A Missiological Review of African Christianity since Independence and Her Missional Tasks

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Abstract

Africa’s Christianity is an immensely dynamic religiocultural phenomenon. Churches have proliferated, especially after Africa’s political independence in the 1960s. Unlike some anticipation that African Christianity would shrivel with the withdrawal of the colonial powers, churches increased in number and flourished dynamically without equal in history. However, the rapid church growth after colonialism was not a new phenomenon in the history of African churches in the twentieth century. In the early part of the twentieth century, even before Western churches set out to evangelize Africa, indigenous preachers had already been actively involved in preaching the gospel and planting churches. Thanks to early African evangelists, such as Wade Harris, the African style of Pentecostal revivals was born and began to spread across sub-Saharan Africa before independence.

The flame of charismatic movements went on and kindled spiritually hungry souls, which led to the explosion of churches in Africa, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. Interestingly, such revivals took place when Africans were greatly dismayed and frustrated by homegrown political elites, who are believed to have contributed considerably to the drastic deterioration of African economies and to the exacerbation of structural corruption. This coincident church
growth should not be interpreted as religious escapism; rather, most churches, regardless of their denominational affiliations, were playing socially significant roles that filled the hollows created by dysfunctional social systems and poor leadership after independence.

There are a number of important features that characterized African Christianity. African Christians were able to survive and overcome harsh conditions of life during and after Western colonialism thanks to their charismatic revival movements that led them to a radical faith in the God of Jesus. Related to this was the religio-cultural factor that the African primal religion (or primal worldview) always played the role of a spiritual seedbed on which the gospel of Jesus was planted, nourished, and sprouted without resistance. While African churches typically belong to one of three types, namely, mainline churches (stemmed from Western missionaries), Pentecostal churches, and AICs (Africa Instituted/Initiated Churches), all of them share the primal religion/worldview as their spiritual bedrock. Although there were some extremely puritanical approaches to African traditions among these churches, most of them were characterized by strong pneumatology and supernatural awareness, which can be ascribed to the traditional or primal religiosity that has been the foundation of African cultural knowledge and life. This explains why charismatic Pentecostal currents have been notably detected across all three ecclesiastical types.
However, there are also a number of obstacles that African churches must continuously work to overcome. The churches should more proactively take the responsibility not only to provide biblically faithful and socio-culturally relevant answers to questions posed by African traditions but also to respond to malfunctioning social milieus in light of Kingdom values and ethics. One other issue to deal with is the increasing acceptance of the prosperity gospel. This problem does not represent African Christianity, but its lurking danger should be discerned and addressed theologically. Lastly, African churches must also make all efforts to carry out their missional responsibility to witness for Jesus pacifistically among Muslim neighbors.

Key Words

African Christianity, African churches, Revival, Pentecostalism, AIC, African Instituted Church, Missional task
Introduction

Christianity in Africa is not “a single recognizable entity” (Gifford 1998:50). Africa’s Christianity is as complex as the continent is geographically gigantic and culturally diverse. Its myriad styles and inextinguishable dynamism have made it ever impressive and grandiose, and the complexity of its religio-cultural phenomena makes it nearly impossible to label. Any careless generalization of African Christianity may yield sloppy reductionism because of its sheer size and diversity. And yet, many scholars from Africa and the West agree that there are significant religio-cultural elements characteristic of Africa’s Christianity that differentiate it from other types of Christianity around the world. These religio-cultural elements compose what is called ATR (African Traditional Religion). It is with these elements that this paper is concerned.

Since Christianity, like other religions, has always been expressed through various cultural forms, it is extremely important to understand a particular society’s cultural worldview to comprehend the Christianity of that particular society. Outsiders must do this by earnestly and adequately capturing the emic views. Only through this process does it

1) Africa is a huge continent with more than two thousand languages and diverse cultures as well as innumerable sociopolitical issues.
even become possible for outsiders to grasp what represents and characterizes various types of Christianity. Thus, to apprehend Africa’s Christianity appropriately, we (particularly non-Africans) must be prepared to understand the historical and cultural backgrounds of African societies and cultures, in and through which the gospel has been experienced in an authentically African way. With this presupposition in mind, I have made a very bold attempt in this paper to identify some significant characteristics deemed to have been salient across sub-Saharan Africa since the political independence achieved in the 1960s.

My description, assessment, and missiological suggestions regarding African Christianity may be incomplete considering the enormity of dynamic churches throughout such a huge continent. However, my humble aspiration is to at least capture for readers (particularly non-African audiences) an overall picture of the streams of African Christianity and the related major challenges and struggles in post-colonial Africa.

I have been able to witness in Africa a vibrant Christian spirit accompanied by the kind of hope that Abraham possessed: “Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations” (Romans 4:18 NIV). This vivacious spirituality and biblically-based hope has sustained many sincere African Christians in the midst of harsh circumstances for decades since independence. It is
one of the strengths that characterizes African Christianity. I have always wanted to know more about it, so I approached Africa’s Christian phenomenon from a phenomenological perspective, by which insiders’ voices could be heard more loudly.

While benefiting considerably from my own experience ministering and researching in East Africa for many years, I have also seriously consulted experts on African Christianity, both African and non-African, through their writings. Notwithstanding all my efforts to eschew personal biases or too subjective opinions, I ought to admit that as a non-African person (Korean), I could be incorrect in describing certain features of African Christianity. However, I hope that this humble paper will be a catalyst for further strengthening the body of Christ in Africa.

A Methodological Issue in Studying African Christianity

Quite a number of studies on Africa’s Christianity have been carried out by both African and Western scholars. Within this scholarly discussion lies a methodological concern. From my observation, it seems that Western scholarship tends to look at African Christian movements mostly from sociopolitical and economic angles. It also assesses African
churches in terms of their contributions to sociopolitical developments in Africa. As a result, Western scholars often miss a perspective on the overall phenomenon of African Christianity—an anthropological perspective that needs to be delved into more seriously to apprehend Christians’ social behaviors.  

Western scholarship has, however, provided a very helpful picture of the context in which African Christians have been living. Its evaluation of the roles that various churches have been playing since independence is also worth much attention. The evaluation even sounds prophetic to some extent. African Christians may as well take these Western critical assessments as an indicator of lurking perils that insiders could easily fail to detect. However, while their discussions and appraisals are worth heeding, Western scholarly works seem to lack much of an emic view.

