**IS PAGAN DEAD?**

**The Theological Legacy of Protestant Missionaries to Rwanda**

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Abstract: This article presents the variation of approaches taken by Protestant missionaries towards Rwandan religion and culture.

Firstly, an impression is given of the general concepts towards Africa and its culture in colonial circles at the beginning of the 20th century.

This is followed by the descriptions of two opposing poles: an attitude of openness and respect, represented by Lutheran German missionaries at the beginning of the 20th century compared to a more hostile attitude represented by the Anglican missionaries in the 1930s.

Following this some more mixed positions are described and discussed.

Finally, the question is raised as to how far the missionary legacy should be a starting point for a today’s theology.

**Introduction**

The legacy of the Protestant missionaries, who used to be active in Rwanda, still reverberates unobtrusively in the background of today’s churches. When attempting to develop a relevant theology for today’s society, one should be aware of this. Therefore, it is useful to consciously consider and discuss this missionary legacy. When considering this legacy, an important basic question is: how did these missionaries approach Rwandan culture and religion. The concepts of these missionaries should also be studied bearing in mind the general concepts of the Western colonialists, who in the 19th and 20th century, were imposing their authority upon the African peoples.

**General concepts of Africa in the Europe of the beginning of the 20th century**

The Congolese sociologist V.Y. Mudimwe has analyzed in his book *The invention of Africa* the action of Western colonization in the 19th century that created a language of "otherness" through which colonizers were speaking about *natives* whose mind should be reformed.[[1]](#footnote-1) This way of thinking and behaviour leaves no room for respect or esteem of African culture by westerners, and no open mind for the people of Africa. Illustrative for this is the contempt towards Africans of the German colonizers in East-Africa. The German *Reichskommissar* (Commander in chief in the German East Africa), a Prussian military commander and Africa explorer, Hermann von Wissmann, saw as the task of the Christian mission: "to educate the savages to a higher form of being, and then to impart them the understanding of religion".[[2]](#footnote-2)

We may assume that this was the general feeling in Europe towards Africa.

Against this background, the concepts of protestant missionaries in Rwanda on African religion and culture, should be studied.

**The theological concepts of the Missionary Ernst Johanssen**

The German Lutheran missionaries started their activities in Rwanda in 1907. They had to leave the country in 1916, when an army under the leadership of Belgian officers, chased away the German troops and put the German colonial administration to an end. By that time the number of Europeans in Rwanda must be estimated at not more than about one hundred, including all missionaries.[[3]](#footnote-3) In the short period of their presence in Rwanda, the German Protestant missionaries had developed a network of six missionary stations, where eight missionary pastors, and five missionary deacons were active, as well as several professionals for building, medical treatment, agriculture and some missionary merchants. The results, in terms of conversions, were rather modest, and show that the missionaries did not aim at mass conversions, preferring to baptize Christians who were seriously convinced. In 1914 the statistics show: 100 baptized Christians, 101 people following catechism, and 280 primary school pupils.

The first missionaries who arrived in Rwanda, had already several years’ working experience in the mission in present day Tanzania. Through this they developed a clear vision on the aim of the mission and missionary presence in Rwanda. The missionary Ernst Johanssen had developed the most outspoken theology of mission. This vision was not always shared by his colleagues. But as the Director of the missionary activities of the Mission of Bethel, he was the most influential.

Two basic ideas are the foundations of his missionary vision.

Johanssen was aware of the fact that the arrival of the Europeans in the Southern hemisphere marked a new area, that would be characterized by a deep cultural change for the Africans. The introduction of modern technique and massive agricultural production would imply a new division of labor, that in turn would result inevitably in individualization of society, a change in structures of power in society and finally in a change in family relationships, all deeply connected to religious concepts. The Christian faith should provide a new moral power to contest European culture that would be devastating for many social institutions of African culture.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Johanssen’s deepest missionary drive was his desire to learn what had been the answer of the Rwandan people to the calling of the universal God. The Biblical message should not simply substitute traditional religion. Johanssen was impressed by the German philosopher Johann Georg Hamann (1730-1788), for whom God is first and for all a God who is in communication with every human being. Already before entering into missionary service, Johanssen had clearly expressed this deepest motive for doing missionary work, the desire to experience the power of the Word of God in a world not already touched by Christianity.

