderson, *The Church in East Africa 1840–1974*, Dodoma, Central Tanganyika Press, 1977, p. 124.
- 20 Osborn, p. 72.
- 21 StJohn, p. 112

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- 22 A. Coomes, *Festo Kivengere: The Authorised Biography*, Eastbourne, Monarch Publications, 1990, p. 68.
- 23 Coomes, p. 99.
- 24 Coomes, p. 100.
- 25 Coomes, p. 69.
- 26 Church, *Quest for the Highest*, p. 130.
- 27 Osborn, p. 77.
- 28 Werner Both, 'Hymns of the Abalokole Revival in Buhaya Tanzania: a preliminary theological analysis', paper presented to the Workshop in Religious Research, June 1966–June 1968, Nairobi Kenya, and reproduced in duplicated form under the title, *Theory & Practice in Church Life and Growth: 36 Studies in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa over the Past 100 Years*, pp. 305–7.
- 29 *Tenzi za Rohoni* No. 137.
- 30 J. Church later wrote a brief account of Kigozi's conversion experience and call to the Church in Uganda, titled *Awake. An African Calling: The Story of Blasio Kigozi & his Vision of Revival*, London, CMS, 1936.
- 31 Ward, 'The Balokole revival' in Nthamburi, *From Mission to Church*, p. 117.
- 32 Ward, 'The Balokole revival' in Nthamburi, *From Mission to Church*, p. 117.
- 33 M. Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa: A Short History of African Christianity*, Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1996, p. 252.
- 34 Church, *Quest for the Highest*, p. 184
- 35 Osborn, p. 81. Nagenda studied at Makerere before that institution conferred degrees, obtaining a Diploma.
- 36 Ward, 'The Balokole revival' in Nthamburi, *From Mission to Church*, p. 117,
- 37 Ward, 'The Balokole revival' in Nthamburi, *From Mission to Church*, pp. 120–121.
- 38 Largely the coastal and southern areas, those under the care of the UMCA (USPG).
- 39 N. Langford-Smith gave me his original Report of his journey, which is now in the Archives of CMS-A in Sydney. When I visited Murgwanza in 1991 several of the old men and women still remembered Lionel Bakewell's first visit, and showed me the large fig tree under which he camped. They also shared with me their reminiscences of the Revival.
- 40 Central Tanganyika Diocesan Newsletter, August 1939, quoted in N de S.P. Sibtain, *Dare to Look Up*, p. 64.
- 41 Church, *Quest for the Highest*, p. 172, quoting Bakewell to Chambers 18 May, 1940.
- 42 L.J. Bakewell, 'On Fire for God', *The Open Door*, 1 November 1940, p. 15.
- 43 Bakewell, *ibid.*, p. 4

- 44 Sundkler, *Bara Bukoba*, p. 113. In Chapter 5, pp. 113–135, Sundkler recounts his experiences of the Revival. In between two terms in Africa he was Professor of Theology at the University of Uppsala.
- 45 Coomes, p. 132.
- 46 Coomes, p. 145.
- 47 Wellesley Hannah, response to questionnaire.
- 48 Florence Shellard, response to questionnaire.
- 49 'Field Notes', *The Open Door*, 1 May 1940, p. 15.
- 50 N. Langford-Smith, Letter to Friends, November 1949, CMS Archives, Sydney.
- 51 Osborn, p. 98.
- 52 Anderson, p. 125.
- 53 Canon H.J. Butcher, Gods Standards: The Basis of all Missionary Work, *The Open Door*, 1 April 1939, p.12. Canon Hubert Butcher was a CMS-UK missionary, and it is interesting to see that his report was published in the CMS-A magazine.
- 54 Church, *Quest for the Highest*, pp. 156–7.
- 55 Church, *Quest for the Highest*, pp. 167–8. The question of the Oxford Group was also discussed, and again, it is clear that Church leaders did not feel there was a connection between its teachings and those of the Revival.
- 56 Anderson, p. 128.
- 57 J.K. Karanja, *Founding an African Faith: Kikuyu Anglican Christianity 1900–1945*, Nairobi, Uzima Press, 1999, p. 250.
- 58 N. Kivuti, in J.N.K. Mugambi (ed.), *A Church Come of Age: Fifty Years of Revival in the CPK Diocese of Embu 1942–1992*, Nairobi, Acton Publishers, 1992, p. 33.
- 59 Karanja, p. 246.
- 60 Martin Capon was another Cambridge Graduate of the year 1930, the same year as several of the Rwanda and Uganda missionaries closely associated with the Revival. Incidentally, these included my father who graduated that year – Victor Reed.
- 61 Letter from M. Capon in CPK Files, quoted by J. Karanja, *Founding an African Faith*, p. 247.
- 62 The following CMS-A missionaries served in Uganda: Archdeacon and Mrs Amey 1935–64, Miss Florence Biggs 1921–41, Miss Dawn Brewer (later Mrs Timmis) 1938–48 (later in Tanzania) Miss E. Garrard 1925–53, Mr and Mrs A. Hart 938–43, Canon and Mrs Lawrence 1915–19 and 1924–41, Miss I. Macnamara (later Mrs Leech) 1905–16, The Rev. and Mrs Moore 1935–54, Canon and Mrs Prentice 1938–63, a total of only 14 people.
- 63 Ward, 'The Balokole revival' in Nthamburi, *From Mission to Church*, p. 128.
- 64 Interview, Mrs Callon Moore, May 1998, Melbourne. Callon Moore went to Gulu in northern Uganda in 1938. She taught under the near-legendary English missionary Phoebe Cave-Brown-Cave.
- 65 Ward, 'The Balokole revival' in Nthamburi, *From Mission to Church*, p. 129.