Phenomenologically speaking, if any sympathetic outsider  

2) For example, see Gifford (1995, 1998, 2009); de Gruchy (1995); Hastings (1995). The first chapter of The Christian Churches and the Democritisation of Africa (Paul Gifford, ed. 1995) by Terence Ranger would be very helpful in glimpsing the major interests and concerns that Western sympathetic academicians had in dealing with issues related to churches in Africa after independence.

3) Paul Gifford asks more evaluative questions than phenomenological for his research into the role of the church in African society (1998:53). However, the criteria that he uses are rooted in a sociopolitical viewpoint that has been utilized to investigate Christian roles mostly in Western societies. I am wondering if his questions are still relevant to the same in African contexts.
desires to fully understand the cultural life (including religious and spiritual life) of Christians in any society other than his or her own, an investigation by solely socio-politico-economic approaches seems insufficient. It does not present a full story. 4) This limited investigation could be likened to “reading into” a scriptural text rather than conducting a thorough exegesis of it with a due focus on protagonists that have filled the pages of their own stories in a life context. This would be true especially when a researcher attempts to examine the religio-spiritual dimension of African Christianity, which comprises complex cultural elements derived from immensely diverse traditions and complicated sociopolitical situations.

In contrast to Western counterparts, African Christian thinkers try to elucidate their perspectives on both cultural and spiritual issues related to church and society. They discuss Christians’ struggles with life conditions, underdevelopment issues, and political problems in Africa. This shows, to a great extent, their deep concern about traditional cultural values and biblical provisions (e.g., Kalu 2005, 2008; Chepkwony 2003;

4) Ogbu Kalu reputes a Western unilateral approach, “[Western] sociological methods that concentrate on the secular effects of missions, that is, both in the social, economic and political field, often fail to deal with the internal or purely religious dimension. They focus on religious expression because the method cannot adequately handle religious experience. Functionalism has bred a strong interpretative model that fails to take people’s religious longings seriously” (2005:19). See also Kalu (2008:192–99) for his critique on Paul Gifford’s assessment of African Christianity.
Many of these African scholars express their strong conviction that churches should play the role of protagonist to reform the whole society. However, their approaches to the reforming task are quite different from what outsiders often suggest. For instance, the African church usually employs a “petition” as a Christian approach to social reform rather than the “protest movements” employed by European societies throughout history (Ela 1986:116).

The disparity in approaching social issues lies mainly with different cultural values between African and non-African (mostly Western) traditions. Whereas ATR is often a hurdle and a hindrance to social reform in Western perspectives, for African Christians, ATR always remains a significant cultural entity that Christianity should deal with, whether positively or negatively, to make the gospel of Jesus understood, embraced, and internalized by Africans. Even in such an important field as theology and church ministry, ATR has ever played a role as the cultural bedrock on which sound African theologies are to be born and utilized to edify the body of Christ in Africa. This probably has been one of the most challenging areas for non-African missionaries to understand and deal with missiologically.
To sum up, *culture* matters greatly in Africa.\(^5\) African traditions—not only Western cultural ideas and forms—have continuously and significantly affected African Christian thinking and behavior. This was so especially after independence. Thus, cultural issues should be treated as very salient subjects when studying and examining Africa’s Christianity.

Much of the sociopolitical and economic incompetence that Western scholars poignantly critique is also profoundly linked with traditional cultural values and the ethos that underlies African societies, of which the cultural bedrock is ATR. For sincere African Christians, ATR is a self-evident reality that they cannot avoid dealing with in full. Even the issues of patrimonialism and clientelism that are often censured by Western thinkers (Gifford 1998:5-6) have much to do with cultural worldviews that have been deeply rooted in the minds and hearts of Africans for generations. That the Western style of reform has not been so successful in most of the independent African nations can be explained this way.\(^6\)


\(^6\) The major reason for the divergence of African understandings from non-African (especially Western) views of society lies primarily with different worldviews. Worldview is a deep level of cognitive culture through which people understand the world around them and interpret the causes of problems in their society. For
Considering both Western and African perspectives on African Christianity, I am primarily concerned with cultural issues affecting the faith. Based on my observations and interviews with fellow African Christians—be they ordinary, elite, poor, rich, uneducated, or educated—cultural values inherited from their previous generations are still so important that the church ought to pay much attention to them all the time. Even African Christian ethics and spirituality cannot be discussed apart from cultural values (cf. Kunhiyop 2008). This simply reminds us that God has used existing human cultures (the foremost element being language) in particular times and places to reveal Himself to humanity. For example, the gospel of Jesus was manifested through Palestinian Jewish culture and society, and the same has been disseminated time and again through different cultural elements to different societies.  

Proliferation of Christianity in Independent Africa

As we turn to the features of Christianity in independent Africa, one will be greatly amazed at the statistical figure of

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7) It goes without saying that the most prominent cultural element (or form) is language, and the power of Christianity has ever been manifested through the translation of the word of God into vernaculars, or home/heart languages. For more discussions on the translation of the Bible in Christian history and missionary contributions to it, see Andrew Walls (1996:26–42) and Lamin Sanneh (1989).
church growth in Africa. Jehu Hanciles depicts its drastic growth as follows:

In fact, nowhere has Christianity’s explosive growth over the last century been as dramatic as in Africa, making Africa the “poster-child,” so to speak, of the epochal shift. The African experience epitomizes the shift not only in terms of its sheer demographic scale but also in its unexpectedness and missionary significance. . . . From roughly 9.9 million (9.4 percent of the population) in 1900, the number of African Christians had mushroomed to about 360 million (over 40 percent of the population) by 2000. Such a rate of growth has no parallels in the history of Christianity. (2008:122-23, 128)

Hanciles also points out that “the most vigorous growth took place after the heyday of Western missionary enterprise and after colonialism” (2008:129, italics mine). Christianity during the colonial era was often perceived to be associated with, and patronized by, the colonial government, so some predicted that churches would wither with the rise of political independence. On the contrary, churches in Africa actually flourished and witnessed rapid growth as the colonial powers ended (Sundkler and Steed 2000:903). This refutes a popular view that Christianity in Africa was merely a product of

missionary Christianity.