For this reason Johanssen was deeply interested to learn the Rwandan language and culture, in order to discover the "footsteps of God" therein, and the way Rwandans had given their answer to this divine calling.[[5]](#footnote-5) Put succinctly, his concern was to discover in the African world "the splendor of eternity" (*Lichtglanz der Ewigkeit*).*[[6]](#footnote-6)*

Johanssen offers resistance against the idea of the mainstream colonialists that Africans had no idea of religion. He also distanced himself from the researchers of ethnology and cultural anthropology, of whom he, otherwise, valued the results of their research. The ethnologists used the term: primitive man and found these "primitive men" to be an interesting subject of research. Johanssen spoke instead of "the so-called primitive man" and felt that the missionary was in a position of equality and mutual identification (literally: "*Ich-Du-Verhältnis*") with them.[[7]](#footnote-7) The missionary sees the African as a "partner", and seeks to enter into "dialogue" with him, a dialogue that makes that the missionary participates wholeheartedly with the existence and the situation of the other. He "sees the African people with the view of a friend, of someone beloved".[[8]](#footnote-8)

Johanssen opposes himself to the evolutionary concept of religion of the specialists of the History of Religion of his time, according to which one would be able to trace a progressive development of ever higher forms of religion, starting with the ancestor cult, and arriving finally at a notion of God. He affirms that these theories lack all scientific foundation. He considers offerings to the ancestors as "slowly ripened fruits of intuition, which, like the ceremonies of the Old Testament, are not less than the shadows which refer to a reality". The sacrifice of animals reveal the idea of substitution, and thus the symbol of death and resurrection that is central in the religion of the heathen. The Gospel offers the key to understand the depth of these rituals. The faith of the African is a mixture of failure and truth which ends up in magic, but that is ready to be purified by the message of the Gospel.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Johanssen is glad to discover in the ethics of Africans each of the ten commandments of Moses.[[10]](#footnote-10) Also the commandment of Jesus to love one’s enemy is not incomprehensible to the Africans, as these consider that proper human behaviour is acting in goodness. The missionary finds thus things in common, in "the natural sentiments and human experiences of the Africans". [[11]](#footnote-11)

In an article in the *International Review of Missions* published in 1931, he analyzed a number of African myths, mainly from Rwanda, and concludes that these show "that the African, in his ideas and feelings is nearer to us than we might expect after the study of scientific works on the way ‘the primitive’ look at life, and on his intellectual capacities".[[12]](#footnote-12)

This missionary approach of Johanssen has resulted in the collection of a great number of myths and fairy tales, expressions and proverbs of Rwandan culture. In the Reader for schools at the mission stations, printed under the name *Ifiberi* in 1911, several of these tales and myths were reproduced.[[13]](#footnote-13)

A second result is the creation of a Church language close to the Rwandan imaginary world, with words taken from everyday life: *Imana*  for God, *Umwuka Wera,* for Holy Ghost*, Itorero* for Church.The intention to create church ceremonies inspired by Rwandan costumes, for instance rituals around marriage, was not realized, due to the fact the German Lutheran missionaries did not have the time to create vital Christian communities, by the time they were forced to leave the scene in 1916.[[14]](#footnote-14)

The idea that the myths and proverbs reveal the basic concepts of African religion, and should be read in the light of the Gospel, was for Johanssen a fruitful basis for the development of what we nowadays would call an African theology.[[15]](#footnote-15)

These concepts of Johanssen are in tune with the way non-Christian religions were discussed during the first international Missionary Conference of Edinburgh in 1910. The majority of the participants to the debates stated that the preacher of the Gospel has to keep in mind that he has to do with fellow men who are looking for light in their darkness. Seeing the stars they are waiting for the rising of the sun. The preacher of the Christian Gospel should recognize the good elements that are to be found in other religions and should develop the beginnings of spiritual life. The missionary should be careful not to destroy and violently reject the non-Christian legacy. In the non-Christian religion traces of the original revelation may have been conserved in the course of oral traditions.[[16]](#footnote-16) It was the general opinion that not every part of other religions should be rejected. The position of a majority could be expressed in the wordings of A. Foster, missionary in China: "The Christian position which recognizes the work of the Logos in every land enlightening men has always been held to justify the Christian teacher in looking for traces of the knowledge of God among all races, and in gladly welcoming all such indications as he could find that the soul of man is naturally Christian".[[17]](#footnote-17)

**The concepts of the Anglican missionaries**

I wil start with a quotation of H.H. Osborn:

"*In their superstitious culture, the Africans lived in a different world culturally and spiritually. For many, the mind was held in bondage of fear to ancestral spirits and often made incapable of logical reasoning relating to the simplest and most common aspect of life: such as hygiene, agriculture, animal husbandry and human relationships*"*.[[18]](#footnote-18)*

Osborn gives this description when explaining the basic ideas of the foundation in 1924 of the Evangelists Training School that was started in Kabale (Uganda), where students from as far as Rwanda and Burundi were trained for leading posts in the Anglican church that was founded by the CMS Rwanda Mission. Teachers were the two first Anglican missionaries to Rwanda: Algie Smith and Leonard Sharp.

The aim of the two year training was to eradicate "pagan" culture, to liberate the Africans of this slavery and prepare them for a spiritual, intellectual and practical life. Right from the start in 1924 a number of 60 students were enrolled. In 1925 the number of students had risen to 100.

