

MARRIAGE AS A FACTOR AFFECTING THE
TRANSFER OF RELIGIOUS ALLEGIANCE
IN KENYA

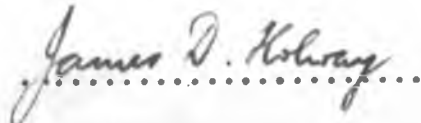
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submitted in fulfilment for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the University of Nairobi

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SIGNED DECLARATIONS

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

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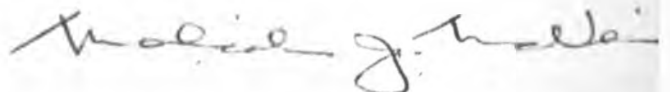
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SUMMARY

This dissertation embodies the results of research into marriage as a factor affecting the transfer of religious allegiance in Kenya, carried out between 1970 and 1973.

The research draws upon a number of academic disciplines, including anthropology, theology and demography, but falls principally within the field of the sociology of religion. In a preliminary investigation into the extent of interconversion between Islam and Christianity in East Africa, it was observed that marriage was an important cause of conversion of individual Christians to Islam. This originating observation suggested an inquiry into the relationship between transfer of religious allegiance and marriage, with related sexual phenomena.

The field of inquiry embraced Kenyan traditional religion, Islam and Christianity. The dissertation opens with a study of the doctrine and practice of marriage and sex in the three religions. In traditional religion it was beyond the scope of the work to make a comprehensive survey of the practices of all the tribes of Kenya and so a selection was made to produce a representative survey typical of the practice of the majority of the people.

In Islam the orthodox practice according to Islamic law is outlined and related to the situation in Kenya. The extent to which polygyny and divorce are practised by Muslims in Kenya is investigated and compared with other Muslim countries. The Asian community receives a brief mention.

In Christianity the references to marriage in the Old Testament are examined from the point of view of many Christians in Kenya who, lacking commentaries in the vernacular, perforce adopt a rather literal interpretation. The New Testament is also dealt with and then a study is made of the attitude to sex and marriage of the European missionaries who brought the Gospel to Kenya.

The interaction between the three religions is next examined, taken two at a time. Marriage between Arabs and Africans produced the Swahili people with their distinctive 'bridging' culture. This facilitated the spread of Islam into the interior during the nineteenth century, although Muslim successes were considerably more marked in Tanganyika and Uganda than in Kenya. Apart from the Muslim stronghold at the Coast and in the north-east of the country, Islam is largely confined to isolated 'Swahili villages' which were established years ago and have not expanded into the surrounding countryside.

The interaction between traditional religion and Christianity has produced a major conflict over the issues of polygyny and initiation ceremonies. By and large the mission-founded churches have followed the missionaries' uncompromising line. The independent churches have generally been more ready to admit polygynists to their membership. The practice varies from church to church and the admission of polygynists is only one of many reasons why people are attracted to independent churches. Not a few members of the mission-founded churches who lapse into polygyny prefer to remain in their church even though they are placed under some form of discipline.

Having studied marriage in the three religions and their interaction with each other, attention is next directed to theological considerations. The determination of many Kenyans to continue the traditional practice of polygyny and initiation ceremonies despite the churches' discipline is examined and it is shown that the desire for continued existence is a strong motivation behind these customs. In Christianity a favourable existence after death is secured through faith in Jesus Christ, in Islam it is obtained through membership of the Muslim community, and in traditional religion it is brought about by begetting offspring. Thus the religious importance of marriage in traditional religion becomes apparent. The unwillingness of Christian converts to abandon this part of their former religion altogether is seen by their actions which call forth the discipline of the church. In reality they have not fully accepted the Christian view of salvation.

Two chapters are devoted to a study of the pastoral problems raised in Christianity by transfers of religious allegiance occasioned by marriage. In regard to Islam it is shown how European attitudes towards Islam have been syncretistic and defeatist, and how these attitudes have carried over into the church in Kenya at the present time. The large number of Christian denominations in Kenya has further served to blur the theological distinction between Christianity and Islam. In regard to traditional religion it is suggested that polygyny is likely to decline, not through the church's teaching, but for economic reasons, but it is being replaced by premarital sexual intercourse as the church's major moral problem, but all the

evidence suggests that this moral offence is so generally accepted as normal practice amongst Christians that the church is obliged to make tacit acceptance of it.

Lastly secularism and its effect upon the status of women is considered. Secularism is seen to come to the aid of women in reducing the degree of male dominance in Kenyan society which has had the acceptance of the three religions. The result is to give wives greater freedom in the practice of religion. Secularism seems to be affecting the Christian community more than the others.

The dissertation ends with a concluding assessment summarising the findings of the different chapters, and the suggestion is made that marriage and pastoral theology might make a fruitful field for African theologians desiring to bring a distinctive African contribution to Christian theology.

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I am also grateful to the Archivists of the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and the Church Missionary Society, and to the Librarian of the Central Catholic Library, all in London, for their assistance. I am obliged to the Principal and Librarian of the United Theological College, Limuru and the Director of the Kenya National Archives, Nairobi, for permission to consult their records. Mr. D.J. Coward, CNG, OBE, the Registrar-General of Kenya, kindly allowed me access to a file of evidence collected by the Commission on the Law of Marriage and Divorce. Dr. Aylward Shorter provided a grant from the Churches' Research Project on Marriage in Africa (CROMIA) towards typing expenses, for which I am grateful.

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Sanderstead, 1976

James D. Holway

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an account of some research conducted in Kenya between 1971 and 1973 into the transfer of allegiance of some people from one religion to another. The particular cause of transfer investigated was marriage, including all the relevant related aspects of human sexual activity.

Marriage is a subject of universal interest. It is the most intimate of all human relationships, and for many it is the greatest adventure of their lives.

Most forms of religion have laid down rules governing marriage and conduct between the sexes. Marriage as a social activity calls for the blessing and sanctity which religion is able to bestow. Religion as the acknowledgement of a transcendental influence which takes an interest in human affairs, seeks to regulate marriage for the good of society in its relation with the unseen.

Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in an area of contact between two religious systems. The followers of most religions assert the rightness of their beliefs and practices, either as universal truths, or as things which are right for their co-religionists. Where people with different religious allegiances come into contact there is always the possibility of conversions from one religion to the other taking place, and

this sets up a fundamental clash of interests, particularly where both religions claim to be unique. Where a man and a woman of different religious persuasions marry, a tension is set up which is heightened when they produce children and the religious allegiance of the children has to be decided.

Marriage is a relationship in which the greatest degree of happiness lies in the couple sharing as far as possible in every social activity, including the holding of common religious beliefs and practices. Marked dissimilarity of custom is a frequent cause of marital breakdown. To this end it is often the practice of religious communities to endeavour to isolate their young people from those of other persuasions, especially during the period when marriages are being contracted.

The originating observation

In earlier research into the extent of interconversion between Islam and Christianity in East Africa, it was observed that the principal cause of conversion from Christianity to Islam was the marriage of Christian young women to Muslim men. This was a one-way process and scarcely any Muslims became Christians for reasons connected with marriage.

This originating observation suggested a further inquiry extended to include traditional religion, and a deeper investigation into the factors governing the transfer of religious allegiance which frequently attends a mixed marriage.

Development of the inquiry

A study of the literature suggested that the inquiry could usefully be widened to include traditional religion in Kenya as a third religious category. With the exception of small minorities of Hindus, Jews and people with a secular outlook on life, the vast majority of people in Kenya owe allegiance to one of these three religious categories. Traditional religion and Christianity are widely distributed throughout the republic. Approximately six per cent of the population is Muslim with a majority in the Northern Province and important concentrations at Lamu and Mombasa and in the Digo tribe to the south of Mombasa.¹

As the research developed the following stages emerged:

- (1) It had already been observed that marriage between Muslims and Christians almost always resulted in a gain to Islam. This suggested an inquiry into the nature of the communal pressures which could be brought to bear on individuals contemplating a mixed marriage.
- (2) This led further to a consideration of the motivating forces governing the communal pressures. It was assumed that there was a discernible cause for some religious communities objecting more strongly than others to their members apostasising. It called for a theological appraisal of the significance of conversion in each religion.
- (3) It was gradually realised that attitudes towards conversion were governed in turn by belief in the purpose and efficacy of the religion. Further examination showed that something

corresponding to salvation in Christianity could be detected in each religion.

(4) A large number of Christians in Kenya are in a state of discipline because of their continued practice of traditional customs associated with sex and marriage. The nature of their religious allegiance -- a mixture of Christianity and traditional religion -- had to be investigated in terms of salvation and their belief in the relative merits of the two religions.

(5) The common practice of Christian girls being pregnant at the time of their marriage was then seen as a practical solution evolved by Kenya Christians to the incompatibility of missionary teaching and traditional belief. This in turn led to a consideration of the pastoral aspects of the problem and the general efficiency of pastoral oversight in Kenya.

(6) While this research was proceeding, evidence was accumulating to suggest that women are much more likely than men to transfer their religious allegiance because of marriage. This observation required an assessment of the degree of male dominance in each religion.

(7) This revealed a connection, not necessarily causal, between the improved status of women and the growth of secularism.

Delimitation of the field

The problem led to ramifications in many directions and a careful demarcation of the field of research had to be made.

(1) It was decided that attention would be confined to the

three major religious categories with only minor exploration into the sub-divisions of these categories.

(2) The survey would be essentially contemporary, keeping historical material to the minimum and using it only where it was desirable to illustrate historical trends.

(3) Illustrations would be confined to Kenya as far as possible.

(4) Although the female circumcision controversy has a major effect on religious allegiance and the progress of Christian missions in the Kikuyu tribe, a detailed consideration lies outside the scope of the present work. Rosberg and Nottingham's book has set the controversy in its proper political perspective.²

(5) References to the European, Asian and Arab communities have been kept to a minimum. In the past, when Kenya as a whole has been written about, the racial categorising favoured by earlier administrations has led to more or less equal space being devoted to each race. This is altogether at variance with religious and demographic reality. On numerical strength alone there are nine African tribes which are each larger than the total non-African population. The distortion arose through the greater political and economic importance of the non-African races in former times.

(6) The possibility of a statistical survey of the extent of transfer of religious allegiance was contemplated, but it was decided that it would be impracticable and of little value, for the following reasons. Several reliable censuses have been held in Kenya in the last twenty years,³ and those of 1948 and

1962 provided information on the religious affiliation of the population. This information is in general agreement with figures for the Christian population obtained from church statistics, but the census figures for the size of the Muslim population were considerably less than those given in Muslim sources. The latter, however, give no satisfactory evidence as to how their claims were arrived at, despite repeated inquiries by the present writer.

The total population of Kenya increased from 8.64 millions in 1962⁴ to 10.94 millions in 1969,⁵ an increase of 26.5 per cent in seven years, or 3.4 per cent per annum. These figures show that apart from the small non-African population which is declining, the rate of increase is general; thus every religious community may expect to increase at this rate by natural increase alone. Set against this background, population changes by conversion diminish in importance, nevertheless the changes in the relative proportions of the population between the 1948 and 1962 censuses indicate that comparatively large transfers are taking place from traditional religion to Christianity. Transfers to and from Islam are very small. Thus the amount of transfer of religious allegiance associated with marriage is also small, and for this reason it was felt that the result of a sample survey would be liable to wide margins of uncertainty.

There was also the further consideration that the subject being researched is one which is capable of generating strong personal feelings and that a survey, even if statistically

sound, would not necessarily yield truthful results. Data-gathering was therefore confined to interviews and correspondence with informed persons drawn from as wide a range as possible. Material obtained from various questionnaire surveys was drawn on to provide qualitative information, but no statistical analysis of transfers of religious allegiance has been attempted.

Survey of the literature

The research extended into a number of different academic fields, each of which has its own extensive literature. Material on the precise subject of the present study is not plentiful, and has had to be assembled from scattered references in a wide range of articles in journals and periodicals. These are referred to in the footnotes at the end of each chapter and listed in the bibliography.

1. Traditional religion. I. Schapera observes that there is 'a fairly voluminous body of literature on the Native peoples of Kenya, some of whom have been described in detail by several different writers. However, there does not seem to exist any critical evaluation of this literature.'⁶ The present writer experienced the same difficulty in selecting materials so as to give a representative survey of tribal marriage and sexual customs in Kenya. A number of works on the more important tribes were consulted, such as those by Cagnolo and Kenyatta on the Kikuyu, Wagner on the Luyia, Lindblom on the Kamba and Huntingford on the Nandi.⁷ Evans-Pritchard has written on the marriage customs of the Luo.

Mbiti's book on African Religions and Philosophy was found to be the most useful for a survey of traditional beliefs on marriage to the depth required for the present work, although since it aims to cover the whole continent necessarily only a few of his illustrations are drawn from Kenya. Of the volumes of the Ethnographic Survey of Africa, those by Middleton and Prins on the Central and Coastal tribes of Kenya were the most useful.

African Systems of Kinship and Marriage edited by Radcliffe-Brown and Daryll Forde, and Women of Tropical Africa edited by Denise Paulme, are symposia with deceptive titles since neither deals with East Africa. Paul Spencer's The Samburu is an interesting study of gerontocracy which has some relevance to the present study.

2. Islam. There are numerous introductions to Islam written in English by Christian Islamicists such as K. Cragg, A.S. Tritton, A. Guillaume and W. Montgomery Watt. There are others, less erudite, by Muslims such as Ameer Ali and H.I. Hassan, who seek to present Islam in a reasonable and fair way to the English-speaking world, and yet others, such as Muhammad Qutb and certain Ahmadiyya writers, who are frankly polemical and devote as much space to denouncing Christianity as they do to praising Islam. All of these books treat in some degree with polygyny and the status of women in Islam.

Norman Daniel's two volumes Islam and the West, the Making of an Image and Islam, Europe and Empire describe the historical growth of European misconceptions about Islam, and

they afford valuable insights into the background of missionary ideas about sex and marriage in Islam. They appear to be more acceptable to educated Muslims in Kenya than works by Cragg and others mentioned above. Symposia edited by I.M. Lewis, Islam in Tropical Africa, and by J. Kritzeck and W.H. Lewis, Islam in Africa, have deceptive titles insofar as they deal with selected topics and are not as comprehensive as their titles suggest. Both contain material on Islam in Kenya, but as it happens none of it is relevant to the present study. An earlier Islam in Africa by G. Dale completely belies its title and is a Christian polemical work the contents of which have nothing whatever to do with Africa.

Most Muslim Arabs and Africans in Kenya follow the Shafiite school of Islamic law. Sources drawn upon in the present dissertation for the provisions of this school regarding marriage and divorce include Minhaj at Talibin, A Manual of Muhammadan Law According to the School of Shafii by Mahiuddin en Nawawi, translated by E.C. Howard (1914); S. Vesey-Fitzgerald's Muhammadan Law, an Abridgement According to its Various Schools (1931); and J.N.D. Anderson's Islamic Law in Africa (1954). Anderson describes both the principles and the application of Islamic law in East Africa. He has more recently collaborated with N.J. Coulson in an article 'Islamic Law in Contemporary Culture Change' in Saeculum (1967), which touches on some of the sociological problems considered here.

Two booklets have been written on the law and marriage

and divorce by East African Muslims of the Shāfi'ī school. The first, Nikahi, A Handbook of the Law of Marriage in Islam, was written in Swahili in 1934 by Ali Hemedi el Buhriy of Tanga and translated into English by J.W.T. Allen in 1959. The contents are largely derived from the Minhāj al-Talibīn (The Students' Guide) of al-Nawawī noticed above, but with elaborations relevant to the East African situation. The second booklet is Busaidy's Ndoa na Talaka (Marriage and Divorce, Swahili). It sets out the orthodox legal requirements in straightforward Swahili and is intended, to judge from the title and cover illustration, to be useful to young Muslims contemplating marriage or divorce. It adds nothing to Schacht's Introduction to Islamic Law. Other books entitled Islam in East Africa are by the Christian writers L. Harries and J.S. Trimmingham. The latter's is the most comprehensive survey available, although it suffers for present purposes in that it does not distinguish between the constituent countries of East Africa. The Muslims of Kenya, as distinct from East Africa, have not yet been honoured with a separate study. A.I. Salim has compiled a history of the Swahili-speaking people of the Coast, most of whom are Muslim. There is a factual survey of the contemporary situation in an article by the present writer in the Kenya Churches' Handbook. On the sensitive issue of Muslim-Christian relations considerable effort has been expended in the present work in order to give a fair and unbiased representation of the Muslim point of view, and to use Muslim sources wherever possible. The fact

remains, however, that much of the academic literature on Islam, and practically all the literature on Islam in Kenya, is by Christian writers.

Several authors, including D.P. Ghai, L.W. Hollingsworth and J.S. Mangat, have written books about the Asians of all faiths in East Africa, but for present purposes a book by Kapadia originating from India has been preferred as a source of detailed information on Hindu marriage.