Before and during colonial times, the gospel was preached to everyone regardless of ethnicity or social class, the Bible was translated in vernaculars, and the new Christian ideas were diffused into traditional African cultures. As Kalu recalls, indigenous preachers like “Wade Harris [had already] trekked from Grebo Island through the Ivory Coast to the gold Coast, baptizing, healing, teaching new choruses, and charismatizing the religious landscape” when Western Christian mission leaders met in Edinburgh in 1910 “to map the future of mission in Africa” (2008:x). With these African efforts and missionary contributions, Christianity steadily mushroomed in various African soils despite many unanticipated challenges. It was just as the gospel itself had been during the time of apostle Paul—“bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world” (Colossians 1:6).

As the Dictionary of African Christian Biography lists, there were myriads of African men and women of God who preached the gospel and planted churches in Africa throughout the twentieth century. Thanks especially to those national gospel-bearers, Christianity has always been perceived and experienced as the hope for broken societies in Africa,

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especially in post-colonial Africa, which has been colored with many gloomy stories of continental deterioration mostly wrought by notoriously exploitative, homegrown political elites.

At independence, Africans hailed their own African leaders. However, their “characters and careers had a decisive impact on the fate of their countries” (Meredith 2005:13). The independent Africa soon began to see a drastically deteriorating economy, and it has been argued that the major cause of such a hasty economic decline was the political leaders’ failure to provide effective government and make wise use of the numerous natural resources in their home countries. Independent Africa “has [also] received far more foreign aid than any other region in the world. More than $300 billion of Western aid has been sunk into Africa, but with little discernible result” (Meredith 2005:683).  

10) Jonathan Bonk adds: “Despite decades of prodigious ‘development’ efforts fueled by close to $600 billion in aid since the 1960s, living conditions across the continent continue to decline. Of the forty countries at the bottom of the World Bank’s 174-nation human development index (HDI), 33 are African, with an estimated income per person less than 2 per cent that of Americans. With 20 percent of the world’s population, Africa generates something over 1 percent of its gross national product” (“Ecclesiastical Cartography and the Invisible Continent,” in Dictionary of African Christian Biography at www.dacb.org/xnmaps.html#top, accessed on January 21, 2013). Ankie Hoogvelt also deplores, “Sub-Saharan Africa contains thirty-two out of the UN’s forty ‘least developed’ member countries. Early post-independence growth, while still externally dependent, was nevertheless a source of hope and optimism. But this was followed by stagnation and negative growth in all but a very few countries” (2001:173).
thinkers and Western critics argue alike that the sufferings modern Africa has been undergoing were caused by “its ruling elites” and their “kleptocracy” (Meredith 2005:686; Isichei 1995:323-24).\(^{11}\) Even other “natural” disasters such as HIV/AIDS endemics, drought, famine, and the like, which look beyond human control, could have been prevented had the political leaders been sober enough to maintain their political integrity.\(^{12}\)

It was in this somber social situation that churches began to proliferate. After independence, Africa witnessed the emergence of countless sorts of churches and unprecedented church growth. While the presence of missionary Christianity was still apparent (mostly represented by the “mainline” denominations,\(^{13}\) which did not diminish as some may have forecasted), a number of new groups with new ecclesiastical styles sprouted and even flourished after independence.

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11) Paul Gifford diagnosed post-colonial African states with having neopatrimonialism that is characterized by corruption and clientelism (1998:5). In the neo-patrimonial systems, economic development does not seem to be the “overriding goal of their government.” Rather, “staying in power is the main objective” (Gifford 1998:13).

12) For example, according to Gifford’s overall assessment of Kenyan society, “the main reason for Africa’s plight is its elite,” although other significant factors, such as slavery and colonialism, contributed to it (2009:250).

13) The “mainline” churches in this paper refers to denominations introduced by Western missionaries or their African protégés, such as the Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists, as well as churches established by Western missions like the then Sudan Interior Mission in West Africa and Africa Inland Mission in East Africa.
Many of them were quite unfamiliar to Western Christendom. While some of them were an extension of the already extant “indigenous” churches during the colonial era,\(^ {14}\) many others were very new.

One of the reasons for such a proliferation of new churches (or resurgence of old churches) could have been the harsh social milieu mostly caused by callous political leaders. However, it would be too unilateral an appraisal to find the main cause of the explosion of African churches solely in such a societal malfunction as the political fiascos that impoverished and afflicted ordinary people; we should employ multilateral perspectives to look into the phenomenon of such exceptional church growth.\(^ {15}\)

\(^ {14}\) Among them, for example, are the Church of the Lord, Christ Apostolic Church, and the Cherubim and Seraphim, all of which sprung from the *Aladura* revival movement, particularly in Nigeria in the early 1930s (Shaw 2010:60–61; Isichei 1995:277). For more on the Aladura revival movement, see Mark Shaw (2009:141–45; 2010:55–65) and Elizabeth Isichei (1995:279–83).

\(^ {15}\) Especially in the 1980s, some churches raised their prophetic voices more directly against callous despots. Interestingly, these churches came mostly from mainline denominations, such as Presbyterians, Anglicans, and Roman Catholics in both Francophone and Anglophone Africa (Gifford 1995:1–4). On the contrary, most of the other churches—that is, old and new Pentecostal churches and newly emergent AICs (Africa Initiated/Instituted Churches)—did not seem to show much concern for social issues like political complications and economic deterioration. But this impression should not lead to the misconstruction that these churches made no positive contribution to their societies. They performed their functions rather indirectly with regard to social issues by emphasizing personal salvation and conversion experience, spiritual growth through Bible study, tangible experience of the Holy Spirit through miraculous healing and deliverance, and moral edification.
A Typology of Resurgent Churches in Independent Africa

African Christians have grappled with religio-cultural issues ever since the gospel was preached in Africa. The kind of spirituality the Christians manifest hints at how they perceive their society—the very society that has been mismanaged by their exploitative ruling elites—in light of their cultural worldviews. In other words, culture has been both a major theological agenda and an extremely important framework in the process of Christianization and church growth in Africa.

In the African worldview, “religion” (or spiritual matters) and “culture” are hardly separate from one another. Rather, how African Christians deal with cultural issues and integrate them with their Christian doctrines and ecclesiastical structures has determined major streams of African Christianity. This religio-cultural dimension is the frame of reference through which one should look into the emergence of individuals in community. Unfortunately, some of the churches were deliberately unconcerned with social issues and even supportive of despotic political leaders (cf. Gifford 1995:3–5). However, we should not assess the failure of these churches to reform their society solely from a sociopolitical dimension. Nor should we take the sociopolitical quandaries of African societies as the major frame of reference by which we understand the characteristics and spirituality of African churches. In fact, there were many other factors that influenced the orientations of African churches. Among these factors, religion and culture were especially significant.
and growth of diverse churches in post-independence Africa. From this viewpoint, I will discuss below three significant types of churches in post-independence Africa: mainline churches, Pentecostal churches, and African Instituted Churches (AICs).