*Anglican missions influence through schooling*

Schooling has been always one of the interests of the Anglican missionaries. Alongside the establishment of institutions of medical care. After the Second World War, that the colonial regime in Rwanda increased the possibilities for Protestant mission agencies to develop primary and secondary education.[[19]](#footnote-19) The teachers training institute at Shyogwe, of the Protestant Alliance, but run by Anglicans, became an important centre of Protestantism, with a great radiance in all of the protestant churches in Rwanda.

In important number of the primary school teachers that were trained in Shyongwe, were later called to the ministry in protestant churches. The teachers training centre also formed a network for the diffusion of ideas of a new revival of mainly laymen, who were engaged in organizations of the Bible Readers League (*Ligue de la Lecture de la Bible*), University Bible Group (*Groupe biblique universitaire*) and still later, from the African Evangelistic Enterprise (AEE).

*Theological background of the first Anglican missionaries*.

The first English missionaries in Rwanda were Anglicans who belonged to a group that put itself to a critical stand point towards the mainline CMS missionary movement. They explicitly considered themselves to belong to the Keswick Convention movement. The Ruanda General and Medical Mission (RGMM), founded as an independent missionary organization in the shadow of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), has stipulated as one of the marking points of the organization, under the heading Where We Stand, "*The Ruanda Council and missionaries… are satisfied that they received from the CMS full guarantees to safeguard the future of the RGMM on Bible, Protestant and Keswick lines*"*.* This Keswick movement was characterized by yearly weeklong meetings, which had started in 1885, in the village Keswick in the Lake District (UK). These meetings were attended by Christians of different denominations from all over the country. Preaching and giving testimonies were at the centre of these *Conventions*, as these were called. The theology at the basis of these Keswick Conventions emphasized the moment of personal conversion and the possibility to arrive at a live of spiritual holiness and sanctification, after a radical break with the sinful past of the Christian individual.

Behind the thinking of the Keswick movement are some concepts inspired by the Wesleyan vision on sanctification. As Andrew David Naselli describes it, a basic assumption is that "the majority of Christians are living in defeat and that the secret to living the victorious Christian life is consecration followed by Spirit-filling".[[20]](#footnote-20) Real sanctification is a consequence of a spiritual crisis of earlier converts that results in a life of total devotion, often called victorious Christian living, and a power for service and dedication. All forms of life and behaviour that are not under the influence of the Holy Spirit who works in the individual believer should be rejected or at least subject to suspicion.

These concepts have colored the approach of the first Anglican missionaries to Rwanda: the emphasis on personal conversion gave no room for a theological reflection on social ethics, or the role of the Christian church in society. The missionary teaching was focused on the contest of idolatry, witchcraft, drunkenness, and polygamy.

In 1928 the emphasis on the Keswick tradition is still intensified by the arrival of a third medical doctor, Dr. Joe Church.

Following the example of the English Keswick movement, the missionaries organized mass meetings, often several days long, where sometimes thousands of people attended. They listened to sermons, listened to and gave testimonies of confessions of sins, prayed and shared prayer.[[21]](#footnote-21) These meetings were the starting point of what is called the East-African Revival that has influenced many churches in East-Africa.

Whereas there is a direct connection between the Keswick movement and theology and these Conventions in Africa, these meetings also had an undeniably African character, which may explain their popularity. During these mass meetings new phenomena were seen, such as: dreams, visions, "trembling", the violent shaking of the whole body . Joe Church writes: "We have seen this often since, but it was unknown to us previously".[[22]](#footnote-22)

*The Revival, a closer look*

Max Warren mentions, in his book published in 1954, a weakness of this Revival: the appeal to individualism, the narrow definitions of sin (79!), danger of exclusiveness as the offspring of two impulses: the desire of uniformity of expression, and the heresy of perfection. The Revival, says Warren, has hitherto been inadequate to be relevant to the vast social, economic and political revolution taking place in Africa (96), and is deficient in discovering the immense prophetic relevance of the Bible (97). He sees the relevance of the Revival in being a lay movement; as such it emphasizes the priesthood of all Church members; it gives possibilities for teamwork where clergy and layman are working together; it works out reconciliation. Thus it creates a middle term between the individual and the ecclesiastical organization; it stresses the uniting force of the Spirit, overcoming race and ethnic boundaries, and differences between different Christians traditions (108).[[23]](#footnote-23)

Roger W. Bowen gives a similar judgment: "Because of the individualistic background of the missionary founders, [….] the Church has operated with a very privatized and inadequate view of sin. The challenge to repentance has usually focused on a fairly limited range of private morality: lying, stealing, adultery, drunkenness. However, there is little awareness of the solidarities of sin in which we are embedded as members of society. Max Warren comments that ‘sin tends to be simplified to the sin of the individual… the corporate nature of man is lost to view and the full magnitude of evil most seriously underestimated".[[24]](#footnote-24)

Thaddée Ntihinyuzwa adds to these comments that on account of this form of spirituality, the Rwandan adepts of the revival toke a principal a-political position.[[25]](#footnote-25)

These judgments may be counterbalanced by the comment of the Kenyan theologian and Church leader John Gatu, who is known for his critical position in politics. Defining the power of the East African Revival movement, he mentions in the first place the power that "in Jesus Christ, all barriers, be they race, tribe, social status, gender, denominational prejudices, among many others, have been crucified with Jesus at Calvary".[[26]](#footnote-26)

*The influence of the translation of Umugenzi.*

The translation of the book: *A Pilgrim’s Progress*, was in keeping with the spirit of Keswick.