3. Christianity. There is no single work on the history of Christianity in Kenya. A history of the Church Missionary Society in Kenya was projected, but only Part I 'The Coast' was ever published. Manuscripts of other parts on 'The Highlands',⁸ and 'Kavirondo',⁹ exist. R. Oliver includes Kenya in his Missionary Factor in East Africa and draws on extensive archival material, but the later part of the book concentrates on political issues. Writers on Christianity in Kenya have been taken up during the last fifty years, perhaps more than in other countries, with political and racial questions which are no part of the present study. A mission history which could serve as a pattern for histories of other smaller missions in Kenya is Levinus Painter's The Hill of Vision chronicling the Quaker movement in Kenya since its commencement in 1902. The contemporary situation is described in detail in the Kenya Churches' Handbook, a mine of information on every aspect of church work. The independent churches are described in David Barrett's Schism and Renewal which, although covering the whole of Africa, contains a proportionately greater amount of

illustrative material on Kenya than on other countries.

4. Marriage. A number of sociological books on marriage and family life were searched for information on interfaith marriages in developed countries where statistical material is more readily available. Thus Goode's The Family devotes Chapter IV, 'Mate Selection', to interfaith marriages and the influence of other factors such as propinquity, race, social status and religion on mate selection in the United States. Udry's The Social Context of Marriage boldly challenges some popular opinions on mixed marriages. Folson's The Family and Democratic Society is a valuable wide-ranging and exhaustive survey. Glass's symposium on Social Mobility in Britain includes a mathematical study on marriage by Jerzy Berent. Hans Mol has written a number of papers, two of which were available for study, on interdenominational marriage in Australia, based on census data and an extensive questionnaire survey. Messenger's Two in One Flesh is a weighty presentation of the Catholic theology of marriage. Finally, and nearer home, Ammer's Growing up in an Egyptian Village was written under the guidance of Margaret Mead and modelled on her Coming of Age in Samoa. It is valuable in presenting the sociological aspects of marriage in the contemporary rural Middle East. A limited amount of illustrative material was selected from these books, but it was not the intention to make the present work a comparative study between Kenya and other countries.

For marriage in Africa the Survey of African Marriage and Family Life written by A. Phillips, L. Mair and L. Harries

is a comprehensive survey of all the problems such as bride-wealth, initiation ceremonies, polygyny and the legal aspects of marriage which have confronted missionaries and African Christians in every part of the continent. Its illustrations of tribal customs are drawn from many different countries, but its portrayal of missionary attitudes, which were remarkably uniform, is as relevant to Kenya as to any other country.

Christian Marriage in Africa, by Adrian Hastings, deals with church marriage and the legal status of marriage, so that its field and approach are rather different from the present work, but it contains an excellent account of the development of the Christian doctrine of marriage in Mediaeval times which led to what is referred to here as the 'missionary attitude' to marriage. Hastings' illustrative material is drawn more from Uganda and Malawi than Kenya, and more from Catholic and Anglo-Catholic sources than the predominantly Evangelical Anglican sources employed here.

Primary source material

In all aspects of the survey much scattered material has been obtained from a wide range of academic journals and other periodicals. They are referred to in the footnotes and listed in the Bibliography.

Also listed in the Bibliography are the unpublished written sources. Of these the chief missionary material was obtained from the archives of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (now the United Society for the Propagation of

the Gospel) and the Church Missionary Society, both in London, which I was able to visit in 1969. Both Societies had close contact with Islam and they were the principle Societies in East Africa to do so. Their journals before 1914 contain copious accounts of missionary communications for the edification of their subscribers who, in a more leisurely age, had sufficient time for reading them.

The annual reports of the District Commissioners in the British administration of Kenya were consulted in the Kenya National Archives, Nairobi. They were drawn on particularly for the Coast Province, where contact between Islam and Christianity has been most pronounced.

Local newspapers have been examined for relevant material. The daily press gives a generous coverage to Muslim affairs and has produced a bulky file of press cuttings on this subject in the space of a few years. No orthodox Muslim periodical exists. There have been attempts to remedy this, but so far without success. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission issues two monthly papers of modest size, the East African Times in English, and Mapenzi ya Mungu (The Will of God) in Swahili, both published in Nairobi. They are chiefly propaganda and contain little East African news, apart from recording the arrival and departure of their missionaries from Pakistan and the presentation of copies of the Qur'an to dignitaries. In any case orthodox Muslims are emphatic that the Ahmadiyyas are heretical, so that a Christian observer hesitates to generalise from these newspapers to any Muslim situation

outside the Ahmadiyya sect, despite the latters' pretensions to speak for the Muslim community as a whole.

For the contemporary situation much material which forms the bulk of the primary source material for the study has been gathered by correspondence and interview with expatriate Christian missionaries and with Kenya Christians and Muslims. They have also supplied information on traditional religion. Direct contact with followers of traditional religion has been scanty. Help has been rendered by my Kenyan research assistants David Aoko and Leslie Stephen. The collection of written interviews in the Archives of the United Theological College, Limuru, has been drawn on for accounts of converts, some of this is fairly recent material and some dates back to the early years of the century, with a considerable amount of information on traditional customs, especially those relating to marriage.

Much useful information has been drawn from answers to questionnaire surveys which have been administered to secondary school students, missionaries, Protestant pastors and Catholic clergy during the past five years, in connection with various research projects undertaken by the present writer. The questionnaires as a whole were not specifically on the subject of the present inquiry, but some of the questions were incidentally relevant.

It has also been possible to consult some unpublished manuscripts written in Kenya by university graduates. A number of those, by women authors, were particularly useful to the present study since they drew on female sources not employed by male researchers. All information from these

sources has been assessed critically in the light of first-hand knowledge gained during the author's seventeen years' residence in East Africa.

sources has been assessed critically in the light of first-hand knowledge gained during the author's seventeen years' residence in East Africa.

References

1. The Muslim proportion of the population is less than five per cent except in Northern Province and in four administrative districts in Coast Province. Kenya Population Census 1962. Volume III African Population (Nairobi: Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, 1966), p.49.
2. C.G. Rosberg and J. Nottingham, The Myth of 'Mau Mau'; Nationalism in Kenya (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1966), Chapter IV, 'Cultural Nationalism', pp. 105-135.
3. In 1948, 1962 and 1969.
4. Kenya Population Census 1962, op. cit., p.19.
5. Kenya Population Census 1969, Volume I (Nairobi: Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, 1970), p.1.
6. I. Schapera, Some Problems of Anthropological Research in Kenya Colony (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), p.4.
7. For details of works quoted in this section, see the Bibliography.
8. R. Oliver, The Missionary Factor in East Africa (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1952), p.199n.
9. P. Lienhardt, 'The Mosque College of Lamu and its Social Background', Tanganyika Notes and Records No.53 (1959), p.228.

CHAPTER II

MARRIAGE IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

'African traditional religion' is the name given to the ancient form of religion practised in Kenya by Africans before Arabs, Europeans and Asians brought Islam, Christianity and Hinduism to the country. It is still widely practised at the present time.

Traditional belief appears to the Christian observer to consist of an awareness that the spiritual dimension pervades the whole universe. Spirit is a substance which becomes hypostatized in living beings, both human and animal, and in non-living material objects. When living beings die the spirit continues to exist. Spirit acts upon living human beings and an important aspect of religious activity is to keep that activity favourable. Ancestral connections are strong and link the living-dead (the dead who can still be remembered) to the living in a bond of mutual obligations. Ancestral connections are jointly held by families, clans and tribes and hence there is a communal aspect of religious activities which incorporates social behaviour rites and customs. Everything in traditional life has religious significance.

The link between the world of the living and the living-dead is one of physical ancestry and descent. Marriage, sexual activity and procreation play a large part in traditional

religion since it is through them that the vital link is maintained. The living-dead depend upon their living descendants. Perhaps neither can exist without the other.

Traditional religion has been the research field of anthropologists rather than theologians. The different tribal practices can be observed and described; tribal beliefs rarely find precise articulation. They are expressed in prayers and proverbs rather than in credal statements. Also the lack of interest of theologians in traditional religion has been largely due to the absence of any sacred literature. This gave rise to the belief that Africans 'had no religion'.

African society in Kenya is organised into a number of different tribes, sub-divided into clans, and again into families. The tribe is best defined as a community having a common language, but the concept is a fluid one and clans often have their own dialects. Tribal self-consciousness plays a large part in tribal identity, enhanced by common customs within the tribe which differ from those of neighbouring tribes. A standard work by Murdock¹ defines eight hundred and fifty-three tribes in Africa of which twenty-seven are found in Kenya. On the other hand the 1969 Kenya population census employed a system of forty-one different ethnic categories of Kenya Africans.² Whatever the number, it is beyond the scope of the present work to summarise the customs of all the different tribes in relation to their initiation rites, marriage practices and beliefs, although clearly a comparative survey is overdue and would be valuable to the

country in many ways.³

Instead reference has been made to selected tribes, the basis of selection being that these are the tribes from which material for the subject of this dissertation was drawn. These include the Kikuyu, Embu, Meru and Kamba tribes of the Central Highland Bantu, the Mijikenda,⁴ Taita, Pokomo and Swahili of the Coastal Bantu, and the Luyia, a large Bantu tribe in western Kenya. Material was also gathered from the Luo, a Nilotic tribe; the Nandi, Maasai and Samburu among the Nilo-Hamitic group, and from the Boran and Somali among the Hamitic group.

Works on marriage in traditional religion are obliged to be selective in their illustrations, especially when they endeavour to survey the whole of Africa. In terms of Murdock's classification Mbiti in African Religions and Philosophy⁵ manages to refer to 135 tribes throughout the continent, drawing illustrations from sixteen of the twenty-seven tribes of Kenya. But in his chapter on 'Marriage and Procreation' he refers to only five tribes, of which only one, the Maasai, is found in Kenya. Clearly his material is illustrative and not representative. The Survey of African Marriage and Family Life⁶ lives up to its title even less adequately. The whole book refers to eighty-nine tribes, of which a mere six are found in Kenya. African Ideas of God⁷ contains twelve contributions, none of them from Kenya.

Transfer of religious allegiance between tribes

Whether each tribe possesses its own distinctive religion, or whether it is valid to speak of 'African traditional religion' as a complex on a par with Hinduism, depends on terminology. Titles such as The Soul of the Bantu⁸ suggest a one-religion view. Anthropological monographs point out the wealth of variety between the tribes. Generally the view will be taken here that in comparison with Islam and Christianity, traditional religion can be thought of as a single system, but in this section individual differences will be explored.

Clearly there is no competition between the different tribal religions. If a person is accepted into a tribe from elsewhere, he or she joins in all the tribal ritual. Young Kikuyu children captured by the Kamba and driven to the coast for sale to the Duruma were brought up as part of the Duruma tribe.⁹ Intermarriage took place from time to time between the Maasai and the Kikuyu. The peace-making ceremonies at the conclusions of inter-tribal wars included a symbolic establishment of new relationships by means of intermarriage,¹⁰ or again, as in the great famine of 1882, some Maasai came and settled in Kikuyu country and took Kikuyu wives.¹¹ Wherever a wife joined a new social grouping, whether tribe or clan, she had to leave the old and learn the customs of her adopted community, and her children would be raised in it.¹² Although there have been great migrations of people in Africa in the past, at any given moment the geographical territory of each

tribe is generally well-defined, and it would seem natural for an outsider dwelling there to follow the local tribal custom; or the host tribe may have insisted on it as a condition of residence. In contrast to the proselytising zeal of Christian denominations a traditionalist does not feel that his own tribal religion is so much better that he must convert other tribes to his way of life. Tribal pride exists and is very strong, but customs tend to be regarded as the tribe's own special possession. Nevertheless it cannot be supposed that in the period before written records tribal life was immutable. Ideas and cultural traits permeated from one area to another. There is a clear link between the circumcision practices of the Kikuyu and Maasai indicating a borrowing in one direction or the other, possibly assisted by intermarriage. On the other hand the Luo, a Nilotic tribe who advanced into a Bantu area, have not adopted their Bantu neighbours' practice of circumcision.

There would appear to be no opposition on religious grounds to legitimate inter-tribal marriage. Abduction of girls for sale into slavery, and capture of women in war, would be objected to, but again more from the sense of tribal and personal loss than from the feeling that they had been forcibly converted to another religion. In recent years urban life has brought people of different tribes into close contact. Parkin has studied the social circumstances of Kenyans in Kampala.¹³ He found that the Ugandan women had more independence of action and were involved in tribally mixed

marriage and cohabitation to a greater degree than the migrant women from Kenya, who were usually married to one of their own or a closely related tribe. The incidence of inter-tribal marriage varied considerably. Mixed marriages became rarer the more dissimilar the tribes were. Clearly compatibility of custom, if not religious outlook, was a factor affecting the situation.¹⁴

When a woman transfers from one tribal or clan group to another she automatically accepts all the customs of her adopted group, including a knowledge of that group's living-dead. If traditional religion is regarded as a single system one can say that she does not change her religion by marrying out, but if each tribe is regarded as having its own distinctive religion then a transfer of religious allegiance takes place whenever a woman marries into a different tribe. A cultural transfer of this nature does not arouse the religious problems which would occur in Christianity or Islam because there is no suggestion that she is endangering her immortal soul. A syncretist view is held and intermarriage presents no religious problem.

The strength of traditional religion in Kenya

It is assumed that originally traditional religion was universally practised throughout what is now Kenya. The presence of Muslim colonies along the coast since the eighth century, and the presence of Christians from time to time since the fifteenth, had no effect upon the inland tribes and very little effect upon the coastal tribes until the nineteenth

century. Then, with the opening up of the interior, Muslims and Christians began to spread inland and Africans began to adopt the new religions.

The first census of population which asked for the religious allegiance of the whole population was held in 1948. People who were neither Christian nor Muslim were entered as 'Other'. They will be referred to here as traditionalists. By 1948 the proportion of traditionalists had dropped from 100 per cent to 62.9 per cent, 3.3 million in a total population of 5.25 million. This was approximately the estimated population in 1897 and 1939.¹⁵

In 1962 the number of traditionalists was approximately the same, but since the population had increased by about one-quarter in the intervening fourteen years the proportion of traditionalists had diminished to 38.1 per cent. The natural increase in the traditionalist population had been exactly balanced by conversions to Christianity and Islam, mainly the former, amounting to about sixty thousand a year.¹⁶ If the trend is continuing, as church statistics suggest it is, the same traditionalist population of 3.3 million people would form only 25 per cent of the population in 1973.¹⁷

The 1962 census reported religious allegiance on a district and not a tribal basis, but it can be seen from the figures that the Giryama, Pokot and Maasai remain strongholds of traditionalist belief and practice, followed to a lesser extent by the Meru, Elgeyo, Marakwet, Tugen and the Kamba of Kitui District, in all of which it still at that time held

the allegiance of well over half of the population.¹⁸ The sample survey which asked for religious allegiance did not extend to the Northern Province, but the Samburu and Turkana can be added to the list as well as a number of smaller tribes including the Iteso, Ndorobo, Njemps, Rendille and Tharaka.

Traditional customs relating to marriage

A number of customs surrounding sex and marriage in traditional society will now be considered, selected because of their relevance to the interaction between traditional religion and Islam and Christianity and the transfer of allegiance between them.¹⁹

1. Initiation rites. All the tribes in Kenya have some form of ceremony to mark the transition from childhood to the status of adult. A person who does not undergo the initiation rites may continue to be regarded as a 'child' even though physically mature.²⁰ Generally the rites are associated with the onset of sexual potency. The young people are made aware at this time of their responsibilities as adult members of the tribe. They learn to endure hardship.²¹ They receive explicit instruction in sexual behaviour. The initiation rites are often accompanied by public circumcision of males and clitoridectomy of females which may be regarded as surgical preparation for married life.

2. Attitude to marriage. All traditionalists agree that marriage is the norm of adult life and celibacy is shunned and considered unnatural. Marriage is the focus of existence.

The duty of producing children is a 'religious obligation'. A person who has no physical descendants becomes forever dead. In Meru those who died without children were known by the hateful name Mburatu-iti-luga, 'people-who-do-not-matter'. After death they became evil spirits.²² A person who has children somehow continues to live through them and achieves survival after physical death, though perhaps not eternal life, since the names of the more remote ancestors are already forgotten.

3. Marriage arrangements. There are many different ways of arranging partners for marriage. The Baganda have at least eight different ways of getting married.²³ In some societies the choice is made by the parents, and this may be done even before the children are born. Amongst the Kikuyu infant betrothal was common,²⁴ but young people could also choose their own spouses.²⁵ In other tribes the man selects a bride, but then his parents have to arrange the marriage with the girl's parents, as amongst the Mijikenda²⁶ and the Kamba.²⁷

Prohibited degrees of affinity vary widely. In some tribes a system of clans exists and a man must not marry outside his own clan. In others a man may not marry a woman with whom he has any detectable blood relationship, no matter how remote.²⁸

It is impossible to generalise on the form of the actual wedding. 'There are as many customs of the wedding procedure as there are African peoples.'²⁹ Generally there is less ceremony than might be expected surrounding the actual wedding day because getting married is a process rather than

an event and extends from the initiation rite as far as the birth of the first child.³⁰

The idea of marriage by capture is perpetuated in the mock fight and carrying-off of the bride amongst the Taita and the Kikuyu, either by the man's female relatives or by his male age-mates, but amongst the Kamba the bride is fetched by the husband and taken quietly to his house in the evening with no symbolic abduction.³¹

Virginity at the wedding is highly prized in some tribes, while in others it is more or less expected that the couple would have had sexual intercourse previously, not necessarily between themselves.