**Mainline Churches**

As I already mentioned, the mainline churches that Western missionaries and their protégés started based on Western missionary Christianity grew even after independence and continue to grow. Although European mission organizations (both Catholic and Protestant) declined and became much less active and influential, the foreign missionary forces did not decrease. Rather, the old European missionaries were replaced by Americans (Isichei 1995:326). These mainline churches continued to maintain the old ecclesiastical structures and catechistic teachings, through which much of Western theological thought has been incorporated into the local understanding of Christianity. Many of the church leaders

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16) This ecclesiastical typology seems a bit arbitrary, but I believe that it will help readers glimpse the contours of post-independence African Christianity.

17) The OAIC website says that AIC stands for “African Independent and Instituted Churches.” Some also call the same as “African Initiated Churches.” All these labels are understood to refer to the same entity.

18) There have been other nationalities among the foreign missionary forces in Africa since the 1980s, such as South Koreans. But their numbers have been very small compared to those of American missionaries. So I have not included their contributions in this present discussion.
were trained in theological institutions overseas (mostly in the West) or those founded locally by missionaries. To this day, denominations in this category usually follow Western evangelicalism or Catholicism and rigorously apply it to their local churches. Members of these churches usually follow their denominational doctrines through catechisms, in both the missionary languages and local languages.

However, one should not misconstrue that these churches have fully adopted Western styles of Christianity and deserted their African identity or traditional values. Judging from my observations, they did not receive missionary teachings passively. Rather, they accommodated the teachings to their own context by interpreting them in terms of their cultural worldview. For example, while Anglican churches continued to retain much of the English original ecclesiastical forms, they did not lose their original cultural worldviews. They still interpreted their life experiences, causes of misfortunes, and so forth in those cultural terms. In other words, they attempted to integrate missionary teachings into their existing theological framework, or what Taylor calls the “African way” (2001:12) or what Walls labels the “primal world views” of Africans (Walls 1996:110-21).19)

Thus a closer observation would witness common

19) For a helpful discussion on the subject of the “primal religions” in Africa from an African theologian’s viewpoint, see Bediako (1995:91–108).
cultural values among members of mainline churches despite their denominational disparities. These common worldview assumptions were extendingly observed even among nonmainline churches, such as Pentecostals or AICs. However, owing to Western theological and ecclesiastical influences, the mainline denominations may very well hold a less supernaturalistic perspective on issues such as evil spirits, spirit possession, supernatural healing, deliverance, witchcraft, and the like than the other two streams of African churches.

Members of the mainline churches were not totally subservient to Western theological worldviews. Even though missionaries attempted to contextualize or “indigenize” their Western Christianity, the outcomes were often “too superficial” (Taylor 2001:7). As a result, some members left mainline churches and joined Pentecostals or AICs, where they felt more at home culturally and spiritually. But most of the leaders and members of the mainline churches continued the struggle to domesticate Western elements in theology and ecclesiology in an African way. These churches often produced “nominal” Christians or caused what Kraft calls “dual allegiance” (1996:201), which refers to a syncretistic mental condition that mixes both the new and the old allegiances.

Members who did not receive from their churches spiritual
solutions to their inexplicable misfortunes tended to become cultural Christians, for whom Christianity was not a palpable experience of the living God but was merely a religious duty. Being spiritually dissatisfied, some of the educated lay leaders left mainline churches and started their own churches to join the Pentecostal movement, which emphasized pneumatology more than Christology. Even some local pastors of mainline churches reviewed their doctrines and began to adjust their theological understanding, eventually concluding that Christianity responded to the felt-needs of their members. Mostly, healing and deliverance were emphasized, and prayers for these were conducted frequently, even during services. Some messages sounded like “prosperity gospel” sermons, which put too much stress on earthly well-being and success and lacked the emphasis on Christian moral and social responsibility as stipulated by the Bible. Such a homiletic adjustment could be explained in terms of the need for wooing more members to the churches, but it should be noted that even the mainline churches were greatly influenced by the strong Pentecostal movement that had been sweeping through sub-Saharan Africa before and after Africa’s political independence.

**Pentecostalism in Africa**

Pentecostal churches in Africa have a long history. African Pentecostalism has often been viewed by outsiders (and many
insiders uninformed of their own history) as an extension of American Pentecostalism. But its origin traces back to various revival movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many African Christian revivals took place during the colonial era, and they carried political overtones, which, though unobtrusive, were perceived as a threat by colonial powers. As a result, some of the prophetic founders of the revivals were imprisoned and exiled by colonial governments (Kalu 2008:29). Apparently their spiritual influence was so great that for decades many new churches emerged whose leaders emulated these spiritual heroes of the past. Kalu provides a helpful typology of the revivals that had a spiritual impact on the emergence of modern Pentecostalism in Africa (2008:28-31). Let me recapture Kalu’s five types below.

The somewhat oldest vestige of revival can be detected in the seventeenth century up to the nineteenth century. In this revival Christianity was not fully orthodox but was synthesized unorthodoxly with African traditional supernaturalism. The second type is probably that which should be regarded as a prototypical revival for African Pentecostalism. The second type came from an appropriately Christian background, and it emerged more as a prophetic movement with emphases on the “ethical and pneumatic components” and “evangelization.” Its evangelists rebuked fellow Africans for idolatry and attended thoroughly to the Bible (Kalu 2008:29). Among the prophets who helped flare these revivals of the early twentieth century
were Wade Harris, Garrick Braide, Joseph Babalola, and Simon Kimbangu.

The third revival was a “wave of African indigenous churches” across Africa “before the First World War and especially during the influenza epidemic of 1918,” among which were “Aladura in West Africa, Zionists in southern Africa, and Abaroho in eastern Africa” (Kalu 2008:30). This type of revival aroused in Africans the significance of African traditional cultural values and symbols, and some groups went too far beyond the sound boundary of Christianity. This third category may well be a prototype of African Instituted Churches (AICs), which I will discuss later on.