In 1931 Harold Guillebaud had finished translating the New Testament in Kinyarwanda, an undertaking that was done as an ecumenical collaboration of the Anglican mission, the Belgian Protestant Mission (SBMPC) and the Mission of the Seventh Day Adventists. Almost immediately he started the translation of John Bunyan’s *A Pilgrim’s Progress*, that was edited in 1933, with as title: *Umugenzi*.[[27]](#footnote-27) He considered this book as "the Gospel acted out".[[28]](#footnote-28)

The book was written by John Bunyan, between 1660-1672, when he was detained for having organized illegal meetings where he had been preaching as a layman. In today’s terms we would call his crime "civil disobedience" in protest against imposed Church authority, backed by the government.

In his cell, separated from his wife and family, he wrote the story of the figure called Christian, a broadly elaborated allegory of life as a Christian. Christian, fleeing the City of Destruction, experienced a wonderful release from his sinful nature when looking up to the dying Jesus at the cross. From then on he started an adventurous journey to eternity. He had to overcome various temptations and doubts, and experienced moments of comfort, joy and certainty of grace, and arrived at an ever deeper understanding and experience of the guidance of God. He discovered that hope is a power to overcome depression and despair. In all his spiritual struggle he found relief in the company of the comrades Faithful and Hopeful, who successively accompanied him on his somewhat lonely journey, that finally ended when having passed the frightening river of death.

This booklet has served the 19th century missionary movement all over the world as a catechism in the form of a sublime form of literature, in which people of all ages may identify themselves. Youngsters may read it as a fascinating adventure story. Older people understand it as a sublime allegory, which illuminates their inner life as a Christian.

The book also became popular in Rwanda, and remains so to this day.[[29]](#footnote-29) My former colleague, a Rwandan pastor, once told me that the pupils at the teacher training college at Shyogwe, in the center of Rwanda, where the book formed part of the study programme, recognized themselves in the characters described in the book of Bunyan in Kinyarwanda and nicknames drawn from the book were given like Simple, Presumption, Watchful, Pliable, Talkative.

The translation of the book of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* has far-reaching consequences. After the translation of *A Pilgrim’s Progress* it took twenty-four years before a complete Bible translation into Kinyarwanda was published. The reading of this book was thus judged to be more important than reading the Old Testament, which contains the stories and the prophets with their emphasis on social justice, and the possibility to criticize the kings who are not acting to their messianic mission.

The book of Bunyan, may be considered in a two ways.

Bunyan, the author, was not a revolutionary, but his total obedience to Christ gave him a freedom and independence from other authorities, like those of the State or of an influential clergy. The story of the book tells about Christian who is finding his way of faith, which even let him make the choice for Christ above all, even when this includes leaving his wife and children. The English scholar Isabel Hofmeyr has masterly shown that the founders of the African National Congress (ANC) in the beginning of the 20th century were greatly inspired by the book of Bunyan, a book that had an important place in the education programme of Institutes of education in Southern Africa like Lovedale.[[30]](#footnote-30)

However, removed from the context of the 17th century politics, Bunyan’s book is a source of inward looking pietism, that sees human society primarily as a dangerous place, and Christians as people who always have to steer clear of bad company. The task of a Christian is not to build up a society of justice, but to flee the world, as nothing is more important than being on the way to eternity. The world is nothing more than the *City of Destruction.*

Following this line of thought, more positive aspects of the world, the world as Creation of God, as *theatrum gloriae Dei*, do not play a role. God’s grace is reduced to His offer of personal salvation, and Christian ethics are limited to personal ethics, not open towards social ethics. When God as the Creator of the world is not taken into account, the eschatological perspective of the Christian faith is restricted to personal salvation.

It is this last sense that was paramount in the bringing this book forward as a basic for the understanding of Christianity. Switching from this book to reading the Bible, Bunyan’s book served as a clue, the hermeneutical key, to understand the Bible, New and Old Testament.

I want to refer to one particular moment in the book. Christian on his journey, just having passed the Valley of the shadow of death, has to pass by two caves, where two giants live, who have been powerful in the past. They are called: Pope and Pagan. Arriving close by Christian discovers however, that Pope is almost dead, passing his time by corroding his nails, and Pagan is completely dead.

