

THE IMPACT OF SCRIPTURE TRANSLATIONS ON MISSIONARY CHURCHES.
A CASE STUDY OF THE CHURCH OF THE PROVINCE OF KENYA, MURANG'A
DISTRICT, 1903 - 1988.

BY

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts in Partial
fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of Master of
Arts (M.A.)

Department of Religious Studies

University of Nairobi

1989

DECLARATION

This Thesis is my original work, and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.



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This Thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as University supervisors.



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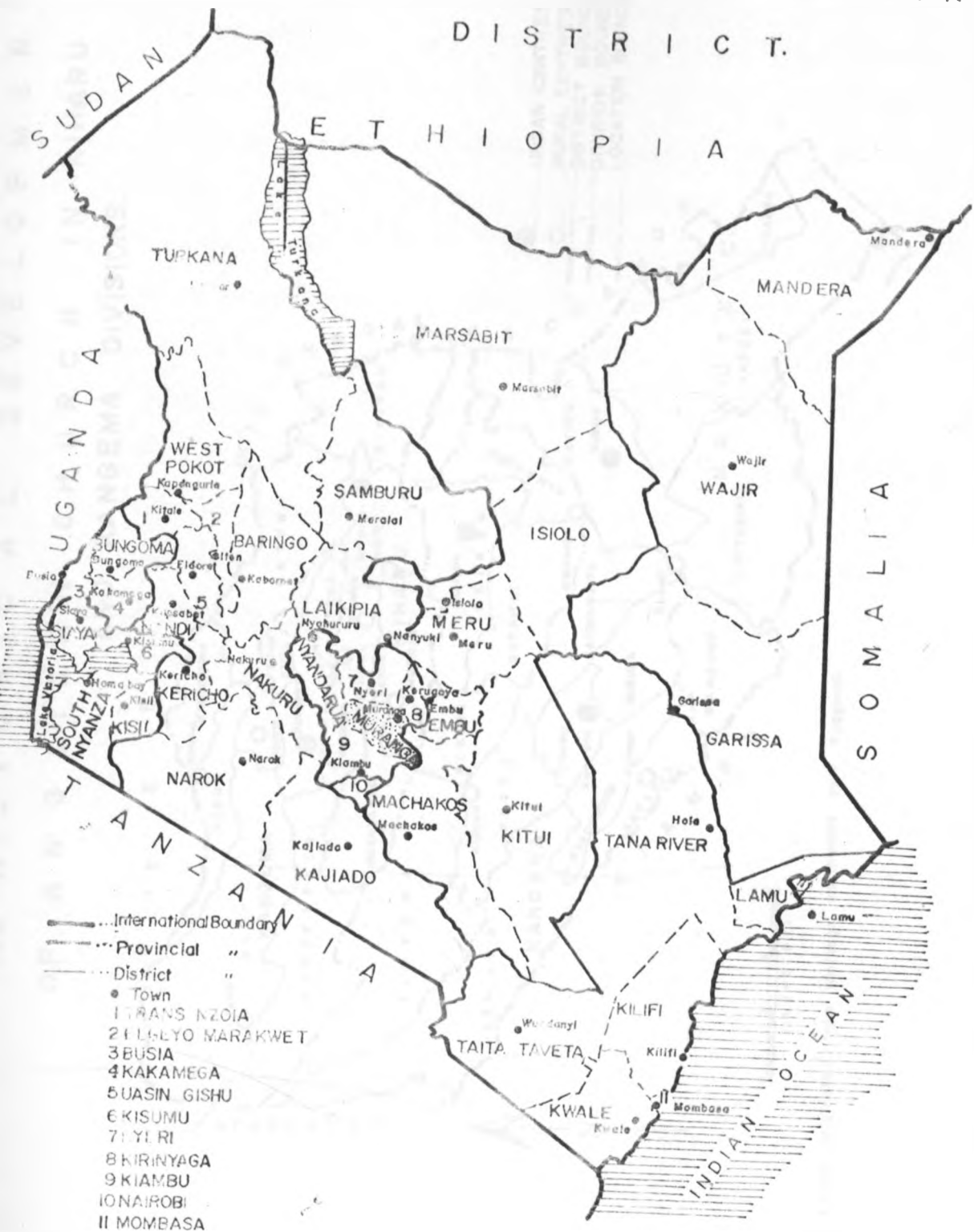
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KENYA: LOCATION OF MURANG'A DISTRICT.



MURANG'A DISTRICT: THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT
 OF ANGLICAN CHURCH IN KIHARU
 AND KANGEMA DIVISIONS.



ABSTRACT

In spite of the various Bible translations that have been made into African languages, there has been no systematized study that has been conducted to evaluate the impact of these translations on the state of the church. The impact of the translated scriptures has tended to be taken for granted by those on the translation desk - that the translations will lead to church growth. However, although the church has grown numerically, the qualitative element in this growth may be lacking. Even with the scriptures in their local languages, some Christians appear to display theological ignorance in regard to most biblical accounts at the level of interpretation. In some cases, this ignorance has led to serious problems such as schisms.

This study is a critical survey on the impact of the scripture translations on missionary churches, with particular reference to the church of the Province of Kenya, Murang'a District. The study is a result of both library and field research.

Chapter one is an introduction to the study. Chapter two provides a brief historical background on some aspects of Kikuyu traditional religion by the time Christianity arrived in Kikuyuland. Note is taken here of the initial but inevitable collision between western Christian religion and culture on the one hand, and Kikuyu traditional religion on the other.

Chapter four and five have focussed on the impact that the translated scriptures have had on the church. Relationship between church growth and scripture translations into African languages is discussed. The role of scripture translations in the rise of African indigenous churches has also been assessed. The theological limitations and challenges that confront Christian users of the scriptures have also been discussed. It is emphasized that the theological implication of the biblical message remain hidden to most African Christians inspite of the scriptures having been made available to them in a language that they can understand.

The concluding chapter contains a summary of the research findings, conclusions from the research findings, recommendations for improving theological education to the Christians and, suggestions for further research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge with deep gratitude and appreciation the contributions of all those who enabled me to carry out this research leading to this thesis. It is difficult to list them all in this tribute.

First of all, I express my gratitude to University of Nairobi for the financial grants it made available to me, without which this study would not have started and progressed.

Secondly, I would like to thank my two supervisors, Dr. Bette Ekeya and Dr. E. M. Kasiera, for their guidance and encouragement throughout the whole exercise. Their constructive criticism and insights enabled me to improve my drafts eventually leading to the completion of this study.

I also express my appreciation to Mrs. E.W.N. Mwangi who devoted a lot of her time and energy to type my work. There are many others whose names I need not mention here, but to all of them, I extend a word of appreciation.

ABBREVIATIONS

A.C.	Anglican Church
A.I.M.	Africa Inland Mission
B.F.B.S.	British and Foreign Bible Society
B.S.	Bible Society
C.M.S.	Church Missionary Society
C.P.K.	Church of the Province of Kenya
C.S.M.	Church of Scotland Mission
N.B.S.S.	National Bible Society of Scotland
R.S.V.	Revised Standard Version
U.B.S.	United Bible Society
U.G.L.C.	United Gikuyu Language Committee

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Christianity in Kenya has been growing and expanding at a meteoric¹ rate and it is still expanding faster than in almost all other countries of the world. About five hundred people are being converted to the Christian faith every year and there are over five million committed Christians in Kenya.² It remains a problem for this inquiry to find out the relationship between this growth rate and the scriptures being made available in a language that people can understand.

Some studies have been done on scripture translations in Kenya. However, none has been conducted to assess and evaluate the impact of such translations. Moreover, the work of Bible translations has appeared to be taxing on those who have been involved in terms of personnel, finances and time. Both Africans and Missionaries, who acted as pioneers in the translation task, deployed all efforts within their disposal to render the translation projects worthwhile and successful. Their experiences and the problems that they encountered should not be ignored.

Similarly, the Bible Societies have devoted most of their efforts in providing people with scriptures in their local languages and at prices they can afford. However, no viable and systematic studies have been conducted to evaluate the impact of this difficult task of scripture translations on the state of the church.

The impact of scripture translations on the state of the church has tended to be taken for granted by those on the translation desk - that the translations made will lead to church growth. However, the quantitative growth of the church may not necessarily imply qualitative growth of the concerned church. The issue here, which forms part of the problem that this inquiry seeks to investigate, is that the church has grown numerically but the spiritual commitment of the resultant church is at question. Whether the growth of the church at the peripheral relates to the growth at the centre in terms of commitment is what this study seeks to ascertain. The study thus questions hollow assumptions and demands honest investigation on the impact of scripture translations on the spiritual life of the church.

Finally, the theological implication of the biblical message to those Africans who have got and read the Bible in their local language remain a problem to this study. It is our contention here that, to most African Christians, the theological implications of the scriptures remain hidden inspite of the scriptures having being made available to them in a language that they can understand.

1:2 Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to make a survey on scripture translations into Kikuyu language. In doing so, we hope to understand the underlying reasons behind scripture translations into local languages and dialects. Further still, we hope to understand

the problems and other experiences that scripture translators undergo and the role of Bible societies in carrying out of translation projects.

Secondly, this study seeks to evaluate the impact of scripture translations on missionary churches with special reference to the church of the Province of Kenya, Murang'a District.

Thirdly, it is the intention of this study to make an honest inquiry into whether the biblical message has been interpreted to reflect local social-cultural and religious situations. We want to answer two questions from this study. The first question is whether Christianity has been Africanized to make it meaningful for Africans so that the biblical message can speak to them, not only in their local languages, but also within their existential situation and condition. The second question want to inquire as to whether or not the biblical message has managed to meet the spiritual, social, physical and psychological needs of the African Christians.

Lastly, this study hopes to investigate how the Bible is used in carrying out the various pastoral programmes as found in the Church of the Province of Kenya. Such programmes include preaching, administration of sacraments, pastoral counselling and uniting Christians.

1.3 Rationale for the Study

Most people who have had a chance to get and read the Bible in their local language are ignorant of the pains that the translators of the Bible undergo in producing and publishing these Bibles. The money that the sold Bibles fetch is not even enough to meet the costs for these publications. There is thus a need to inform the people on the important role that the Bible societies play in making the scriptures available to people in languages they can understand and at prices that they can afford. This study is an attempt to assess the invaluable role that Bible societies have played and continue to play in making the scriptures available to people.

David B. Barrett in an article, "The expansion of Christianity in Kenya AD 1900 - 2000", has estimated that by the year 2000, it is likely that there will be twenty eight million Christians in Kenya, of whom perhaps fifteen million will be committed in the Christian faith.³ For Christianity to be of any meaning to the Africans, it will have to be Africanized to reflect social-cultural and religious conditions affecting Africans. There is thus a need to evaluate whether the Bible, besides being translated into languages that people can understand is interpreted to reflect and fit the African in his social, cultural and religious existence. The present study seeks to do this by taking as a case study, on how the Kikuyu Bible is used in the church of the Province of Kenya, Murang'a District, in conducting pastoral programmes.

1.4 Literature Review

Some literature has been written about Christianity in Africa. This has mainly dwelt on the coming of Christianity, how it was received by the Africans and the effects of interactions that ensued between the two religions, that is, Christianity and African religion.

However, we do not have a systematized study that has focussed itself on the impact of scripture translations on Missionary churches. Even the literature that appear to talk on translations of the Bible tend to hint on the impact of such translations incidentally.

Eugene A. Nida in his book, God's Word in Man's Language, has focussed in his study on the procedures to be followed while carrying out a Bible translation. He appears to emphasize the importance of scripture translations into local languages when he notes,

The message of the scriptures will be most effective if it is presented in one's local language. In religion, only the vernacular can convey the deepest in man, inspite of the fact that every language has its own limitations in this respect.⁴

In another study, Toward a Science of Translating, E. A. Nida has further dwelt on the technicalities involved in translations. In the case of Bible translation, Nida notes that it should be clear and meaningful for people to identify themselves with the biblical message within their social-

cultural and religious context.⁵ It is in this regard that Nida has tried to show the relationship between the sixteenth century church reformation and translations of the Bible into a language that people could understand. He says, "the knowledge of the Bible was the single motivating force which stirred the lives of millions, of whom the church had been the only known mediator of divine salvation."⁶

John Beekman and John Callow have written a book on Translating the Word of God. As the title of the book suggests, the writers have mainly dwelt on methods to be followed while carrying out translations of the Bible. Like Eugene A. Nida, Beekman and Callow seem to be concerned mostly by the accuracy of the Bible translations bound to be done. The impact of the translated scriptures is discussed only incidentally like where they say, "an accurate and intelligible version of the scriptures is essential to the building up of a strong community of believers".⁷

A similar emphasis on the importance of scripture translations into local languages has been laid by the United Bible Society in an article, "Bulleting United Bible Societies. Current trends in Scripture translations. Third/Fourth Quarters 1985 No. 140/141". The main argument in this article is that for translations to be of any use to the users, they should reflect the level of language in any given language area. The article is helpful particularly where it discusses how

translation projects originate and their operations.⁸

David B. Barrett in his book, Schism and Renewal in Africa, has given an analysis of six hundred independent church movements in Africa. It appears that Barrett, in this book, has talked about scripture translations into vernacular languages as an incidental part in his study. Even so, Barrett has not given us the impact that the translated scriptures had on the missionary churches. However, the book is helpful particularly where Barrett attempts to updraw a relationship between vernacular scriptures and breakaway church movements. He observes;

With the translation of the complete Bible, African societies began to discern a serious discrepancy between missionary teaching and the biblical religion in connection with their traditional institutions under attack. Their institutions which were attacked by missionaries appeared to have close parallels, or even tacit approval, in one or other parts of the Old and New Testaments.

John S. Mbiti in his book, Bible and Theology in African Christianity, has talked of Bible translations and use in the church. This book is also helpful especially where Mbiti discusses the use of the Bible in African Theology. He has shown the importance of scripture translations into local languages. He says, "African Christians get full access of the biblical message when it is in their language. The Bible becomes a living book, very different from other books."¹⁰

J. M. Mbogori in an article, "How the Bible is used in Africa" in the book, African Challenge, has discussed the various ways Africans have used the Bible to help them realize some given needs. For instance, he says that, "through the reading of the Bible, people of Africa realized clearly the

dignity of men and women and as a result demanded freedom in their own land".¹¹ However, the article does not discuss vernacular scriptures in the context of the impact they have had on the missionary churches.

Douglas W. Waruta has written an M.A. Thesis, entitled, "scripture translations in Kenya". He has reported on how various societies in Kenya have come to get vernacular scriptures. In the same Thesis, Waruta has also noted the relationship that exists between the scriptures and the apparently higher literacy rate among a given people. He argues, "literacy has been higher among people influenced by scriptures. Literacy liberated people and made them receptive to worthwhile changes".¹² Waruta has not however, discussed the impact of the various vernacular scriptures that have been translated on the state of the missionary churches.

Ward Kevin in his Ph.D. Thesis, "The Development of Protestant Christianity in Kenya 1900-1940", has discussed at length how the missionaries had claimed to use the Bible to condemn cherished African traditional customs, like polygamy and circumcision. When Africans started to be converted to the new Christian faith, Christianity began to be contrasted with African traditional religion to the disadvantage of the latter.¹³ Kevin has not shown us whether the situation whereby African traditional religion was condemned by missionaries changed or did not, when Africans got and read the Bible in their vernacular languages.

T. F. C. Bewes has written a book on Kikuyu Conflict: Mau Mau and the Christian Witness. In this book, Bewes has shown how the Kikuyu Christians were condemning their fellow Kikuyu people who were fighting against the colonial government. To the Christians, all had to obey the government which they believed to be divinely instituted. Bewes has also argued that the followers of Mau Mau Movement claimed to use the Bible to fight colonialism. They likened their situation to that of the oppressed children of Israel as recorded in the book of Exodus.¹⁴ Bewes has not shown however, whether vernacular scriptures had any relationship with the nature of the church during this period.

In an M.A. Thesis entitled, "The Dissemination of Christianity in Nyeri District (1903-1963) with special reference to African Teachers and Evangelists", J. N. Mburu has highlighted the invaluable role that local African evangelists played in leading to church growth in Nyeri in the above period.¹⁵ However, Mburu has not shown the relationship between this church growth and the translation of the Bible into Kikuyu.

In light of the findings above, it is apparent that the available literature does not focus on the impact of scripture translations on missionary churches. The impact of the vernacular scriptures on the state of the church appears to be hinted only incidentally. This leaves a gap for further research concerning the impact of scripture translations on the missionary churches. In the present study, however, due to limitation of time and financial resources, we will confine our research to the impact

of scripture translations on the Anglican Church, Murang'a District.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The study will focus on the impact of scripture translation upon missionary churches in Kenya, in particular, upon the church of the Province of Kenya, Murang'a District. Whenever the Bible is translated in the local languages, changes have always resulted. D. B. Barret has formulated a theoretical framework to explain the impact of scripture translations into local languages. He has argued that when people begin to read the scriptures in their own language, great changes result. People start identifying themselves with the message of the Bible as if it was written directly for them. People begin to compare what their traditional beliefs have taught them. Not only are the traditional beliefs tested through the scriptures but also the influence of the mother church is scripturally gauged.¹⁶

In the sixteenth century, translations of the scriptures into a language that people could understand was revolutionary. In the case of Germany, the impact of Luther's preaching and the publication of his new Testament in the vernacular stirred such a movement among the people resulting in civil revolt and revolution in Germany. Luther's translation became the cornerstone of the new protestant faith. Luther based his message on the scripture as opposed to the Edicts of the church.¹⁷

The knowledge of the Bible was the motivating force which stirred the lives of millions, for whom the church had been the only known mediator of divine salvation. The message of Christ was unshackled from ecclesiastical bondage and the scriptures became life and liberty for spiritually enslaved people.

In Africa, scriptural Christianity was brought by Western missionaries. These missionaries were condemning African institutions like the family with claims that such condemnations were scripturally valid. However, with scripture translations into local languages, Africans began to detect a serious discrepancy between missionary teachings and the scripture particularly on what were to them the major points of conflict, namely the traditional customs being attacked by the missions. D. B. Barrett has argued that independent churches in Africa are the product of Bible translations among other factors.