4. Bridewealth. The custom of presenting a gift to the bride's parents is practised widely in Africa, though in varying degrees. It is said to be a mistaken idea to suppose that the gift is in any sense a payment, nevertheless in some vernaculars the words used are the same as those for buying or selling something in the market place.³² Current bride-wealth values are so high that a mercenary interest can scarcely be discounted.

5. Polygyny. 'Most Africans still consider that sexual access to a plurality of women is a male right.'³³ Southall's comment on the situation in contemporary Africa illustrates how little the acceptance of polygyny has been altered by recent social change. Acceptance requires justification, but the justification may not be logical. It is said that the more wives a man has the more children he is likely to have and hence the stronger the power of 'immortality' in that family.

But if the tribe as a whole firmly believes that it is vitally important for each man to beget physical descendants, it would be more logical and fair to outlaw polygyny, since the more wives one man marries the more men there will be who will be cut off from immortality through not being able to marry and have children. A distinction must be made between universal acceptance of polygyny and the degree to which it is practised. One solution is proposed in Appendix A.

Again polygyny is defended on the ground that it helps to reduce unfaithfulness and resort to prostitution on the part of the polygynous husband. But where one man takes eleven wives it increases the temptation to sin on the part of the ten other men thus deprived.

6. Divorce. While wide variation in practice is reported across the breadth of Africa, divorce appears to be unknown or very rare amongst the tribes of Kenya. The barren wife need not be divorced when it is possible to marry a second wife, and in a rural agricultural society every wife is an economic asset. In some tribes if divorce occurs the husband may get back some of the bridewealth; in others nothing is returned to him.

7. Sexual offences. Fornication is condoned in those societies mentioned above where virginity at marriage is not highly prized. Amongst the Kamba premarital intercourse is expected, but it is shameful for an unmarried girl to become pregnant. Abortion is caused by eating wet cow-dung.³⁴

Amongst the Kikuyu the sexes sleep together before marriage

without sexual intercourse being supposed to take place.

In former times when adultery was discovered it was often severely dealt with; the punishment might extend to mutilation or death.

8. Ritual use of sex. Sexual intercourse may take place in public as a ritual part of certain ceremonies. In other areas sex is used as an expression of hospitality, so that a man may lend his wife, sister or daughter to a visitor for the night. Where the male age-group is an important institution the members of the age-groups may all be entitled to sexual access to each other's wives.

These eight aspects reveal the deep involvement of traditional religion with sex and marriage and related matters.

Contemporary incidence of polygyny

Polygyny is a widely accepted institution, so that many tribes can be described as polygynous. Not all of them practise polygyny at any given time and Mbiti estimates that where it is most commonly practised the proportion of polygynous families would not exceed one in four of the population.³⁵

A question on polygyny has never been asked in a census in Kenya. The question was raised in the Tanganyika census of 1957 and the results reported on, subdivided by Region, but not by religion.³⁶ Muslim polygynists were thus included with traditionalists, but the highest incidence of polygyny

was found to be in the areas where traditional religion was strongest. Table I shows the extent of polygyny in Tanganyika Territory in 1957.

TABLE I
THE EXTENT OF POLYGYNY IN TANGANYIKA, 1957

Number of wives	Percentage of adult males	Percentage of adult females
None	26.7	7.2 (unmarried)
1	57.8	57.8
2	12.6	25.2
3	2.1	6.3
4	0.5	2.0
5 or more	0.3	1.5
	100.0	100.0

The table shows that 15.5 per cent of the adult males and 35.0 per cent of the adult females were living in a polygynous relationship. These figures would agree with Mbiti's estimate depending on whether his definition of 'polygynous family' is in terms of the father or the mother relationship.

In Kenya an investigation was carried out by Spencer in 1959 into the degree of polygyny practised by the Samburu.³⁷ Tax clerks were asked to record the age-sets and number of wives of all Samburu men when they came to pay their taxes. The results are shown in Table II.

The table shows that young Samburu men are obliged to postpone their first marriages until after 25 years of age, but that thereafter their chances of taking more than

one wife are high and increase steadily with age. Polygyny is the accepted pattern of society, but at the time when the survey was made only 1,330 men out of a total of 5,736 actually had more than one wife, that is, only 23.2 per cent of the adult male population were polygynists at that time.

TABLE II

NUMBER OF SAMBURU ADULT MALES AGAINST NUMBER OF WIVES, 1959

Age-set and approximate age	Number of wives								Percentage of men with more than one wife
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		
Merisho 65	4	143	129	68	25	1	3	60.6	
Kiliako 50	10	569	495	128	19	1	-	52.7	
Mekuri 40	28	828	381	34	7	-	-	33.0	
Kimaniki 25	2435	389	39	-	-	-	-	1.4	
Total	2477	1929	1044	230	51	2	3	23.2	

Nevertheless the percentage of polygynists in an age-set increases with age so that 60.6 per cent of those who survived to the age of 65 years had more than one wife.

There was a total of 5,736 men and 1,330 polygynists had 3,010 wives between them. Assuming the population contained 5,736 women (which the report did not make explicit) then 52.5 per cent of the women would be involved in polygynous relationships.

Figures obtained by Kinoti from the tax records in the District Commissioner's office at Keru showed a remarkably similar pattern of polygyny in that area. The incidence being slightly higher since 69 per cent of the men aged 47 years were polygynous, a percentage not reached in the Samburu

until age 65 years.³⁸ Calculations made on the 1962 census data suggest that in the total population 24 per cent of the married men were polygynous, involving 39 per cent of all married women. Clearly the incidence of polygyny is widespread and substantial and the expectation and acceptance of polygyny even higher.

Contemporary incidence of clitoridectomy

No survey is known to have been taken of the contemporary incidence of clitoridectomy in Kenya, and it is doubtful if a survey would yield reliable results. Opinions and impressions differ considerably and depend upon (1) whether the informant is estimating the actual situation, or what he or she thinks ought to be the situation, (2) whether the estimate is of the proportion of clitoridectomised women in the population or the proportion of young women currently undergoing the operation, (3) whether the estimate is for a rural or an urban area, an educated or a less educated group of people, or (4) which tribe it applies to.

Kiriro reports for the Embu that

Female circumcision is practised as frequently today in Embu and other parts of Kikuyu country as it had been in the 1930's. The only exceptions are girls who have been educated and have managed to remain in educated circles away from the villages. Resolutions of African District Councils, excommunication from the Church, fines --- all have been wholly unable to suppress the custom.³⁹

Amongst the Nandi educated young women speak out against it, but the village matriarchs regard themselves as the guardians of the old customs and fight to defend them against

social and religious change.⁴⁰ A case was cited of a young man who went away to college, leaving his fiancée at home. While he was away the girl was circumcised to prepare her as a pleasant surprise upon his return. When he came back and found what had taken place he broke off the engagement and refused to have anything more to do with her.⁴¹ In Meru at Kaaga Methodist Girls' Intermediate School in 1959 it was found that 40 per cent of the girls had been operated on.⁴² Kiriro's remarks on the Embu apply also to the Meru, and Kinoti's observation that most people think that only five per cent of the girls are now operated on indicates a wild optimism. All one can conclude for the country as a whole is that the custom is still widespread but is gradually decreasing, particularly amongst the educated.

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CHAPTER III

MARRIAGE IN ISLAM

The Muslim population of Kenya

The Muslim population of Kenya was reliably estimated to form about six per cent of the total population of the country in the 1962 census of population.¹ There is no evidence to suggest that this proportion has changed significantly in the intervening years and so, allowing for the annual increase in population of 3.4 per cent, the Muslim population numbered some 800,000 in 1974.²

A number of different communities go to make up this population.³ There are (1) the Digo tribe, the most highly islamised Barhi tribe in Kenya, (2) the Somalis, who occupy the north-eastern portion of the country, (3) the Arabs, who live mainly at the Coast, (4) some Asians, originating from India and Pakistan, and (5) a small and scattered population of Africans of other tribes and of mixed blood, often calling themselves Swahilis. The Coast is sometimes referred to as the stronghold of Islam in Kenya, and there are towns at the Coast where the Muslim presence is noticeable, but only one-quarter of the population of the Coast Province is Muslim and in only two administrative districts, Lamu and Tana River, do they form a majority. The growth of Mombasa through the influx of up-country people has brought the Muslim proportion of the population down to one-third.⁴

Muslim influence is greater than the size of the Muslim population would suggest and, perhaps because of this, Muslim sources frequently claim a proportion of one-quarter of the total population for Islam, but these claims lack any supporting evidence.⁵ The Muslim influence and cultural prominence is due to several historical reasons. (1) When European explorers reached Mombasa and the coastal area they found it under Arab Muslim control. (2) All of the Arabs in Kenya and one-quarter of the Asian community were Muslim, and under the colonial system of socio-ethnic stratification these communities were allotted a status superior to that of the bulk of the population. (3) British administrators generally adopted a favourable attitude towards Muslims for political considerations which extended beyond Kenya. (4) The Muslim community, often factional when left to itself, became united and vociferous whenever it considered that Islam was in danger. (5) European missionaries saw the Muslim community as a competitor in their work of evangelisation. They sent alarmist reports back to Europe about the growth and spread of Islam.⁶

Marriage

There are some similarities between traditional and Muslim marriage. For both marriage is the normal state of adults and celibacy is an abnormality regarded with horror. For both marriage practice lies in the observance of 'custom'. The orthodox majority of Muslims are known as Sunnis because they follow the sunna or custom of Muhammad. This custom is

in written form in the Qur'an and Traditions, unlike that of traditional religion which was transmitted orally. The Muslim Traditions (ahādith, Arabic) are a vast mass of literature in Arabic, not readily available in English, recording the customs which Muhammad followed during his lifetime, down to the remotest detail. They serve as a guide to the devout Muslims. The Ahmadiyyas have published a selection in English, a Manual of Hadith,⁷ which appears to be acceptable, for want of a better, to orthodox Muslims in Kenya, most of whom cannot understand Arabic. Wensinck's Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition⁸ gives a good idea of the subject matter of the Traditions, though not the actual wording. Christians used to verse references being given for scripture quotations would notice the absence of these references when Kenya Muslims quote the Traditions. The usual style is 'There is a tradition which says...'

Published material on Islam in Kenya by Kenya Muslims is scanty. There are small collections of selected Traditions in Swahili and booklets on the correct form for saying prayers and observing Ramadhan. Four booklets in Swahili on marriage and divorce have come to notice.⁹ They all reproduce the orthodox teaching on marriage and divorce according to the Sunni Shāfi'ī school of law, derived from the Qur'an and the Traditions.

The norm of marriage¹⁰

Marriage in Islam is regarded as a meritorious (nafla)

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The norm of marriage¹⁰

Marriage in Islam is regarded as a meritorious (nāfila)

act.¹¹ A man gains merit by marrying, provided he has adequate financial means to support a wife and family. Marriage is a contract in civil law (‘aqd al-nikāh contract of marriage, Arabic). The word nikāh originally meant sexual intercourse, but is now applied to the marriage contract. In Islamic law the contract may be performed by any adult male Muslim who knows the correct form of words. In Kenyan law it may only be performed by a qādī (Muslim judge, kadhi Swahili) or his accredited representative. The bridegroom concludes the contract with the legal guardian (walī) of the bride, and he agrees to pay the nuptial gift (mahr) to the wife herself. The contract must be concluded in the presence of witnesses. Privacy between husband and wife, and consummation, are not essential to the contract, but are facts which may be of legal relevance when the marriage is dissolved.¹² The marriage may be terminated by divorce at any time. There is no sense in which marriage is regarded as sacramental, or a life-time's contract, or in which married people have irrevocably entered a different state from that of the unmarried. In this Islam differs from Christianity and from traditional religion. Marriage does not produce any community of property between husband and wife and the woman retains complete freedom of dealing.

The quality of a woman

In Islam the most highly esteemed woman is bikr, a virgin, preferably one who is pious. Second to her in quality is the

thaiyib, a non-virgin, who has already been married, or who has lost her virginity through rape. A thaiyib is not recommended for a young man marrying for the first time. The physical state of the woman is entered on the Kenyan Mohammedan marriage certificate. There is no corresponding description of the physical state of the bridegroom.

Affinity

According to the sharī'ah or Muslim law, it is preferable for a man to marry one of his relatives, not too close to become incestuous, but within the clan. Incest is guarded against by numerous impediments to marriage, all based on relationship.¹³ Some of these are specified in the Qur'an.¹⁴ Cousin-marriages are popular amongst the Arabs in Kenya, the reasons advanced being that such marriages tend to be more stable, and that they retain the family property within the family. Tanner has made a survey of cousin-marriages amongst the Arabs of Mombasa.¹⁵ This practice is in striking contrast with the traditional custom of most tribes, where cousin-marriages were regarded as incestuous. Amongst the Luo, for example, an extreme case, any discoverable blood relationship is an impediment to marriage.¹⁶

Equality of birth

Marriage eligibility in Islamic law is governed by the principle of kafā'a, equality of birth (kufuu, Swahili). According to this principle a woman should not be given in marriage to a man who is in any way her inferior. The

requirements differ a little between the different sects and legal schools of Islam. Most Muslims in Kenya are Shafiite, and for this school al-Nawawī states the following conditions:

In order to determine whether the suitor is a good match, the following must be taken into consideration:-

1. Absence of redhibitory defects of body.
2. Liberty. A slave is not a suitable match for a free woman, nor an enfranchised slave for a woman born free.
3. Birth. An Arab woman makes a mesalliance by marrying a man belonging to another nation; a woman of the Koraish does so if her husband is not of the Koraish; a woman who is a descendant of Hashim or of Abd-~~el-Mottalib~~, i.e. who is of the same blood as the Prophet, can make a suitable marriage only in the same family. In the case of marriages between persons belonging to foreign nations, like the Persians, genealogy must be taken into consideration as in the case of the Arabs.
4. Character. A man of notorious misconduct is not a suitable match for an honest woman.
5. Profession. A man exercising a humble profession is not a suitable match for the daughter of a man in a more distinguished profession....¹⁷

The Sharifs of Lamu are said to be particularly disliked among the Arabs of the Coast for their discriminating invocation of the principle of kafā'a when it suits their own advantage, since they refuse to allow their women-folk to marry non-Sharifs. The degrees of religion are, firstly, Muslims, secondly members of the ahl al-kitāb, the 'people of the book', originally referring to Jews and Christians, thirdly followers of other religions, described in the Qur'an as 'idolaters'.¹⁸

A small number of Arabs are Ibadīs who do not follow the Shafiite school. Anderson states concerning them that 'while they agree that no non-Arab is the equal of an Arab woman, differ among themselves concerning the other constituent

text which justified such action.²⁴

It will be seen that there are three distinct features of Islamic law relevant to the present discussion, namely kafa'a or equality in marriage, waliya or guardianship in marriage, and ijbar or compulsion in marriage, each with its own legal provisions and safeguards.

Bridewealth

The nuptial gift (mahr) was originally purchase money among the pre-Islamic Arabs and was handed to the girl's wali.²⁵ In the Qur'an it became a reward, a legitimate compensation given to the wife. If the marriage was dissolved the wife kept the mahr. Payment is an essential requirement in order to legalise the marriage in Islamic law. There is a space on the Kenyan Mohammedan marriage certificate in which the amount of the mahr must be entered. However, beyond a certain minimum amount (required by Kenyan law, not by Islamic law) the sum may never actually be paid during the lifetime of the husband, unless divorce ensues, and the wife may finally recover it from her husband's estate only after his death. Mahr is mentioned in the Traditions. Some suggest that it must be neither too high nor too low. Others show that a poor man could give the mahr to his wife in the form of instruction in the Qur'an. In Kenya the legal mahr is usually a nominal sum, often equal in value to a Maria Theresa dollar.

Among the Arab-Swahilis at the Coast a much larger amount is customarily agreed upon between the parents of the

couple. This is called the mahari, a Swahili term obviously deriving from the Arabic. This sum, which is not stated in the legal contract, depends upon the physical state of the bride, and may amount to six thousand shillings at the present time, three to five thousand shillings being commonly paid for an educated virgin. Although paid by the man to his bride, the money usually goes to the bride's mother, who may spend a proportion of it in preparing the bride's trousseau, and on marriage celebrations. The mahari is an example of the interaction of Islamic and traditional customs. Its advantage over traditional custom is that it belongs to the newly-married couple and does not go to the bride's father; its disadvantage is that in practice much of it goes to the bride's mother to be squandered on the extravagances of an elaborate wedding occasion. The mahari may be paid in kind, for example in jewellery and household possessions. On the other hand it may be waived if man and woman are close relatives, and it may also be foregone if there is a premarital pregnancy, when the woman's parents are anxious to have her married without delay.

Choice of marriage partner

The initiative for choosing a wife rests with the man, but it has been the custom in Kenya for a young man's female relatives to play a large part in choosing a wife for him. They may visit the home of a prospective bride, probably without disclosing the real reason for their visit, and secretly appraise the girl's manners and appearance.