Bunyan did not write his book in order to serve missionaries in Africa. But once it arrived in Africa, the book confirms what many missionaries already had in mind: Pagan is dead. Everything that is pagan, is not interesting, does not have to be dealt with, and may be overlooked. This means in practice: all manifestations of Rwandan culture are pagan, and should be neglected. In the 20th century mission this implied: African culture is out of date, and should be replaced by western forms of culture.

Thus the book may be seen as an obstacle to the development of an African theology, in the sense that scholars like the Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako had in mind.

*Keswick Conventions and The Pilgrim’s Progress*.

The form of Christianity expressed in the idea of the Keswick Convention is not the same as that of the Pilgrim’s progress.

One of the differences is found in the expression of Christian life and behaviour. The spirituality of the Keswick Convention aims at the outbreak of a conversion as a momentary experience of a vehement presence of the Spirit, a sudden break-in of that Spirit, expressing itself through the confession of sins, dreams, visions and weeping.

These experiences are not the experiences of Christian in a *Pilgrim’s Progress*. The difference may be given in words *sudden in-break*, a sudden event, over against: *progress.* In line with the Keswick spirituality a Christian should prove his conversion by his experiences of being taken by the Spirit in an extra-ordinary behaviour. According to the Pilgrim’s Progress, Christian life is a life long struggle, with its ups and downs, a process of ripening.

Within the spirituality proposed by the Anglican missionaries these both concepts or forms of Christianity have been present.

What these had in common, was the strict decline of the original African religion and culture, and thus the promotion of European culture. Rejection of Paganism is the common ground.

**Other approaches**

Thus far we have seen two positions that are in are opposed to each other: Johanssen’s openness to Rwandan culture, and the Anglican rejection of it.

In the history of protestant missions in Rwanda, there is more than these two extremes. Therefore the approach of the missionary Edgard Durand has to be mentioned and also the reality of the Revival conventions has to be elaborated more extensively.

*Edgard Durand’s approach : community building and leadership training*

The Missionary pastor Edgar Durand, of Swiss nationality, lived in Rubengera from 1924 to 1963, in the service of the Belgian protestant Mission. As president of the Belgian Protestant missionaries he has left his mark on the three parishes that formed a General Synod in 1960 of the church which became ultimately the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda.

As an active missionary, Durand, has left no scholarly writings based on research of traditional religion and he has not thematised his position towards African culture and religion. Nevertheless, his reports sent to the Belgian missionary leaders in Brussels, and his Bachelor’s thesis at the University of Geneva, presented in 1930, and an extensive interview I had with him in 1978, give us a reliable idea of his general attitude towards Rwandan culture.

The choice of the subject of his Bachelor’s thesis is already revealing. In view of his missionary work in Rwanda, before starting his activities in Rwanda, he went to the United States to familiarise himself with the practice of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC), the first independent African church established in 1816 by black Methodists in reaction to the unbearable white domination. Durand shows a deep admiration for the personality of the first bishop of this Church, Richard Allen, who had given this black church a solid organizational structure, and had developed missionary work in South Africa, where the black American bishop Henry Mc Nell Turner supported the Ethiopian Church of Mokone.[[31]](#footnote-31)

Reflecting on the impact of the Christian faith on this bishop, Durand writes a revealing phrase: "The conversion has not only a spiritual effect on him, it liberates also his intellectual life".[[32]](#footnote-32)

Explaining the need to bring the Gospel to Africa, Durand hints at a negative view on the traditional religiosity of the Africans. He speaks of a double role of western missionaries. Western civilization is a necessary factor to free from illogical elements in the African way of reasoning. But if this civilization is not accompanied by Christianity, the African will flee to a spiritual form of neo-paganism. This will be less rude ("*moins grossier*") than the manifestation of ancestral paganism, but will not be far from a new deterioration of the African people. "Non-intervention of white Christians into the religious life of the Africans, or an intervention that is too weak, would not be less than a crime against humanity".[[33]](#footnote-33)

Thus the position of Durand may be summarized as follows: Durand describes Africans as religious, but in doing so he does not speak appreciatively of their religion. Conversion to the Christian faith initiates the awakening of the capacities of self-reflection and the intellect in general. Through the development of his intellectual capacities, the new convert sees that traditional religion is not rational. This includes that mission work is not completed by the preaching of the Gospel, but should include also the uplifting of the converts to a higher cultural level.

Nowhere in the writings of Durand do we find an interest in traditional religion in order to find a point of contact, or some common concept, to which the Gospel may be related. Christianity has nothing to do with traditional religion. Traditional religion should be superseded by education and intellect.

In this line Durand affirms in a final thesis as his conviction that a sound missionary enterprise must elaborate a well organized schooling system. Therefore, every church that results from missionary work should without delay consider the creation of a university. [[34]](#footnote-34)

Considering Durand’s way of thought that may be deduced from his thesis, written in 1930, one may conclude that this position leads to some form of indifference towards traditional religion. In Durand’s view there is no reason for the missionary to enter into open combat with traditional religion. Not the Gospel, but the intellect should vindicate traditional religion.