While adopting D. B. Barrett's theoretical arguments in our study it is important to note that the theory has some limitations in the present study. Some secessions in African Christianity have begun because of mission decisions not to publish scriptures in those languages. We have observed in the study that the Anglican church in Murang'a has grown numerically as a result of the availability of the scriptures in Kikuyu language among other factors. Secondly, the Bible has been the best companion to most African Christians in most circumstances. The scriptures have provided African Christians with indispensable guidance at crucial periods. For instance, the

biblical notion of equality between all races has been a great source of strength for Africans to fight against all forms of exploitation from other races. It is therefore necessary for the church to provide African Christians with theological education which will give them constant justification to their faith and prevent them from becoming easy prey to all kinds of influences.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is narrowed down to Murang'a District and to only one church denomination. This is that of the Church of the Province of Kenya. This study does not, therefore, claim to reflect the impact of scripture translations on all Missionary Churches. To do justice to this topic on a national scale, it would require more time and finances than is possible presently. In addition, such an undertaking would appear too presumptuous and too ambitious. It is our hope, however, that any knowledge learned at this micro-level may legitimately be generalized to apply to other churches.

Murang'a District was also quite large for the author to effectively carry out the study. The author therefore narrowed the area of study to two divisions that comprise Murang'a District. These two divisions are Kiharu and Kangema. These divisions were not chosen at random.

The criterion for selecting Kiharu division was based on Anglican influence and activity in Murang'a District. Kiharu division had the earliest influence of the Anglican Church since the Anglican Missionaries of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) set up a mission station at Weithaga and Kahuhia in 1903. Since then, the people of Kiharu have experienced intensive Anglican influence.

The criterion for choosing Kangema division lay in the historical expansion of the Anglican Church after it was established in Kiharu division. After its establishment at Weithaga and Kahuhia, both in Kiharu division, the Anglican church spread to the neighbouring Kangema division. Mission stations that were opened in Kangema include Njumbi, Muguru, Iyego and Kiru. Thus the immediate expansion of the Anglican Church was destined for Kangema division, in Murang'a District. Moreover, Kangema division is as Anglican as Kiharu is.

1.6 Research Methodology

The success and the quality of a research mainly depend on the investigating instruments the researcher employs to collect the desired information. In carrying out this research, the author decided to use library research, verbal interviews, administration of questionnaires and participant - observation method.

In library research, which formed secondary data, an attempt was made at consulting books, C.P.K. church records and pamphlets related to the study. The relevant documents form part of our bibliography. Three weeks were spent at the National Bible Society of Kenya archives consulting relevant records on Bible translations in Kenya.

1.6.1 Informal Interviews

The author decided to administer informal interviews to the aged group of the church who could not effectively fill

questionnaires. To identify the primary informants among this group, the author talked to elderly church members. As a result, a sample of twenty-five informants were identified. These respondents were selected from Kangema and Kiharu divisions of Murang'a District. As we have shown in our scope of study, these two divisions are predominantly Anglican in matters of religion.

Through informal interviews, the author had an advantage of personal contact and minimum inconvenience to the respondents. Respondents could ask for clarifications where they did not understand. Some of them gave their opinion freely.

However, there was a problem or limitation in deploying this method of interviewing respondents. Too much time was spent collecting data from each respondent unlike the questionnaire which could be administered to a wider sample.

1.6.2 Questionnaires

The questionnaire method was used as a key method to get information from respondents. Questionnaires were administered to pastors and ordinary Christians from the Anglican Church.

In the two divisions of Kiharu and Kangema, ten pastors were interviewed. These pastors represented ten out of the thirty parishes found in the two divisions. The ten parishes were the earliest to be established after the Anglican Church established itself in Murang'a District. These parishes are Weithaga, Kahuhia, Njumbi, Muguru, Kahuti, Kiru, Fort Hall

(present Murang'a town) and Nyangiti.

The author wanted to interview a wide range of ordinary Christians who are literate as far as reading the Kikuyu Bible is concerned. To arrive at this sample group, the author talked to pastors and church elders in the above mentioned parishes. As a result, fifty respondents were identified from the ten parishes mentioned above and subsequently, questionnaires were administered to them. From the fifty respondents, twenty of them were over fifty years old, fifteen were between thirty-five and fifty years old while fifteen were between fifteen and thirty-five years old. The idea here was to get a wide sample of the ordinary Christians who read the Kikuyu Bible.

The author further administered questionnaires to five members of the National Bible Society of Kenya personnel and three translation consultants working with the United Bible Society. Those members of the National Bible Society of Kenya who were selected have a wide experience in co-ordinating various translations of the Bible. Those in the United Bible Society were chosen out of their experience as translation consultants.

The questionnaire method consumed lesser time to administer and was given to a wider sample as we have shown above. The main handicap was lack of close personal supervision especially in cases where there were many respondents answering the questions and the limitations imposed by illiteracy. In addition, most of the parishes visited are too far wide apart and most of the distance was covered by foot due to transport problem.

1.6.3 Participant - Observation

Participant-observation method is the one in which the observer participates in the daily life of the people under study, either openly as a researcher or covertly in some disguised role. Although today this method is the least frequently used in data collection by social scientists, the author found the method quite invaluable in this social inquiry.

The method, as its name implies, required of the author to involve himself in the lives of those being studied, and thus involved a number of activities including looking, listening, enquiring and recording.

The author attended eight church services from eight different local congregations. The services are normally held once in a week on Sundays. The congregations selected are located in Kiharu and Kangema Divisions of Murang'a District. These congregations are well established in terms of numerical growth. The author wanted to observe how pastors deliver sermons particularly how they interpret the Bible.

Similarly, the author attended two Christian marriage ceremonies, one at Muguru and the other at Ihiga, both in Kangema division. The author also attended a Christian funeral ceremony at Weithaga in Kiharu division. The aim was to build up, over a period of time, an account of how the scriptures are

used by members of the clergy in carrying out of pastoral programmes.

1.6.4 Evaluation of the Methods

The three methods that the author employed in the investigation, that is, a questionnaire, questionnaire-interview and participant-observation were quite useful.

The questionnaire method was the most useful in that it consumed less time to administer and was given to a large sample. The main shortcoming was that of some respondents not fully grasping the meaning behind questions on attitudes, values and change. To plug up these loopholes, the author visited such respondents and personally administered questionnaires. Such visits provided the interviewer with opportunities to clarify questions on values and attitudes to the respondents who answered the questions accordingly.

In the case of questionnaire-interview method, the author had the opportunity to come into real contact with the respondents. The author also had the chance to observe both the respondent and the total situation to which he or she was responding. The dialogue was enhanced and respondents could ask questions or clarifications. The main loophole in the method was that of some respondents trying to display heroism while answering questions thereby giving inconsistent information. To plug up this short coming, the author conducted group interviews such that if a given respondent appeared to give incorrect information,

other respondents in the group could object and give their own clarifications. In the final analysis, the author had the opportunity to balance the information he got from each respondent in the group and drew viable conclusions based on the questionnaire.

As for participant-observation method, one advantage was that there was the opportunity for the author to see for himself and make judgements. The main shortcoming was that the author could not make conclusive judgements as he was one of the participants. To plug up this loophole, the author deployed three assistants with whom he later compared notes to arrive at what appeared to be a balanced observation.

Therefore, the author fairly concludes that these methods brought out the information required in this study and objectives were achieved. The result of the field work is what then follows in the next few chapters. We will first focus on the Kikuyu traditional religious beliefs and practices and the coming of Christianity, Church of the Province of Kenya into Murang'a District.

NOTES

1. D. B. Barrett (ed.) Kenya Churches Handbook. (Kisumu, Evangel Publishing House, 1973) p. 157.
2. Ibid, p. 157.
3. Ibid, p. 177
4. Eugene A. Nida, God's Word in Man's Language. (New York, Harper & Row Publishers, 1952), p. 69.
5. Ibid, p. 69
6. E.A. Nida, Toward a Science of Translating. (Leiden, Netherlands, E. J. Brill Publishers, 1964), p. 118.
7. John beekman, Translating the Word of God, (New York, Zondervan Corporation, 1974), p. 13.
8. Bulletin United Bible Societies Current Trends in Scripture Translations. Third/Fourth Quarters 1985 No. 140/141, p. 3.
9. D.B. Barrett, Schism and Renewal in Africa (Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 165.
10. J. S. Mbiti, Bible and Theology in African Christianity. (Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1986) p. 24.
11. J. M. Mbogori. How the Bible is used in Africa in Kenneth Y. Best African Challenge: Major Issues in African Christianity (Nairobi, Prudential Ltd., 1973), p. 111.
12. Douglas W. Waruta, M.A. Thesis, Scripture Translations in Kenya. (Nairobi, 1975), p. 84.
13. Kevin Ward, Ph.D. Thesis, The Development of Protestant Christianity in Kenya 1900 - 1940 (University of Cambridge, 1976), p. 131..
14. T.F.C. Bewis, Kikuyu Conflict: Mau Mau and the Christian Witness. (London, The High way Press, 1953), p. 46.
15. J. N. Mburu, M.A. Thesis, The Dissemination of Christianity in Nyeri District (1903-1963) with special reference to African Teachers and Evangelists, (Nairobi 1975). In the third chapter, Mburu has discussed the invaluable role played by African Evangelists as 'ambassadors of Christianity'.
16. Barrett, Op. Cit. P. 269
17. Ibid, p. 268

CHAPTER TWO

KIKUYU TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND THE COMING OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN MURANG'A DISTRICT

Before a discussion on the structure of the Kikuyu traditional religion can be of any value to the present study, it is important for us here to explain briefly its place in this chapter. This is so because our study in its totality is an inquiry into the impact of scripture translations on the Anglican church, Murang'a District, in which case an outright introduction into the nature of Kikuyu traditional religion may appear misplaced. In order to assess and evaluate the nature and extent of the impact of scripture translations on the Anglican Church, it is invaluable to understand the structure of religious beliefs among the people for whom the scriptures were translated. In the present study, it was the Kikuyu people who got the Bible translated in their local language which is Kikuyu.

Furthermore, it is of equal importance to highlight the traditional religious beliefs of the Kikuyu society because the response that the scriptural religion of Christianity received among the Kikuyu people was partly determined by the structure of their religious beliefs and practices. Moreover, the impact that the translated scriptures had on the missionary churches depended partly on what Africans found more attractive in the biblical religion than in their traditional religious beliefs and practices.

Background Information on the Area of Study (Murang'a District)

Murang'a District is the traditional centre of the Kikuyu plateau and is one of the main administrative divisions into which the plateau has been divided. The district covers an area of 52 sq. km and has a population of over one million people.¹ It is boarded by Nyeri District to the North, Kiambu District to the South, Kirinyaga and Machakos to the East and Nyandarua to the West. Administratively, Murang'a District is divided into six divisions namely Gatanga, Kandara, Kigumo, Kiharu, Kangema and Makuyu. Each division has five locations except Makuyu which has four locations only. There are 124 sub-locations in the District.²

The topography of the District is hilly and dissected. From Nyandarua range of mountains, many streams run eastwards. These streams form part of the head waters of the Tana River. The main streams are the North and South Mathioya, the Gondo, Maragua, Thika and Chania. The whole District consists of comparatively narrow ridges running East and West from the foothills of the Nyandarua mountains to the Tana River.

The main Kikuyu clans are thought to have been formed before Kikuyu entered Murang'a District. When the first Kikuyu families arrived, they found a densely forested area occupied by the Gumba who were hunters and collectors. Within the traditional Kikuyu society, social and political systems were regulated by the family at the lowest level. The core of the

Kikuyu society was the Nyumba, the elementary family. This consisted of a man, his wife or wives and their children. Several Nyumba traced their origin to a common male ancestor and several generations back and formed a Mbari or a sub-clan, which may have numbered anything from a few to several thousands. The various Mbari (sub-clans) traced their ancestry to the original ten Mihiriga (clans). As well as Nyumba (elementary family) being the primary social unit in the social framework, it was the immediately operative political unit.³

Each Nyumba (elementary family) formed a Mucii (pl. Micii) or the homestead and the various homesteads were grouped together into an Itura (pl. Matura), that is, a collection of dispersed homesteads.

This Itura was the focus of the social and political interaction in every day life, and was in many ways a closely knit community. The Matura were grouped together to form a bigger administrative unit, the Mwaki, which in turn would be part of a rugongo (pl. Ng'ongo), that is, a ridge. The ridge was by far the largest administrative unit under normal circumstances but in times of crises, mutual need or country-wide ceremonies, an ad hoc alliance of several ridges might emerge and act in concert. A particular Mbari or even clan might have been predominant in one administrative unit, such as an Itura or ridge, but this was not always the case since the various clans and Mbari were widely dispersed.⁴

Consequently, land was occupied ridge by ridge by the pioneers, who were later joined by their kinsmen, or alternatively attracted diverse elements into their sphere. In principle, land was owned by Mbari (sub-clan) and its administration was entrusted to a Muramatj, that is, guardian or custodian, who was the nominal head of the Mbari.⁵

Economically, traditional Kikuyu engaged themselves in agriculture as the main economic activity of any significance. The land and what it produced used to be the life's blood of the people. The traditional type of agriculture was entirely of a subsistence nature. Although each Mbari (sub-clan) may have had a fairly large acreage, only part of it would be under cultivation at any one time. In this type of agriculture, both seasonal and perennial crops played a part. The chief long rain crops were the beans, Njahi (*Dolichos lablab*), maize and various other pulses. The chief perennial crops were bananas, sugar cane and sweet potatoes. Millet was by far the most important and was planted during the short rains.⁶

The Kikuyu also engaged themselves in other modes of occupation which included trade and local industries. There were iron smelting industries in areas consisting of iron-bearing rocks of decomposed granite. They made iron articles like spears,

swords, knives and ornamental wires. Other activities included basket making, woodcraft and pottery making.

Sheep and goats were extremely important in the traditional Kikuyu economy. They were herded communally on the common land of Mbari (sub-clan) and provided a source of meat and clothing. They were also important from a religious and social point of view in sacrificial ceremonies. They were also an important part of bride-price. In Kikuyu law, sheep and goats were required according to a fixed scale in payment for all kinds of offences.

Men were responsible for rearing cattle, milking and most of the work connected with the livestock. Breaking virgin land was also the men's task. Women were more concerned with domestic duties like cooking, fetching water and firewood. They also did some tilling of the land and harvesting.

This traditional way of life began to change when the Kikuyu came into contact with Europeans. Another aspect of their life which was to be affected was their religious beliefs and structures. This is discussed shortly in the following few pages.

2.1 Some Aspects Of the Structure of Kikuyu Traditional Religion by the time Christianity arrived in Murang'a District

The Kikuyu traditional religion was not an individual affair but a communal one. It was closely interwoven with other social, political and economic concerns to such an extent that it was difficult to differentiate the sacred from secular.⁷ Silvano Bottingnole, in his book, Kikuyu traditional culture and Christianity, has observed that religion in traditional Kikuyu society was, "interwoven with traditions and social customs of the people. All members of the community were considered to have acquired during their childhood teachings all that was necessary to know about religion and culture."⁸

The Kikuyu traditional society was regulated, even in the smallest details, by the traditional religion with which it was fully identified. Religion was a unifying factor in this society. Concerning this, L.S.B. Leakey observes that, "religion held each family together, united the inhabitants of every village, bound together the inhabitants of various villages of a territorial unit and gave them cohesion that was essential to their mutual security."⁹

According to Jomo Kenyatta, there were two main elements in Kikuyu traditional religion. The first element was that of worshipping Ngai (God in Kikuyu), and the second one was that of communion with ancestors. This latter element of traditional Kikuyu religion was labelled by some missionaries as 'ancestor worship.'¹⁰

It is important to look at these two elements of traditional Kikuyu religion closely because they were central. In his comments on the place of Ngai and the ancestors in traditional Kikuyu religion, L. S. B. Leakey observes;

Belief in God (Ngai) and in the ancestral and departed spirits was the fundamental basis of life as a Kikuyu ... Law and order depended more upon religious beliefs than upon police activities of the Njama (warrior council) or the judicial authority of the Kiama (council of elders).¹¹

The Kikuyu people believed in Ngai as the only ^{supreme} Being. They also believed that he was the creator and giver of all things. To the Kikuyu people, atheism was not only unknown but inconceivable. According to Samuel Kibicho, "it was the equivalent of a man denying that he had a mother or a father."¹² The Kikuyu believed that Ngai loved and hated people according to their behaviour. Ngai was never associated with any evil that was experienced by the society. He was believed to be an exclusive source of goodness and this was expressed by the proverb, "the enemy of man is not God."

The Kikuyu never bothered Ngai in matters of secondary importance but he was invoked by the patriarchal family in moments of crisis, such as birth, circumcision, Marriage, famine and epidemics. During these times, the whole community implored the help of Ngai through rituals officiated by religious specialists particularly the elders. Religious specialists as an aspect of traditional Kikuyu religion will be discussed shortly. However, it suffices to note here that elders were considered to be intermediaries between the community on the one hand, and Ngai and the ancestors on the other hand.¹⁴

It should be noted that to the Kikuyu, enjoyment of peace was a manifestation that everything proceeded as it ought. This was the clearest sign that Ngai had blessed their activity and that the ancestors were at peace with them. However, deep dismay was caused by natural phenomena such as thunder, lightning, earthquakes and eclipses. These were considered as direct expressions of the power of Ngai. A person who was struck by lightning was considered to be struck by "the sword of Ngai".¹⁵

Communion with ancestors was another important aspect of traditional Kikuyu religion. The Kikuyu, like most African communities believed in life after death. However, it should be pointed out that this belief did not constitute a hope for a future and better life after death as it is found in some faiths, for instance, Christianity. The major concern of life was to live here and now. The Kikuyu, however, believed that after death, one entered the world of spirits.¹⁶

As spirits, the deceased were believed to have certain powers and limitations. Their influence was seen as supernatural. They could punish wrong doers. Concerning this, L.S.B. Leakey observes, "people believed that clan ancestral spirits required that boundaries of a clan and family lands were not moved. Thus a person who wilfully destroyed trees marking boundaries would die more less immediately as a result of supernatural intervention." 17

The Kikuyu people believed that their ancestors acted as intermediaries between Ngai and the society. Families used to give food and drink offerings to these ancestral spirits as tokens of fellowship and oneness. However, relationship between the Kikuyu individual families and these ancestral spirits was never one of worship. Rather, the Kikuyu had the term guitangira ngoma njohi, translated to mean (to pour out or to sprinkle beer for spirits). 18

According to the Kikuyu beliefs the immediate and main concern of the ancestral spirits was the welfare of the community at all levels. During all the most important sacred ceremonies, the spirits were always remembered, and when misfortune befell the society, appropriate sacrifices were offered to appease the angered ancestors.