According to the shari^c a man should see his fiancée before the marriage, but the Kenyan custom has been that he should not see her before the wedding night. Modern social conditions are making this custom unenforceable. An enthusiastic local writer has this to say of the id al-fitr celebrations:

It is indeed joyous to be at the Coast, particularly at Mombasa, during the Idd celebrations. The youngsters make a point of going to Makadara ground where there are hundreds of festivities to enjoy with friends and relatives. This is popular with young men and women who have no opportunity of meeting at other times as tradition forbids males from meeting females in secluded places. Many romantic episodes have started from Makadara during Idd resulting in happy marriages.²⁶

Written in 1968 this paragraph illustrates the extent to which Muslim girls' lives are still circumscribed by long-standing conventions. Changes are beginning to appear but the contrast with the freedom of movement enjoyed by Christian schoolgirls in Kenya is still considerable.

Inheritance of widows

In pre-Muslim times the Arabs considered a wife to be part of the estate of her deceased husband. The heir simply continued the marriage of the deceased. This resembles the Levirate marriage in the Old Testament and the traditional practice of certain tribes, notably the Luo. In the Qur'an this custom was made subject to the consent of the widow, eliminating one of the more objectionable aspects of traditional practice.

Ritual use of sex

Sexual intercourse is regarded as a private matter in Islam and the practices described under this heading in the chapter on traditional religion are quite contrary to Islamic custom. As in the Old Testament, sexual abstinence is practised at times in order to enhance the sanctity of one's condition, thus abstinence is enjoined upon the pilgrim when he approaches Mecca and assumes the ihram (sacred state, Arabic).²⁷ Sexual intercourse is one of the things which, if indulged in during the hours of daylight, are considered to break the fast of Ramadhan.²⁸

Polygyny

Early Christian missionaries in East Africa felt that Islam had one great advantage over Christianity in competing for the allegiance of traditionalists, and that was in the practice of polygyny. It is true that polygyny has been regarded as a legitimate custom throughout Islamic history. It is also true that Muslims today are not very happy about the situation.

There is in fact only one specific reference to polygyny in the Qur'an.²⁹ In this verse a Muslim man is permitted to take up to four wives concurrently. Furthermore, apart from Muhammad himself no other person is mentioned in the Qur'an as being a polygynist. There are six Old Testament characters in the Qur'an who are seen from the Old Testament records to be polygynists,³⁰ yet the Qur'an makes no reference

to their state of polygyny, nor does it draw on their example as support for the practice. There are several verses in which it is apparent that Muhammad has more than the four wives permitted to other Muslims. It is described as 'a Privilege for thee above the rest of the Faithful.'³¹ Elsewhere it suggests that polygyny is a cause of domestic dissension.³²

Modernist Muslims regard monogamy as the ideal. Muslim reformers have devoted their efforts towards giving a monogamous interpretation to the one verse mentioned which permits polygyny. Ameer Ali, an active Muslim reformer and writer in English on Islam seventy years ago, comments 'It is worthy of note that the clause in the Koran which contains the permission to contract four contemporaneous marriages, is immediately followed by a sentence which cuts down the significance of the preceding passage to its normal and legitimate dimensions.'³³ By 'normal and legitimate' he refers to monogamy.

He continues, 'The passage runs thus, "You may marry two, three or four wives, but not more." The subsequent lines declare, "but if you cannot deal equitably and justly with all, you shall marry only one".' Ameer Ali's interpretation of this is that 'As absolute justice in matters of feeling is impossible, the Koranic prescription amounts in reality to a prohibition.'³⁴

This interpretation is widely accepted amongst educated Muslims in East Africa, and is frequently quoted, greatly to the encouragement of monogamy as the norm of Muslim marriage

though the critical observer may be allowed to ask with Guillaume why, if a contingency is impossible, should the Qur'an legislate for it.³⁵ The polygyny of Muhammad is accounted for on this interpretation as a temporary expediency, not intended to serve as a model for all time. Ameer Ali again gives the acceptable modern view. He believes that Muhammad, 'poor and without resource himself when he undertook the burden of supporting the women whom he married in strict accordance with the old patriarchal institution, was undergoing a sacrifice of no light character',³⁶ and that 'By taking them into his family, Mohammed provided for them in the only way which the circumstances of the age and the people rendered possible.'³⁷ This interpretation finds favour in East Africa today, and is in accord with the Qur'an,³⁸ although it is not used by the Ahmadiyyas, who feel that the opportunity for plural marriage is useful in their missionary work amongst Christians.

Contemporary incidence of polygyny

In view of the commonly held opinion amongst Christians that every Muslim man has four wives, it would be a useful exercise to try and ascertain the facts. Unfortunately information on polygyny has never been asked for in a Kenya population census. A question was asked in the Tanganyika census of 1957, but the results, tabulated in Chapter II above, was reported for the population as a whole, without distinguishing Muslims from traditionalists.³⁹

The Arab community was reported on separately in the Kenya 1962 census. This ethnic group is entirely Muslim, but unfortunately it did not show the characteristics of a stable population, and so no conclusions on the extent of polygyny could be drawn from the data. In the Arab population there were 18,084 males to 15,964 females, a male excess of thirteen per cent over the females. This resulted in a deficit of wives, there being 6,356 married male Arabs of fifteen years of age and over compared with only 5,832 married females. From these figures alone it might be concluded that 524 men at least had taken non-Arab wives, and this was noted in the census report which described the situation as 'anomalous' and concluded that widespread intermarriage exists between Arab men and African women. Further information was not available from the census data, and, it is clear, these figures furnish no evidence regarding the extent of polygyny.⁴⁰

Another possible approach to the problem was to take the population data for Lamu, a District which in 1962 was more than ninety per cent Muslim. The 1969 figures for the District show approximately equal numbers of males and females in each age group, but a breakdown by marital status was not available. This evidence is insufficient to draw any conclusions on the incidence of polygyny.⁴¹

There is therefore a lack of reliable statistical data to support oral and field evidence that at the present time the incidence of polygyny amongst Muslims in Kenya is quite low.

Polygyny amongst Muslims elsewhere

Goode, in his book on World Revolutions and Family Patterns, points out that the picture of every Muslim man owning a harem of wives has always been a western male fantasy which could not possibly accord with reality. Apart from anything else, he writes, the natural numerical equality of the sexes militates against it.⁴² In this he is not correct, as an examination of Appendix A will show. Daniel shows that even from the seventeenth century, when modern English writers began to take an interest in the East, it was recognised by impartial observers that monogamy was a common practice amongst the Turks.⁴³ One way in which the fantasy has arisen is in the confusion between polygyny and frequent divorce and remarriage. Thus Cromer thought that polygyny was common in Egypt, but this is one of the illustrations he gives:

The first thing an Egyptian of the lower classes will do when he gets a little money is to marry a second wife. A groom in my stables was divorced and re-married eleven times in the course of a year or two.⁴⁴

His observation is really on frequent divorce and re-marriage and has little bearing on polygyny. Lane, writing more than one hundred years ago, estimated that in 1835 no more than five per cent of Egyptian married men were polygynous.⁴⁵

Goode gives the following estimates of the extent of polygyny in certain Muslim countries, based on recent census data shown in Table III. The percentage of women who were wives of polygynous men would be at least double the figures given for men, so that in Iraq, for example, at least 15.6

per cent of the women would be in this condition, almost one in six. Nevertheless for Algeria, Egypt and Tunisia the percentages are not high.

TABLE III

THE EXTENT OF POLYGYNY IN CERTAIN MUSLIM COUNTRIES

Country	Year	Percentage of polygynists among married men
Algeria	1958	1.9
Egypt	1947	3.6
Iraq	1947	7.8
Morocco	1952	6.6
Tunisia	1946	4.5

It should be noted that the figures refer to percentages of married men and not adult males.

There is an atmosphere of reform abroad in some modern Muslim countries. The Ministry of Social Affairs set up in Egypt in 1939 made the restriction of polygyny one of its first aims. In this they had the support of educated opinion, but had to contend with the opposition of the religious leaders.⁴⁷ Polygyny was outlawed in Tunisia in 1956 and there was little outcry. In Syria the law requires the prior approval of a qadi before a second wife can be taken and proof of financial capability has to be shown.⁴⁸ In Kenya the approval of an Ismaili Provincial Council is required before an Ismaili can take a second wife, and this is normally granted only when the first wife is barren, or chronically ill, or insane and permanently unable to perform her domestic duties.⁴⁹ The standard Swahili commentary on the Qur'an, written by an

orthodox Kenya Muslim, prefers monogamy to polygyny.⁵⁰

The attractions of polygyny may still be used by Ahmadiyyas as a means of enticing Christians into Islam, with little success, but most orthodox Muslims prefer to be thought of as modern, and monogamous.

Divorce

The Qur'an lays down comparatively detailed regulations regarding divorce (talāq, Arabic) and these improved the position of divorced women in the time of Muhammad compared with their position amongst the pre-Islamic Arabs.⁵¹ The Quranic injunctions are further elaborated in the Traditions.⁵² Before the rise of Islam the right to a one-sided dissolution of marriage belonged exclusively to the husband, as in the Old Testament, and the woman could be sent away penniless. The Qur'an improves the position to the extent that when the woman is divorced she is entitled to retain her legal mahr. Divorce should not be instantaneous, but the formula of divorce ought to be pronounced by the husband in three separate repudiations during three successive states of his wife's post-menstrual purification, or during three successive monthly intervals for a wife past her menopause. However, it became customary to give the three repudiations in one declaration, and this was accepted as valid.

Under Islamic law the wife may demand the dissolution of her marriage when she comes of age, or on the grounds of the impotence, or lunacy, or chronic illness of her husband.

The marriage also ceases when it becomes invalid, for example through either husband or wife apostasising from Islam, or if the wife, being a slave, becomes her husband's property.⁵³

Contemporary incidence of divorce

Table IV shows the number of adults who were recorded as widowed, divorced or separated, in the 1962 census.⁵⁴

TABLE IV

WIDOWED, DIVORCED OR SEPARATED ADULTS, KENYA 1962

	Numbers		Percentages	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Africans	(38,000)	(175,000)	2.0	8.1
Asians	803	2,575	1.5	5.5
Arabs	473	1,509	4.5	16.8
Europeans	562	1,573	2.5	8.5
All Kenya, 1969	98,029	396,922	3.7	14.5

(The percentages read thus: 2.0 per cent of adult male Africans were widowed, divorced or separated). The numbers of females are three to four times greater than the numbers of males in every case. In 1969 the figures for the total population were broken down further, 'widowed' being distinguished from 'divorced or separated'. Thus the figure of 14.5 given in the Table was divided into 11.1 per cent widowed and 3.4 per cent divorced or separated.⁵⁵ The much larger number of females than males who are widowed is a consequence of women beginning their married life at an earlier age than men. It is difficult to draw any conclusion from the data about different patterns of divorce between Muslims, or Arabs, and

other sections of the community. If the incidence of divorce amongst Muslims is higher, they do not delay very long before marrying again.

The figures for Muslim marriages and divorces used to be returned by some District Commissioners of strongly Muslim districts in their annual reports. Lamu is the district in Kenya with the highest proportion of Muslims in the population. In 1935 there were 490 Muslim marriages registered and 332 divorces; in 1960 there were 470 marriages to 246 divorces. Divorces expressed as a proportion of marriages were 68 per cent and 52 per cent for these two typical years.⁵⁶ These proportions are high and a further check was made on figures for the whole country. The Chief Kadhi of Kenya kindly furnished figures for the whole country for 1972. Although these were not quite complete, the returns available showed a total of 3,512 marriages and 1,277 divorces, divorces being 36 per cent of the marriages.⁵⁷

These figures suggest a rather high divorce rate. The average Muslim marriage would appear to be short-lived, although individual marriages may be life-long. Also the incidence of divorce may vary between different sub-groups within the Muslim community. Tanner investigated cousin marriages in the Afro-Arab community of Mombasa and found that out of 817 cousin marriages there were only 56 divorces. This at first sight supports the view that cousin marriages are more stable than others. But he also found that there were only 36 divorces amongst 510 non-cousin marriages.

Divorces as a proportion of marriages are almost exactly seven per cent in both cases. Compared with the Chief Kadhi's information this suggests that the sub-group which Tanner was investigating was not representative of the Muslim population as a whole in this respect.⁵⁸

The percentages given above of divorces to marriages compare with 54 per cent for major cities in Egypt in 1931.⁵⁹ In Algeria the rate fluctuates from year to year, but has gradually fallen from about 35 to about 10 per cent since 1900.⁶⁰ Goode, who quotes these figures, discusses several factors distorting them such as increasing literacy, higher rate of registration, and quiet resumption of marriage by divorced couples amongst the richer Arab families. Referring to the Middle East he remarks 'Especially for the poor, divorce was the Arab's polygyny.'⁶¹ This could be true of African Muslims in Kenya. A further distortion of vital statistics might be caused by more importance being attached to registering a divorce than a marriage. Indeed in Kenya amongst the Muslim Pokomo of Chara Location on the lower Tana River marriage was always according to Pokomo traditional custom, and would therefore not be registered with the mudir (former Muslim official, Swahili).⁶² A traditionalist couple becoming Muslim are not required to be remarried under Islamic law,⁶³ but if they later divorce it would be counted as a Muslim divorce. For these various reasons the number of divorces in the statistics at our disposal may be inflated compared with the number of marriages.

The balance of the evidence suggests, however, that fairly frequent divorce is a feature of a major part of the Muslim community of Kenya, and since it is not a feature of traditionalist life the missionaries might have done better to point this out to their converts, rather than bemoaning the Muslims' supposed advantage in polygyny.

The law on mixed marriages

Inter-faith marriages between Muslims and non-Muslims are not forbidden, but there are a number of Quranic verses which govern such marriages, and their application has been extended by the principles of Islamic law to situations in Kenya and elsewhere where conversions to and from Islam take place.

A Muslim man cannot marry an idolatress,⁶⁴ but he may marry 'virtuous women of those who have received the Scriptures before you', namely Jewish and Christian women, the implication being that the wife need not become a Muslim.⁶⁵ This situation occurred with Muhammad's wife Mary the Copt. Jews and Christians are together known in Islam as ahl al-kitāb, the people of the Book, in distinction from traditionalists, on account of their possessing books of divine revelation. Shāfi'ī law restricts this concession by further conditions to such an extent as to prohibit it in practice, so that the woman is almost obliged to become a Muslim.⁶⁶ However marriages between Muslim men and Christian women occur in East Africa where Shāfi'ī law is generally followed. A

paragraph in the Tanzanian Islamic Law (Restatement) Act of 1964 suggests that an African Christian woman marrying a Muslim could not claim to one of the ahl al-kitāb and so retain her faith. It observes that according to the Shāfi'ī school no person shall be deemed to be a kitabīa or kitabī unless it is shown that such a person's ancestors, dating back to the time of Muhammad, were kitabīs.⁶⁷

A woman of atheist or secular views is not covered by these rules, but if the matter were ever contested she would probably be regarded as having the religion of her parents of grandparents, since the rule is more concerned with the community to which she belongs than with the state of her own private religious beliefs.

A Muslim woman cannot under any circumstances be married to an idolater,⁶⁸ and this is extended to include all non-Muslims,⁶⁹ probably through the application of the principle of kafā'a. Thus although Kenyan Arabs object to the Sharifs of Lamu applying this principle against them, they do not hesitate to apply it against non-Muslims.

If a husband and wife, being non-Muslims, wish to become Muslim, there is no need for them to be re-married. Their marriage under their previous custom or religion remains valid, although it might be registered in Kenya under Muslim law and the Muhammadan Marriages Ordinance by the issue of a marriage certificate and the payment of the legal mahr.

If either the husband or wife of a traditionalist couple becomes a Muslim, the marriage immediately becomes

technically invalid and the wife is regarded as divorced and commences her ḥidda period of waiting (eda, Swahili). If the second spouse becomes a Muslim before the period of four months and ten days elapses, then the marriage is immediately reinstated. If a wife refuses to accept Islam with her husband, then after the ḥidda has elapsed she is a divorced woman even without the formal pronouncement of the talaka. This method of obtaining a divorce is unknown to nominal Christian husbands who, by employing it, would save themselves much expense and inconvenience.

If a traditionalist with more than four wives becomes a Muslim he should choose four of them to continue as his wives and divorce all the others. This applies even if they all decide to become Muslim with him. If none of them becomes Muslim, then he must divorce them all and choose some Muslim woman to marry. Again, if the customs of his tribe allow a traditionalist to marry two sisters, or to marry or inherit his father's sister, (shangazi, Swahili), even if they become Muslim with him he is obliged to divorce them and any others who are in a jam^c or prohibited relationship under Muslim law (maharimu wake, Swahili).⁷⁰

If a Muslim apostasises from his religion his wife is automatically divorced, and if a wife apostasises she is also automatically divorced.^{71,72} There are severe punishments prescribed in Islam for apostasy, but these are not legally applicable in East Africa. Thus it is always possible for a Muslim wife in desperate circumstances to feign apostasy in

order to obtain a divorce, but no case of the use of this stratagem in Kenya has come to our notice.

The Asians in Kenya

A brief mention will be made here of the Asian communities. These comprise people who originated from the Indian sub-continent. Formerly holding a key position in the social and economic structure, they are rapidly declining in numbers and importance. Their religious influence on the country is slight. Their strength at the 1962 Census is shown in Table V.