In practice this means that the cultural manifestations, closely related to traditional religion, such like the rites of passage around birth, marriage and death, are irrelevant for the Christian faith, and should be neglected, abandoned or resisted by the Church born from mission. The result of this is that the missionaries of the Belgian protestant mission have introduced the rites of passage exercised in the Western culture they were acquainted with.

However, Durand was not ignorant of the religious expressions in Rwanda, such as the initiation rituals of the Ryangombe cult (*kubandwa*). Personally, Durand showed a pastoral attitude toward the religious catechumens and converts. In his quarterly report in 1932 he writes:

"The munyarwanda is religious by nature, which means that our teaching should destroy as little as possible, but should envisage transformation. Showing the futility and vanity of certain pagan manifestations that stem from their religious sensibility, one should stay away from destroying the sentiment that provokes them. On the contrary, our task is to fortify this sentiment, showing in which way Christian piety may unfold and make it budding. A delicate task, but certainly fascinating. The Christian instruction towards pagans understood in this way offers the missionary wonderful spiritual hours. The preparation of the lessons are a feast of intelligence and of the soul, and the presentation before the audience a joy of his conscience and his heart".[[35]](#footnote-35)

Durand was not used requesting Christians to do public confessions like was done during the Conventions of the Revival movement. But he required candidates for baptism to confess in a personal encounter if they had been involved in religious practices, such as the initiation into the cult of Ryangombe. In this case he required a confession and revelation of the highly secret name given during the initiation. In case someone did not dare to pronounce this name, he used to say: "whisper the name in my ear".[[36]](#footnote-36)

This pastoral attitude and spirituality was in contrast with the manifestations and public confessions that belonged to the Conventions of the Revival Movement. Durand belonged to the Calvinistic reformed tradition, that stressed intellectual development and deep personal conviction, which finds its expression more in solid organizations and personal piety, than in public manifestations and confessions.

The personal piety should be developed in a steady lifelong process, more than in a sudden momentary conversion. Also this is in contrast to the piety of the Keswick Convention. A keyword for Durand was the word "sanctification", a word he to his regret could not easily translate into Kinyarwanda.[[37]](#footnote-37)

This personal piety should find its expression also in taking responsibility for the development of a parish, run by its proper members, independent of the influence of the missionary. Durand saw it is his missionary task to create self-governing Christian parishes, and to educate elders capable of bearing the responsibility for these.

*The East African Revival – viewed from an new angle*

The East African revival should be once more considered, now with a closer look to certain aspects that are related to elements of African traditional religion and culture. Certain elements and manifestations, that are proper to the East African Revival, were not introduced by the missionaries, such as trembling, shaking, as mentioned by Joe Church.

Also Max Warren quotes a missionary, whose name he does not mention, who refers to "the dreaming of dreams, hearing of voices, prolonged times of hymn singing going on until to the morning, mass weeping during the services". …"We began to see for the first time these strange manifestations".[[38]](#footnote-38)

This kind of new phenomena show up similarity to manifestations we encounter in the so-called independent churches, and in the actual neo-Pentecostal churches. In fact, the East-African Revival has resulted in several secessions from the mainline church, for instance in present day Kenya, where some of them have been subject of research.[[39]](#footnote-39)

The enormous popularity and expansion of the East-African Revival is often explained by the fact that the preaching of the English and Ugandan missionaries of the Ruanda Mission did not fall into a vacuum, but touched certain elements of traditional African religiosity. As such it was considered as "an African answer to the Gospel", that was not satisfied with the more static, prescribed, cultic expressions of Protestant missions. Several anthropologists see similarities between cultic expressions of the revival and African religious traditions.[[40]](#footnote-40)

With these indications, I transgress the boundaries of my subject: the legacy of the protestants missionaries, and come into the domain of the African acceptance of Christianity, and the proper theology that is needed in the African situation.

Could it be true that the courageous vision and dreams of Johanssen, with its full hearted acceptance of African religion, have come true through the East African Revival in its various forms?

***Conclusion***

There has been no uniformity of the different missionaries’ attitude towards Rwandan Culture and religion. The most elaborate reflection on the relationship between African traditional beliefs and practices and Christianity is that of Ernst Johanssen. As Johanssen had to leave the country untimely, his ideas were not applied to the missionary work in Rwanda.

Other missionaries have not made use of his rich recourses.

In an unexpected way the East-African Revival has created proper forms for the Gospel that was brought by European missionaries in its typical continental and English packaging.