Sacrifice formed an essential aspect of traditional Kikuyu religion. It was through it that the society maintained contact with Ngai and the ancestors. Sacrifices were also offered to Ngai in thanksgiving for a variety of blessings like good harvests,

continued prosperity and health. These sacrifices were usually accompanied by prayers which were directed to Ngai as the object of worship. ¹⁹

Prayers in the traditional Kikuyu society were not conditioned by a precise timetable. They had a precise etiquette both in the individual and community life. In public assemblies, prayers were directed to Ngai that he might endow the ruling elders with wisdom in order to maintain peace and harmony in their deliberations. Prayers were also offered to Ngai so that the population might enjoy prosperity and tranquility, that flocks and herds might bring forth plenty of offspring. ²⁰

Religious specialists constituted another aspect of traditional Kikuyu religion. Such specialists included all categories of elders like prophets, priests and "medicinemen". In religious ceremonies, political and social gatherings, the elders held supreme authority. The custom of the Kikuyu demanded that the elder had to be given his due respect and honours, not only when he was present, but also when he was absent.

The prophet was believed to get Ngai's will for the community through visions. One of the most renowned and celebrated of the Kikuyu prophets was Mugo wa Kibiro, who is remembered for his prophecies on the impending disruption of the Kikuyu society by colonialists. ²¹ Prophethood was quite different from the institution of the 'medicineman' whom the Kikuyu called Mundu

Mugo. The 'medicineman' was usually consulted by depressed members of the Kikuyu society who, after believing that there were some taboos that they had broken and thus offended one or more of their ancestral spirits wanted to know which ancestor was offended. 22

In traditional Kikuyu religion, there was no religious preaching as converting campaigns were unknown. The absence of such converting campaigns was due to the fact that one was born and brought up in the Kikuyu religion which, as has been shown earlier in this chapter, was closely interwoven with other social-political and economic structures of the Kikuyu society.

Kikuyu traditional religion was more than what has been highlighted above. However, the most salient aspects which characterized this religion have been identified. With the coming of the missionaries, who brought Christianity into Kikuyuland, the structure of this traditional Kikuyu religion was adversely altered. The interaction between Christianity and Kikuyu traditional religion proved detrimental to the latter.

The missionaries, claiming to base their authority on the scriptures, condemned some of the cherished Kikuyu traditional customs and practices. Such practices included the institution of marriage, where monogamy was advocated at the expense of polygamy which the Kikuyu practiced normally. Other practices include initiation rites, like female circumcision otherwise known as clitoridectomy which the missionaries labelled inhuman,

and ancestral beliefs which were labelled 'devilish' emanating from superstition. 'Medicinemen' were wrongly labelled witches by these Christian missionaries. Other practices like African dances and songs were labelled immoral and dirty.

The Kikuyu people later questioned the validity of the missionaries' claim that their customs were scripturally condemned. This was greatly facilitated by the availability of vernacular scriptures. This issue is discussed further in our fourth chapter.

In the following pages, we will discuss briefly the advent of missionary Christianity among the Kikuyu.

2.2 The advent of Christianity, Anglicanism, into Murang'a District.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus taught his disciples that they should go into the world and preach the Gospel to every nation of the world. In 1900, Anglican Christianity reached Kabete, its first step into Kikuyu land. It was brought by Rev. A. McGregor, a missionary of the Anglican Church. He was a member of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.), a body of European missionaries who belonged to the Church of England.²³ The C.M.S. represented the evangelical wing of the Church of England.

In our present study, the church of the Province of Kenya has been used to refer to the Anglican Church of Kenya. Before

1970, when the Church of the Province of Kenya (C.P.K.) achieved autonomy, it used to be a part of the Church of the Province of East Africa. The coming of this Anglican Church into Murang'a District has a long history, to which we now give our attention.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the primary focus of Anglican Missionary influence in Kenya was the freed slave settlements at Freretown and Rabai at the East Coast of Africa. The arrival of John Ludwig Krapf in 1844 at Mombasa had marked the beginning of post-portuguese missionary activity in East Africa. The significance of this early Anglican Church Missionary endeavour in East Africa was contained in Krapf's dream/vision of penetrating the African interior in chain of mission stations stretching between East and West Africa.²⁴

The year 1873 was a turning point in the C.M.S. involvement in East Africa. The death of David Livingstone stimulated a great outpouring of support for missionary enterprise in terms of both finances and recruits. After 1900, the focus of C.M.S. work shifted steadily to the central highlands of Kenya. This region was inhabited by the Kikuyu people, who were increasingly subjected to the encroachment of European settlers.²⁵

Between 1875 and 1914, the C.M.S. operations in what was later to become the Diocese of Mombasa, grew from its two centres in the environs of Mombasa, to sixteen resident centres widely dispersed throughout Eastern and central Kenya.²⁶

The first decade of the twentieth century witnessed the most dramatic outburst of mission energies, as the Uganda Railway and the new colonial administration opened up the previously inaccessible Kikuyu highlands to missionary penetration. Between 1900 and 1914, the C.M.S. underwent its most ambitious programme of expansion in the highlands of central Kenya, an effort that resulted in the creation of six Anglican outposts among the Kikuyu. These outposts were opened at Kabete, in Kiambu, in 1900, at Weithaga and Kahuhia, both in Murang'a, in 1904 and 1906 respectively, and at Kabare and Kigari in Embu, in 1910.²⁷

There was intensification of the C.M.S. efforts which grew in part out of an almost desperate need to expand. In central Kikuyuland, known as Murang'a, the C.M.S. came into direct competition with the Italian Consolata Fathers. Neither group was prepared to agree to 'spheres of influence' agreements.²⁸

The C.M.S. wrote substantial propaganda to persuade the parent committee to support local efforts at expansion.

A. W. McGregor, a C.M.S. pioneer in Murang'a, wrote to England appealing to the patriotism of his superiors as follows:

To me, it seems a serious matter that such a district should be overrun with an influence so greatly unEnglish.... I ask what must be the effect of the loyalty of these people as part of the British Empire to have the country so overrun with an influence, if we, who stand for all that is true, straight forward and loyal to God and country, do so little.²⁹

In Murang'a District, it was the above mentioned Rev. A. W. McGregor, who was to establish the Anglican Church. Having established himself in Kabete, Kiambu, McGregor was anxious to push on into the heart of Kikuyuland particularly to the area known to the colonial administration as "Kenia" province and to the Kikuyu as Murang'a, some eighty kilometres north of Nairobi. Rev. McGregor wrote to Bishop Peel of the then Diocese of Mombasa in November, 1901, "We must begin something in Murang'a if we do not wish the Roman Catholics to forestall us".³⁰

In 1901, Rev. McGregor received communication from Karuri wa Gakure, the most important Kikuyu political figure, who had established his military and political prominence in Murang'a during this time. Karuri had established his military and political prominence by drawing both traditional and 'modern' European sources of authority in the last decade of the nineteenth century. In the former category lay his reputation as an expert in local poisons, a mediator of some repute and a skilled warrior. To these strengths, Karuri added great wealth derived from his considerable trading connections with Kiambu and a military-commercial alliance with a free-lance European trader named John Boyes.³¹ It is apparent then that the process of C.M.S. expansion in Murang'a District was affected by policies of local African leadership.

Karuri saw in the Europeans a possible source of political and economic strength and prestige. He was a good example of other self-seeking Kikuyu leaders who had seen the advantages to be gained by associating and supporting the white man. Karuri was such a keen collaborator with the white man that he desperately hankered to have a white man of any kind at his home. He was the first person to invite missionaries to enter Murang'a and also the first to send his children to be educated by them.

Since the institution of chieftainship was a colonial creation and was abhorred by the Kikuyu, Karuri had to identify himself fully with the Europeans whether settlers or missionaries. He jealously guarded any access to the white man. Through these efforts, Karuri became extremely influential in colonial circles and was instrumental in building up most of the other collaborators both in Nyeri and Murang'a.³²

It was against the above background that Karuri invited Rev. McGregor to visit his residence at Tutho, Murang'a. He was allowed to explore the region in order to select a number of sites for future occupation. McGregor founded a number of mission stations, with centres at Weithaga (1903) and Kahuhia. This was to lead to the establishment of Anglican Christianity in the district.

2.3 Establishment of the Anglican Church in Murang'a District

Christianity, as we have noted earlier in this chapter, came into Murang'a at the heels of the colonial administration. Besides Rev. McGregor, other pioneers of the C.M.S. in this region were Dr. and Mrs. T. W. W. Crawford and Mrs. Douglas Hooper. They selected various sites which were later to serve as the cradle for the future development of Anglican influence in the district.³³

One of the sites that Rev. McGregor chose was Weithaga, about twenty four kilometres west of Murang'a town. This is where the chief colonial administrator of the district resided. Mission work at Weithaga was started in 1903, although the Weithaga log book states, "The commencement of the work in Kenia province of British East Africa may be said to have its origin in the request sent by Karuri (Chief of Tusu) to Rev. McGregor in 1901"³⁴ Other stations that were chosen included Kahuhia, Kiruri, Njumbi, Gathukeini, Fort Hall and Kahuti.

The process of establishing these missionary centres was not an easy one. The European administration had to inform the chief about the missionary's intentions and the missionary had to go and live at the home of the chief where he pitched his tent. The missionary had to stay here for some time while negotiations

about land for the mission station proceeded between him and the owners of the land. It was from these sites that the Anglican church was to expand to other regions of Murang'a District.

Furthermore, the C.M.S. lacked material resources and man power. In her structure, initiatives for expansion always came from local authorities but all such requests were carefully scrutinized by the parent committee largely in terms of financial implications. A perpetually strained treasury as well as a certain belief that India and China should take precedence over East Africa resulted in frequent demands for retrenchment, thus forcing the local mission to strain its expansive designs to fit the resources available.³⁵

As in most areas of Kenya, Christianity came to Murang'a wearing a western cultural stamp. Missionaries believed that evangelization and conversion to Christianity would involve not only the acceptance of the Gospel, but also the adopting of the culture which such missionaries endeavoured to introduce. Converts were expected to abandon their traditional ways of life, and pattern their new Christian existence in accordance with the norms which they would learn from the mission station.

Christianity was never sympathetic to African spiritual outlook. Instead, it launched a frontal attack on Kikuyu traditional beliefs and sought to emancipate the Kikuyu from

their traditional outlook. The new faith was not translated by the missionaries into genuine African categories. The missionaries were never prepared to understand either the Kikuyu traditional beliefs and practices or their philosophy. This situation was bound to bring tension and conflicts between the two religions. ³⁶

In this context, the missionaries found it quite difficult to recruit converts. Owing to the stronghold of traditional religion, it was extremely hard to win the hearts of the Kikuyu people especially the older generation. Parents found it hard to allow their sons and daughters into mission stations. Those who volunteered to join the Christian community during these early days were subsequently rejected by their parents. They were regarded as traitors who had denounced their African heritage.

Such converts who found themselves disowned by their parents testifies to being hated and despised by family and friends for their connection with the missions. Many of them built their homes as close to the mission station as possible. One of the early converts in Weithaga observed in an interview that, "In the early days, association with the mission meant that one was regarded as lost." ³⁹

Fundamentally, the Kikuyu's reaction towards establishment of Christianity was the result of an inevitable clash between two contrasting world views and two social systems. It was also

a clash between two civilizations and two religions. In this context, appreciation of missionary teaching turned to hate when it dawned to the Kikuyu that the Gospel was something more than a comforting and beautiful story. It was a great revolutionary force bound to cut across some of the cherished customs of the society.³⁸

The missionaries recruited young unmarried boys and girls to the mission stations for instructions in line with their principles about individual salvation of souls. However, a problem arose when such unmarried converts felt a need to get married. Where would they get partners to marry in case they failed to get Christian spouses? To solve this dilemma, the missionaries urged their converts to advise their spouses to join Christianity and get converted. In spite of such advice, some of these converts gave up their new faith and married in line with Kikuyu traditional customs of marriage. With time, most mission stations experienced a great loss in terms of converts.³⁹

However, the missionaries resorted to some other methods of gaining converts. They realized that effective evangelization endeavours could only be achieved by introducing education to the Kikuyu people. A school was opened at Kahuhia and another at Weithaga, both in Murang'a, where prospective converts could be taught how to read and write. With these basic literacy skills, such converts were eventually able to read the Bible. Parents

viewed these educational efforts of the missionaries negatively. They could go to the mission stations to return home their sons and daughters.

A good illustration of such negative parental reaction is the case of a father of a son named Mbatia. After hearing on March 18, 1906 that his son had gone to the mission at Weithaga, he decided to go there and remove him from school. He went to Rev. McGregor with a request to have the boy go or accompany him home. However, after getting home, Mbatia was asked not to go back to the school. A sacrifice was to be offered to the ancestors to cleanse Mbatia for having polluted himself by going to the mission school. Mbatia was also ordered to take off the uniform that he had been given at the mission school to "become like other Kikuyu." The father threatened to beat Mbatia up, curse him and eventually cast him away, if he should disobey. None of these threats, however, moved Mbatia who later ran back secretly to the mission.⁴⁰ This incident was not an isolated one during this early period of western education in Kikuyuland.

This subject of western education among the Kikuyu is highlighted further in our third chapter. It suffices to note here, however, that with time, education became the primary motivating factor for conversion to Christianity. Education, with its 'magic' of reading and writing, coupled with the social advancement that was inherent in the new economic order, drove many people to these mission schools. These schools produced the first generation of

catechists, teachers, pastors and evangelists who were deployed in expanding Christianity in Murang'a District.

Introduction of medical services was another strategy that missionaries used in getting converts. The importance of medical services for missionary work could be seen from both the missionary and African point of view. From the African's point of view, the new medical treatments and the drugs which were used represented a virtually new experience. The effectiveness of the new treatment at the mission dispensary became a means of attracting

possible converts.⁴¹ Some doctors like Dr. Crawford, who were also evangelists, appeared to present their treatments as superior to the traditional ways of healing.⁴²

In other instances, missionaries could seek exemptions for their adherents whenever chiefs were asked to recruit labourers for the colonial administration. They argued that this would disrupt their work at the missions. With the outbreak of the World War I (1914-1918), missionaries objected to their pupils being enlisted as carrier corps. When the Kikuyu realized of such exemptions through missionaries' efforts, many flooded into the mission stations.

The missionaries also adopted agriculture and industry for their economic self-sufficiency and as a means of evangelizing the Kikuyu. An industrial training college was set up at Kahuhia. Africans were trained in industrial arts like brick making, carpentry and masonry.⁴³

Missionaries could also result to enticement methods like giving Africans articles like salt, blankets, sugar and clothes to gain converts. Apparently, Christianity was initially viewed negatively by the Kikuyu people. However, after its establishment, it grew and expanded rapidly into other areas in Murang'a District. We will focus briefly on this growth of the Anglican Church in Murang'a prior to the translation of the scriptures into Kikuyu language.

2.4 Growth and Expansion of the Anglican Church Prior to the Translation of the Scriptures into Kikuyu language.

The growth and expansion of the Anglican Church in Murang'a District was closely connected with education expansion. With the introduction of mission schools, converts could be taught the work of evangelism. Eventually, the work of preaching began to be carried out by the local evangelists more than by the missionaries. This situation arose out of a general shortage in missionary workforce in any given station. Secondly, the African evangelists were better placed in evangelization efforts since they understood the local language and other social-political and religious beliefs and practices of the Kikuyu.

The first group of converts would be sent to win more converts and the process of conversion would continue spreading outwards from the mission stations where the missionaries were based. The understanding of the Gospel by the prospective converts depended very much on that of the local evangelists, who in turn would have received instruction from a missionary

or from a fellow African evangelist. Intensive and long theological training was not considered as important as the full acceptance of the Gospel message. Without this class of evangelists or catechists, Christianity would not have spread as it did in Murang'a or anywhere else in Kenya.⁴⁴

From the mission centres, Christianity spread and expanded to other areas of Murang'a in form of 'out-churches'. From Weithaga mission station for instance, the Anglican church spread to out-centres such as Kiruri, Njumbi, Kahuti and Fort Hall. In 1917, Weithaga Mission station was given a pastorate which gave it a further sense of autonomy. By 1920, there were 1,450 people on the baptismal roll at the station of whom 800 had been confirmed. The number of baptismal enquiries at the time was about 3,000.⁴⁵

Other 'out-churches' of Weithaga Mission station included Githiga, Kibutha, Koimbi and Gathukeini. Out of the four, it was Gathukeini which expanded most. Christianity was brought at Gathukeini by Rev. and Mrs. A. E. Clarke, who arrived from Weithaga Mission station on November 19, 1913. The growth of Gathukeini Church was remarkable within a short time. By around 1914, there were over 500 baptized Christians of whom 360 were communicants.⁴⁶

From Gathukeini, the Anglican Church spread to Gitugi, Yakarengo, Kambara and Githanga. Key evangelists in this expansion include Paul Karanja, Leonard Gitu and Joshua Muiruri.

The established centres were eventually transformed into mission communities as more and more converts joined them. ⁴⁷

During its initial years of expansion, the Anglican Church experienced her greatest growth rate between the First World War years of 1914-1918. It has been shown earlier in this chapter that association with a mission station could be a means of avoiding service in the war, as missions were largely exempted from military draft. This had led people to flood the missions and in the process increased converts. Such numerical growth of converts made missionaries happy with what they mistakenly believed was a positive response to Christianity. However, before the war ended in 1918, about 1,400 young men were recruited from the Anglican Church for service as carrier corps in the war. ⁴⁸

Further still, during this war period, baptism, a Christian name and a church wedding had become popular symbols of entrance into the Christian society. This development had made many people to join the church as they wanted to identify themselves with the new seemingly progressive society.

The immediate period that followed World War I appeared unfavourable to further growth of the Anglican Church. The Kikuyu Christians who had served in the war became suspicious of the whites in general. Such Kikuyu had seen the white man, who had discouraged and even condemned tribal wars, engaging in an international war. To the Kikuyu people, the white man had appeared as one who always advocated and even championed peace.

However, after the exposure of the massacre of the war, these people became confused. Some of them renounced their Christian faith and even influenced others to follow suit. Gradually, the Christian membership in the Anglican Church started to erode.

The Anglican Church in Murang'a was to experience more drop outs after the Kikuyu Christians got and read the scriptures in their local language. This is highlighted in our fourth chapter. What suffices to note here is that by the end of the first half of the third decade of the twentieth century, the Anglican Church had been established in Murang'a District. Seeds of church growth and eventual maturity had been sown although this was to be realized mostly after the 1930s. It was after this time when decisive africanization of leadership begun in the Anglican Church hierarchy.

The foregoing chapter has shown that Christianity was established among a people who had their own religious beliefs and practices. The main problems that the Anglican church experienced in its initial period in Murang'a appear to have emanated out of the missionaries' failure to encounter the traditional Kikuyu religious beliefs and practices with all the respect they deserved. Missionaries had condemned these beliefs and practices claiming to base their authority on the Bible. However, with scripture translations into Kikuyu language, the Kikuyu Christians were to find a serious discrepancy between mission teaching and the biblical teaching. A survey of scripture translations into Kikuyu language is the main topic of our third chapter which we now turn to.