Kalu’s fourth category can be regarded as an archetype of what I have mentioned about the mainline churches in the previous section. Even before independence, there was a revival movement arising within mainline churches with great emphasis on the roles of the Holy Spirit in daily life. Some movements remained within their original churches with a continuous effort to reform the churches theologically, while others founded new churches. One of the notable characteristics of this type is that the protagonists of the revival “reject[ed] the traditional cultural ingredients” and were quite puritanical (Kalu 2008:30).

20) Kalu illustrates some examples (2008:30): Ibibio revival within the Qua Iboe Church in eastern Nigeria in 1927; the Kaimosi revival within the Friends Africa
The fifth type was a precipitating catalyst for the modern Pentecostal charismatic movement, particularly in the 1970s. This revival was mainly triggered by “puritan young preachers from secondary schools and universities” (Kalu 2008:87). The fervor continued in the 1980s and greatly influenced young students on university campuses. This last brand should be differentiated from the previous types of revival in that it was a charismatic movement initiated by young Christians who had least experienced the colonial reign.

Although these revivals showed somewhat different orientations from one another in dealing with African primal culture, the major theological element that was shared among these types is that they laid a great emphasis on pneumatology. As the pneumatic fervor continued in the 1970s and 1980s, African Pentecostalism ushered itself into a new phase of World Christianity and played a major role in the explosion of Christianity in independent Africa. During this period, both eastern and western Africa witnessed a great current of conversion to Christ and a flame of charismatic revivals accompanied by miraculous healing and deliverance.21)

This fifth type of revival occurred across all of sub-Saharan Mission/Quakers in western Kenya in 1927; the Balokole revival through the Anglican Church from 1930; the Ngouedi revival among the Swedish Orebro Mission in 1947.

21) Conversion took place even from the old Aladura AICs in Nigeria (Kalu 2008:88).
Africa, including Rwanda, Malawi, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Uganda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Kenya. A charismatic evangelistic movement broke out, especially among university students, and this flame of evangelism contagiously spread even to secondary school students. This movement was characterized by its puritanical preaching of the gospel and a very conservative attitude towards traditional cultures. They urged people to confess their sins and radically turn from old polytheistic paradigms to an absolute allegiance to Christ. They also censured any, even minor, mix of Christian belief with traditional ways. This evangelistic fire touched so many young people during the 1970s and 1980s, and many of them experienced a radical life transformation and became prominent evangelists, pastors, missionaries, cross-cultural mission founders, and theologians in their home countries.

This evangelistic zeal, however, should not be thought to have occurred among Pentecostal circles alone. As mentioned, the spiritual blaze was somehow kindled among youth on university and high school campuses. Thus the movement was quite interdenominational and powerful enough to shake and influence even the mainline churches. Thanks to such a vibrant spiritual movement, the sparks of evangelistic flames spread through the students to mainline churches and aroused them from a long spiritual stagnancy to contribute directly or indirectly to the dynamic movement.
The evangelistic fervor was based on doctrinally sound foundations, so it was also kindling a fervent missionary movement among African Christians. This missionary movement thus began to be observed in various “mission fields,” including Muslim and Hindu societies. Now missionary enthusiasm did not belong only to white missionaries; the missionary mandate was given to all peoples regardless of their color or amount of wealth, because they all equally received salvation and possessed the same Spirit of God. From the 1970s on, para-church organizations of Christian students, such as FOCUS (Fellowship of Christian Union Students, affiliated to the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students), began to form across sub-Saharan Africa. Quite a number of the students who were involved in those campus ministries participated vigorously in cross-cultural missions and even organized their own missions, especially for Muslim societies in their countries and beyond.22)

Almost at the same time as African young Christians were on fire for evangelism and missions, a new stream of Pentecostalism evolved in the 1980s, which is popularly known as the “prosperity gospel.”23) Messages of the

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22) I was involved in one such organization in Kenya as a council member for some time in the 2000s. Its missionaries have been actively involved in various ministries, including education and community development, in neighboring Muslims communities.

23) This unsound stream is often called “neo-Pentecostalism,” but I think the label
prosperity gospel began to boom and spread across sub-Saharan Africa from the 1980s onward.\(^ {24}\) The prosperity gospel is known to have its origin in America, but it seems to have borne more fruits in Africa.\(^ {25}\)

It may be easy to understand why the prosperity gospel became so popular in Africa. Seemingly indelible poverty, rampant endemic diseases, incessant sickness, and continuously deteriorating life conditions would easily allure the suffering poor to look for a “better” or more encouraging interpretation of their situations than “normal” Christian views. For such desperate people, prosperity messages sounded like a breakthrough full of promises that would rescue them from deteriorating circumstances. These new messages were becoming another gospel to those suffering exploitation by their own political leaders.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Western preachers of the prosperity gospel frequently visited Africa for mass evangelistic and healing meetings. Along with the development of mass

\(^ {24}\) It is believed that Benson Idahosa (1938–1998), the Nigerian charismatic preacher and founder of the Church of God Mission International, was the African harbinger who first brought the American prosperity gospel to African soil. Cf. Adeleye (2011:87).

media and technologies, the prosperity gospel was rapidly spreading around African countries. Quite a number of African Christians who were exposed to wealthier and affluent Western countries through broadcast media and the Internet began to lose heart over the hopeless situations in their countries. They were seeing a different type of savior in another part of the world, one who they believed would save them not just from eternal damnation but from their earthly misfortunes.

We need to be aware that Africans conceptualize the meaning of “prosperity” quite differently from the way Western Christians do. As a Ghanaian scholar of African Christianity, Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu explains, the indigenous concept of “prosperity” was theologically aloof from that in America or the rest of the West. This is because the latter societies have historical and cultural backgrounds very dissimilar to those of Africa.

The word “prosperity” in English seems quite insufficient to convey the concept that African Christians intend to communicate. Conversely, the concept to which African Christians allude by using the same word “prosperity” can

hardly find its counterpart in the affluent American context. I often feel it more appropriate to understand that concept in African contexts as a “wholeness” of life or “shalom,” as in Hebrew (cf. Kalu 2008:261).

With this understanding, sincere African Christians express their strong desire to become wholesome in every aspect of life through putting their faith in the gospel of Jesus. In view of such harsh life conditions, they yearn to “move from ‘leprous anointing’ (repentance from sin and initial acceptance of Christ), to ‘priestly anointing’ (spirit baptism, sealed and seated with Christ, and the manifestation of charismatic gifts of the Spirit), to ‘kingly anointing’ (or capacity to engage in a power encounter with forces of darkness)” (Kalu 2008:260). This is the theological basis of sound Pentecostalism, and in this view African Pentecostals seek legitimately to achieve a theological healthy “prosperity” or holistic transformation of life.