1. Mudimwe, Valentin-Yves: The invention of Africa. Gnosis, philosophy and the order of knowledge, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1988, 256 pages, here: 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. "dass die Wilden zu einem höheren Wesen erzieht und ihm dann das Verständnis für Religion beizubringen sucht", H. von Wissmann in the journal *Das Volk,* of 6 July 1890, quoted by Menzel, Gustav: Die Bethel Mission, Aus 100 Jahren Missionsgeschichte, Neukirchen 1986, 658 pages, here: 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Honke, Gudrun: Für König und Kaiser. Die Etablierung der Deutschen Kolonialherrschaft, in : Honke Gudrun: Als die Weissen kamen*.* Ruanda und die Deutschen 1885-1919, Wuppertal 1990, 112-127. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See also : Van ’t Spijker, Gerard : La mission comme préparation au changement de société. La mission protestante allemande au Rwanda de 1907 à 1916, in : Jean Pirotte (Dir.): Les conditions matérielles de la mission. Contraintes, dépassements et imaginaires XVII-XXe siècles. Actes du colloque conjoint du CREDIC, de l’AFOM et du Centre Vincent Lebbe, Belley (Ain) du 31 août au 3 septembre 2004, Paris  2005, 223-244. This article is also published in : Perspectives missionnaires, Number 49 (2005), 31-27. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Johanssen, Ernst: Afrikanisches Geistesleben im Lichte des Evangeliums, München 1931, 263 pages, here: 7. With reference to Paul‘s Epistle to the Romans 1,18s, and 2,14,15: "Also muss es doch Fußspuren Gottes nicht nur in der Natur, sondern auch in der Geschichte der Menschheit geben, denn wenn sie sich nicht nachweisen ließen, könnte von der Menschheit nicht erwartet, geschweige denn gefordert werden, dass sie Gott finden möchten". See also: Van ’t Spijker, Gerard , Les usages funéraires et la mission de l’Eglise.Une étude anthropologique et théologique des rites funéraires au Rwanda,Kampen 1990, 262 pages, here : 132-140. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Johanssen, Ernst: Geistesleben afrikanischer Völker im Lichte des Evangeliums*, 7.* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Johanssen, Ernst: Geistesleben afrikanischer Völker im Lichte des Evangeliums, 2*s* (in translation*).* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. “ *…Dagegen dem Missionar tritt der Eingeborenen als Partner gegenüber und die Folge ist eine Herzens-Anteilnahme an dem Angehen und der Lage des Anderen‘.* Johanssen, Ernst, Geistesleben afrikanischer Völker im Lichte des Evangeliums*,* 2-3*.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Johanssen, Ernst, Geistesleben afrikanischer Völker im Lichte des Evangeliums*, 262.* [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Johanssen, Ernst, Geistesleben afrikanischer Völker im Lichte des Evangeliums*, 114-123.* [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Johanssen, Ernst, Geistesleben afrikanischer Völker im Lichte des Evangeliums*,125*: "So kann an das natürliche Empfinden beim Afrikaner angeknüpft werden“. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Johanssen, Ernst, The Idea of God in the Myths and Proverbs of some East African Bantu Tribes, in: International Review of Missions, 20 (1931), 345-355, 534-546, here: 345. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Ifiberi rya Urunyarwanda I, Bethel 1911. A second Reader was published in 1914: Ifiberi rya Urunyarwanda II Ruanda-Fibel. II.Teil (Lesebuch), Bethel 1914. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. As for Johanssen, he was among the first missionaries who were allowed to return to present day Tanzania after the First World War. He returned to Germany in 1929, where from 1931 he was teacher of Missiology and African religions at the University of Marburg. The University of Münster granted him an honorary Doctorate in 1925. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The author has tried to develop African ideas on evil and sin. Van ’t Spijker, Gerard: "Quand  le mythe ‘donne à penser". Les mythes africains sur le mal’, Carrefour, Journal de théologie de la Faculté de Théologie protestante de Butare, Rwanda, Number 8 (2009), 9-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Argumentation used by F.Hahn of the Gossner Mission in a letter to the Commission IV of the conference. See:. Van Lin, J.J.E:Protestantse Theologie der Godsdiensten. Van Edinburgh naar Tambaran (1910-1938), Assen 1974, 8, reference 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Letter of A. Foster to the Conference Commission IV. See: Van Lin, J.J.E: Protestantse Theologie der Godsdiensten, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Osborn, H.J.: Fire in the Hills, Crowborough, East Sussex 1991, 67. Quoted by Ntihinyuzwa, Thaddée : Le réveil évangélique est-africain et ses origines anglo-saxonnes: les paradoxes du religieux et du politique*.* Thèse de doctorat nouveau régime, Université Marc Bloch- Strassbourg II 2002 (not edited), 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ntihinyuzwa, Thaddée: Le réveil évangélique est-africain et ses origines anglo-saxonnes, 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Andrew David Naselli, Keswick Theology: a survey and Analysis of the doctrine of sanctification in the early Keswick Movement, in: Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal Number 13 (2008): 17–67, here 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. An influential meeting has been the convention of Kabale in 1945, attended by 15.000 people from Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya and Tanzania. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See also the quotation mentioned by Max Warren of a missionary who refers to ‘’strange manifestation, we began to see for the first time: the dreaming of dreams, hearing of voices, prolonged times of hymn singing going until the morning, mass weeping during the service’’. Warren, Max: Revival. An Enquiry, London, 22 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Warren, Max: Revival. An Enquiry,London 1954, 123 pages. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Bowen, Roger W.: Genocide in Rwanda 1994 – An Anglican Perspective, in: Rittner, Carol/Roth John K./ Whitworth Wendy:Genocide in Rwanda. Complicity of the Churches?*,* St. Paul, Minnesota 2004, 37-48, here 42-43. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Ntihinyuzwa Thaddée: *o.c*. 131ss. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Gatu, John G: Jesus Christ the "Truthful Mirror": My Finding Jesus Christ in the Ministry of the East African Revival Movement, in: Ward Kevin/Wild-Wood Emma (Eds.): The East African Revival. History and Legacies, Kampala 2010, 47-59, here: 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Bunyan, John : Umugenzi. Le voyage du chrétien en Runyarwanda, London 19331; ;19592. A third edition, edited in 1979 by the Free Methodist Church in Rwanda, was printed in Bukavu (Congo): Imprimerie Echo du Kivu, 170 pages. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Guillebaud, Meg: Rwanda. The Land God Forgot?, London 2002,.368 pages, here: 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. The complete title of the book is: Bunyan, John: The Pilgrim’s Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come. Ed. James Blanton Wharey and Roger Sharrock. Oxford 1960,; reedited with corrections, 1967, 365 pages. Another critical edition is: Bunyan John: The Pilgrim’s Progress, edited by Cynthia Wall. An authoritative text; contexts, criticism,New York 2009., 458 pages. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Hofmeyr Isabel: The Portable Bunyan. A Transnational History of The Pilgrim's Progress,Princeton/Oxford 2004, 320 pages. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Durand, Edgard : Une Eglise nègre autonome. Les hommes et les institutions de l’Eglise méthodiste épiscopale africaine (A.M.E Church). Thèse présentée à la Faculté autonome de théologie de l’Université de Genève pour obtenir le grade de bachelier en théologie. Genève 1930, Dactylographed, 161 pages. Archives of the Faculty of Theology, Geneva, Thesis number 285 (Bf 1130/285). Richard Allan had wanted "doter ses frères de race d’une institution, où ils n’aient pas à souffrir du despotisme religieux qu’ils avaient expérimenté des Blancs". Durand, Edgard: Une Eglise nègre autonome, 132. Mangena Mokone called his church "Ethiopian" referring to Psalm 69,32: "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God", which he read as a promise of the evangelization of Africa. See Sundkler, Bengt: Bantu Prophets in South Africa, London 19612, 381 pages, here: 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Durand, Edgard : Une Eglise nègre autonome, 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Durand, Edgard : Une Eglise nègre autonome, 142. "La non-intervention ou l’intervention trop faible des chrétiens blancs dans le domaine de la vie religieuse des Africains ne serait rien moins qu’un crime de lèse-humanité". [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Durand, Edgard : Une Eglise nègre autonome, 145: Epithese III "Il est nécessaire à toute œuvre missionnaire qui veut se développer normalement de posséder un système scolaire fortement organisé. Par conséquent, l’Eglise en terre missionnaire, en vue de son avenir doit sans tarder considérer la fondation d’une université". [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Rapport de Novembre 1931-Avril 1932, envoyé au Secrétaire général de la SBMP, le pasteur H. Anet. (9 pages), daté le 1er Mai 1932, in: Archives of the Commission missionnaire de l’Eglise protestante unie de Belgique, Brussels, Belgium. The quotation is from page 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Interview of the author with Edgard Durand in Geneva, August 1978. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Interview of the author with Edgard Durand in Geneva, August 1978. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Warren Max: Revival. An enquiry, London 1954, 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. See Welbourn, F.B.: East African Rebels. A study of Some Independent Churches, London, 1961, 258 pages. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Derick J. Stenning has indicated the “public confessions of sin”, condition for being accepted as member of the community of *abalokole*’, that he observed in Ankole, region in the South of Uganda, has similarities with initiation rituals of the *Hima* peopleof that region*. Stenning, Derick:* Salvation in Ankole*,* in: Fortes M. and Dieterlen G. (Eds),African Systems of Thought, London 1961, 258-275.

Adrian Hastings mentions the African inspiration of the Revival in the organization structure of the movement*.* Hastings*,* Adrian:Mission and Ministry, London 1971*,* 241 pages, here: 169.

J.V. Taylor mentions the cluster-pattern, the organization around a charismatic leader of head of a family, that plays a role in the Revival movement. Taylor, J.V.*,* The Growth of the Church in Buganda, London 1958, 288 pages, here: 44-55. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)