NOTES

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18. Kenyatta, op. cit. p. 266
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CHAPTER THREEA SURVEY OF SCRIPTURE TRANSLATIONS INTO KIKUYU VERNACULAR
LANGUAGE (1900 - 1988)

It was shown in the second chapter that one of the problems that the Anglican Church encountered in its early years among the Kikuyu was that of limited access to the biblical teaching among her converts. This was due to the unavailability of scriptures in Kikuyu language, a situation that bred suspicion among the Kikuyu, that they were only given part of the biblical truth while the rest was either hidden from them or denied them. To the Kikuyu, the Bible, being presented to them in a foreign language, remained a 'closed book'.

In view of the significance which the various missions attached to people being able to read the Bible in their local language, most of the missionaries embarked on translation work almost as soon as they arrived in a given region. Such translations were merely selections from the scriptures and other materials from the Book of Common Prayer. However, before the missionaries embarked on serious and thorough translations of the scriptures into African languages, they introduced western education among the Africans. This literacy education was a preparation for an effective propagation of the Gospel. It was after acquiring skills in reading and writing that Africans could read the Bible.

This chapter briefly focus on the introduction of western education among the Kikuyu people prior to the translation of

the bible into Kikuyu language. We also give a survey of scripture translation into Kikuyu language. The role of Bible societies in the translation exercise is also assessed.

3:1 The Introduction of Western Education as a Preparation for an effective propagation of the Gospel among the Kikuyu people

The introduction of western education was closely connected to the establishment of Christianity among the Kikuyu people. The missionaries had discovered right from the beginning that education was an important precondition for a successful propagation of the Gospel. The introduction of education for this end was not limited to the Kikuyu people:

When a mission begins work in a new district in Africa, it begins with a school ... The primary object of the education given is to enable each person to learn for himself and to understand the record, the character and the teaching of Jesus and the chief doctrines of historical Christianity.¹

The missionaries considered it desirable and indeed necessary to teach their converts how to read and write to enable them to read the Bible. Christianity was a scriptural religion with the Bible as the central base of all its doctrines. This Bible had to be read and interpreted in the context of all Christian worship. In worship, there were some liturgies that were written which the converts were expected to follow. This situation impelled the missionaries in Kikuyuland and elsewhere in Kenya, to introduce literacy education as an aspect in their missionary enterprise.²

Initially, education offered by missionaries was mainly meant for evangelism. In 1904, a C.M.S. parent committee warned that no missionary institution had the right to exist if it was not distinctly and openly evangelistic. In Murang'a District for instance, the C.M.S. parent committee ensured that their schools were primarily and predominantly evangelistic.³

The literacy materials that were used in mission schools were merely selections from the scriptures, which were translated into Kikuyu language. Other materials included stories with Christian message. Pupils were taught to memorise rudiments of the Christian doctrine and the important facts of the Holy Bible, in order to explain to their fellow Kikuyu the teachings of the missionaries. Although the missionaries were willing to teach the Kikuyu literacy education, it was stated that 'there was no need for a detailed syllabus'.⁴

The missionaries produced a Kikuyu 'primer' which contained Bible stories and narratives about day-to-day activities of the Kikuyu. Before the beginning of the First World War (1914-1918), the C.M.S. had its own 'primer' called Muthomere wa Gikuyu, meaning, "format for studying Kikuyu".⁵ The reading classes normally started with reading sheets on which the alphabet was written. There was no specific time within which the sheets were to be mastered, but those who were able to read the alphabet were 'promoted' to the next class, where they were taught to join vowels with consonants to form syllables. This stage was called by the Kikuyu kuhikithania ndemwa, that is,

"marrying of letters". It was only after this stage that pupils were able to start on the 'primer' and portions of the Bible.⁶

Most missionaries did not consider it necessary to teach English language to their pupils. They taught them in Kikuyu and Kiswahili. The C.M.S., for instance, emphasized during its 1904 meeting at Murang'a that all teaching had to be done in Kikuyu and English was not to be taught as yet. The missionaries held the view that they had come to Africa principally to convert people to Christianity. They could best do this by learning the language of the people to enable them communicate to them directly. For this reason, they spent a lot of time studying Kikuyu language and translating Bible portions and hymns into the language. Having done this, they could not see why they had also to teach pupils English, an activity which they considered to be inimical to their work of evangelism.⁷

However, as we saw in the previous chapter, the Kikuyu were initially opposed to western education. Their negative response towards it was an aspect in their wider reaction against colonial rule. They felt that colonialism attacked their indigenous social-economic set up on social grounds. At their early stages, both boys and girls were expected to play distinct roles in the social fabric of the community. A boy was trained quite early in life to assist his father in taking care of livestock while a girl assisted her mother in the farm and at home. In such a set up, to tell the youth to leave their homes for mission schools

was to undermine the economy of the people, especially at a time when chiefs were being called upon to supply labourers to the white settlers. Moreover, it was the ambition of every parent that his or her child would grow up to be a worthy member of the community and uphold the good name of the family long after his or her death. The older generation, particularly, opposed western education and considered it irrelevant and indeed undesirable to their social-economic set up.⁸

Education was, however, bound to acquire more popularity when its benefits became evident in the new social economic situation created by colonialism. Christian missionaries may have believed that they were merely converting the Kikuyu to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The fact was that they were converting them to a whole range of western values. For instance, they had introduced literacy education, medicine, industrial education, wage earning and town life. Missionaries also instilled in their converts a distaste for traditional values. This situation led Kikuyu converts to adopt a new identity based upon the colonial western order. With education, one could secure employment in the colonial government as a clerk, messenger or a teacher just to mention a few. After acquiring such jobs one was assured of social advancement in the new economic system created by colonialism. Having discovered this, most Kikuyu started to flood mission schools in order to acquire an education.

As more pupils joined the mission schools, the need for extra translated Bible portions and other materials with the

Christian message increased. The missionaries mistook the increased enrolments of pupils in their schools to be a positive response towards Christianity. For them, however, it was important that pupils who joined these classes were able to recite certain portions of scripture which the missionaries considered important. All missionaries, therefore, started to lay very special emphasis on translating the scriptures into the vernaculars. In 1910, the C.M.S. together with other protestant missions, assessed the situation and set up a sub-committee for translation work. This sub-committee was to engage in serious and thorough translation of the scriptures into some African languages and dialects.⁹

Translating the Bible was facilitated greatly by the formation and development of Bible societies which worked in co-operation with the missionary societies. A survey of scripture translations into Kikuyu will be given shortly. We will first focus our attention briefly on reasons behind scripture translations into local languages and dialects.

3.2 Reasons behind scripture translations into local languages and dialects

The pioneer translators of the scriptures into some African languages and dialects were missionaries through assistance from the Africans. A number of reasons drove them to undertake the difficult task of translation.

The first reason had to do with their evangelizing mission. The pioneer translators were responding to Christ's command as contained in the Gospel according to St. Matthew (28:19-20). In these two verses, Christ gave his disciples the Great commission of taking the Good News to the whole world. The missionaries were willing to disseminate the Gospel story to Africans and this could best be realized if that message was presented in a language that people could understand. The missionaries used to give Africans bits or mere selections of the Bible and this could not achieve as great an impact as when the people had the Bible in their own language. Missionaries were thus driven by the sincere need to explain the scriptural story in a language that people could understand.¹⁰

Secondly, the Bible was, as it still is, the basic guide for all Christian life. The scriptural message had to be relayed in a language that people understood best for an effective foundation of the Christian faith. We have shown earlier in this chapter that the main aim of missionary education was Christian education in which the doctrine of the church was the chief subject taught. The first grammar books and story books published in Kikuyu were scriptural with Christian message as their main content. The first book to be published in Kikuyu was thus the Bible. This Bible was a basic necessity for the early evangelists, who saw it as an indispensable tool for any viable propagation of the Gospel among the Africans.

Thirdly, most of the pioneer translators of the scriptures into African languages were vigorous and adventurous men and women who wanted to conquer and eliminate all barriers that could limit their mission of spreading the Gospel. "They were ill equipped in terms of linguistic experiences but undertook the translation task as an adventure to muster the local languages. Having mastered the languages, they could communicate with the people directly. There was also a lot of pleasure and satisfaction to be derived from scripture translations."¹²

Finally, the pioneer translators wanted to prove the worth of their missions abroad by engaging in such difficult tasks as translation of scriptures. Most of the missionary organizations were not founded on stable financial grounds. In Europe, for instance, few people supported evangelistic endeavours mounted by the missionaries either financially or morally. In order to attract financial support from the home countries abroad, missionaries engaged themselves in such tasks as scripture translations, medical work and social welfare.¹³

The work of scripture translation was not an easy task. It was very challenging, demanding a thorough understanding of both the whole background of the people's religious and philosophical thought.¹⁴ We will look briefly at the problems which confronted the pioneer translators of the scriptures into some African local languages. ' |

3:3 The Pioneer Translators of the Bible into African local languages and their experiences:

An effective translation will always need some guides and aids. Like any other technical exercise, translation as a science requires training and knowhow. The pioneer translators were not professionals in the exercise. Indeed, very few could claim any basic knowledge in linguistics. This situation was made even more difficult by the general absence of guidance material. In the case of the Kikuyu language, missionaries could not verify dynamic equivalences since the Kikuyu were not conversant with the translators language. The translations which, therefore, resulted from these pioneers could not correctly be labelled scientific.¹⁵

The work of translation was quite a difficult task. It demanded of the missionaries that they understand thoroughly, the language of the people, their world-views and religious beliefs. They had to learn, listen, and inquire into these languages, a task that was exhausting physically, mentally and even spiritually. However, since the missionaries had to transmit the message which they believed to have been entrusted to them, in a way which was to be understood, there was no escape from undertaking the task. These were missionaries committed to the Great Commission.¹⁶ It is remarkable to note that despite the great odds which they faced, sections of the Bible were translated often within a few years after a missionary arrived in an area.

However, a misunderstanding of a peoples' culture and religious concepts would inevitably lead to a misinterpretation of the biblical message in the new translations. The hurry in which the work of translation was done in this pioneer period sometimes did not allow adequate time for the translators to learn and understand the conceptual background of the new languages.¹⁶

A second problem which the translators encountered was lack of a written alphabet or symbols in the African languages. The implication here was that the missionaries had to learn the local languages and 'invent' an alphabet for them first before they could translate the scriptures into these languages. It was quite difficult to determine what letters of the English alphabet could effectively represent African sounds. It was with patience and sincere sacrifice that these missionaries were to conquer these barriers. Professor Bolaji Idowu of Nigeria, talking of the commendable efforts of the pioneer missionaries declared:

Those who translated the Bible left us an invaluable heritage. In any case, it must have been an arduous task, indeed to find suitable or appropriate indigenous words or idioms for biblical concepts and categories. What the translators took in meditation, in patience and labour will remain inculcable, and we today who reap the benefit of their devotion to duty must acknowledge that we owe them an unpayable debt of gratitude.¹⁷

The translations which these missionaries carried may need to be revised and reviewed from time to time, but their achievements will always stand as a landmark in the history of biblical translations in Kenya. The task of succeeding translators was made increasingly lighter because of what these pioneers had done.

For translation to succeed, financial assistance was invaluable. This was made possible by the formation of Bible societies. We will focus briefly on the role that Bible societies played and continue to play in the translation exercise.

3:4 The Role of Bible societies in the Translation of Scriptures both during the pioneer missionary period and the present Period

The Bible has been translated, fully or partly, into nearly six hundred African languages, out of a total of about one thousand.¹⁹ This work of scripture translations has been facilitated greatly by the formation and development of Bible societies. During the pioneer missionary period, these societies worked in co-operation with the missionary societies, having as their main objective, the providing of scriptures in languages that people can understand and at prices which they can afford.²⁰ These societies played an invaluable role in assisting the missionaries in printing and publishing what had been translated. The British and Foreign Bible Society (B.F.B.S), for instance, provided funds for distribution of the printed scriptures. In 1909, the New Testament translation into Kiswahili by W. E. Taylor and H.K. Binns

was completed and published by B.F.B.S. In 1952, B.F.B.S. published the whole Kiswahili Bible. In 1956, the Kamba translation of the whole Bible was completed and published by the B.F.B.S.²¹

The role of these societies continue to be valued by the churches in co-ordinating revisions and supporting the translation and publication of scriptures in new versions. According to the current policy of the Bible societies, the church should always be the initiator of a translation. Since the church is composed of more than one denomination, the Bible Societies become instrumental. Talking on how translation projects originate, Dr. Rachel Kanyoro, a translation consultant working with the United Bible Society, says:

When an individual church or group of local Christians request for a translation, it is the responsibility of the Bible Society personnel to explain and encourage the involvement of all churches who will be using those scriptures. It is necessary for a meeting involving Christians and Bible society personnel to be held during which the whys and hows of carrying out a Bible translation will be discussed and agreements arrived at. These agreements form a basis for administrative principles of that translation.²²

However, if both the church and individual Christians do not request for a translation where the Bible Society sees the need, the society can initiate a dialogue with the churches and make them aware of the need to assist them in organizational procedures. A meeting of church leaders who are intended users of the scriptures in question is inevitable, before the United Bible Society can get involved in any translation. The United Bible Society (U.B.S.) is an international Bible society with

members from most parts of the world in the form of National Bible Societies. The National Bible Society of Kenya is a member of the United Bible Society.²³

The role of the United Bible Society is quite remarkable.

Dr. Kanyoro says:

It provides assistance to National Bible Societies in form of technical guidance and translators' consultants. It also provides training and possibly financial assistance, depending upon the needs of the churches. The society further provides translators' helps in the form of published aids for translators and commentaries.²⁴

The experience of the Bible societies has shown that the most efficient organization for any translation project is a four-tiered committee structure each with different but supportive functions to the translation.

The first committee should be composed of a translation team of not more than five (preferably two or three) members who are qualified in biblical studies, linguistics, the ability to work with others, and a special aptitude in language. These people should give their full time to the work of translation. This team is responsible for the actual work of drafting and for the final form of the translation. Their work is carried out under the supervision of a United Bible Societies' translators' consultant.²⁵

A second team is that of the Review Committee which is made up of competent receptor language persons. This committee reads over the translated material and makes written comments for the purpose of assisting the translators in developing better and better drafts until finally, a printable manuscript has been prepared. The function of this committee is advisory. It is not one of censorship. Members of this committee will be appointed by churches on the basis of their qualifications and commitment to the aspirations of the Bible translation.²⁶

The third team is the promotions group which is made up of twenty to twenty-five fully representative and positively committed persons. This committee is usually kept informed on the progress of the translation. It is in turn responsible for explaining and popularizing this progress and preparing the way for a positive reception of the finished product of the translation. This committee is representative of the clergy, the lay, the young, the old, men, women, different geographical, social and linguistic representation.²⁷

The final team is that of the Management Committee which is placed under the overall guidance of the National Bible Society. It is responsible for the local planning, organization, funding and administration of the Bible translation that may be. The Management Committee, on the basis of appropriate recommendations by the General Secretary of the Bible Society, Translations consultant and the church leaders, establishes the principles and procedures of the Bible translation. It also assists in choosing a full-time translator or translators. This Committee

further provides the needed clerical staff, all its equipment and supplies needed to facilitate the translation.²⁸

Acceptance of the translation depends in part on the adequate representation from all churches in the translation that may be, but the foremost consideration has to be that of the quality of the people appointed to the task, and quality of the work they do.

In the next few pages, we will focus ourselves on how the Kikuyu people came to get the Bible in their local language. We will further lay an attempt to evaluate the possible reasons which have made it necessary to have the present Kikuyu Bible revised.

3:5 Translation of the Scriptures in Kikuyu Vernacular language (1900-1988)

The Kikuyu language received the first scriptures in 1903 when A.W. McGregor, a C.M.S. missionary, assisted by Enock Boi, translated the Gospel of St. John. This translation was published by the British and Foreign Bible Society (B.F.B.S.). In 1909, A.R. Barlow, translated the Gospel of St. Mark, which was published by the National Bible Society of Scotland (N.B.S.S.). It was printed by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1912. In the same year, the African Inland Mission (A.I.M.), Kijabe, translated the epistle of Paul to the Philipians. The translation was done by F. H. McKendrick of the A.I.M. In 1915, H. L. Leakey of the C.M.S. translated the Gospel of St. Matthew. It was

published by B.G.B.S. in London in the same year.²⁹

The year 1922 saw the translation of the Acts of the Apostles through the joint efforts of F. H. McKendrick and the then formed United Gikuyu language Committee (U.G.L.C.). In the same year, H. L. Leakey, with the help of the U.G.L.C., made translations of the book of Jude and Hebrews.³⁰

The New Testament was completed in 1926. The people who had been engaged in that translation included Stefano Kinuthia, Mathayo Njoroge and A.R. Barlow. Others were J. Henderson, H. L. Leakey and Marion S. Stevenson.³¹

Work on the Old Testament began in 1924 when the Book of Jonah was translated by R.G.M. Colderwood of the church of Scotland Mission (C.S.M.) with the help of U.G.L.C. In the same year, Genesis was translated by Jesse E. Raynor of the A.I.M. Translation of the Old Testament continued until 1929, when A. R. Barlow finished translating a selection of thirty-six Psalms. In 1934, Exodus was translated by M. Njoroge assisted by H. L. Leakey. These two later translated the Book of Numbers. By 1935, three Old Testament Books were completely translated. These were, the Books of Joshua, Judges and Ruth.³²

The year 1941 witnessed the translation of the Book of Obadiah and Haggai. It was done by J. Beecher of the C.M.S.

In 1951, the Old Testament was published in the Kikuyu language by the efforts of the United Gikuyu Language Committee, hereafter designated as U.G.L.C. Those who were members included Reuben Muriuki of the C.S.M., Mathayo Njoroge and Stefano Kinuthia. Others were L.J. Beecher and Mrs. Becher of the C.M.S., K. Downing, A. R. Barlow, R. G. M. Calderwood of C.S.M. and T.F.E. Bewes of the C.M.S. The Old Testament was published separately from the New Testament in 1951. The Kikuyu used to carry the two volumes while going to church.³³

In 1955, there was a felt need among the translators to revise the Kikuyu New Testament Bible before binding it together with the Old Testament. R. A. Philip, Secretary General to the U.G.L.C., wrote a letter to all missionaries, African ministers, church leaders and church courts working among the Kikuyu community informing them of the need to reprint the New Testament, in order to bind it together with the Old Testament as one volume.³⁴

A meeting was held from the tenth of February to the thirteenth of the same month of 1958. This meeting was composed of all members of the United Gikuyu Language Committee. The meeting agreed that a preface had to be added to the proposed single-volume Bible, indicating that it contained the present Old Testament together with the revised New Testament. The preface was also to indicate that the single-volume Bible was being put out for use until such a time as a full revision of the whole Bible could be undertaken.³⁵

In 1958, the New Testament was revised by the U.G.L.C. while the following year, 1959, witnessed the binding together of the Kikuyu Bible.