The main problems lie with quite a number of extreme preachers who deliberately and typically exploit their members with a prosperity gospel that does not seem compatible with the African primal notion of holism, let alone the biblical teaching of shalom. Learning from or being influenced by profoundly secularized and commercialized, and even distorted, messages of prosperity gospel in the West (mostly in America), some preachers introduced legalistic and
even magical methods for a prosperous life based on arbitrary interpretations of the Scriptures.\textsuperscript{27}) Judging from my many observations and discussions with African evangelical and Pentecostal members, this is an area that African churches must redress and reform theologically through, in part, discipleship. Such a message will nurture nothing but human greediness. Unfortunately, messages for earthly prosperity preached by such preachers appeal to many Africans who are broke and have long been traumatized. Even worse, the message appeals to Christians who live better than much poorer people yet continue to seek more prosperity.

It is very sad to witness such negative syndromes of the prosperity gospel mentality increasing in African urban contexts today. However, we are warned by sincere African Pentecostals that we should not judge African Pentecostalism based on partial observations of churches in urban cities alone; we will surely come up with an entirely different assessment of it if we immerse ourselves in the majority of Pentecostal churches in rural Africa and conduct adequate ethnographies of vibrant churches in less “prosperous” communities, such as urban informal settlements (crudely called “slums”) (cf. Kalu 2008:169).\textsuperscript{28})

\textsuperscript{27}) For an African evangelical criticism of African versions of the prosperity gospel, see Femi Adeleye (2011:87–94).

\textsuperscript{28}) Discussing Pentecostalism in rural Africa may take another full article. Due to the limited space in this paper, I will leave this subject to a later opportunity.
AICs (African Instituted Churches)

Due to the huge variety of Pentecostal movements in Africa and the scope of their theological beliefs, it is often extremely challenging to differentiate between African Pentecostal churches and some African Instituted/Initiated Churches. The name “AIC” also alludes to some churches that have been planted and pastored by African Christians without any connection to, or support from, Western churches or missionaries. The founders and pastors are often professionals or “lay people” who have not necessarily received any formal theological training in theological institutions.

The label “AIC” was originally bestowed on certain types of churches that shared with other African Pentecostal streams similar theological views that stemmed from the same African “primal worldview.” Both the African Pentecostals and AICs can be said to have been born out of the revival flaming in the early twentieth century, such as the Aladura movement in West Africa. Both of them are “innovative and have developed doctrinal emphases that differ from the inherited traditions of the missionaries who responded with jaundiced perceptions of the world of power in indigenous African communities” (Kalu 2008:67).

Such similarities found in both streams have actually confused many church historians as to whether they should
be regarded as the same ecclesiastical group and what criteria should be applied to differentiate the two streams.\(^{29}\) In fact, most of the AICs regard themselves as Pentecostal in terms of theology.\(^{30}\) Generally speaking, they share theological presuppositions, as both stress pneumatic ministries such as healing and deliverance; however, they differ from one another ecclesiastically, as AICs insist that they regard “African traditions and beliefs” as one of their core values.\(^{31}\)

Historically, a group of AIC leaders met and founded the representative body of all AICs, called the Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) in 1978. The leaders of AICs sought “to provide a forum for AICs to fellowship, share concerns and learn together.”\(^{32}\) According to the OAIC, there

\(^{29}\) For varied views on AICs among scholars, see Kalu (2008:68–75).

\(^{30}\) “The majority of these [AIC] leaders had little formal education and, more often than not, came from the ranks of the poorest and most vulnerable in society. Since political independence, AICs have continued to be founded, most of them describing themselves as Pentecostal” (Organization of African Instituted Churches, “About Us,” http://www.oaic.org/about-us/). Philip Jenkins comments: “The independents vary widely in their belief and practice, but these too should be comprehended under the very flexible label of ‘Pentecostal.’ Many indigenous churches do not like the Pentecostal title, which implies a reliance on American mission activities, rather than spontaneous local growth. The ‘independents’ fully deserve their name: they are nobody’s puppets” (2002:68).

\(^{31}\) Organization of African Instituted Churches, “About Us.”

\(^{32}\) Ibid. The international headquarters is located in Nairobi, Kenya. The OAIC joined the All African Conference of Churches (AACC) in 1966. It has been actively participating in the domestic and worldwide network of churches, both evangelical and ecumenical.
are about 60 million AIC members with tens of thousands of various denominations across sub-Saharan Africa and among African Diasporas.\textsuperscript{33} They have inherited the original ethos of AIC during the colonial reign, which stemmed from an African response to missionary Christianity that tended to depreciate African cultures and tried to replace them with those of missionaries’ home societies.

Most AICs are primarily interested in empowering and transforming impoverished grassroots people with the gospel of Jesus in an entirely African way. For example, Roho Churches\textsuperscript{34} in Kenya tried to empower their members to get out of poverty solely through the power of the Holy Spirit, without succumbing to Western culture (sometimes even rejecting Western medicines). The churches emphasized African identity in their profession of Christian faith, essentially saying that an African can become a Christian without following Western culture and theology and giving up his or her Africanness. The churches also intended to challenge mainline churches, which looked to them too dependent upon the West.\textsuperscript{35}

As seen here, AICs’ practice of Christianity is, basically, theologically Pentecostal and culturally Africa-centered.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} “Roho” means spirit in Swahili.
\textsuperscript{35} For more of the OAIC, see their website: http://www.oaic.org.
However, the development of AICs was not merely a reactive movement to Western missionary Christianity; rather, it was a self-awakening movement and an extension of incessant efforts to revitalize their own communities holistically and for themselves. AICs have been deeply concerned with poverty, health, social injustice, and the overall well-being of community. They have been struggling to eradicate social ills caused by ignorance and evil customs, such as the practice of witchcraft and witchcraft accusation, and to protect albinos from unjust treatment. They have also promoted theological training among AIC member communities and have sent their pastors to theological training institutions that are run by non-AIC denominations.\(^{36}\)

It seems that AICs have often been misperceived by missionaries due to their theological positions, worship styles, and ecclesiastical polities. The members’ religious procession on Sundays in colorful uniform with traditional music and drums, and their general tendency to refuse any connection with Western historical churches could perturb missionaries. But the phenomenon of AICs should be understood in light of multiple factors: the long history of African Christianity,

\(^{36}\) Even some of my students come from AICs. They proudly call their churches AICs. These churches are actually very close to general Pentecostal churches in terms of their doctrines, such as belief in the inerrancy of the Bible and the works of the Holy Spirit as in the time of the early church. So even in this case the label “AIC” is used to highlight the African origin of local churches as opposed to the category of Pentecostal churches that usually have Western connections.
African churches’ relations with Western Christendom, and the aftermath of political independence. It is quite encouraging and commendable that despite being historically misunderstood, leaders of AICs have made great efforts to build a more fraternal network with other churches and to foster reconciliation where there was serious contention or discord.