TABLE V
THE ASIANS IN KENYA, 1962

Religious Community	Number	Percentage
Hindu	97,841	55.4
Muslim	40,057	22.7
Sikh	21,169	12.0
Christian	16,524	9.3
Other	1,022	0.6
Total	176,613	100.0

The Muslims included approximately 10,000 Ismailis, 3,000 Ithnasharis and 2,000 Bohoras, the rest being Sunnis of the Hanafi school.⁷⁴ The Christians were almost all Catholic Goans. In 1969 the Asians numbered 139,037, showing the decline common to all non-African communities. Of these 60,994 were Kenya citizens.⁷⁵ The decline is likely to continue.

Wilson's description of the Asian communities of Mombasa

applies to Kenya as a whole. Sociologically they are 'closed ethnic groups juxtaposed within each of the two major religious divisions. Each prefers to marry endogamously and exceptions are not only rare, but generally condemned.' He lists at least eleven Muslim and twelve Hindu groups which, with others, total twenty-eight or more communities averaging under one thousand members each.⁷⁶ Rigid adherence to endogamy has been a potent factor in minimising their influence in the religious complexion of Kenya. Ismaili sources claim a few scattered African Ismailis and Hindus claim a few African Hindus at Nakuru, but in neither case is there any claim to Afro-Asian intermarriage. Hollingsworth states that in the nineteenth century it was a fairly common practice for Indians who had left their wives in India to keep ~~some~~ concubines,⁷⁷ but more recently Trimingham has found that Shia Muslims do not attempt to proselytise Africans, and do not take African wives.⁷⁸ Lofchie observed an absence of intermarriage between the Asians and other communities in Zanzibar.⁷⁹ Terence Day has found Asian women in the Eastleigh section of Nairobi who were forced into prostitution by economic difficulties. From prostitution some have formed temporary liaisons with African men, and some of these were semi-permanent. He had observed family groups of Asian mother, African father and their children walking in City Park, completely ostracised by other Asians. These people were quite without religion.⁸⁰ The Presbyterian Church engaged a minister from India to work at their Eastleigh Community Centre, but the response was very poor.

The outright refusal of the Asian communities to intermarry is bitterly resented by Africans in East Africa, and in Zanzibar and Uganda Asian girls have been forcibly married, sometimes by leading African government officials. It was noticeable that the furore raised by the Asians of Kenya in the newspapers and elsewhere met with very little support from other communities, most of whom seemed to think that the Asians had only themselves to blame because of their persistent endogamy which, in independent Kenya, is difficult to distinguish from an attitude of racial superiority and disdain for Africans.⁸¹

From the Asian point of view endogamy is defended on the grounds of a very high view being taken of marriage. Amongst the Hindus divorce is practically unknown and there is no plural marriage. A barren marriage is saved by the couple adopting orphans from within the community.⁸² Kapadia describes the sacramental view of marriage prevalent in India, and how the status of women has gradually been raised to meet modern changes.⁸³ Parallel developments can be observed in Kenya.

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CHAPTER IV

TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND ISLAM -- A SYNTHESIS

Traditional religion and Islam, described in the previous two chapters, are two distinct religious systems capable of existing in close proximity with scarcely any interaction. The people of the Kenya coast furnish a clear demonstration of this since Islam existed at Mombasa for many centuries without being embraced by the neighbouring Nyika or Mijikenda tribes. It will be suggested in this chapter that intermarriage is a principal cause of such blending of the two as has taken place in Kenya, and this has resulted in transfers of religious allegiance from traditional religion to Islam. The movement is all in one direction. No evidence has come to light of conversions in Kenya from Islam to traditional religion, whether by marriage or by any other process.

The Swahili culture

The Swahili culture developed as a result of intermarriage between Muslims and traditionalists. Ever since Muslim Arabs and Persians began sailing down the East coast of Africa, some of them have settled in small coastal enclaves. The immigrants came as individuals, not as families, and by marrying indigenous people they formed a new group, the Sawahila or 'coastalists'.¹ These Waswahili, through being

an intermediate group, blurred the differences between Arabs and Africans, and through them the planting of Islam in East Africa was greatly facilitated. They were intermediate in culture as well as in language, and with the passage of time there was some mixture of religious customs. .

For more than a thousand years the Swahili lived at the coast in small settlements, turning their backs on an inhospitable continent, and looking across the sea to their Islamic metropolis. It was not until the third quarter of the eighteenth century, about 1780, that the first Swahili traders began to penetrate into the interior. The easiest route lay through the hinterland of Kilwa, across what is now southern Tanzania, far from the present Kenya. When the traders moved inland the marriage pattern was repeated. They went without their wives and married African women in the settlements which they established inland, where they would live sometimes for many years. They took concubines, and thus produced a comparatively large number of offspring of mixed blood.² Wives and children all had to belong to the Muslim faith.³

The process began later in Kenya than in Tanganyika. Viewed from the coast the trader at Mombasa faced a three-day march across the desert, followed by a crossing of the territory of the hostile Maasai and Kamba. Swahili traders and Christian missionaries alike favoured the easier routes through Tanganyika. Nevertheless by the 1890's Swahili settlements were springing up in Kenya at Kitoto's, Semei's and Mumia's,⁴ and they had reached Embu in the heartland of the Central Highland Bantu when the Crawford's established

their mission station there in 1910.⁵

Trimingham has described the way in which the Swahili culture spread inland as the interior opened up, but he does not distinguish between Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Many of his illustrations are drawn from Tanzania, where the Muslim influence is more widespread, but the same processes are observed at work in Kenya on a rather smaller scale in the Swahili villages found here and there throughout the country.⁶ Accretion to Islam appears to have been almost entirely through Muslim men in the villages taking local wives and bringing them into the Muslim community. These villages do not, however, form the centres of much expansion at the present times. The Muslim villages of Riruta and Karai, near Nairobi offer good examples. Islam is not spreading outwards from the villages into the surrounding population to any discernible extent. Bulbul village furnishes another example. Massignon claims that Islam is spreading amongst the Maasai and quotes an estimated 45,000 Muslim Maasai in 1919.⁷ This cannot be correct. The figure suggests an expansion of Islam into the tribe as a whole, but Trimingham makes no mention of this,⁸ and indeed the only place where Muslim Maasai are to be found is at Bulbul, between Nairobi and Ngong, where there is a mosque. The origin of this Muslim nucleus can be traced to intermarriage between Muslim men who came to Nairobi in its earliest days, and Maasai women. Stigand observed the town women going to Ngong trading centre:

Masai women from Nairobi can be seen coming out to pay their respects to Lunana, immediately recognizable

from their stay-at-home sisters, as they have adopted the cotton robes of the Swahili. Quite a number of Masai women are married to Indian traders, coolies and Swahili and coast boys.⁹

If Massignon's estimate for 1919 was correct, Islam has suffered a serious decline amongst the Masai.

The process of accretion to Islam by Muslim men marrying traditionalist women has continued until recent times. Hannington Mfalme made a study of a small town thirty kilometres east of Shinyanga. He found that the 'Arabs' in the town, better described as Swahili, came and settled there in the 1930's. First of all they persuaded the chief to become a Muslim. As a result of this the Arabs were given a place to settle. They employed local people as servants and insisted that they become Muslims too. Then they took young girls to be their wives, and these also had to become Muslim, thus in a short while a small Muslim community had been created.¹⁰

The resistance of the people living in the hinterland of Mombasa to Islam may be caused by too close an acquaintance with Muslim practices which were unacceptable to traditional life. Although, as will be seen later, there are a number of features of marriage and sex which Islam and traditional religion hold in common, they differ over the frequency of divorce. Divorce amongst Muslims tends to be rather common; amongst traditionalists it is rare.

About fifty years ago the nature of marriage arrangements between Giriama women and Arabs came to the notice of the administrative officers recently appointed to the District to the north of Mombasa. Writing in his Annual Report for the

Takaungu Sub-District for 1916, the Commissioner enlarged on what he called 'the Abduction or enticement of Wa-Nyika women by Arabs and others'. His comments are worth quoting at length:

Numerous Wa-Nyika bring complaints, or are sent by the District Officers, Nyika, to make their complaints, regarding the abduction of their wives by Arabs, or others.

In accordance with the ruling of the High Court, and in spite of section 498 I.P.C. (Indian Penal Code) which is understood to form part of the law of this country, the complainants have no redress at law, and have to be so informed.

The ruling of the High Court is based on the presumption that the Nyika Contract of marriage is a species of insurance, by which the father of the woman guarantees the return of the mahunda in the case of his daughter deserting the husband, but that such insurance does not cover the liability of the woman to run away with a Mohamedan. In other words the latter is not subject to Nyika custom and does not commit any offence under the Sheria, and is therefore not liable for the Mahunda. It would seem however that he commits an offence under the laws applicable to the British empire, which it is thought are of greater consequence than the Sheria or Nyika custom.

Many of the Nyika women are said to be converted. If such conversions could be looked into, it would be found that they can be described as "wayside conversions" that is to say the probationary period of teaching is entirely lacking, the conversion being effected loosely by the first-comer.

It would however appear that the Nyika marriage laws are more binding than the corresponding Mohamedan laws. It is customary for a mohamedan woman to be married before one Kathi and divorced before the next, and in this manner to have as many as 4 or 5 husbands to the year. Taking into consideration the promiscuous morals of the Coast, it is difficult to see that the mohamedan marriage ceremony exceeds in dignity the Nyika marriage.

The mahunda referred to in the report is the traditional bride-wealth. The behaviour of the younger Arab men appears to have been a callous usage of the Nyika women for their own pleasure without regard to the social suffering caused, and was not necessarily typical of the Muslim community as a whole.

Nevertheless their actions drew Nyika women out of their tribe and into the Muslim community in Mombasa. There was a noticeable deterioration in moral standards in Mombasa during the early 1920's which was as much the concern of the Arab leaders as of the District Commissioner. The older Arabs charged the administration with being responsible for the increase of 'drunkenness and general moral depravity among the young Coast Arabs and better class Swahilis of both sexes.' The cause was 'the outcome of that liberty of the subject which, enjoying ourselves, we insist on bestowing on all subject races.' An administrative officer was at a loss to devise any remedy without, as he put it 'reverting to the severity of the Islamic Law, but I doubt even then if we could do much to save this particular class'.¹²

Marriage of traditionalist men with Muslim women

The growth of the Muslim population described above was through Muslim men taking traditionalist women and insisting on wives and children being raised as Muslims. When traditionalist men wished to marry Muslim women, the transfer of religious allegiance was still in favour of Islam, since the men had to agree to become Muslims.

When the interior began to be opened up a second stage in the process of islamisation by marriage developed. The railways provided safe transport across tribal boundaries and there was every economic encouragement for people living in the interior to travel to the coast looking for work. A spell

of six months or so working on the railway or in the coastal plantations such as the Ramisi sugar estates provided the worker with money for taxes and some left over for purchasing goods and taking another wife. But to go to the coast meant entering a Muslim environment, and to go without a wife was to risk falling a prey to temptation. Klamroth, writing about German East Africa, observed that these migrant, temporary workers, were 'converted by the Mohamedan women with whom they contract temporary alliances; these women refuse to have anything to do with an uncircumcised Kafir, and to escape the disgrace attaching to such an appellation, their husbands become circumcised and thus receive an entry into Muslim society'.¹³ Nominal acceptance of Islam was probably required in any case, but as far as circumcision was concerned, most tribes in Tanganyika (to which Klamroth was referring), as in Kenya, already practised circumcision, the Nyamwezi being the principal tribe not to do so. At Mombasa the Luo would be the chief tribe affected, in addition to any Nyamwezi, Baganda and others who might make their way there.

Trimingham refers to over seventy inland tribes being represented in Zanzibar, and Wilson to over one hundred tribal associations in Mombasa,¹⁴ so that this move to the coast in search of work and adventure was quite widespread, and the converts to Islam would have a correspondingly wide influence on their return home. On the Kenya coast the more recently assimilated to Islam are called mahaji, 'converts'.¹⁵ The extent to which islamisation of the migrant male workers was taking place is illustrated by a problem over hut tax payment

which was reported on by the District Commissioner for Mombasa in 1935. The Mudir of Changamwe had recently imprisoned a married woman for non-payment of tax due on her hut; her husband had left the district and his whereabouts were unknown.

The Supreme Court reversed the Mudir's judgment and held that the husband alone could legally be held liable for the tax due on his wife's hut. The decision affects this district considerably as the population is mainly Mohamedan with an appreciable number of unmarried women owning huts in their own rights and living in a perpetual state of concubinage, but seldom with the same man for any length of time. As a concubine is included in the definition of the term wife it is difficult to prosecute in respect of these huts when the male population is chiefly floating.¹⁶

Muslim marriage with its easy divorce merges sociologically into concubinage of longer or shorter duration, and concubinage for a brief period merges into prostitution. Pumwani, a Muslim area in Nairobi, has been notorious for years as a place of prostitution.¹⁷ Wilson found that temporary liaisons continue to be common in Mombasa at the present time.¹⁸

Resistance to Islamisation

In recent years the situation at the coast has altered. More up-country men have their wives and families with them at the coast and the phenomenon of temporary marital liaisons contracted with Muslim women during a stay at the coast has diminished. In fact Mombasa is increasingly a non-Muslim town. Table VI gives some figures which were obtained from the 1902 census for the Mombasa District. As the census report shows, the district extends beyond the island to include parts of the mainland, and is coterminous with Mombasa

Municipality.

While 40,200 Africans are Muslims, only an estimated 2,200 of these belong to up-country Kenya tribes; the rest are members of Coast and Tanganyika tribes. It was not found possible to estimate the extent to which up-country men who become Muslims while at the coast remain Muslims after they return home. They probably do so only if they live in or near an existing Muslim village.

TABLE VI

POPULATION OF MOMBASA BY RACE AND RELIGION, 1962¹⁹

Race	Christians	Muslims	Others	Total
African	58,300	40,200	13,300	111,800
Arab	-	17,700	-	17,700
Asian	3,900	16,300	23,500	43,700
European	5,300	-	-	5,300
Other	700	100	100	1,000
Percentage	38.0	41.3	20.7	100.0

The population distribution of Nairobi and Mombasa approximates in each case to the formula of 2 male adults to 1 female adult to 1 male child to 1 female child, whereas the overall national proportions are 1:1:1:1.²⁰ This means that about half of the adult males in the towns are living away from their families. Wilson, in his survey of Mombasa, asked African heads of household about the domicile of their wives. He found that 39.8 per cent of the men's wives spent more time in the home location than with their husbands in Mombasa, or never came to Mombasa at all, 51.2 per cent of the wives were with their husbands or visited them regularly, 7.7 per cent

were elsewhere, had deserted or returned to their parents, and 1.3 per cent of the men were polygynous, one wife being with the husband in Mombasa.²¹ Wilson considered that temporary liaisons were frequent in the urban area, but inter-tribal marriages were still exceptions to the rule of traditional marriages being within the tribal group. Many uneducated or traditionalist wives became prostitutes, their husbands having little control over them, but in some cases the tribal associations stepped in; the Luo Welfare Association, for example, prevents Luo women from becoming prostitutes.²² These tribal associations act as a deterrent to islamisation and tend to maintain tribal traditional customs amongst the migrants.

Numerical decline in the Swahili community

The improvement in communications during the later nineteenth century had an important consequence for the Muslim population of Kenya. In the Arab community it meant that Arabs could migrate from Arabia in greater numbers and bring their wives with them. Thus there was less incentive for Arab men in Kenya to take African wives. Trimingham makes a qualitative demographic analysis of the Muslims of East Africa, and includes 'Afro-Arabs' and 'Arabs' as separate categories,²³ but it is not clear how his categorisation correlates with the answers which people give on the census forms, nor with the estimates made by the administration in earlier years. The total Arab population of Kenya was estimated to be a mere nine thousand in 1911,²⁴ and it would appear that some of

Trimingham's categories at that time were rather small in numbers. They would still be predominantly male. Even in 1930 there were still 50 per cent more males than females in the Arab population, but in the period from 1930 onwards a substantial normalisation of the Arab population was taking place. The ratio of males to females fell from 155.2 in 1931 to 128.5 in 1948, 113.3 in 1962 and 113 in 1969, males to 100 females.²⁵ This trend reflects the increasing number of children acknowledged as Arabs, having Arabs for both parents, and thus indicates the increasing number of Arab wives.²⁶

This led to a decrease in the earlier racial mixing. Under the British administration society was segregated under an ethnic system which placed Europeans at the top and Africans at the bottom, with Arabs and Indians occupying intermediate positions. Thus there were differences of social status between Arab, Indian and African Muslims. Later these differences were translated into political divisions. Zanzibar in the 1960's became a tragic arena for the clash of Arab and African nationalisms, in which all the participants were Muslims. The Arabs of Mombasa, by the very smallness of their numbers, were spared this.