We have noted earlier in this chapter that those missionaries who translated the scriptures into Kikuyu language were not conversant with the local language. The scriptures that resulted from their translations needed further revisions by nationals in later years. In the case of the Kikuyu Bible, this need for a fresh translation arose as far back as 1975. This was due to a number of reasons.

The first reason was that various Kikuyu speaking people from different churches complained that the present translation had a number of shortcomings. One of these shortcomings was that it was a literal kind of translation. This means that the translation does not always seem to represent the level of Kikuyu which is used by the people of the present time.³⁶

Secondly, there were complaints that the present translation was produced by a committee in which the missionaries, who were not conversant with the local language, played a dominant part. In their translation, the form of the message as it is found in Greek or Hebrew was translated rather than the content, a situation that renders the translation to become unclear, sometimes meaningless and certainly unnatural.³⁷

Thirdly, the younger generation also complained that what they read in the present Kikuyu Bible does not sound natural Kikuyu, or reflect the phraseology they use. Some of these complaints may of course be a case of younger immature people who are still not fully conversant with a wider vocabulary and finer points in their own language. Nevertheless, it is a familiar story in many languages - the youth need to be adapted to the language of the rising generation which is not quite the same as that of their fathers.³⁸

Finally, other users of the Kikuyu Bible have complained that the Kikuyu translation does not often reproduce natural spoken and idiomatic language. The Kikuyu Psalms for instance, are said to contain words which are not used or well understood today. The contention has been that such words may be worth preserving in the dictionary but not in the Bible.

The above complains have led to the launching of a new translation of the Kikuyu Bible which is in progress at Limuru Conference Centre. The translators engaged in this project are nationals who are better placed in the exercise than the pioneer missionaries. The translation also represent all the churches in Kikuyu speaking areas. In this present translation, the translators are struggling for naturalness and meaningfulness which the earlier translation lacked. To them, only when the content and the meaning is expressed naturally in the receptor language can they be sure that the translation can communicate to the people bound to use it.

The United Bible Society is providing all the necessary technical help for the success of the Kikuyu translation. Churches that are bound to use the new translated Bible have been called upon to assist in the expenses involved either by raising a capable translator for a certain period and continuing to pay his or her salary. It is hoped that with the new translation, most of the weaknesses and shortcomings of the earlier translation will be eliminated.³⁹

The foregoing chapter has been an attempt to discuss the introduction of western education as a precondition for a viable dissemination of the Gospel among the Kikuyu people. Secondly we have evaluated the reasons behind scripture translations into African local languages. Thirdly, the experiences that the pioneer translators underwent have been exposed. Fourthly, the role of Bible societies in facilitating translations both during the missionary and present period has been highlighted. Finally, we have in this chapter reported how the Kikuyu people came to have the Bible in Kikuyu language.

In the fourth chapter, we will focus ourselves on the impact that the Kikuyu vernacular Bible has had on the Church of the Province of Kenya, Murang'a District.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE IMPACT OF SCRIPTURE TRANSLATIONS ON THE CHURCH OF THE
PROVINCE OF KENYA, MURANG'A DISTRICT

In this chapter, we will address ourselves to the impact that the Kikuyu vernacular scriptures had on the church of the Province of Kenya. In doing so, we will evaluate the relationship between the Kikuyu scripture translations and the rise of church independency among the Kikuyu people. Secondly, we will lay an attempt to evaluate the effects that these break-away churches had on the church. Thirdly, the response of the mother church will be highlighted in the context of how it redressed itself in light of the new situation created by independent churches.

The missionaries and Africans who translated the scriptures into African local languages and dialects had aimed at sustaining continued growth of the church. It had been their contention that the resultant vernacular scriptures would be influential in promoting their evangelizing mission, eventually leading to the extension of Christ's church.

However, the impact that the vernacular scriptures had on the missionary churches appeared to be far removed from what the scripture translators had projected. We will focus here on what the Kikuyu Christians found after reading the Bible in their local language.

4:1 What the Kikuyu Christians found after they read the Bible in their local language

The publication of the Bible, in part and later in full, was the first major publication in Kikuyu language. For some time, it remained the only main publication that the Kikuyu could read in their mother tongue. It was mainly through this Bible that the world of reading opened itself up to the Kikuyu people. The publication of the translated Kikuyu Bible was received with tremendous joy by both readers and listeners alike. In course of time, this Bible became a crucial landmark in the history of the church in Kikuyuland.¹

After reading the Bible in their local language, Kikuyu Christians found three main things. Firstly, the Bible, which appeared 'closed' before the translations, gradually became a 'living book', very different from other books.

In our own language, we found that we had full access to God without the missionary intermediaries who used foreign accents. Between us and the biblical truth, there was no longer that authoritative missionary transmitter of that biblical message. The word of God could now speak to us directly, with full force and authority.²

The Kikuyu people could not remain unchanged after such a valuable encounter with the biblical message in their local language.

Secondly, the Kikuyu heard the story of God's salvation and grace unveiled in a language they understood with their whole

being, the language of their dreams and expectations, their hopes and fears. To them, the Bible became a mirror that reflects, or a photograph that records a people's own experience. The Bible appeared to reflect their cultural and religious outlook and practice.³

Thirdly, it gradually dawned on the Kikuyu that the world of the Bible did not vanish two or three thousand years ago. They found out from the Bible that this world was one of yesterday and today, a world of their own lives and community. To the Kikuyu, the Bible became a living portrait of their customs, expectations and spiritual longings.⁴

It is apparent that through Bible translation, the Kikuyu Christians came to a new stage of penetrating the Bible. We noted in the second chapter that prior to translations of the scriptures into Kikuyu, Kikuyu Christians used to complain of the very selective manner in which the contents of the bible was given to them. This had created a feeling of suspicion among them, that they were being denied the whole of the biblical truth. Andrew Karega, one of the earliest African evangelists in Murang'a District, talks on the way the missionaries used to present the Bible to the Kikuyu people:

We were expected to take whatever the missionaries taught us as the biblical truth. They alone had access to this Bible in their language. When we got the vernacular Bible, we felt that we were finally being initiated into the mysteries of the Bible. Ngai was now speaking our language and the Bible was now our Bible. There was a feeling among us that we were now free to apply this biblical message in ways we understood.⁵

A similar response was given by Emmanuel Maina, one of those Christians who were later to become adherents of the Holy Ghost Church of East Africa. He said;

I recall how the Kikuyu Bible (then only the New Testament) was brought in our home by my uncle. This holy book was treasured highly in our family. We used to gather in our home every evening to read this Bible. We came to discover that the missionaries were misinterpreting the biblical message on various issues to suit their own end. We vowed to apply this biblical truth in ways we found fit.⁶

The translation of the Bible into Kikuyu was to play an invaluable role in the formation, inspiration and guidance of the Kikuyu African church movements.

4:2 The role of scripture translations in the rise of independent churches among the Kikuyu

David Barrett, in a scholarly study he undertook on the causative factors of the phenomenon of independency in Africa, has shown a direct link between independent churches and translation of the Bible into African languages. He has argued that vernacular scriptures were a major causative factor in the rise and spread of independency, although it was not the single factor. According to Barrett, vernacular scriptures had far greater power to communicate and create religious dynamism than versions in English or Swahili. In the case of the Kikuyu people, the Kikuyu Bible enabled them to grasp inner meanings of profound and intricate biblical doctrines like the liberty of the Christian man and woman.⁷

Before the Kikuyu got the scriptures in their local language, the missionaries had the absolute control over the scriptures just as they had exercised over the church. They alone had access to the Hebrew and Greek sources of the scriptures and their interpretation was to be taken as absolute and final. With the publication of the Kikuyu scriptures a momentous change took place among Kikuyu Christians. They could now differentiate between missions and scriptures. The vernacular scriptures provided an independent standard of reference that these Kikuyu Christians were quick to seize on.⁸

From the scriptures, Kikuyu Christians gradually began to detect a serious discrepancy between what the scriptures stood for and what the missionaries were advocating.

The missionaries, claiming authority from the scriptures, had denounced most of our cultural and religious beliefs and practices. In marriage for instance, they wanted us to marry only one wife. From the Old Testament, we could observe that, the Patriarchs, who commanded a lot of respect, practised polygamy. Which Bible were they (missionaries) using then?

The only conclusion that Kikuyu Christians could arrive at after a close scrutiny on the place of polygamy in the Old Testament was that it was justified and normal.

A similar argument is arrived by Jomo Kenyatta in his book, Facing Mount Kenya. Kenyatta, who had assisted in the translation of the New Testament in Kikuyu, published in 1926,

poignantly described the reaction among the Kikuyu to the missionary insistence on monogamy in these words:

Faced with this acute problem, the African, whose social organization was based on polygamy, which harmonized his communal activities in tribal affairs, set about to look for the evidence in the Bible. In the Holy book of God, the African failed to find evidence to convince him on the sacredness of monogamy. On the contrary, he found out that in the book of God, Ibuku ria Ngai (as the Bible is translated in Kikuyu), many of the respected characters are those who practised polygamy. On this evidence, the African asked for further enlightenment from his missionary teacher, but the missionary ignored all these queries.¹⁰

As a result of this, for those who were later to become Kikuyu separatists, the only conclusion to this discrepancy between missions and scriptures was that missionaries were not interpreting the Bible correctly. Rather, they only adopted the system of monogamy to suit their own ends.

The importance of vernacular scriptures as an independent standard of reference was not limited to the Kikuyu Christians. On the rise of Ethiopianism in Nigeria, David Barrett writes, "unrestricted access of the Bible with its notions of equality and non-racialism, provided the early converts with a valid weapon which they were not reluctant to employ against the missionaries, who brushed these ideas aside in church administration and in their relations with the converts."¹¹

Following a similar line of argument, Elijah Masinde, founder of Dini ya Msambwa among the Bukusu of Western Kenya, accused European missionaries for basing their hostility to polygamy, not on the Bible, nor on reason, but on the belief that the practice implied sexual promiscuity, thus rendering it immoral. After an exhaustive study of the Bible, Elijah Masinde had concluded, "this prohibition of polygamy was arbitrary rule of the church, unsupported by biblical testimony."¹²

The Kikuyu people began defending their traditional institutions from the Bible. Some of them argued that their ancestral beliefs and ritual observances which were labelled "savage" and "devilish" by missionaries were endorsed in the commandment 'Honour your Father'. We should not ignore in such a context a general lack of any theological education among Africans which sometimes led to ridiculous misinterpretation of the Bible. However, that fact notwithstanding, the vernacular scriptures provided African Christians with indispensable guidance at a crucial period at which they could otherwise have been inarticulate. African Christians began to demand a society spiritually independent from the religious imperialism of western extra-biblical ideas.¹³

Jacob Kairu, one of the earliest leaders of the Holy Ghost Church of East Africa in Murang'a District had the following to say in regard to the formations of independent church movements among the Kikuyu. "It is not Christianity that we hate. Rather, it was the way the 'wazungu' (white missionaries) disseminated it

to us. They appeared to loathe anything that we practised, be it religious or cultural. We wanted to have an African Karing'a (pure) church, where we could apply the biblical message in ways meaningful to our religious background."¹⁴

The second issue that promoted discrepancy leading to church independency was the missionaries' failure to uphold and practise the biblical concept of love which they proclaimed. The Kikuyu Christians noted that Christianity, with its central task of proclaiming the immeasurable love of God in creation, and eventual salvation of the world through Christ, was being distorted by missionaries who were practising the opposite. The missionaries, for instance, taught the Kikuyu to relate as brothers and sisters in everything they did. However, they appeared to support the colonialists who were taking the people's land. In this regard, the missionaries failed to demonstrate consistently the fullness of the biblical concept of love as sensitive understanding towards equals.

Circumcision was the third issue that heightened the storm which led some Kikuyu Christians to drop out of mission churches to form their own. To some Kikuyu, the banning of clitoridectomy (circumcision of girls) was the zenith of their cultural destruction by missionaries. In the Bible, the word virgin, which had referred to the mother of Christ had been translated with the Kikuyu term muiritu, which denoted an unmarried but fully circumcised girl who was eligible to engage in ngwiko, (a limited sex play permitted among young men and women).¹⁵

Besides, from Saint Paul's letter to the Galatians, it was apparent to the Kikuyu Christians that neither circumcision nor lack of circumcision is of any avail, for all were equal before Jesus Christ. (Galatians 6:15). Moreover, the translation of the word circumcision, irua, was one which in Kikuyu did not distinguish between male or female operation. This issue of circumcision found political expression in the late 1920s. The Kikuyu Central Association (K.C.A.), which was a political organization, debated on the issue of preserving traditional customs including cliteridectomy.¹⁶ In any case, the Kikuyu complained that among God's commandments there was none on circumcision. It was added by the missionaries in efforts to stamp out what appeared to them as a strange custom.

However, it suffices to note here that at Kahuhia, Murang'a District, the C.M.S. had adopted a milder opposition to female circumcision. The missionaries themselves found the custom abhorrent but in general, they refrained from setting up a rigid body of laws. This reluctance to legislate laws against female circumcision prevented the church at Kahuhia from losing many church adherents.¹⁷

We have shown earlier in this chapter that vernacular scriptures had a role in the formation of independent church movements, although it was not the only factor. One such independent church was the African Independent Pentecostal Church, which broke away from the Anglican Church. It was founded in 1929. This church retained polygamy and female circumcision.¹⁸

A second independent church that was founded partly due to discrepancies observed between the scriptures and missionary teaching was the Holy Ghost Church of East Africa. In the preamble of the rules of this church is stated, "Reasons for the emergence of this church can be founded in Acts 2:17; 1:18; Joel 2:28; Hebrews:10-13; and Jeremiah 31:33-35".¹⁹

The above biblical chapters together with their corresponding verses reveal eschatological tendencies with emphasis on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The book of Hebrews was particularly appealing, "They shall not teach everyone his fellow for all shall know me from the least to the greatest" (8:10-13 RSV). The above verses had tremendous influence on these Kikuyu Christians; "We realized that the missionaries misrepresented the Gospel by ignoring or even overlooking the importance of the Holy Spirit and his manifestations in prophecy, dreams and visions."²⁰

The third church that separated from the Anglican church was the African Orthodox church, now known as the African Greek Orthodox Church. Although it emerged as a nationalist church out of the political, educational and cultural struggles, the vernacular scriptures helped the founders to realize that the missionaries' hostility towards their culture was not biblically backed.²¹

Splits of protestant background have also occurred in other parts of Kenya. The causes of these splits are as many as the groups. Since this is outside our field of study, we

shall not dwell on these reasons. For our interest, however, it suffices to note that whereas scriptures in local languages had a hand in the founding of independent churches, it was not the one major reason. Neither would we say that it was because of the rejection of African culture per se. A number of spirit churches found chiefly in western Kenya are believed to owe their origins to the coming of the Canadian Pentecostal Mission to Nyang'ori earlier this century. These include African Church of the Holy Spirit, The African Israel Church, Nineveh and the African Divine Church.²² E. M. Kasiera in his study on Pentecostal Christianity in western Kenya has attributed some of these spirit churches to the Quakers.²³

Independent churches that were formed affected the church of the Province of Kenya on some grounds. We will focus briefly on these effects.

4:3 Effects of the formation of independent churches on the Church of the Province of Kenya

Erasto Muga in his book, African Response to Western Christian Religion, has observed that it could be inferred that if Christian missionaries accepted African culture as it was, provided some aspects of it were not condemned by the Christian Bible, it was doubtful if African independent churches would have been established. He has based his conclusion on the argument that the factors for establishing such separatist churches would have been lacking.²⁴ Although the reasons for church independency cannot be limited to the level of African

cultural destruction by the missionaries, as Muga concludes, it is nevertheless a valuable explanation.

The missionaries appeared to condemn African culture not from the Bible, but from their western cultural bias. To them everything from the western world appeared to be normal. It was in this context that dissatisfied African Christians opted to drop out of the mission controlled churches and form their independent ones where respect for their cultural values could be restored.

The formation of independent churches should not be interpreted to mean a rejection of the biblical message on the part of the Kikuyu or any other African Christians in this case. Rather, it should be seen as an outright rejection of the dominant culture of the missionaries which appeared to distort Christianity. The flourishing of these churches²⁵ bears testimony that the African has taken the Bible and applied it to his culture.

However, the then established churches were adversely affected by the formation of these independent churches. The missions claimed that those Kikuyu who broke away wanted to discredit missions; making it possible for them to gain much credit with their fellow tribesmen and with the women even more, by showing how the real aim of the missions was to force the Kikuyu people away from their traditional customs and tribal identity.²⁶

Since the beginning of missionary work in Kenya, both the Protestant and the Roman Catholic church had striven hard to win converts among the African people. In doing so, the two missionary groups had gone to the extent of competing against each other for church adherents. Their aim had always been to increase church membership and subsequently maintain it. In this context, the formation of other churches independent from the mission established ones was a bitter experience on the side of the missionary churches. The very membership which these missionaries were striving hard to maintain was being eroded:

Protestant churches were hardest hit due to the fact that most of their adherents could get an unrestricted access to the vernacular scriptures. The Roman Catholic Church appeared to experience few secessionists due to the rarity of access to such scriptures. Before Vatican II of 1962-1965, it was the policy of the Roman Catholic Church that authority to interpret the scriptures laid with the priests. Even the Holy Mass was being conducted in Latin as a matter of policy.²⁷ However, even with the Vatican II's resolutions, ordinary Roman Catholics still have a limited access to the scriptures compared to their Protestant counterparts.

During the initial phase of evangelization, the missions had attracted and maintained church membership through establishing schools, hospitals, social centres and welfare agencies. We saw in the second chapter that these establishments had acted successively as recruiting bases for church membership and adherents for the young and old. However, the mass dropouts by some

church members to form independent churches forced the missionaries to devise ways of curbing breakaway movements and to maintain church membership.