As mentioned above, the AICs derived from the same spiritual source of the earliest revival movements in the twentieth century as Pentecostals, and most of the AICs took a sound path of theology. However, there were some of them that gradually broke off from the earlier traditions and took a theological trail quite different from the Pentecostals. The major differences between these AICs and Pentecostals may be found in two maniac religious syndromes that resulted from domesticating the Bible excessively: paranoiac messianism and excessive dependence upon traditional beliefs and practices. The excessive dependence is to the extent that the apparent truth of Christ and His salvation in the Bible is watered down and even distorted.

Some groups, such as the Brotherhood of the Star and Cross and the Kimbanguists (Kalu 2008:79), to mention but a couple, derailed from biblical understanding and ascribed divinity to their founders. The members believe the founders to be new messiahs. Furthermore, a number of members
resort to traditional healing methods by leaning on cultic spirits usually found in their traditional or “primal religion” (Kalu 2008:79). Kalu’s castigation of an AIC practice sounds appropriate in review of their theological deflection: “Symbols and rituals used at the primal context must be rejected without any effort to reinterpret them in such a manner as to perpetuate their validity. For instance, it will be considered dangerous to kill a fowl and smear the blood on someone as a sign of the blood of Jesus” (2008:80). It is hoped that such deviated AIC groups will eventually come to terms with the biblical truth of the only Messiah in history and the true meaning of the power of the Holy Spirit as revealed and demonstrated in the Bible.

**Constructive African Elements in African Christianity**

It is nearly impossible to generalize or even describe African Christianity in a simplistic way. We are dealing with the gigantic history of a geographically enormous continent imbued with an extremely vibrant spirit of different types of churches. However, it is not entirely impossible to capture some characteristics that belong inimitably and solely to African Christianity. In this section, I will review some of these characteristics that helped construct African Christianity, especially during difficult times.
First of all, much of the proliferation of African churches originated in various revival movements that arose from within Africa before and after Africa’s independence. It should be noted that historically the flame of charismatic revival movements was kindled and carried basically by African Christians; “the agency was preeminently African” (Kalu 2008:99), although Western missionaries also made their unique contributions to forming the new landscape of African Christianity. This point has often been overlooked by some historians and missiologists. For example, African Pentecostalism as the predominant stream of Christianity in Africa must be understood as having originated from within Africa and as having cultivated its spirituality indigenously. Kalu states:

One may need a foreign missionary to hear the gospel for the first time, but not necessarily for experiencing the baptism of the Spirit. Yes some scholars write about African Pentecostalism as if they were recounting the saga of nineteenth-century missionaries. The Pentecostal experience broke out without missionaries or any foreigners and often to the consternation of missionaries who deployed the colonial government’s clout to contain the flares. . . . African Pentecostalism did not originate from Azusa Street and is not an extension of the American electronic church. (2008:viii)

For this very reason, African Christianity has also been
characterized by indigenous vigor for evangelism with its inherent missionary trait. I believe that this is true of all three types of churches mentioned above.

Another important characteristic of African churches is the fact that they have demonstrated African ways in embracing the gospel and practicing Christian faith. This means that the African primal worldview has functioned as a religious seedbed on which the gospel is understood and penetrates the hearts of Africans.\(^{37}\) The African primal worldview has also served as a cultural tutelage under which African Christians are guided to make out their society and interpret all its issues. Since the primal worldview carries a cultural lens that is quite religious and thus very different from the Western enlightenment paradigm, African Christians tend to view their society and even its problems spiritually. In other words, more than Western socioeconomic or political perspectives, the primal worldview has shaped and presided over the direction of African Christianity.

For instance, unlike some Western views that African Christians have been either unaware of or unconcerned with socioeconomic and political problems (cf. Gifford

\(^{37}\) It is not easy to describe the primal worldview of African traditional religion(s) in English because psychocultural schemata underlying English words are supposedly too different from those of African languages to make semantic equivalence possible.
African churches were actually engaged in the struggle with social problems in their own ways during the drastic decline of African economies in the 1980s and 1990s. Unfortunately, the economic collapse took place coincidentally when charismatic evangelical movements reached their peak. The churches looked indifferent or silent, and the appearance was often misinterpreted as escapism. But in fact, the churches were dealing with the social problems through messages and ecclesial activities. A number of local churches, small or mega, have actually been fighting social ills in one way or another by running varied projects throughout the difficult days of Africa.\(^{38}\)

It is true that there have always been preachers and church leaders who do not speak up with prophetic voices against social injustice. Some of them even support corrupt regimes and remain indifferent to dysfunctional societies.\(^{39}\) However, we should not misconstrue that such Christian

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\(^{38}\) See some examples in Kalu (2008:135–36). Even the local church where I have been serving as associate pastor, located at the entrance of the second largest informal settlement in Nairobi, has been running a social service called “welfare program,” which helps their members in the event of a funeral. Conventionally, with consideration of the cultural significance of death, the church leaders designed that particular program and prioritized it over other matters. For this purpose, the leaders always press hard on their small budgets, which are supplied solely from Sunday offerings.

\(^{39}\) As already mentioned, most of the political elites in independent Africa are perceived to have contributed to the deterioration of its economy and to its other negative social conditions.
leaders represent the Christian ethos of the majority of African churches. A much larger and more socially active population of Christians exists in rural Africa and in poor urban communities. African Christianity should not be judged unilaterally based solely on its dark sides or entirely from a sociological perspective (cf. Kalu 2008:99-100). There are so many other factors that have affected and governed the minds and hearts of African Christians.