During the present century there has been a movement away from the use of the word 'Swahili' as an ethnic term. Between 1924 and 1931 the number of Arabs in Zanzibar increased from 18,884 to 33,401 while the Swahilis diminished from 33,944 to 2,066.³¹ Clearly there was a large transfer of people out of the category of 'Swahili' to Arab and, to a lesser extent, to African. Prins points out that at times

'Swahili' has been a pejorative term involving no communal loyalty and describing characteristics of negative value.³² The category 'Swahili' was not used at all in the Zanzibar censuses of 1948 and 1958.³³

In Tanganyika³⁴ and Kenya the Arab community did not grow in the 1920's from an influx of Swahilis as it did in Zanzibar. Table VII shows the census population of Arabs and Swahilis/Shirazis in Kenya.

TABLE VII
THE ARAB AND SWAHILI POPULATION OF KENYA³⁵

Year	Arab Population	Swahili Population
1911	9,100 (estimated)	
1921	10,102	
1926	10,557	
1931	12,166	
1948	24,174	
1962	34,048	8,657
1969	27,886	9,971

The Arab figures from 1921 to 1962 are consistent with a steady growth rate of 3.0 per cent per annum, showing that there was no switching of the Swahili population as happened in Zanzibar. One inhibiting factor was the higher poll tax which Arabs had to pay, compared with Swahilis who were classed as Africans. The decline between 1962 and 1969 is a feature of all the non-African communities following Independence.

The number of people claiming to be Swahilis is surprisingly small. Nevertheless, even if the Swahili community is small it has played an important part in the

sociological movement described in this chapter, in which intermarriage between Muslims and traditionalists facilitated the spread of Islam in Kenya. The readiness of Arabs in earlier times to take African wives illustrates that indifference to race in Islam which has often been remarked upon and contrasted with the racial discrimination practised in Christianity. As Mendelsohn remarks, the strongest factor in favour of Islam is in the field of race relations. 'Islam groans under no burden of being first and foremost a white man's religion'.²⁷

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CHAPTER V

MARRIAGE IN CHRISTIANITY

Marriage in Christianity is a voluminous subject. The intention in this chapter is to select those aspects which are relevant to the Christian situation in contemporary Kenya. It might perhaps be thought that this would involve an examination of (1) the Bible, (2) the historical development of the Church's teaching, leading to (3) orthodox Christian teaching and practice at the present time. Some modifications will be made to this scheme.

The historical development will be omitted here, partly because it has already received an excellent treatment in Adrian Hastings's recent book Christian Marriage in Africa¹, but chiefly because Kenyan Christians attach little importance to it, this for philosophical and political reasons. H. Burkle, a lecturer on religion at Makerere College, has observed that historicity in the western sense of the word is unknown to the African.² In the present context this means that there is no incongruity in jumping from Biblical times to the present. In a sense the Bible in one's hand is part of the present. Another factor is that the events of church history took place largely in a European setting, and in the chauvinist atmosphere of contemporary Africa that history is dismissed as 'foreign'. Paul Miller, in his study of ministerial training in East Africa, observed that when his study conferences were asked to

compare patterns of ministry in East Africa with those of earlier times 'precedents cited from church history tended to be rejected as "colonialist pressure upon us".'³

The third stage, orthodox teaching and practice at the present time, will be seen, as it is seen in Kenya, as the teaching which the missionaries brought, no longer to be accepted unequivocally, but needing to be reassessed in the light of the contemporary situation. Since the Bible in the vernacular is increasingly in the hands of Christians in Kenya and read by them without the benefit of commentaries, the Old and New Testament teaching on marriage and related topics will be examined here in a similar literal manner.⁴ Then, passing over the intervening period of church history, the moral standpoint of the European missionaries who brought Christianity to Kenya will be considered. Finally data on marriage and religious transfer in other countries will be mentioned briefly for purposes of comparison. The matters of particular importance to Christians in Kenya include polygyny, divorce, bride-wealth, mixed marriage, fornication and adultery.

The Old Testament

The Old Testament has a special attraction for Christians in Kenya. Stephen Neill and others have pointed out that the African pattern of thought is nearer to the Hebrew concepts of the Old Testament than to the Greek ideas of the New.⁵ Burkle observes that there is a preference for Old Testament texts among preachers.⁶

The Norm of marriage. The Old Testament begins with the story of Adam and Eve and how they became husband and wife. The concluding comment to the story is 'Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh'.⁷ This took place while man was still in a state of innocency since 'The man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed'.⁸ Nothing sinful is attached to the state of marriage. By implication marriage is monogamous, yet polygyny is not ruled out. The marriage was both 'arranged' by God and the 'free choice' of the two partners. It was consummated without a religious ceremony.

The innocency and goodness of marriage are assumed later in the Old Testament in the Song of Songs, a short book describing courtship and marriage in a tender atmosphere. In Hosea and elsewhere the parallel is drawn between married love and the love which God has for Israel.

Polygyny. Monogamy was not the only form of marriage practised in the Old Testament. Lamech⁹ was the first man to have more than one wife. In the Old Testament more than fifteen polygynists can be detected, more than half of them kings, and it is probable that polygyny was general amongst the kings of Israel and Judah. Polygyny is nowhere condemned. The only legislation in the Mosaic law which takes account of a polygynous situation is in Leviticus 18.18, where it is forbidden to have two sisters as wives simultaneously, Deuteronomy 17.17, limiting the number of wives a king may take, and Deuteronomy 21.15-17, ruling on the fair division of goods to a polygynist's children. There are echoes of all this

legislation in the Qur'an.

In the prophets the imagery of marriage is used to depict the relationship between God and Israel, but the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah are never thought of as the two wives of God.¹⁰ There are no scriptural references to polygyny in the Post-Exilic period and Jewish marriage gradually became monogamous.¹¹ Malachi described the marriage bond as a covenant and speaks of a wife as a man's companion.¹²

In the few places where an account is given of a polygynous household some reference is made to the rivalry between the wives or their offspring. In 1 Samuel 1.6 and Leviticus 18.18 the word used for 'other wife' means 'her rival'.¹³ The existence of that rivalry is recognised in Deuteronomy 21.15-17, where an attempt is made to mitigate it.

Divorce. Divorce was permitted under the Mosaic law, but this is nowhere stated explicitly. It is mentioned incidentally in Deuteronomy 24.1-4 where the first husband of a twice-divorced wife is not allowed to remarry her. It is implied that a man must have a reason for divorcing his wife; nothing is said of a wife being able to divorce her husband. God is said to hate divorce.¹⁴ There are no actual cases of divorce recorded in the Bible, except perhaps in Ezra 10 under ecclesiastical pressure.

Status of women. The Old Testament assumes that the husband is the dominant partner in the marriage union. In Proverbs 31 there is a song of praise to the good wife. The Jewish priesthood and the Temple officials were all male; a Jewish

prophetess is mentioned in Luke.¹⁵

It was through woman that the serpent gained access to man in the Genesis narrative. Man blamed woman; in this way sin entered the world.¹⁶ This doctrine remains undeveloped in the Old Testament. Neither Samson nor David, for example, plead the temptation of a woman as an excuse for their sin.¹⁷

Barrenness. Barrenness was regarded as the fault of the wife, and considered to be a major social failing. It was looked upon as an affliction sent from God which might be removed by prayer.¹⁸ Alternatively it could be circumvented by a proxy birth. A barren wife might give her slave-girl to her husband to bear him a son.¹⁹ One man had no son, but perpetuated the male line by giving one of his daughters to his slave.²⁰

There is no mention of adoption as an institution.

Affinity. In the earliest times people of quite close relationship married without censure. Even the case of Lot, who had children by his daughters, is recorded without comment.²¹ Later, in the Mosaic law, a table of prohibited degrees is given.²² They stop short of cousin-marriage.

Special restrictions applied to the priests;

Marriage arrangements. Sometimes marriages were arranged by the parents,²³ at other times men chose their own wives.²⁴

Not all of the free-choice marriages turned out well, and some of the arranged marriages resulted in true love.²⁵

Exodus 22.16-17 legislates on young people who try to present their parents with a fait accompli. There is no description of the marriage ceremony.

Marriage by capture. A man was allowed to marry a captive taken in war,²⁶ and in Judges 21 the men of Benjamin are allowed to capture women from other tribes in order to preserve Benjamin from extinction.

Bridewealth. It was customary for the bridegroom to make a marriage gift (mohar, Hebrew) to the bride's father,²⁷ to be held in trust for the daughter.²⁸ It could be claimed from a seducer.²⁹ It amounted to fifty silver shekels, irrespective of the beauty or quality of the girl.³⁰

Mixed marriage. Throughout the Old Testament the Hebrews preserved a strong sense of racial distinctiveness, based on religious foundations. They were conscious of having been specially chosen by God to be his people. Apostasy from the God of Israel was likened to playing the harlot.³¹ The perils of mixed marriage resulting in mixed religion are set out in Exodus 34.11-16. Thus Esau made life bitter for his parents by marrying foreign women,³² and in consequence special precautions were taken over his brother's marriage.³³ Similarly Abraham's servant had to journey back to the homeland in order to find a suitable wife for Isaac.³⁴ Mixed marriage is condemned outright in Ezra 9-10 where the community was ruthlessly purged of foreign elements. In the wilderness the Israelites were commanded not to marry Canaanite women lest they be led astray from the Lord.³⁵ This was exactly what did happen when they disobeyed the law, and it happened again in the reigns of Solomon and Ahab as a result of their dynastic marriages.³⁶ On the other hand, Joseph's marriage to an Egyptian and Moses'

to a Cushite are recorded without comment.³⁷ It is thought that the book of Ruth was written as a reaction to the extreme views of Ezra,³⁸ although in the story Ruth, the Moabitess, apparently became completely integrated into the Hebrew community.

Fornication and Adultery. Fornication (sexual irregularity amongst unbetrothed persons) is not condemned in the Decalogue. The man was fined and, unless the girl's father refused, the couple were made to marry.³⁹ A newly-married wife found guilty of premarital unchastity was to be stoned.⁴⁰ Adultery (sexual irregularity amongst married people) was categorically forbidden⁴¹ and the penalty for both parties was death.⁴² Betrothed persons were placed in the same category as those already married.⁴³

The Old Testament contains no legislation on prostitution, but 'playing the harlot' is a frequent metaphor of the prophets. Temple prostitutes and the ritual use of sex were features of the Canaanite worship of Baal and Ashtoreth which the Hebrew prophets were fighting throughout the period of the Monarchy. Sexual intercourse was regarded as a private matter and public exhibitions were condemned.⁴⁴

The New Testament

In the New Testament the theme of monogamy is reiterated and strengthened. Jesus quotes Genesis 2.24 with approval.⁴⁵ The dominant position of the husband over the wife, and indeed of men over women in general, is accepted without

question,⁴⁶ although in the New Testament, as much as in the Old, women play their part. There were women from Galilee who ministered to the needs of Jesus and his disciples, and Martha and Mary are mentioned as acceptable hostesses. However the doctrine of woman as the source of temptation is adduced from the story of the Fall, and as a result woman must take a submissive place.⁴⁷

Polygyny. There are no references to polygyny in the New Testament. In the Pastoral Epistles church officers are required to be 'husbands of one wife',⁴⁸ which could imply the existence of polygynists, but is generally taken to mean 'married only once'.⁴⁹ Also in 1 Corinthians 7.2 Paul urges that 'each man should have his own wife and each woman should have her own husband', a distinctly monogamous injunction which could also be taken to be directed towards polygynists.

Divorce. Jesus abrogated the Mosaic toleration of divorce⁵⁰ and condemned remarriage of divorced persons. The only exception was divorce on the grounds of adultery.⁵¹ Paul reasserts this teaching in 1 Corinthians 7.10-14, but allows the husband and wife to live separately in the event of irreconcilable difficulties. He does, however, rule that if an unbelieving person wishes to divorce, the Christian partner is free to marry again,⁵² and this would appear to apply also where a Christian spouse apostasises; the partner who continues in the faith is then free to remarry. There are no actual cases of divorce cited in the New Testament.

Barrenness. The New Testament says nothing on this point.

Clearly it is no ground for divorce. Neither are there any references to affinity, marriage arrangements, bride-wealth or the ritual use of sex.

Mixed marriages. The emphasis in warnings against mixed marriage has changed from ethnic to purely religious considerations. Paul rules against marriage between a Christian and an unbeliever in 2 Corinthians 6.14-7.1, pointing out the danger of being led astray into non-Christian worship. On the other hand, if a person is converted to Christianity after marriage, the marriage should not necessarily be dissolved, since one convert in a non-Christian family can sanctify the whole family in a mystical way, the unbelieving spouse as well as the children.

Double standard of morals. Even in the Old Testament there were special rules governing the marriage of priests which did not apply to the ordinary people.⁵³ In the New Testament Paul advises that 'he who marries his betrothed does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better.'⁵⁴ The first clause puts forward a view of marriage which has been followed by the generality of Christians. The second has become a sacerdotal attribute.

Both of these views on marriage are commended in the New Testament, and neither is condemned. Jesus himself remained celibate, but graced the wedding at Cana with his presence and contributed to the success of the occasion. He regarded husband and wife as joined by God,⁵⁵ and quoted Genesis 2.24 to support his teaching. Paul, too is high in

his praise of Christian family life.⁵⁶ He uses marriage as an illustration of the love which Christ has for the Church, a metaphor also used by John and borrowed from the prophets.⁵⁷ Again, in Hebrews, Christians are urged to hold marriage in honour.⁵⁸

Parallel with this there is teaching in the New Testament regarding the celibate state. Jesus said 'For there are different reasons why men cannot marry. . . . others do not marry because of the kingdom of heaven. Let him who can do it accept this teaching'.⁵⁹ The meaning would seem to be that the labour demanded by the kingdom of heaven leaves some men with no leisure for the enjoyment of family life. Paul has more to say on this in 1 Corinthians 7.1-9. He feels that the unmarried state is preferable, but to avoid temptation to immorality each man should have his own wife and each woman should have her own husband. It has to be remembered that Paul was also influenced by the current Christian view that the second coming of Jesus was imminent, so that the need for begetting another generation of children did not arise.⁶⁰ A further point is Jesus' teaching that there will be no marriage in heaven.⁶¹ This suggested that marriage is a temporary, worldly state, not worthy to rank with eternal matters.

Fornication and Adultery. Fornication is mentioned frequently in the New Testament. In the settlement between Jewish and Gentile Christians the latter were specially asked to abstain from it.⁶² Paul urged two quite different courses of action

regarding fornicators inside and outside of the church. The Christians at Corinth had to shun fornicators within the church, and a particularly scandalous person was to be expelled from the congregation.⁶³ But they still had to go with the gospel to pagan fornicators, otherwise sinners outside the church would never hear the good news of salvation.⁶⁴ The law against fornication, he says, comes, not from the Mosaic law, but from the spiritual reason that the Christian's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who dwells within him.⁶⁵ He invokes Genesis 2.24 to show that consorting with a prostitute has far greater spiritual consequences than might at first sight appear. Warning against fornication (along with other sins) is a frequent admonition in the New Testament; thus the churches of Galatia, Ephesus, Colossae, Thessalonica, Thyatira and Pergamum all received apostolic warnings against fornication. It was singled out as the sin which most effectively characterised Babylon or Rome.⁶⁶ In fact fornication appears to have been widespread amongst non-Christians in those days, and a particularly severe temptation to the Christians.

Adultery is often mentioned in the New Testament and the Seventh is the most frequently quoted of the Ten Commandments. Jesus extended its application to include thought and intention as well as actual deed.⁶⁷ Yet although he quoted the commandment against adultery with approval he refused to apply the Mosaic punishment for it when a guilty woman was brought to him.⁶⁸ Paul hoped that adulterers, like other sinners, might be saved.⁶⁹ Jesus declared that prostitutes

would enter the kingdom of God before the chief priests and elders of the people because they believed John the Baptist.⁷⁰

Missionary attitudes to marriage

During the two thousand years of its history the Church has made use of the two levels of morality in its task of worshipping God and extending his kingdom throughout the earth. Sects have arisen, such as the Marcionites and Montanists, who have shunned the procreation of children altogether, and thus denied themselves the most fruitful source of recruitment which any human society can employ; yet they succeeded in continuing to exist for several centuries.⁷¹ Celibate religious orders have existed even longer, continually attracting new members from the larger constituency of the Church. The Roman Catholic Church has made celibacy the rule amongst its leaders, priests and religious orders, and the missionaries who came to Kenya were drawn from amongst these. For this reason the Catholic Church acquired an ascetic sex-denying image.

Celibacy has not been popular, nor encouraged, amongst the Protestant Churches. On the other hand it has not been discouraged. The Protestant interpretation of Jesus' teaching is that celibacy and marriage are equal in status,⁷² and that a Christian is celibate or married according to the nature of the circumstances dictated by his call from God. Many of the Protestant missionaries to Kenya were married. Of 168 missionaries in the Quaker mission in Kenya between 1902 and 1965 there were only nine single men and twenty-seven single women.⁷³

In regard to their general attitude to sexual morality

it has to be remembered that the first English Protestant missionaries came from Victorian England, and that the core of Victorian life was religion. A historian suggests that 'amongst highly civilised countries Victorian England was probably the most religious that the world has known'.⁷⁴ The particular type of Christianity widely practised then, and which set its mark on society, is known as evangelicalism, a set of beliefs and practices distinguished by the high value placed on a literal interpretation of the Bible, on conversion as a definite personal decision, and on piety in the Christian's everyday life. Relevant to the present study is the importance which was attached to sexual morality, and fidelity in marriage, and domesticity. In this Queen Victoria herself led the nation. Daily family prayers were a special feature of the times, led by the father and attended by the whole household, including the servants.