The first method that the missionaries deployed to curb breakaway church movements was the training of Africans in theological colleges. Although right from the beginning the evangelization missions in Murang'a were mainly the work of Africans, the missionaries had gradually observed that these African evangelists were theologically ill-equipped. One example of a college founded to train theologians was St. Paul's United Theological College Limuru. The aim here was to prepare such Africans for future responsible leadership at higher levels. The missionaries' contention was that after training Africans to leadership levels, they could influence their fellow African Christians to consider Christianity more seriously, now that leadership in churches was slowly being made the responsibility of Africans.²⁸

Andrew Karega, a former African evangelist and a retired priest, talks on the reasons for the Africanization process in the Anglican Church in the 1950s. He says;

The Church Missionary Society had realized that it would be in the interest of the Christian church if the African membership was sustained. Moreover, this process of africanization was taking place in other spheres of life, for instance in politics, commerce and industry. Why not in the church? It is such reasons which made the Late Obadiah Kariuki to be consecrated an assistant Bishop in 1955.²⁹

Secondly, the missions began to reconsider their earlier negative attitudes towards African customs which, as we have shown earlier in this chapter, had played a cardinal role in the rise and spread of break away church movements. The C.M.S. missionaries in Murang'a for instance, laid down attempts at reconcilliation with the independents. They began by adopting a generally more moderate position on the circumcision issue. They, for example, compromised by agreeing to allow the operation in a clinic although they prohibited the initiation ceremonies which accompanied the rite.³⁰

These efforts on the part of missionaries, sustained the growth of the Anglican church inspite of the breakaway church movements. Another factor which helped was the Revival Movement. To this movement, we now focus on.

4:4 The Revival Movement and its Role in Sustaining Church Membership in Face of Independent Church Movements

By the third decade of the twentieth century, the New Testament had been published in various languages in Kenya, for instance, Kamba (1920), Luhya/Ragoli (1925), Kikuyu (1926) and Dholuo (1926). It has been argued earlier in this chapter that the effects of such translations were significant as far as the direction of Christianity was to take in Kenya. One result for instance has been shown to be the emergence of independent church movements.

However, some Christians, although equally moved by the Gospel message in their local languages, remained devoted, faithful and committed members of the historical or mission churches. The working of the Holy Spirit to a unique degree in the lives of such Christians cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, it was the revival fellowship that apparently renewed the church from within.

Revival, from a theological context implies spiritual reawakening. It is apparent that by the 1930s, the mission churches had gradually come to lack spiritual fervour. The zeal with which African converts had initially accepted Christianity was beginning to dwindle. Missionaries, on their side, had seemed to have lost their original fire. The dryness of the missionary version of Christianity could be felt and a certain restlessness had begun to develop among Kenyan Christians.

In Kenya, the revival movement spread as revival fellowship. It has widely been connected with the East African Revival fellowship whose origins dates back fifty years, to the Ruanda Revival. This movement reached Kenya in 1937 through these Ruanda Revivalists.³¹

The Revivalist language was salvation oriented. Their message is summed up in the Revival hymn entitled Tukutendereza, which in Kiganda mean, "we praise". This hymn was used by the revivalists to greet each other and identify each other as the saved ones. Among the Kikuyu, the revival movement or experience came to be seen as kuhonoka or "to be saved".³²

After World War II (1939-1945), the Revival fellowship developed rapidly in Kenya and increased greatly in membership, particularly in the Anglican Church. It gradually gained confidence of the Anglican church as a result of its dynamic evangelistic influence in many parts of the country. Vast conventions that were organized by African Christians acted as a great source of spiritual inspiration for many thousands of ordinary Christians. Such conventions lasted for several days. They have been seen by some people as a major factor in the emergence of nationwide African Christian leadership.³³

Furtherstill, such conventions brought about spiritual awakening of great numbers of people and challenged the churches to intensify their evangelistic and missionary endeavours. Their themes were mainly biblical. In 1947 for instance, there was a convention held at Kahuhia, Murang'a, where 3,000 Christians from the Anglican Church attended. The main theme was "God wants all people to be saved". (Timothy 2:3-4). Another one at the same place had its theme as "Jesus is the Head of the Church". (Ephesians 5:23). This latter meeting had over 6,000 attendants.³⁴

Meetings that were held were primarily devotional providing opportunities for testimony and mutual encouragement, prayer and scripture reading. Charles Muchiri Tanu, a member of the Revival Movement, and a church elder, vividly recalls how one of the revival conventions that he attended at Kahuhia, Murang'a, was conducted. The year was 1947. He says:

It was a huge gathering of people from near and far. It lasted for several days. This meeting provided people with an opportunity to accept Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour. Hymns were sung, prayers were offered and the Bible was widely read. It was a wonderful spiritual experience and revival for those who attended.³⁵

This revivalist Christianity provided a modification of the rather 'cold' Mission Christianity which had failed to meet the spiritual needs and answer questions that Africans felt. For instance, the hymns which the missionaries wanted the Africans to use were often pure translations from Europe and America.

The Revival Movement has continued as a movement of renewal within the Anglican Church up to the present times. The Brethren claim that they receive a deeper insight into the meaning of several New Testament passages. They attribute this insight to their experience of Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour. Esther Njoki, who claims to be a 'born again' Christian, had the following to say on the issue of salvation; "The question of salvation is personal. After one accepts Christ as his or her personal Saviour, great things begin to happen in that person's life. He or she acquires deeper insights of God's word as it is found in the Bible. One also gets an opportunity to amend his or her immoral actions."³⁶

The zeal of these revivalists helped to sustain the Anglican Church, particularly during the political crisis when the Church at large was accused by some freedom fighters for collaborating with the colonial government. Revivalist Christians particularly objected the Mau Mau oaths. They accepted the government as

ordained by God, and hence counted it as a sin to rebel.³⁷

The revival fellowship has influenced the clergy in the Anglican Church to such an extent that about ninety per cent of all the clergy of the church belong to this fellowship.³⁸

Talking on the place of the Revival in Kenya Churches, George K. Mambo has observed;

The Revival in Kenya has performed an important service in helping to create a new sense of fellowship within the historical churches. It has made possible the full participation of men, women and youth in worship. It has also opened avenues for the use of charismatic gifts in preaching by the laity, including women, who had tended to become mere observers in the churches. The revival fellowship remains a continual source of renewal and rededication to the meaning of the churches' existence.³⁹

The rapid increase in revival membership in most Kenyan churches including the Roman Catholic Church appear to indicate that there is considerable evangelistic dynamism in the Revival. Further, its success in avoiding becoming a sect outside the main church makes it a phenomenon that should not be ignored.

In this chapter, on the impact of scripture translations on missionary churches, with particular reference to some aspects of the Anglican Church, three observations have been made. Firstly, scripture translations into local languages was a crucial landmark in the history of the missionary churches among the Kikuyu. The chief direct contact with Christian

thought became exclusively the Bible in the Africans' local languages. From the vernacular scriptures, the Africans heard and saw a confirmation of their own cultural, religious and social life in the history of the Jewish people as portrayed and recorded in the pages of the Bible.⁴⁰

Secondly, we have observed that scripture translations into local languages had a hand in the founding of some independent churches, and in their existence the Bible plays a central role. After getting the scriptures and reading them in their local languages, the Kikuyu, just like most other African Christians who have had a similar experience, realized that their customs were not in conflict with the biblical belief as the missionaries claimed. On the contrary, the Bible itself was in agreement and is replete with African traditional religious beliefs and customs. For instance, the Kikuyu Christians noticed that in the Old Testament, the patriarchs practiced polygamy. Moreover, they saw that the Old Testament gave an indication of the importance of giving dignity and status to women. Deborah for instance, in the Old Testament held an outstanding religious office as a prophetess and judge. The New Testament is also explicit on its views for women. As a result, some African Christians dropped out from the missionary churches as efforts to reform what appeared to be an over-westernized distortion of Christianity.⁴¹

Thirdly, the Revival fellowship has been treated as an invaluable phenomenon that has sustained church growth inspite

of breakaway movements the New Testament has been particularly helpful to these revivalists who claim to have received deeper insights on the passages there in out of the help derived from Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour.

Some knowledge on the role of the vernacular scriptures in the church programmes is of great significance if we are to understand and evaluate further the impact of scripture translations on the Anglican church. This is the topic of the fifth chapter which we now address ourselves to.

NOTES

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5. Interviews with Mr. Ephraim Maina, a former African evangelist in the Anglican Church, on the impact the Bible had on the Kikuyus after it was made available in that language.
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35. Interviews with Mr. Charles Muchiri Tanu, a member of the Revival fellowship and a church elder in the C.P.K. Church, Ihiga Parish, Murang'a.

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CHAPTER FIVEUSE OF THE KIKUYU BIBLE IN THE CHURCH OF THE PROVINCE OF KENYA,
MURANG'A DISTRICT

J. M. Mbogori in an article, "How the Bible is used in Africa", has observed that in many African homes, especially in rural areas, one may not find many books. But in many of the Christian homes, both in the rural and urban areas, have a copy of a well used Bible, a prayer book and a hymn book. If the Bible is not available or does not exist in his language, the African Christian will at least have a Gospel or New Testament in his own language or in a language he can understand.¹

It is also apparent that the Christian church has grown and multiplied in Africa due to the availability of the written word of God in languages that people can understand. The African Christian does not accept a preacher who does not use the word of God from the Bible. Similarly, he expects every preacher to be a Bible believing Christian. The Bible appears to be the best companion of most African Christians in most circumstances.²

In this chapter, we will examine the role the scriptures play in uniting Christians in the Church of the Province of Kenya, with those from other denominations. Secondly, the chapter will address itself on how the Bible is used in the various pastoral programmes as practiced in the Church of the Province of Kenya.

5:1 Scriptures as a Convergence Point of all Christians

In spite of the breakaway movements that resulted in the mission-related churches, the majority of Christians have remained in these mission churches. In the fourth chapter, a highlight of the possible explanations behind some Christians opting to remain in such mission-based churches, while their brothers and sisters formed independent churches was touched. Relationships between these independent churches and mission-related ones have appeared to be one of enmity.

However, despite the apparent enmity and tension between the two Christian strands, the Bible still remains a point of convergence, a guide recognized and followed by both. The Bible, which played a role in separating Christians, is also playing a crucial role in bringing them closer to one another at many points.³ Scripture translations, for instance, have become an ecumenical undertaking. Earlier translations were carried out almost exclusively by Protestant Churches. Local African Christians and overseas missionaries were both engaged in the translation work. There has been relatively little translation by the Roman Catholic Church before the Second Vatican Council of 1962-1965.

Since Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church's stand in regard to translation of the scriptures has changed considerably. During this council, it was resolved that, "ignorance of the scriptures is tantamount to ignorance of Christ". In light of this observation, the council resolved that the availability

of the scriptures in the languages that people could understand was of primary importance. There was thus a stress on the importance of scripture translations.⁴

Secondly, the council resolved that interdenominational collaboration in Bible translations is one of the very best fields for the growth of understanding between Christians. Thirdly, the council resolved that the introduction in any country of a common Bible for Catholics and Protestants can be a major step forward on the path of Christian Union.⁵

Today, the work of scripture translations and revision of past translations is being carried out jointly by scholars and workers from different churches. Independent churches also use translations done by the mission-related churches. They have not produced their own Bible translations as yet. Writing on the subject of the significance of the Bible in its ecumenical potential, J. S. Mbiti has observed: "With greater ecumenical co-operation and tolerance, the study of the Bible will be carried out by all, regardless of ecclesiastical attachments, and in this way each party or each background will interact with the others to the benefit of all and to the greater understanding of the scriptures".⁶ This observation further testifies on the importance of the Bible in breaking down walls that appear to separate various churches.

From a similar argument, J. M. Mhogori has noted that with all the divisions of the Christian Church, there is one point which all Christians find unity. This common ground of unity is

found in the Bible which bears witness of the God head of Jesus Christ, the Lord of all the churches.⁷

In the church of the Province of Kenya, the Bible plays a central role in most of her pastoral programmes. Such programmes include preaching, administration of sacraments, Christian funeral rites, pastoral care especially for the youth, propounding on the mission of the church and officiating in marriages. In the next few pages, we will address ourselves to the use of the Bible in conducting the above mentioned pastoral programmes.

5:2 The Kikuyu Bible and Pastoral Preaching

The Kikuyu Bible is the official base in giving sermons in the church of the Province of Kenya, Murang'a District. Every effort is made to support practice and teaching by biblical references. Except on rare occasions, the church follow lectionaries, that is, readings appointed to be read at divine services. These lectionaries are formulated in Europe, with a bias for greater use of sermon texts from the New Testament than from the Old Testament.

The following Table is an example of the biblical preaching programmed to be used during Sunday services over a two-month duration in a local church. It covers the months of January and February, 1988.

Biblical Readings for January/February, 1988

Sundays	Main Reading	Other Readings
January 10.1.1988	Mark 7:20 - 23	Matthew 25:41 - 46 1 Peter 3:18
January 17.1.1988	Matthew 17:1-3	2nd Peter 1:16-18
January 24.1.1988	Job 11:1-20	Luke 11:1-4 Ephesians 1:19-21
January 31.1.1988	1 Corinthians 10:1-3	Revelations 1:8 Mark 1:15-17
February 7.2.1988	Numbers 1:1-4 45-54	Matthew 4:1-11 Galatians 2:21
February 14.2.1988	Luke 15:11-32	1 Timothy 2:3 Romans 5:8
February 21.2.1988	John 2:1-18	Isaiah 1:18 1 John 4:19
February 28.2.1988	Luke 18:1-4	Jeremiah 6:1-5 1 Peter 5:5-6

Source for the above table is a lectionary, "A Guide to preaching based on calendar." January/February, 1988.

From the above table, it becomes apparent that the bulk of sermon texts are from the New Testament books. The New Testament is more frequently used than the Old Testament apparently due to the nature of its contents. It is in the New Testament that Christians claim to witness to the life and deeds of Jesus Christ, the Head of the church universal. Similarly, the issue of salvation, which appear to be crucial in the Christian life is claimed to be more explicit in the New Testament than in the Old Testament. While salvation is seen in the Old Testament implicitly, in terms of the nation of Israel, the New Testament appear to reflect mankind's salvation through Jesus Christ.

Some pastors in the Church of the Province of Kenya recognize institutional and ecumenical merit in using such prearranged texts while delivering sermons. However, there is also a shortcoming, which they admit, in using prearranged sermon texts. This is because the choice of such sermon texts may not always be related or determined by the taste and needs of the local church. A situation arises whereby the image of the sermon theme appear to be already predetermined towards a particular theological orientation.

Although the balance in the use of both the old and the New Testament is weighted against Pauline theology, pastors should, however, be at liberty to choose readings from any book in the Bible while preaching. One advantage of such liberty will be that, the congregation will benefit from sermons which will reflect and dwell on social-political and economic issues affecting them.

Secondly, Christians will be exposed to a wider survey of the Bible in its totality. The whole Bible should be brought to Christians in its entirety. This will help Christians to fashion their life according to their needs and in line with what they find in the scriptures. There is meaningful life for Christians in the entire Bible since the contents constitute what is essential for being a Christian. Similarly, the entire Bible embraces the Christians' points of reference in terms of their world-view, social institutions and spiritual sensibilities. It is only after being exposed to the whole Bible in terms of sermons, Bible study and basic theological education, that Christians will take it seriously and open themselves to its guidance, a guidance that harmonizes with their situation of life. This guidance will also give them a new anchor and a new affirmation before God.⁹

Illiteracy rates are as high as eighty-five per cent in the rural areas, which implies, in effect, that to most Christians, the Bible is personally a 'closed book'.¹⁰ Such Christians have to rely on what they hear being read or retold to them. However, some lay preachers, both men and women are known to be spreading and explaining the Christian message even when they themselves cannot read or write. This is an aspect of the dynamism of Christianity in Africa. By word of mouth, the scriptures are communicated to those who cannot read them.

Within the Anglican Church in Murang'a, the vernacular scriptures appear to be causing a religious restlessness. It is driving Christians to examine imported forms of Christianity and church life with a view, consciously or unconsciously, to questioning, abandoning, modifying or affirming a wide range of teachings and practices. This restlessness is further directed towards the Kikuyu traditional background as well as the contemporary situation.

5:3 The Kikuyu Bible and Christian Funeral Rites

Any message concerning death will obviously bother people regardless of their religious backgrounds. People try even to ignore thinking about it. In conducting a Christian funeral, the Bible plays a crucial role. Biblical texts that appear relevant to the occasion are recited, accompanied by prayers and hymns. The liturgy for burial ceremonies reflect the Christian beliefs in eternal life, resurrection and the communion of saints, as stated in the Apostles Creed.¹² The liturgy further expresses the Christian belief that after physical death, a faithful Christian will enter the kingdom of God to live with him eternally while the wicked will be condemned to eternal hellfire.¹³

From a Christian funeral that the author witnessed, it is apparent that the words from the scriptures comfort the congregation in such trying times. In this funeral, the pastor officiating used various biblical references as aids in

conducting the rite. For instance, he quoted Phillipians 1:21, where the apostle Paul says, 'to die is to gain'. He further quoted John 11:25 which says in part, "I am the resurrection and the life and the way, he who believes in me, though he die, yet he shall live."

During the same funeral, that was held near a local church, in Murang'a, the pastor also quoted the book of Revelations 14:13. He read, "Then I heard a voice from heaven say to me, write down: Happy are those who die in the Lord! Happy indeed, the Spirit says, now they can rest for ever after their work, since their good deeds go with them."

Such biblical passages appear to console those who are present during such funeral ceremonies. In the funeral under discussion, one participant says, "To we Christians, the death of a fellow Christian is a great loss to the church." The scriptural passages that are read comfort and console us, that death is not the end but the beginning of eternal life".¹⁴

There are two conclusions that can be drawn from the way the Kikuyu Bible is used in conducting Christian funeral rites. Firstly, it is apparent, at least from the author's observation, that the occasion of death presents an opportunity for the pastors to issue warnings for people to accept Jesus as personal saviour. The pastor further dwells on the issue of salvation, basing his arguments on the impending and ultimate death for everyone. The warnings are even more explicit from the prayers

offered. The concerns most evident in the prayers range from a commendation of the departed to God, through prayer for mercy and deliverance from the torments of hell or the terrors of the Day of Judgement, to admonitions to the living to lead virtuous lives in the face of death, which strikes at the root of human pride.

Secondly, although the Bible is the main source or prayer book used while conducting Christian funeral rites, the theological understanding of the destiny of man and woman remains a challenge even to theologians. The expression that the physical death to a faithful Christian is not the end of life is but a question of faith. This throws a challenge to theologians to do more research on the Christian doctrine of death and eschatology in general in order to enlighten Christians on concepts like heaven or hell.

The word heaven, for instance, is used in many ways in the Bible. Heaven is the abode of God (Gen. 1:1) and also his throne (Mt. 23:22). In heaven, the will of God is done and the Kingdom of God which was the core of Jesus' teaching comes from heaven (Mt. 6:10). Heaven is thus shown as the eschatological home of the Christians. Heaven is also regarded as a country located above where Christians are heading as pilgrims. It is also taken symbolically to mean a city, the holy city of God, where the righteousness will dwell after Christians' resurrection. The heavenly city is sometimes identified as the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:9-27). The symbols of city, New Jerusalem and the

country above, are locational symbols.