It is extremely important to feature African churches and their characteristics from all-inclusive perspectives with a scrupulous care not to fall into any unilateral interpretation of the phenomenon of African Christianity since independence. And it should be borne in mind that the truthful picture of African Christianity can be brought to light only when the minds and hearts of the African protagonists who have played missional roles in the history of the African church are properly portrayed and given due recognition and respect. There has not been a single church that was born without history and context; therefore, only when we approach churches contextually with multidimensional and multidisciplinary angles can we begin to grasp the reality in which insiders live. Theological assessment should be carried out after this is adequately done. This is an immensely important missiological task, especially to those who intend to partner with African churches in their vigor to expand God’s kingdom in Africa.
African Christians have been able to endure and survive extremely harsh environments, which were caused mainly by their callous political leaders. Countless Africans have responded enthusiastically to the salvation offered in Jesus and have given their allegiance to the God of Jesus—not any other gods or spirits. African Christians have also been able to preserve the core truth, values, and vitalities of the gospel of Jesus during many challenging times. Thanks to the African primal worldview, a spiritual muscle of clinging to the gospel has always remained available and affordable to ordinary Africans (as opposed to elites) at all times. Endurance and perseverance among sincere Christians in the midst of unspeakably harsh conditions are what have made African churches, regardless of the different types as mentioned above, so distinct from churches in other parts of the world.\textsuperscript{40} Therefore, negative features should not be taken to represent overall African Christianity, nor should they be allowed to overwrite the pages of more positive stories.

\textbf{Conclusions: Missional Challenges}

Having mentioned some fundamental, positive

\textsuperscript{40} Hanciles comments, “On the whole, African Christianity has displayed a remarkable capacity to adapt and to readjust to shifting sociopolitical predicament, constantly reshaping its religious maps to achieve congruence between physical realities and spiritual need within situations of powerlessness” (2008:130).
characteristics of African Christianity, I also testify that many serious challenges remain that African Christians must face courageously and wrestle with tirelessly. As the continent is gigantic, so its challenges are innumerable! As a non-Western fellow Christian, I would like to point out some missiologically significant issues that both African churches and foreign missions working in Africa should consider. I believe that by getting involved in these issues, they may help take African churches beyond the horizon of a survival motif to a more proactive engagement with challenges that are critical to the enhancement of theological and ecclesiastical health in African Christianity.

As John Mbiti states, “Africans are notoriously religious . . . Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it” (1969:1). Africans come from religious societies, where “culture and religion are not easily separated” (Dickson 1984:47) and the cultural worldview is spiritual and even “charismatic” (Kalu 2008:178). Located in the midst of these societies, churches should be prepared to answer theological questions arising from “a highly spiritualized environment where recognizing the powers has not been banished in a Cartesian flight to objectivity and enlightenment” (Kalu 2008:178). They cannot avoid them.

41) For those who have a serious interest in African culture and seek to engage these questions, *African Cultural Knowledge* (edited by Michael Kirwen 2005) might be a good place to start learning about the African worldview.
For example, traditional concepts of God and supernatural beings and forces (including diverse ideas of witchcraft and witches) persistently pose questions and challenges to African Christians. To engage these concerns, churches and theological institutions must constantly review the content they teach and the educational curricula they use to be sure it responds to these questions and challenges precipitated by traditional religious beliefs and practices.

Even socioeconomic problems and political malaise are not unrelated to the spiritual realm in the African worldview; they are not just mechanical results of human behavior. The causes of social problems link closely with the supernatural world. How then could the gospel be presented as “good news” to those victimized by dysfunctional social systems and the dark sides of unchristian traditions? This is a hard question to answer, but African churches need to keep wrestling with questions like it. What are the best Christian answers? Good answers will at least be theologically persuasive and culturally African without derailing from the nonnegotiable truth of the gospel of Jesus. They will touch religio-cultural dimensions and social realities at the same time.\(^\text{42}\) I believe that struggling

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42) This question of the relationship between gospel and culture has also to do with the issue of Christian self-identity. Paul found his Christian identity primarily in and with Christ (cf. Romans 6:3–11; Galatians 2:20; 3:26, 28; Ephesians 1:12–13; 2:6–7, 10, 13; 3:6; 4:15; Philippians 1:1; 4:21; etc.), but he never gave up his earthly identifications. He always identified himself with his Hebrew origin, and he lived fully as a Roman citizen (Acts 21:39; 22:3, 25–28). As we observe
with these hard questions will help both African churches and para-churches (including mission organizations in Africa) accurately diagnose root causes of human problems and provide perpetual solutions.  

Related to this is another missional question: what ethical responsibilities do Christians have towards society? As already mentioned, independent Africa has suffered tremendously from many frustrations and disillusionments inflicted by its own homegrown elites. Political corruption and its negative corollaries have been a social malady obvious even to onlookers. How then should African Christians address ethical issues from an authentically African cultural perspective without constantly borrowing answers from external (mostly Western) sources? What would be the best way for African Christians to implement their Christian values? By using African traditional cultural elements, even in the public

43) This missiological question has been wrestled with by a number of African theologians and thinkers, such as Bediako (1999), Mugambi (2002), and Dickson (1984), to name but a few.

44) By scrupulously examining African traditions and Western Christian ethics in light of the authority of the Bible, Samuel Kunhiyop has attempted to provide African Christians with a balanced ethical view on an exhaustive list of contemporary African ethical issues (2008).
sector? Furthermore, what social actions should Christians be expected to take individually and collectively to continue making positive contributions towards reforming society based on the values of God’s kingdom? These questions are not for a temporary inquisition. Rather, they should be asked on an on-going basis as Christian communities in Africa participate in God’s holistic mission until He returns.

Last but not least, I would like to briefly mention one more task that African churches should include in their missional responsibilities. Today it seems inescapable for Christians to relate to Muslims, particularly in Africa. However, not many Christians seem effectively prepared to respond to challenges posed by Muslims and to build irenic relationships with Muslim neighbors. Elsewhere I have suggested how Christians, particularly in the African context, should understand the Muslim world and relate to Muslims with the gospel (Kim 2009). In my assessment from a Christian Islamicist perspective, in many ways African churches have great potential for an effective mission to the Muslim world in the African context and beyond. However, such potential will not be actualized until the churches, regardless of their different theological positions and ecclesiastical differences, deeply realize God’s undivided calling to this grand task and comply practically with it.
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