By 1870 evangelicalism had reached its greatest point of influence in England and showed the first signs of decline,⁷⁵ but the families from which missionary recruits were drawn were those who continued in the evangelical tradition for another half-century or more, so that the evangelical attitudes and mores continued to be felt in Kenya long after its influence had waned in England. In a book on Kenya published in 1926 it was pointed out how the Puritan tradition was notoriously unpopular amongst the European settlers. That tradition, through its representatives, the missionaries, criticised many of their pleasures, including horse racing and the consumption of alcohol, and still looked with Victorian

eyes on their loose moral behaviour.⁷⁶ English society had veered away from piety to a life of pleasure, led by King Edward the Seventh.⁷⁷ Succeeding generations of missionaries clung to the old way of life and upheld it as the Christian norm. Despite their decline in numbers there are still evangelicals in England, one of their foremost exponents through the medium of literature being C.S. Lewis (1898-1963). What he says on chastity may be taken to represent the view of most Protestant missionaries throughout the missionary period in Kenya, and is identical to the views of Victorian evangelicals:

Chastity is the most unpopular of the Christian virtues. There is no getting away from it: the Christian rule is, 'Either marriage, with complete faithfulness to your partner, or else total abstinence.' Now this is so difficult and so contrary to our instincts, that obviously either Christianity is wrong or our sexual instinct, as it now is, has gone wrong. One or the other. Of course, being a Christian, I think it is the instinct which has gone wrong.⁷⁸

So far so good, a point of view in accord with the New Testament teaching on fornication and adultery described earlier. The missionaries were unequivocal in their proclamation of the highest standards of morality, and immoveable in their observance of the same in their own private lives. They were less successful in their dealings with sinners. This failing caused much difficulty to the church in Kenya and resulted in many frail souls lacking the spiritual encouragement and pastoral care which the church should have provided them.

American Protestant missionaries held a similar attitude to the English in regard to sexual morality. Udry describes

the Christian tradition of sex values in general and the American standard in particular, and his description tallies with what has been written above about the British.⁷⁹

Conservative American Protestants place even more emphasis on the literal view of the Bible. Some lack of sympathy can sometimes be detected between British missionaries and their American colleagues, but in general they all belong to the same religious tradition.

Differing Biblical views of marriage

Some Christians in Kenya accepted the missionaries' teaching on marriage. Others questioned it. Both views were based partly on the Bible and partly on social custom. The missionaries' position was based on the New Testament and, more so than they realised or were prepared to admit, on European custom. The other view drew its scriptural support from the Old Testament. It did not necessarily contradict the missionaries, but it sought acceptance for an interim ethic which would facilitate the transition of many people from traditional religion to Christianity.

In many missions in Kenya the converts were taught to regard the Bible as the Word of God, of equal weight throughout. The idea of a progressive revelation was inadequately taught and was difficult to grasp. Many of the matters relating to marriage in the Old Testament are paralleled in African traditional life, whereas the New Testament has less to offer in this direction. A reading from the Old Testament finds a

readier response in African ears. European missionaries, on the other hand, would recognise the progressive nature of the divine revelation in the Bible, and would see that much of African traditional custom was 'Old Testament' in nature, and doomed to fade away as Christian ideas prevailed.

Amongst Catholics the celibate ministry is unpopular, especially with men. In 1968 of a total of 786 priests and brothers in Kenya only 98 (12.5 per cent) were Kenyans. Women were rather more forthcoming and 515 (41.0 per cent) of 1253 sisters were Kenyans. Catechists, who were not required to be celibate, numbered 2,344.⁸⁰

Racial discrimination in Christianity

It is a matter of frequent comment in Muslim sources that Christianity, a religion which preaches the brotherhood of all mankind, should have a particularly bad record of racial discrimination. At the present time this is most apparent in the Republic of South Africa, with its policy of enforced separation of racial groups, and its legislation which forbids mixed marriages and makes sexual intercourse between people of different racial groups a criminal offence. Since the legislation is passed and the situation is enforced by a dominant minority group of European Christians, their conduct is generally ascribed to their religious faith by those critical of Christianity.

In the rest of Africa and in the United States discriminatory legislation was applied by European Christians in the

past, but has been repealed in recent years. In some instances racial discrimination has begun to be applied against European Christians. Whoever may be the discriminators, this attitude has had a strongly inhibiting effect upon marriage between members of different races. Even within Christianity marriages between members of different nationalities, different tribes and different language groups are much rarer in proportion than marriage rates within homogenous populations.⁸¹

The tendency for 'like' to marry 'like' is not restricted to Christians. Tolson sees it as a universal tendency, subject to similarity of race, religion, language, social class, occupation and closeness of geographical location.⁸² But however much it is practised by the human race as a whole, it should be a matter of regret amongst Christians that they have been prone to erect racial barriers within the church, instead of regarding Jews, Gentiles and barbarians as 'all one in Christ'.⁸³

Christian attitude to interdenominational marriages

A community may be inclusive, neutral or exclusive in its attitude to mixed marriages. Thus in race Europeans are generally exclusive. Persons of mixed blood are not regarded as Europeans, and may suffer social disabilities. The Parsees and Hindu castes adopt the same attitude to the offspring of their members who marry out. The Japanese are probably the most extreme of all people in their passion for genetic purity, heightened in recent years by the after-effects of

nuclear warfare.⁸⁴ African tribes appear to adopt a neutral attitude. The individual of mixed blood may choose which of the two parental tribes he or she wishes to be attached to. It is the initiation procedure which, by and large, makes a person a member of the tribe. Welbourn points out the significance of this in the case of a juvenile of the tribe but it also serves to incorporate the voluntary recruit into the tribe.⁸⁵

Christian denominations are inclusive for the most part. When a member of the denomination marries out they welcome the spouse and encourage the children to be brought up in the denomination. This has not been a universal practice, and the Society of Friends is an example of a denomination which during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries suffered grievous losses in membership in England and America through the practice of disowning members who 'married out'. In the English county of Yorkshire alone, for example, 151 persons were disowned between 1837 and 1854. 'Few religious bodies could long live and flourish with such a radical surgical method of dealing with its membership'.⁸⁶ In the whole of England nearly 5,000 people, fully one-third of all members of the Society who had married between 1800 and 1850 had been disowned for marrying non-Friends.⁸⁷ In 1859 J.S. Rowntree pointed out the implications of this practice for the life of the Society, and the rules were changed. Subsequently the membership increased, and it would be safe to assume that the relaxation of the rules on marriage was a factor of no small importance.

The Roman Catholic position

Until recently the Roman Catholic Church took a very rigid position on mixed marriage, doing its utmost to reduce the incidence of marriage between Roman Catholics and other Christians.

After the Reformation the Catholic Church was obliged to acknowledge the existence of Protestant Churches, and the Council of Trent was held from 1545 to 1563 to reform dogma and discipline within the Catholic Church. A decree Tametsi was passed on the subject of matrimony. It laid down that in places where the decree was promulgated, a marriage between baptised persons (whether Catholics or not) was valid only when it took place in the presence of the Catholic parish priest and at least two witnesses.⁸⁸ The decree was not wholly satisfactory and to remedy its confusions a new decree Ne Temere was promulgated by Pope Pius X in 1907. The new decree laid down that no marriage between two Catholics is valid unless celebrated before the Catholic parish priest. The same ruling held of only one of the contracting parties was a Catholic. Thus the Catholic Church declined to recognise marriages in which a Catholic is involved if solemnised before a Protestant minister, or merely by a civil contract.⁸⁹

In the Canon Law of the Catholic Church, Canon 1060 states that 'the Church most solemnly and everywhere forbids marriage between a Catholic and a person enrolled in a heretical or schismatic sect. If there is a danger of perversion for the Catholic party and the offspring, such a

marriage is forbidden also by divine law.⁹⁰ However a dispensation can sometimes be obtained on one of the following conditions: 'grave cause, a written promise from the non-Catholic partner not to interfere with the religion of the Catholic, along with the promise of both parties to have all their children baptised and educated as Catholics, and moral certainty that the promises will be fulfilled. In addition, the Catholic party must assume the task of trying, prudently, to convert the non-Catholic partner'.⁹¹ An American Catholic authority on conversion points out that the Catholic Church is not out to ensnare non-Catholics. It is not interested in using mixed marriages as an instrument to acquire new members. Converts must embrace Catholicism freely; they must have thorough instruction and inner conviction. Conversion must come from within as an act of the intellect and the will'.⁹²

In recent years there has been a softening of the Catholic position on mixed marriages. More recent thinking on this subject is contained in the Apostolic Letter issued Motu Proprio on 31 March 1970, laying down certain norms for mixed marriages.⁹³ The Catholic Church still discourages this type of marriage, but there is a certain easing of attitudes in accord with the current mood of ecumenical understanding.

It is now the Catholic partner who promises to do all in his or her power not to fall away from the faith, and to have all the children baptised and brought up in the Catholic Church.⁹⁴ No declaration or promise is required of the non-Catholic but he is acquainted with the promises made by

his partner. The marriage may take place in a non-Catholic place of worship, and even before a non-Catholic minister.⁹⁵

1891
1892
1893
1894
1895
1896
1897
1898
1899
1900

No.	Name	Age	Sex	Color	Religion	Married	Children
1.	John J.	M
2.	F
3.	M
4.	F
5.	M
6.	F
7.	M
8.	F
9.	M
10.	F
11.	M
12.	F
13.	M
14.	F
15.	M
16.	F

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14. Mal 2.16.
15. Lk 2.36.
16. Gen 3.12-13.
17. Jg 16.28; 2 Sam 12.13.
18. Gen 25.21; 1 Sam 1.5.
19. Gen 16.1-3; 30.1-13.
20. 1 Ch 2.34-5.

21. Gen 19.
22. Lev 18.6-18.
23. Gen 24.1-9; 28.1-2; 29.21-9; 1 Sam 18.17-19.
24. Gen 26.34-5; 28.9; 29.18; Jg 14.1-3; 1 Sam 18.20.
25. Gen 24.67.
26. Dt 21.10-14.
27. Gen 34.12; Ex 22.16-17; 1 Sam 18.25.
28. Gen 31.14-16.
29. Ex 22.16-17; Dt 22.28-9.
30. Dt 22.28-9.
31. Jg 2.17; 1 Ch 5.25; Hos 9.1; Mal 2.10-16.
32. Gen 26.34-5.
33. Gen 27.1.
34. Gen 24.3.
35. Ex 34.12-16.
36. 1 Kg 11.1-8; 16.31.
37. Gen 41.50; Num 12.1.
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39. Ex 22.16-17; Dt 22.28-9.
40. Dt 22.13-21.
41. Ex 20.14; Dt 5.18.
42. Lev 20.10-16; Dt 22.22.
43. Dt 22.23-7.
44. 2 Sam 16.21-2; Gen 9.22.
45. Mt 19.5-6.
46. 1 Cor 14.34; Eph 5.22-24.
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CHAPTER VI

ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY — A CONFLICT

Theological conflict

Islam arose later in history than did Christianity. It is the only major religion which takes cognisance of Christianity in its scriptures. Sects have arisen from time to time having a prophet or a revealed book such as the Sikhs, Baha'is, Mormons, Christian Scientists and Ahmadiyyas, but Islam is the only major religious system to have made a significant impact upon Christendom, and for fourteen centuries the two have been at loggerheads.

The Bible makes no specific reference to Islam although it contains many general warnings and prophecies about false prophets and antichrists who will arise to lead Christians astray.¹ Muslims see favourable prophetic references in both the Old and New Testaments to Muhammad and to the rise of Islam.² Christianity, on the other hand, is mentioned a number of times in the Qur'an, generally in a sense of sorrow that Christians should have been led astray -- from Islam.³ The theological attitude of each religion towards the other is one of unavoidable incompatibility.

For example, Christianity is a religion which offers the hope of salvation through the acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Saviour from sin, the ultimate result of this being eternal bliss in heaven. In a typical verse on salvation the

Bible says that 'if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved'.⁴ The formula 'Jesus is Lord' ascribes divinity to Jesus, and this is denied in the Qur'an.⁵ Another example of a profound difference in theology is found in the death of Jesus on the Cross and his subsequent resurrection. The Bible accepts these as real events having atoning significance.⁶ The Qur'an appears to deny the historicity of these events.⁷ Thus the basic tenets of Christianity are denied. The result is a theological impasse: Christians cannot see in Islam a way of salvation, and Muslims can only see Christianity as a religion of error.

Muslims hold that there were once three books, Tawrat, Zabur and Injil, written by Moses, David and Jesus respectively, but that these were corrupted so that the Bible, containing the Pentateuch, Psalms and four Gospels, is today a false book. Textual variations in Biblical manuscripts are proof to Muslims of the corruption. All that was ever of value in the original books is now found, they say, in the Qur'an. As far as the deliberate perversion of Jesus' teaching goes, Paul is held to be the chief of sinners (as he himself admits).⁸ Belief in the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Sonship of Christ are all condemned in the Qur'an.⁹ In Muslim eyes Christians worship three distinct gods. Yet in the Qur'an¹⁰ Muslims are told that 'thou shalt certainly find those to be nearest in affection to (those who believe) who say, "We are Christians".' Whether this is true of Protestants is not clear, because the reason

given for this affection is 'because some of them are priests and monks, and because they are free from pride'.

The two religions each assert their own uniqueness and deny the uniqueness of the other. Each asserts the divine inspiration of its holy book and denies that of the other.

Like Christianity, Islam also offers eternal bliss for 'those who believe and do the things that are right'.¹¹ The parable of the great assize¹² finds its parallel in the Qur'an.¹³ Eternal bliss in heaven is promised for the faithful and eternal torment in hell is the punishment of sinners. Thus each religion offers a scheme of rewards for fidelity to its own system of beliefs and practices, and punishments for infidelity and neglect of good works. In both religions adherence to or conversion to the other is counted as infidelity. A Muslim attracted to Christianity is held back by fear of the punishments decreed for him by Islam if he should apostasise, and exactly the same situation applies to a Christian attracted to Islam. The two religions are similar in many respects, but in their relation to each other it seems that one is the mirror-image of the other. When one extends its right hand the other, in mutual misunderstanding and incomprehension, extends its left.

Communal conflict

Arising from the theological confrontation, communal antagonism developed soon after the appearance of Islam, and these have continued to bedevil interfaith relations throughout

subsequent history. They are most pronounced in the Middle East.¹⁴ Neither religion enjoins its followers to wage war on the others, to exterminate them, or forcibly to convert them.¹⁵ Nevertheless wars of religion have occurred and further soured relationships. Where communities have refrained from physical attack discriminating humiliations have been imposed by those in power upon minorities.¹⁶ All sorts of charges, denials and counter-charges have been made by Muslims and Christians against each other regarding aggression, forcible conversion, slavery and massacres, all interesting in themselves to the student of polemic, but only mentioned here to illustrate the enduring hostility between Christian and Muslim communities.

Even at the present time persons of high academic distinction can disagree completely on the treatment of Christian minorities under Muslim rule. Thus Dr Amir Hassan Siddiqi, former Head of Islamic History at the University of Karachi, considers that throughout history 'the Muslims set up a brilliant record of benevolent treatment to those who were not their co-religionists. . . . they have meted out an equally generous treatment to their subjects even in modern times and have, in return, met with a shabby treatment which puts the worst atrocities of humanity in the shade'.¹⁷ Professor Stephen Neill, former Head of the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of Nairobi, writes that 'The Koran does not proclaim equality in any sense in which that term is used in the West; it does not permit

equality between Muslims, who alone can be fully citizens of an Islamic state, and those of other religions, who cannot hope for more than tolerance on a basis of limited privilege'.¹⁸

At times a complete massacre or forced expulsion has been attempted by one side against the other in a territory under its control,¹⁹ but except where these drastic measures have been successful there are many places where one side has lived more or less peacefully as a minority under the rule of a majority of the other side.²⁰ In situations of this kind communalism has generally been the practice. In the Ottoman Empire this was known as the millet system and to it Christians in the Middle East owe their survival.²¹ The minority lived to itself as much as possible. The millet became a state within a state. The religious leader became the political head. This is still a feature of the countries of the Middle East where Christian communities still exist.²² Segregation of the religious communities is increased by the use of different languages, names, styles of dress, feeding habits and the reinforcement of differentiating traditional customs of historical origin, especially those commemorating a victory or defeat in battle against the other side. In these circumstances a person is readily identifiable as belonging to a particular community, in fact everyone must belong to a religious social grouping. Communalism is so much a habit of thinking and a way of life that anyone who tries to avoid becoming part of the system, such as newly-arriving Protestant missionaries from the West, find that they are denominated by

the rest of society and labelled 'the Protestants' (or whatever it might be). Any attempt to have intercourse with another community or to adopt any of its customs would be regarded as apostasy, whatever the individual's religious views, or whatever his motives for approaching the other community might be. European missionaries have found to their sorrow that on the rare occasions when a Muslim has desired to become a Christian the other Middle East Christians have regarded him with grave suspicion. Conversion is so much contrary to the Middle East view of the social structure that even one conversion causes a furore. Ultimately even Protestant missionaries abstain from trying to influence the Muslim population.²³ Interfaith marriage under such conditions is practically impossible.