In the Kikuyu Bible, the term matu-ini, meaning, "the place in the sky", is the one used to mean heaven. A synonymous term for matu-ini is iguru, meaning 'above'. These Kikuyu terms, as found in the Kikuyu Bible, do not convey the proper symbolic meanings of the term heaven. These words have subsequently led some Christians to view heaven as a geographical location in the sky.¹⁵

5:4 The Kikuyu Bible and Youth Pastoral Care

Besides conducting worship and officiating in various church ceremonies, pastors also preoccupy themselves with guiding the youth in their life challenges.

In Kenya, more than sixty per cent of the population is under the age of twenty years.¹⁶ This figure implies that the most challenging ministry of the church is to the youth. Urbanization, social change and western education have appeared to modify traditional pattern of the upbringing of children. In the modern times, the youth do not have a clear direction and control from their parents or even relatives. In traditional Kikuyu society, for instance, the upbringing of children was the duty not only of the immediate parents, but of the entire society. However, with modern education, the youth are learning new ideas in school where they spend most of their time away from parents and relatives. After school, these young people spend most of their time in employment or in search of it.¹⁷

In such a structure, the church has an invaluable role to play in guiding the young people to live up as responsible persons. In the New Testament for instance, Timothy is estimated by some biblical scholars to have been between twenty to twenty-four years of age when Paul wrote the two letters to him. In 1 Timothy, Paul gives Timothy advice towards Christians. Pastors are urged to treat the youth as they would treat their mothers. They should treat them with propriety. On their part, the youth are advised to be upright and responsible (1 Timothy 5).

Although the Bible contains ample teachings for the youth, it appears that the church is yet to take the challenge of guiding the youth to face their diverse problems. Situations whereby some pastors use the Bible as a weapon to lay attacks on the youth are not rare. Some pastors conduct sermons which are meant to attack the youth causing them to feel alienated from the rest of the congregation. This leads to poor attendance of young people to church services. For instance, instead of educating the youth on how to face adolescence, and its challenges, pastors appear to rebuke the youth in matters of dressing, unbecoming behaviour and sexual permissiveness. To the youth, such monotonous style of preaching seems boring, dull and does not appeal to their social, psychological and intellectual interest. A Christian Sunday School teacher had the following to say in regard to the relatively few number among the youth who attend church services, "The services that are conducted do not seem to appeal to the young people. Sermons that are offered appear to be mere attacks when it comes to the youth. Consequently, the young people feel alienated and

unwanted in the church and hence keep off from church attendance."¹⁸

There is an urgent need for the church to introduce a forum in which the young people in the church can express themselves as they grow up in their Christian life. In the church for instance, our youth ought to be given a chance to read the Bible during church services. The church can also make arrangements for the young people to be involved in collecting offerings from the congregation. In this way, our youth will feel recognised by church elders and this will further encourage most of them to attend Church services.

Similarly, our pastors ought to be well informed on how to interpret the scriptures in regard to the type of congregation present. We expect them to adopt a much broader outlook of the Bible as far as their relationship with the youth is concerned. If the future of the church is to be catered for, at least on grounds of leadership and membership, there is need by the church for a high attendance of its services by the youth. Among other things, the youth need to be given educative biblical sermons.

In this context, pastors who are called upon to take regular youth counselling ought to become students of the Bible. It is important that everyday they at least spend some time studying the word of God, not only from the Bible itself, but also books written about the Bible, for instance commentaries. Such knowledge will enable our pastors to deliver sermons that are more dynamic and relevant to the needs of their congregation in general.

However, most of our youth prefer to use the English Bible than the vernacular scriptures. They complain that the language used in these vernacular scriptures is rather difficult for them to comprehend. Moreover, they argue that in school, they use English Bibles. On the question as to why young people prefer English Bibles than vernacular ones, a youth leader of the Kenya Anglican Youth Organization (K.A.Y.O) in a local church says, "Some of the language used in Kikuyu Bible does not reflect the level of language used by the young people. The youth are not used to reading literature written in Kikuyu and hence prefer the English Bibles."¹⁹

The preference of English Bibles by the youth ought to be seen in light of the wider educational system which appears to have a bias towards local languages. The implication here is that as more and more people acquire western education, recourse to vernacular scriptures will be limited to the aged people who will not be literate in foreign languages, like English. There is a need to undertake translations of the Bible which will reflect the level of language to which the youth are used. This will encourage them to appreciate and use vernacular scriptures as an aspect of their cultural heritage.

5:5 The Role of the Kikuyu Bible in conducting Christian Marriage Ceremonies

Christian marriage is regarded as a very important aspect in the life of the church in the sense that the socialization of the children in the life of the church would begin at the

home so created. The issue of marriage has continued to be an important pastoral challenge.²⁰

According to the Christian teaching, there are three purposes of marriage. One purpose is that of procreation. Secondly, marriage is understood by Christians to be a viable means of establishing basic companionship between adults of the two sexes. This is based on the account of creation in the first two chapters of the book of Genesis. Christians interpret these chapters to mean that in the beginning, God created man and woman to be helpers and companions of one another, to avoid loneliness. Finally, Marriage is understood by the church as a means of avoiding sin. Adultery is forbidden in Christian teaching and to make provision for its avoidance, which is seen as sin, monogamous marriage is instituted.²¹

Normally, procreation is considered secondary to the other two purposes for Christian marriage according to Anglican Christian teaching. In this context, childlessness is not considered as a ground for dissolving a Christian marriage. Other Christian church denominations appear to endorse a similar stand to that of the Anglican church in regard to childlessness occurring in marriage. In the Roman Catholic church, for instance, marriage is meant to be life long, with or without children, until death separate the couple.

In the Anglican church, Murang'a District, Christian church weddings are conducted following an Anglican liturgy. From a

wide range of church weddings that the author attended, it was observed that the vernacular scriptures are the official source while officiating in Christian marriage rites. In one of these marriage ceremonies that was held at a local church in Mirang'a, the pastor quoted a wide range of biblical verses which dwell on the institution of marriage. In Genesis 1:28, the pastor read that marriage is divinely instituted. By putting the first couple of human beings together, that is, Adam and Eve, God thus instituted marriage, the most basic of all social institutions.

The officiating pastor in the above mentioned wedding also emphasized on the divine intention for marriage as a permanent relationship. He quoted Genesis 2:24 which reads, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and the two shall be one flesh." In the commandment, 'Thou shall not commit adultery' (Exodus 20:14), the wedding couple was urged to remain faithful to each other. As a unique covenant commitment of the two people, marriage excludes all others from its intimacy.

The Pauline theological reflection on marriage appears to be a further guide for pastors conducting Christian church marriages. In the marriage ceremony under discussion the officiating pastor used extensively, Paul's teaching on marriage as recorded in 1 Corinthians 7. The couple was cautioned against adultery. They were to regard themselves equal in what the pastor called 'marriage contract'. Divorce, which the church regards as being opposed to divine intension of marriage as a life long relationship was discouraged in this wedding.

Further, the pastor cautioned the congregation against putting asunder what God has put together (Matthew 19:6). For the couple, it is only death that should separate them. The husband is called upon to love his wife and sacrifice his life for her, just as Christ suffered and died for the church (Ephesians 5:25). Finally, the pastor advised the wife to respect her husband and regard him as she regards the Lord. (Ephesians 5:33).

Judging from the above wedding and similar ones that the author attended, two observations can be made, concerning the use of the Kikuyu vernacular Bible with reference to Christian marriage rites. Firstly, the issue of marriage should be taken as an important pastoral challenge. This is so because some of the social systems that are reflected in some biblical passages are quite different from the current social foundations on which our society rests. For instance, Paul's teaching on the value of marriage and how he understood it should be seen within the historical background in which the apostle talked about. His talk on marriage was one of his responses to the many burning issues that had appeared to threaten the infant church in Corinth.

Similarly, when Paul insists on the subordinate place of the wife in domestic circles, he was echoing the contemporary social structure that he knew, in which the woman was more subject to the man than she is today. The implication here is that although the Bible is the basic guide for one officiating

on a Christian marriage rite, the biblical references ought to reflect current social and economic situations.

The second observation is that Christians bound to marry should receive appropriate counselling as far as the institution of marriage is concerned. This is important if church weddings are to maintain their dignity. Presently, some church weddings appear to be mere embarrassments to the church due to instabilities which are normally leading to breakages. Church weddings have also appeared to be fund raising ceremonies which, incidentally happen also to be fashionable. From a total of four hundred church weddings conducted in Murang'a District within the Anglican Church in 1980, fifty of them were reported to have been dissolved by the end of 1987.²² This implies that twelve and a half percent of church weddings conducted from the Anglican church in Murang'a had broken down within a period of eight years. Among other factors, lack of a proper understanding about the implications and meaning of marriage as an institution, account for such breakages.

Since Christianity is culturally adaptive, theologians ought to devise a way of taking what the Bible says about marriage and what is applicable from traditional Kikuyu marriage rites. This is important because the Bible appears to be silent in regard to the position of polygamists, for instance, opting to join the church. In the Anglican church, polygamy is prohibited.

5.6 The Role of the Kikuyu Bible in the Administration of Sacraments

Besides marriage, the church of the Province of Kenya observes two other main sacraments. These are Baptism and confirmation.

5.6.1 Baptism

Baptism as a sacrament occupies a central place in the church of the Province of Kenya as it is considered as the 'passport' to spiritual life. The theological basis for the practice and meaning of baptism in this church are scriptural. The New Testament is normally resorted to as the official guide while conducting or administering the rite.

However, in the New Testament, we do not have an explicit teaching concerning the actual mode of baptism. The rite as conducted by John the Baptist was by total immersion. The apostles in the early church equally baptized people by immersing them in water. In the case of John the Baptist, baptism was a very significant rite symbolizing publicly the ceremonial washing of the penitent sinner in the clean waters of Jordan which, rising from the lofty mountains of Lebanon, drained into the Dead Sea. Jesus was baptised in that river, and from that example, his followers continued the practice of baptism.²³

In the church of the Province of Kenya, baptismal rite is administered by sprinkling water over the head of the convert. The candidate is declared baptised in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. There is both adult and infant baptism. Adults are expected to undergo long durations of catechetical instructions in order to be baptised and become

members of the church. This is based on the New Testament exposition of baptism as recorded in the Pauline letters, for instance, 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, where the sacrament is viewed as a means of incorporating the convert into the Christian community.

Infant baptism is practised in the C.P.K. church as an expression of child's parent that the child will grow up within the setting of the church. The responsibility of bringing up the child in line with Christian principles is placed on parents and the Christian community at large. The parents who become the sponsors of the child at the baptismal ceremony, take vows and promises on the child's behalf. They vow, for instance, that while growing up, the child will renounce the devil and fight against evil. They also vow that the child will believe and hold fast the Christian faith and further, that he will obediently keep God's commandments and serve Him faithfully, all his days.

According to the church of the Province of Kenya, infant baptism has no explicit scriptural base or reference. The church's argument is that the infant was afflicted with original sin without its consent and thus the faith of the child, which is impossible by any standards, can be supplied by the church.

The C.P.K. church administers baptismal rite as a fulfilment of Christ's command to his disciples. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commanded his disciples to go to the world, preach the Good News

and baptize people in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As such, those baptised Christians are regarded as Jesus' disciples charged with duties of preaching and spreading Christ's church world wide.

The question of acquisition of new names during baptism has become a matter of theological debate. It is not a mandate of the New Testament scriptures. The implication and popular consequence of the practice of acquiring biblical or European names has been that, baptism has often been understood wrongly as a mere re-naming ceremony. The concept of 'Christian names' appears to have added to the overshadowing of the sacramental significance of baptism in the sense that the acquisition of a noticeably new name has come to be popularly understood as a mark of becoming a Christian. There is thus a need for the church to educate Christians in regard to the actual significance of baptism as a Christian sacrament. One should be baptised and still retain his African name or names without having to acquire a 'Christian name', which appear to undermine the baptismal rite.

Baptism is also practised in the C.P.K. church as a sacramental rite symbolising unity and 'oneness' of all Christians in Jesus Christ. This stand echoes St. Paul's teaching as found in Ephesians 4:5, where all baptised Christians are regarded as equal in Christ. It further reflects Galatians 3:26-29, where male and female, slave or free, Jew or Greek are said to be one in Christ - the Head of the church universal.

Baptism is also practised as a symbol for death and resurrection of the convert. This is based from the New Testament teaching, for instance, Romans 6:5-11, where the rite is interpreted symbolically as dying and rising of Christ. The practice is also based on Ephesians 5:25-27 which states that, "it is the love and self offering of Christ that gave baptism its power to cleanse and sanctify the church".

Although the Kikuyu Bible is the official source in the administration of baptism in the C.P.K. church in Murang'a, it is apparent that most Christians are ignorant of the theological implications of the rite. This is exemplified by Christians who have dropped from the C.P.K. church to acquire, for instance, different 'Christian names' from other church denominations. A Christian, who recently dropped from a local C.P.K. church gives the reasons which compelled her to join a neighbouring Roman Catholic Church, she says;

I was baptised Grace when I was young. When I grew up later, I discovered that my parents chose this name after my aunt's Christian name. We are at logger heads with this aunt of mine and hence I had to drop 'her name' and be baptised one of my choice. Since I could not be re-baptised in the local Anglican church, I felt compelled to join the Roman Catholic church. I have been baptized Lucy. ²⁴

The above case is not an isolated one among Christians who drop from their churches to join others. This throws the challenge to the church to educate Christians on the theological

significance of baptism as a sacrament. It is partly out of ignorance that some Christians have denounced Christianity as a religion, basically due to the implications of acquiring European names. Their arguments have been that European names imply cultural exploitation and domination.

5.6.2 Confirmation

Like baptism, the rite of confirmation occupies a central place in the C.P.K. church. It is only after undergoing the rite of confirmation that a Christian is allowed to share in the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper. Secondly, it is only after being confirmed that a Christian is allowed to wed in the church. Similarly, infant baptism is not administered to a couple that has not been confirmed in the church and undertaken a church wedding. Unlike baptism, the sacrament of confirmation is administered to adults. We do not have infant confirmation in the C.P.K. church.

Although the essence of confirmation is to allow a Christian to share in the Eucharist, most Christians especially among the youth cease to take part in the Lord's Supper after the confirmation ritual. The main reason why such Christians appear to boycott the Eucharist is that most of them do not fully understand the theological meaning of the Lord's Supper. The church ought to educate such lay Christians about the theological implication of Eucharist, as a Christian ritual in which Christ's death is commemorated by the consecration of bread and wine.

In the light of what has been discussed in this chapter, four observations and recommendations are worth noting. First, the impact of scripture translations on the C.P.K. church will highly depend on the ability to read and write on the side of the converts. This is because, as it has been shown earlier in this chapter, to most African Christians, the Bible has appeared to be a personally 'closed book' inspite of its availability in the local language. If scripture translations are to achieve the desired goals, that is, leading to both qualitative and quantitative growth of the church, there is an urgent need to eradicate illiteracy among Kenyans especially in the rural areas.²⁵ It is encouraging to note people who have acquired some basic literacy skills from the adult classes managing to read the vernacular scriptures on their own.

Secondly, there is a pressing need for the church to educate Christians on various biblical theologies. Theological education ought to be part of the main focus in the development of the church. As it was shown in the fourth chapter, seperatism, in a way has partly been due to the failure of the church in its theological task. In this context, theological education should not just be limited to the so-called 'ministry' but should also reach the 'laity'. Educating the laity will aid them in giving constant justification for their faith which is biblically rooted. Moreover, this will debar them from being easy prey to all kinds of influences. Biblical truth ought to be expressed in the African context in which the existential political, cultural and economic situation of the African Christian should be taken into consideration.

Thirdly, the clergy, who appear as spiritual guardians of lay Christians, ought to have a sound theological knowledge of what they disseminate and impart to the congregation. Pastors, for instance, should become regular students of the Bible and all that is written about it, like commentaries. Incidents are not remote whereby ill-equipped pastors in biblical knowledge have used the Bible to rebuke some sections of the congregation particularly the youth. The result has always been disastrous leading to mass drop outs from the church by the youth.

However, it has been shown in this chapter that despite the absence of a sound theological understanding of the scriptures among most Christians, the Bible still appears to be the converging ground to Christians of all walks of life. It still provides a common ground of unity inspite of the apparent enmity and tensions among the various church denominations.

Fourthly, this chapter has shown that it is through the vernacular Bible that the C.P.K. church in Murang'a has managed to examine 'imported Christianity' and other aspects of church life, with a view of deriving what is best fit for the African Christian. The field of music, for instance, has been transformed. Hymns which hitherto used to be mere translations of English or American tunes have gradually been replaced by those from the African religious setting. Such hymns are bound to appeal to the African Christian within the framework of his social existence.

NOTES

1. K. Y. Best, African Challenge: Major Issues in African Christianity. (Nairobi, Prudential Printers Ltd., 1975) p. 111.
2. Ibid., p. 111
3. J. S. Mbiti, Bible and Theology in African Christianity. (Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 32.
4. A. Hastings, A Concise Guide to the Document of the Second Vatican Council, v.2 (London, Longman & Todd Ltd. 1969), p. 163.
5. Ibid, p. 163
6. Mbiti, op. cit. p. 32
7. Best, op. cit. p. 113
8. Interview with Pastor Edward Maina. Edward Maina is a Pastor in charge of Kanorero Parish, Murang'a District.
9. Interview with Reverend James Muhia. Rev. Muhia is pastor in charge of Ihiga Parish, Murang'a District.
10. Mbiti, op. cit. p. 42
11. Ibid, p. 43
12. J. N. K. Mugambi, M.A. Thesis, some perspectives of Christianity in the context of the modern missionary enterprise in East Africa with special reference to Kenya (Nairobi, 1977), p. 73.
13. Interview with Rev. Samuel Muhoro. Rev. Muhoro is a retired pastor in the C.P.K. Church, Kahuhia Parish, Murang'a District.
14. Interview with Joyce Wambui. Wambui is a lay leader in the C.P.K. church, Iyego Parish, Murang'a District.
15. Interview with Samson Njuguna Gitau. Gitau is the Principal of Weithaga Bible College, Murang'a District.
16. Kenya population census, 1979, volume 1. June, 1981.
17. Mugambi, op. cit. p. 1983
18. Interview with Lucy Gathoni. Gathoni is a Sunday School Teacher in the C.P.K. church, Muguru Parish, Murang'a District.

19. Interview with Joseph Maina. Maina is a Youth leader of the Kenya Anglican Youth Organization (KAYO), Waithaga Parish, Murang'a.
20. Mugambi, op. cit. p. 64
21. Ibid, p. 65
22. The C.P.K. church records, Murang'a Diocese, 1987.
23. Mugambi, op. cit. p. 80
24. Interview with Lucy Muthoni, an ordinary Christian in the Roman Catholic Church, Murang'a.

CHAPTER SIXCONCLUSION

The foregoing study has been an attempt to evaluate and understand the impact of scripture translations on missionary churches. The church of the Province of Kenya, Murang'a District, was taken as a case study, with the hope that any knowledge that could be learned at this micro-level could be legitimately generalised to apply to other churches.

In the first chapter, we identified the problem of the study. We found out that although the Bible has been translated into various African languages, no systematic study has been carried out to evaluate the impact of these translations on the state of the church. The study was thus carried out to fulfil this need.

Broadly, five issues have been raised in this study. In the second chapter, we have observed that Christianity did not establish itself to a people who were devoid of religion. The Kikuyu people had their own religious beliefs and practices which enhanced societal cohesion. It was not the hunger for the new religion, that is, Christianity, that drove the Kikuyu to the mission stations. Rather, it was the need for an education that appeared to be closely associated with social advancement in the new economic system created by colonialism, that drove the Kikuyu to the mission stations.

In the third chapter, a survey of scripture translations into Kikuyu vernacular language has been highlighted. In this chapter, the task of scripture translations has emerged as a

challenging one in terms of personnel, finances and time. The pioneer translators, both Africans and missionaries have appeared in this study as devoted and sincere people, who undertook the arduous task of translations with patience. Their role in taking the challenging role of translations has remained inculcable and those today who reap the benefits of their devotion to duty, must acknowledge that they owe them an unpayable debt of gratitude.

Similarly, we have seen, still in the third chapter, the invaluable role that Bible Societies have played and continue to play in making the scriptures available to people in languages that they can understand, and at prices that they can afford. During the pioneer missionary period, the Bible societies assisted the translators greatly through printing and publishing what had been translated. In the post-missionary period, these societies continue to help translation work through co-ordinating revisions and giving support to publications which have been translated in new versions and languages.

Among the various factors that led to break-away independent church movements, the vernacular scriptures have emerged in this study as one of them. In our fourth chapter, we have seen how the vernacular Bible created a serious discrepancy between missionary teachings and biblical teaching among Kikuyu Christians. The missionaries appeared to have been negatively vocal towards various cultural beliefs and practices as held by the Africans, like circumcision, polygamous marriages and some ancestral

beliefs, whereas the Bible appeared silent. African Christians came to the conclusion that the missionaries were condemning whatever African beliefs and practices that appeared strange to them. The yardstick in such condemnations was not the Bible but the western cultural standards which these missionaries proclaimed.

Independent church movements have appeared in this study to have affected the missionary churches adversely, in terms of membership that was being eroded. The church devised some measures, as discussed in the fourth chapter, to restrain future breakaway church movements. Such measures included Africanization of leadership in church hierarchy, introduction of theological training for African clergy in institutions like the then established St. Paul's United Theological College, Limuru, and a general relaxation of their former stern position with regard to African cultural beliefs and practices.

The Revival Movement has emerged in this study as a movement whose religious zeal helped to sustain the C.P.K. church in face of the break-away church movements. The members of this movement claimed to have received some deeper insights from the New Testament which had been made available to them in their local languages. The revival fellowship remains a continual source of renewal and rededication to the meaning of the churches' existence:

The study has in the fifth chapter, evaluated the use of the Kikuyu Bible in carrying out some of the pastoral programmes as found in the C.P.K. church, Murang'a District. Our investigations have revealed that, due to the high level of illiteracy among most of our Christians in the rural areas, the Bible has remained to them personally, a 'closed book', in spite of its availability in the local language. There is an urgent need therefore, to eradicate illiteracy if the quantitative growth of the church is to be proportional to the qualitative growth.

Moreover, our Christians need theological education, which the church ought to take as the main focus of its development. Educating our laity will give them constant justification for their faith which is rooted in the scriptures. There is a pressing need, for instance, to inform lay Christians on the significance of church sacraments. In Baptism, for instance, the concept of acquiring a noticeably new "Christian name" or "names" has appeared to have overshadowed the sacramental significance of the rite.

That the church has grown fast is understandable as a sign of sincere dedication on the part of our African evangelists. However, the extent and depth of the churches' care leaves a lot to be desired. The church appears to have failed in applying the scriptures to aid the youth, for instance, in facing their diverse and challenging life situations. Our investigations have shown that, some pastors conduct sermons which are meant to attack the youth causing them to feel alienated from the rest of the congregation.

Similarly, some priests appear to have taken the vocation of priesthood as a means to an end, that is, to make a living. Some are even too old and ill-educated in terms of theological education. We wish to stress here, that priesthood, like any other vocation, calls for sacrifice, knowhow and commitment. The clergy, who act as spiritual guidance of lay Christians, ought to be regular readers of the Bible and any other biblical literature, for instance, commentaries. Such knowledge will make their sermons more dynamic and relevant to the needs of their congregation in general.

An appreciation has been made, however, on the invaluable role that vernacular scriptures have played and continue to play, in uniting Christians. The scriptures remain a point of convergence and a guide recognized and followed by Christians regardless of their denominational loyalties.

Similarly, it has been as a result of availability of the vernacular scriptures, that the C.P.K. church, Murang'a District, has managed to examine 'imported Christianity' and other aspects of church life, with a view of deriving what is best fit for the African Christian. In the field of music, for instance, the church has began using Christian hymns which are bound to appeal to the African within the framework of his social existence. Hitherto, hymns that were used by the church were just mere translations of English or American tunes.

The summary of the findings is that, so long as the Bible is not interpreted within the context of African or indigenous cultural values, it will take long before it is fully appreciated and incorporated by African Christians. The Bible, which has appeared in this study as both ancient and modern in its contents, should be seen to provide the modes of expression, framework and meaningful categories, so that its message might be relevant.

Thus, as a conclusion to this study, we wish to point out that although the Bible has been translated into various local languages, the task of interpreting and applying that message within the African indigenous framework is yet to be achieved. However, the study does not purport to have made a conclusive statement on the impact of scripture translations on missionary churches.

The author proposes, as a recommendation, that Christians within the Anglican church need to undergo a thorough theological training programme before assuming the vocation of priesthood. This will prepare them with the necessary theological tools to handle their congregations effectively. Those who are already in the vocation need to be attending regular theological refresher courses. In the case of ordinary Christians, there is need for the church to organize Bible study programmes, possibly on set days within the week, which will help in deepening the spiritual life of church members.

In the course of writing this thesis, one area has been identified as calling for urgent research. This is on how and to what extent the scriptures are used in our churches. There is extremely little information on how and what extent the Bible is used by the church. It is known that the whole Bible is used for preaching, but we do not know what the content of that preaching is. The author suggests that a systematized study should be carried out to shed some light to this silence.

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APPENDIX ONE

GROUP A QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED TO ORDINARY CHRISTIANS

1. (a) What is your name? _____
(b) Age _____
(c) Marital status _____
(d) Occupation _____
(e) Educational standard _____
 (i) Primary _____
 (ii) Secondary _____
 (iii) University _____
 (iv) Other _____

2. (a) What religion do you belong to? _____
(b) Which church denomination do you belong to? _____

(c) When did you join this church? _____
(d) Why did you join this church? _____

3. Would you say that you are:-
(a) A strong believer _____
(b) Norminal believer _____

4. (a) Do you go to church often: Yes ____ No ____
(b) Would you feel guilty if you did not go to church? Yes ____
 No ____

Probe for reasons _____

5. Did you marry in church? Yes ___ No ___

Reasons: _____

6. (a) Do you consider it important to read the Bible?

Give reasons _____

(b) In what language is the Bible you use in church
written in? _____

7. (a) How do you like the way your pastor preaches _____

(b) Interpretes the Bible? _____

8. Do you consider it important for your children to read the
Bible _____

Why? _____

9. What good things do you associate with the Bible? _____

10. What major changes in your Christian life do you associate
or attribute to the Bible as it is found in your language?

11. What improvements would you like to see in the Kikuyu Bible? _____

12. What do you consider as the greatest advantage of your having the Bible in Kikuyu language? _____

13. What do you think would be the difference if the Bible was preached to you in any other language other than Kikuyu? _____

GROUP B QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED TO PASTORS

1. (a) What is your name? _____
- (b) Age _____
- (c) Marital status
- Single _____
- Married _____
- (d) Occupation _____
- (e) Educational standard
- (i) Primary _____
- (ii) secondary _____
- (iii) University _____
- (iv) Other _____

2. According to you, what do you think is the impact of one preaching the scriptures' message in a language that people can understand? _____

3 (a) How often do you quote the scriptures while preaching?

(b) What response or reaction do you normally get from the congregation after preaching scripture-based sermons?

4. What major changes in the ordinary lives of Christians would you associate or attribute to scriptures as they are found in their own language? _____

5. What would you term as the greatest advantage of a Christian having the scriptures in a language that she/he can understand? _____

6. (a) According to you, what would you say contributes to church growth? _____

(b) What would you say has been the greatest or strongest agent in the growth of the church of the Province of Kenya, Murang'a District? _____

7. What would you say has been the impact of scripture translations on the C.P.K. church in Murang'a District?

8. What roles does the Bible play in:-

(a) marriage programmes _____

(b) pastoral care _____

(c) counselling of the youth _____

(d) caring for the needy _____

(e) death ceremonies _____

(f) administration of sacraments like baptism and confirmation _____

(g) women's organizations like Mothers' Unions _____

9. How do you measure the spiritual stature of Christians in the C.P.K. church? _____

10. How do you evaluate whether the biblical message manages to meet the Christians' social, physical, spiritual and psychological needs or whether it does not? _____

GROUP C QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED TO BIBLE SOCIETY PERSONNEL

1. (a) What is your name? _____
- (b) Age _____
- (c) Marital status single _____ married _____
- (d) Occupation _____
- (e) Educational standard _____
- (i) primary _____
- (ii) secondary _____
- (iii) university _____
- (iv) Other _____

2. What are the importance of Bible translations into languages that people can understand? _____

3. The work of scripture translations is a difficult undertaking in terms of finances, time and personnel. How do you evaluate the impact of the whole exercise on the churches concerned?

5. Translations of the scriptures into a language that people can understand does not necessarily mean that such people will have a firm theological base of the message contained in those scriptures. What are you doing to ensure that people not only have the scriptures in their own language

but also develop a firm theological reflection of the message?

6. According to your observations, what has been the relationship between independent church movements and the provision of vernacular scriptures to people?

7. (a) What would you say was the greatest weakness of the Bible translation into Kikuyu which might have called for a new translation? _____

(b) What would you say is the targeted result from this second translation of the Kikuyu Bible? _____

8. What is the future of the church vis-a-vis scripture translations in Kenya? _____

GROUP D QUESTIONS ASKED TO THOSE WHO BROKE AWAY FROM ANGLICAN
CHURCH AND JOINED OTHER CHURCHES

1. What is the name of your church? _____
2. When was it founded? Who founded it? _____
Why? _____
3. When did you join this church? _____
4. Why did you join it? _____
5. Why did you break from the Anglican church to join this
church? _____
6. How do you feel now that you have joined this church?

7. What problems did you have with the missionaries when this
church was formed? _____

8. How did the vernacular Bible influence you in forming this
church? _____

APPENDIX II

LIST OF INFORMANTS

A. BIBLE SOCIETY PERSONNEL

1. Dr. Rachel Kanyoro. A Bible translation consultant working with the United Bible Society. Interview held at the U.B.S. offices, Westlands, Nairobi. Date of interview, 5-8-87.
2. Rev. Joseph Musembi, Former Secretary General to the Bible Society of Kenya. Interview held at A.I.C. offices along Valley Road, Nairobi. Date 7-8-87.
3. Mr. Joseph Kasio. Working with the National Bible Society of Kenya. Interview held at Biblia House offices. Date 14-8-87.
4. Mr. Gerald Wanjala. Works with the National Bible Society. Interview held at Bible Society offices. Date 15-8-87.
5. Dr. Oloo Mojolla. A Bible translation consultant working with United Bible Society. Interview held at U.B.S. offices, Westlands, Nairobi. Date of interview - 4-8-87.

B. PASTORS INTERVIEWED

1. Rev. Samuel Muhoro. A Pastor at Kahuhia Parish. Interview held at Parish Headquarters. Date - 21-10-87.

2. Edward Maina. A pastor at Kanorero Parish. Place of interview: His home. Date of interview: 13-10-87.
3. Edwin Maina. A Pastor at Gakira Parish. Place of interview: Parish headquarters. Date of interview: 22-10-87.
4. Rev. Samuel Gitau. Gitau is a Pastor at Mugaru Parish. Place of interview: His home. Date of interview: 26-10-87.
5. Rev. James Muhia. Rev. Muhia is a Pastor at Ihiga Parish. Place of interview: Parish headquarters. Date of interview: 14-10-87.
6. Rev. Peter Mwangi. Mwangi is a Pastor at Kenya Njeru Parish. Place of interview: His home: Date of interview: 18-10-87.
7. Rev. Gedeon Macharia. Rev. Macharia is a Pastor at Nyakianga Parish. Place of interview: His home: Date of interview: 28-10-87.
8. Rev. Joseph Minja. A former pastor at Ihiga Parish. Place of interview: His home. Date of interview: 12-10-87.
9. Rev. Jackson Kamweru. Kamweru is a pastor at Maingi Parish. Date of interview: 19-10-87. Place of interview: Parish Headquarters.

10. Rev. John Gatimu. Gatimu is a former Pastor at Iyego Parish.

Date of interview: 21-10-87. Place of interview: His home.

C. OTHER INFORMANTS WITH POSTS IN THE CHURCH

	<u>Name of Informant</u>	<u>Position in Church</u>	<u>Place of interview</u>	<u>Date of Interview</u>
1.	Esther Njoki	Lay leader C.P.K. Ihiga	At her home	1/11/87
2.	Charles Muchiri	Church Elder C.P.K. Ihiga	At his home	3/11/87
3.	Elias Macharia	An Elder Holy Ghost Church	His home	5/11/87
4.	Grace Gathoni	K.A.Y.O. Leader C.P.K. Ihiga	Her home	4/11/87
5.	Lucy Muthoni	Sunday School teacher	C.P.K. Ihiga	6/11/87
6.	Joseph Maina	Sunday School teacher	C.P.K. Ihiga	6/11/87
7.	Stephen Mwangi	Lay leader	C.P.K. Muguru	9/11/87
8.	Mercy M. Maina	Lay leader	C.P.K. Kahuhia	10/11/87
9.	George Maingi	Church Elder	C.P.K. Watuha	14/11/87
10.	John Ndirangu	Choir Master	C.P.K. Iyego	16/11/87
11.	Daniel Gathogo	Choir Master	C.P.K. Njumbi	18/11/87
12.	Benjamin M. Kanyi	Church Elder	C.P.K. Mununga	18/11/87
13.	Julius Maina	Choir Master	C.P.K. Ihiga	20/11/87
14.	Anne W. Maina	Lay leader	C.P.K. Kahuhia	24/11/87
15.	Jason Kamau	Evangelist	C.P.K. Ihiga	25/11/87
16.	Ephraim Karumwa	Evangelist	C.P.K. Ihiga	25/11/87
17.	Samuel Nderitue	Sunday School	C.P.K. Watuha	26/11/87

	<u>Name of Informant</u>	<u>Position in Church</u>	<u>Place of Interview</u>	<u>Date of Interview</u>
18.	Eunice N. Mwangi	Mothers' Union Leader	C.P.K. Kahuhia	27/11/87
19.	Peter Mwangi	Elder	C.P.K. Iyego	27/11/87
20.	John Mwangangi	Church Elder	C.P.K. Kenya Njeru	28/11/87
21.	Jecinta Wangeci	Lay leader	C.P.K. Yakarengo	28/11/87
22.	Lucy Wangui	Youth Leader	C.P.K. Gitugi	29/11/87
23.	Michael Macharia	Choir Master	C.P.K. Gikoe	29/11/87
24.	Willis Maina	Church Elder	C.P.K. Kanorero	30/11/87

D. LIST OF LAY CHRISTIANS

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u> (Years)	<u>Church</u>	<u>Date</u>
1.	Rose Njoki	20	C.P.K. Ihiga	24/10/87
2.	Philip Maina	25	C.P.K. Ihiga	"
3.	Mary Wangui	22	"	"
4.	Peter Mwangi	19	"	"
5.	Justus Macharia	20	"	"
6.	James Nderi	24	"	25/10/87
7.	Susan Wanjiru	18	"	"
8.	Samuel Murage	23	"	"
9.	Jane Wangari	19	"	"
10.	Julius Irungu	26	"	"
11.	Solomon Gitau	50	"	26/11/87
12.	Naftali Githitu	50	"	"
13.	Mercy Wanjiru	55	"	"
14.	Nahashon Maina	60	"	"
15.	Godfrey Matere	50	C.P.K. Kahuhia	27/11/87

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u> (Years)	<u>Church</u>	<u>Date</u>
16. Nancy Wangari	45	C.P.K. Kahuhia	27/11/87
17. Lydia Wangui	56	"	"
18. Grace Washiondo	59	"	"
19. James Kamau	52	"	"
20. Julius Mwangi	19	"	28/11/87
21. Martha Wanjiru	22	C.P.K. Weithaga	"
22. Christine Wangeci	19	"	"
23. Joyce Wangari	26	"	"
24. Patricia Wanja	24	"	"
25. Peterson Mwangi	28	"	"
26. Eunice Wangeci	35	C.P.K. Iyego	29/11/87
27. Johnson Kamande	38	"	"
28. George Maina	38	"	"
29. Janet Wangui	33	"	"
30. Gladys Mwithaga	39	"	"
31. Jedidah Njeri	18	C.P.K. Kahuti	30/11/87
32. Grace Mwihaki	28	"	"
33. Julius Mwaniki	36	"	"
34. Peter Gatuha	39	"	"
35. Teresia Mwithaga	19	"	"
36. Jackline Wangui	29	C.P.K. Mununga	6/12/87
37. Susan Mwariri	36	"	"
38. James Ngahu	18	"	"
39. Anne Wangu	25	"	9/12/87
40. John Mwaura	28	"	"
41. James Muhiu	16	"	"
42. Ignatius Irungu	27	"	"

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u> (Years)	<u>Church</u>	<u>Date</u>
43. Grace Njeri	32	C.P.K. Mununga	9/12/87
44. Jemimah Nduta	23	C.P.K. Gitugi	11/12/87
45. Ephraim Mwangi	62	"	"