Marriage between Muslims and Christians in Kenya

Marriages do take place between Muslims and Christians in Kenya, and therefore the religious situation possesses some fluidity, and has not crystallised into the Middle East pattern of stalemate. Mombasa has been the chief area of contact between Christians and Muslims, and the evidence suggests that a small but steady rate of intermarriage has occurred throughout the twentieth century. In former times the loss of newly-won Christian converts to Islam was greatly feared by the missionaries. A missionary wrote from Frere Town in 1912 on her return after an absence of fourteen years:

I find that few have become Mohammedans, although one or two girls have married Mohammedans and some young

men have become Mohammedans who felt the restraints of Christianity too hard for them.²⁴

Frere Town is the Christian community which has had the longest period of close contact with Islam. It was formed originally as a settlement of freed slaves, most of whom originated from beyond the boundaries of present-day Kenya.²⁵ They came from a diversity of tribal backgrounds and inevitably when the settlement was formed they derived much of their common culture from that of the surrounding Swahilis.²⁶ Over the years this cultural contact has worked to the advantage of Islam. In 1919 it was reported that 'At Frere Town, as last year, the contact of African Christians with Mohammedan Swahilis is said to be deleterious. In three or four cases unmarried Christian girls have fallen away to Islam . . .'²⁷ This steady drain continuing over the years has demoralised the Christian community. A church leader stated in an interview that all his friends were Muslims and that he much preferred the company of Muslims to that of his fellow-Christians. The Swahili-speaking Christian community received little invigoration from the influx of up-country Christians working at the coast. An Anglican clergyman residing in Mombasa described the situation in 1957 in the following terms:

The Church in Mombasa is not rooted in the life of the town. The majority of its members are only here for longer or shorter periods. In Freretown the roots go more deeply but on the whole the inroads of Islam into this small community have been rather more than the indent of the Church into Islam.²⁸

This impression was confirmed during a visit to Immanuel Church, Frere Town, in 1972. The incumbent, the Reverend Samuel Levi,

stated that the young people tend to intermarry, the young Christian women becoming Muslims. Many leave the settlement (which is now some distance from the church) and go into the town to live. He said that these women could be seen, wearing their buibuis (black purdah garment, Swahili), attending the weddings or funerals of their Christian friends and acquaintances.²⁹

In nearby Kongowea a Methodist evangelist, Elijah Shimbira, is himself a convert from Islam. He was born in Tana River District of the Pokomo tribe. He stated that in Kongowea marriages between Christians and Muslims were 'always happening', and that generally the Christian partner, whether the bride or the groom, became a Muslim. He attributed this to a general lack of Christian pastoral care.³⁰

The effect of marriage as a cause of Christians becoming Muslims was confirmed from Muslim sources. An Arab Muslim convert to the Ahmadiyya sect stated that he knew of a number of Christians who had become members of the Ahmadiyya, and supplied their names and circumstances. All were converted, he said, because they saw the truth of Ahmadiyya teaching and the falsity of Christianity. But he added 'I also know some who through marriage changed religion, but such I do not consider to be real conversion for this is only done to hit a certain goal'.³¹ The Chief Kadhi of Kenya, Sheikh Abdulla Saleh Farsy also confirmed the strong tendency, in Zanzibar, for young Christians to become Muslim 'because of matters relating to marriage'.³²

Where a man, Muslim or Hindu, wishes to convert to Christianity and is already married, the communal pressures are increased, especially if his wife does not share his views. The Reverend S.A. Martin of the CMS, stationed at Mombasa, told in 1908 of an Indian teacher at Buxton High School who had had to face much opposition:

The opposition against Vdji, the master, is tremendous. His wife bitterly reproaches him; his brother and four other companions are known to the police as determined to do him bodily harm if he persists in becoming a Christian; his community have cast him off, and publicly and falsely defame his character in the local Indian papers. If he is baptized, he will be the first Indian in Mombasa to be so, but I feel he will bring in many others if God gives him the victory.³³

In more recent years there have been Asians who have become Christians in somewhat happier circumstances. A case was reported of a Bohora boy who went to a Goan school in Mombasa and became a Catholic. Later he went to London and married a German Catholic woman. Marriage was not instrumental in his conversion, but it was in the case of his sister, who wished to marry a Goan young man and became a Catholic. In counselling her the priest suggested that she separate the two things, marriage, and conversion, in her mind. Would she, he asked, wish to become a Catholic if the question of marriage did not enter into the situation? The same priest reported an Ithnashery young man who married a Goan girl and became a Catholic, also a Hindu girl who converted on marrying a Goan.³⁴

In the rest of the Coast Province outside Mombasa information gathered suggests a similar pattern. The Baptist Church at Malindi was opened in 1965. By 1967 the pastor had

already had a case of a member who had become a Muslim 'on account of a Giryama woman', and so had the Pentecostal Church in the town.³⁵ A European teacher at Shimo-la-Tewa Secondary School became a Muslim on marrying a Digo girl.³⁶ In a report of a survey of Islam in Kenya carried out in 1959, the Reverend S. von Sicard found that at Ribe 'the number of Muslims in this area is growing. They live side by side with the Christians and especially marriage contributes to the growth as the Muslims openly confess that they prefer the Christian girls, since they are considered more stable than their Muslim sisters'.³⁷ This process has been going on for many years in the area. In nearby Rabai as long ago as 1905 the Anglican Christians had 'to face the efforts of the Mohammedans living in their midst to win them over to that religion',³⁸ and marriage was one of the methods employed. Again, at the Methodist girls' school at Ribe a Muslim Taita girl became a Christian, converted, according to her own testimony, through gazing at a picture in the school hall of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. No action was taken by her family at the time, but after leaving school she was married to a Muslim and her headmistress stated that 'for all practical purposes she is now a Muslim again'.³⁹ Other cases of conversion to Islam associated with marriage were reported from Mazeras, Kaloleni, and from the Pentecostal Church at Dida, near Kilifi. A member of the Church of God congregation at Ziwani sisal estate, Taveta, became a Muslim at the insistence of the Muslim girl he wished to marry.⁴⁰ This was not the first instance of conversion by marriage at Taveta. In May 1914, when Mrs Verbi, wife of a CMS missionary,

visited Taveta, 'some old women begged for a woman missionary, affirming that at the government station in the district the young women were led to become the wives of the Mohammedan soldiers by being told that Islam was the same as Christianity, since it baptized its converts'.⁴¹ In 1936 the District Commissioner for the Taita District observed that Christianity in the district was very nominal. 'Many instances are known of bigamy and loose morality, while several cases have come to my knowledge of professing Christians embracing Islam in order to escape from what, to them, is the irksome practice of monogamy'.⁴²

On the other hand, at Mariakani a pastor thought that many are drawn by the buibui and the ease of the Muslim religion, and at nearby Giriama Catholic Parish the priest knew of one Muslim woman who wanted to become a Catholic, but was prevented by her husband, a so-called Catholic.⁴³ The Anglican clergyman posted to Malindi shortly before being interviewed there in December 1967 did not know of any Christians who had become Muslims, but he could tell of a Digo Muslim woman who became a Christian on marrying a Pokomo Christian.

Thus it appears that generally speaking all the churches, ranging from the Pentecostal to the Catholic, experience loss of members to Islam for reasons connected with marriage. Only the Catholic Church could report any gains from Islam, and this was in the parish of a priest who had made a special study of Islam.

Further away from the Coast the incidence of conversion from Christianity to Islam for reasons connected with marriage

is scattered. Since Christianity is widespread in Kenya and Islam is localised, conversion largely follows the pattern of distribution of Muslim centres. Conversion to Islam through marriage was reported from Machakos and elsewhere among the Kamba,⁴⁴ among the Kikuyu in towns,⁴⁵ among the Maragoli, Kisii, Kalenjin, Luo and Luyia.⁴⁶ At Njabini a Catholic became a Muslim when he went to work at the Coast, but in the main Kikuyu Muslims are found only in the towns, where they are chiefly women married to Muslim men. The few Kamba Christians who become Muslim are either divorced women who have fled to the towns to pursue a loose life, or else they are young men living in towns and renting rooms owned by Muslims who win them to Islam. They fall in love with Muslim women and are obliged to become Muslims in order to marry them.⁴⁷ At Eldama Ravine two Christian girls were married to Muslims and converted to Islam.⁴⁸ At Mumias the same occurred and a Catholic woman who became a Muslim's second wife was forced to become a Muslim. She probably received little support from her church and would have been placed under discipline if she had remained a Catholic.

Baxter reports that Boran who are lapsed Christians frequently become Muslims rather than reverting to traditional religion. He considers that indirectly the Christian missions may be a proselytising influence to Islam amongst the Boran.⁴⁹ This could be the case with other tribes if the Muslim presence were stronger. The same process adds a few Muslims to the population of Muslim villages such as Karai in the Kikuyu area, but considering the number of lapsed Christians there are

likely to be living within reach of Karai, the attraction to Islam is remarkably small.

Many of the comments quoted above came from various questionnaires in surveys of Islam and Christianity in Kenya, in which a question on marriage was sometimes included. One-quarter of the answers to this question mentioned marriage as a cause of conversions from Islam to Christianity. Thus although the movement is not entirely in one direction, it is predominantly from Christianity to Islam in Kenya at the present time.

Christian reaction to the situation

Marriage is clearly an area in which Christianity finds it difficult to compete with Islam. If missionaries had cared to study the background of African traditional religion they might have found sociological reasons for this. Instead they chose to interpret the situation theologically and spent much time contrasting the high moral level of Christianity with what appeared to them to be the much lower moral tone of Islam. Thus they could comfort themselves over their lack of progress. In East Africa many missionary comments on Islam are available in UMCA sources, since that mission was particularly exercised about the situation in Tanganyika and Zanzibar, but they voiced widely-held missionary views.

Canon Godfrey Dale made a special study of Islam and gave some lectures on the subject in the cathedral in Zanzibar. On the subject of marriage he said

And when we turn to Christianity and the teaching of

the Divine Founder of our Faith about marriage and divorce, when we compare with the sensual descriptions of an earthly Paradise in the Qur'an the words "In heaven they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are as the Angels of God", when we think how much the spirit of Christianity has already accomplished for women all over the world, can anyone desire for a moment the progress of a religion which regards women as Mohammedans regard them on earth and believe they will continue to regard them eternally in Heaven?⁵⁰

Norman Daniel points out that this view of Islam as 'a sexually corrupt tyranny based on false teaching' is a traditional area of polemic between Christians and Muslims which has had a long history.⁵¹ But the missionary societies congratulated themselves upon their high moral tone, and took pride in that, rather than in the winning of converts. Canon Scott Holland explained

Of course we know well that our difficulties come not only from our sins . . . but also from our excellencies. That power of the Mohammedan to marry in -- to marry into a race -- comes to him from his low view of marriage and not from a high one.⁵²

Most missionaries would have agreed with him. In their relations with Islam, missionaries in the early part of this century seemed to take delight in setting a deliberately high and unyielding standard, just at the place where it would seem that sympathy and understanding were needed.

Every genuine Christian must in some way be tried; we cannot shield our Moslem brethren from the test of faith, even if we would. A friend who many years ago renounced Islam, hearing of a profession of conversion, always asks, "Has he suffered anything for Christ? Till he does, we cannot be sure he is genuine".⁵³

This kind of test should logically be applied to all Christian converts, indeed all children of Christian parents, but it was not. It was reserved for converts from Islam, and

this because it was precisely these converts who were likely to suffer persecution in any case. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this writer, and those who thought like him, were trying to justify the persecution which Muslim converts always faced, rather than trying to do something to alleviate it; and that they were trying to justify their lack of success in the field of marriage and conversion by setting impossibly high moral standards and then blaming the converts for not achieving them. As a further line of defence they attacked the other side, as, for example, the outrageous statement by Pruett: 'I do not know any single instance in Eastern Equatorial Africa of a pure native who has become a true and earnest Muslim'.⁵⁴ Norman Daniel warns that 'We cannot presume that converts to Islam were more often insincere than other men'.⁵⁵ The CMS Report for 1907-8 was a little more restrained when, referring to Nombasa, it said

Among the Swahili Moslems it is the grosser side of Islam that impresses their imagination or determines their practice. Divorce is grievously common among them, and in almost every case of a native apostatizing from Christianity the inducement offered is the facility afforded of divorcing an uncongenial wife or the license for polygamy.⁵⁶

All the same, one wonders why the missionaries were so complacent about their losses which took place in this way.

Muslim reaction to the situation

Conversion through marriage is a process which operates greatly to the advantage of Islam, and there is little that Muslims need to do about it. Whether it is a case of a Christian man wishing to marry a Muslim woman, or a Muslim

man taking a Christian wife, the principle of kafa'a encourages the Christian to become a Muslim. Muslims are aware of the advantage of polygamy which Islam has in the traditionalist's eyes, compared with the Christian insistence on monogamy. One informant summed it up thus:

Of no mean importance is the Arab's casual remark to the native that "Islam ndiyo Dini ya Mwafrika" (Islam is the proper religion for the African, Swahili) while Christianity is "Dini ya Mzungu" (the religion of the European, Swahili). The native Christian who is not properly grounded in his faith sees a bit of truth in this, and when a time comes that he wants a second wife he may⁵⁷ as well flee into the growing community of Moslems.

Muslims are also aware that once a Christian has fallen into sexual sin it is very difficult for him to escape, because of the Church's discipline on the one hand, and disinclination to give pastoral support on the other. Thus a correspondent living on the coast of Tanzania described how Muslims in Kilwa had a policy of getting Christian teachers involved immorally with Muslim women, and then threatening them with dire punishment unless they married the women, which meant that they had to become Muslims.⁵⁸ However, in Lamu a case was reported where a Kikuyu man made a Muslim girl pregnant, and when communal wrath was poured upon him he agreed to marry the girl. Having done this, he then exercised his right as a Muslim of divorcing her without formality, and thus escaped from the situation.⁵⁹

In 1962 Sheikh Yahya Hussein told a meeting of the Muslim Council of Kenya that the Muslims of East Africa should launch a public campaign to convert public figures such as

Mr Kenyatta (as he then was) to their faith. 'Many leaders who are Christians have married more than one wife and some of them have divorced their wives. If they were Muslims they could do this without being irreligious and the country would be more stable' he is reported to have said.⁶⁰ None of Kenya's leaders has chosen to take this path to moral living in the ensuing ten years. Perhaps they look upon it as a piece of unnecessary casuistry.

The only reference in a Muslim periodical to Muslims being tempted to become Christians through marriage was contained in an article in Mapenzi ya Mungu by Iddi I. Muwanga, a student at Makerere University, entitled 'Ni Chambo kwa Wavulana!'⁶¹ (It's Bait for the Young Men!, Swahili). The burden of the article was that many Christian parents were using their daughters as a means of attracting young Muslim men into Christianity. This was the first occasion on which the present writer had come across this phenomenon and I corresponded with Mr Muwanga in an endeavour to find out to what extent the practice was taking place, and where; but several replies failed to produce any positive information, and I concluded that he was generalising for the whole of East Africa from a single incident in his own private life, in which he had been unsuccessful in persuading a Christian girl to marry him.

Comparison with other countries in Africa

Evidence from other parts of Africa suggests that the one-way process of conversion from Christianity to Islam for

reasons associated with marriage is not confined to Kenya, nor is it solely a contemporary phenomenon. In missionary literature it is presented as a 'problem' to which no solution has as yet been found.

1. The Maghreb. Here is the situation as a Christian missionary sees it in North Africa today. A Muslim girl is converted to Christianity.

The missionaries pray for several years that the girl will not be married off to a Muslim by her family. The family seems to do nothing about it (a problem of communication, since the family is doing something, but the missionary does not know it). Then suddenly in a few days time the girl is engaged and married. The missionaries then feel discouraged, and start to pray she will cling to her faith and win her husband. However, no Christian wife has ever won her Muslim husband to my knowledge. Moreover this is a problem which not only faces Christian young women, but Christian young men as well.

It is not made clear exactly how the marriage arranged by the family for the young Christian man affects his faith, but by giving him a Muslim wife the possibility of his setting up a Christian household of his own is greatly reduced. The reference here to Christians is to converts from Islam. The situation is a 'problem' only to the missionary and to the young person concerned. To the Muslim community it is a most satisfactory solution. The Christian mission spends money on education and medical facilities for the benefit of the Muslim community with the aim of winning souls for Christ, but any evangelistic success is effectively negated by the use of marriage as a curative measure.

Cooley, in writing about religion in North Africa, mentioned interconversion between different faiths, and singled

out marriage as a causative factor:

Even in North Africa, where the religious communities have lived completely apart, there are cases of the conversion of native Jews and of European Christians to Islam, often when they marry Moslems.⁶³

Notice again the unidirectional nature of the process.

2. Egypt. Writing in the Moslem World on 'Why Copts Become Moslems', The Reverend Qummus Sergius enumerated several factors, including (1) in the villages of Egypt Christian girls or widows cannot find Christian men to marry, (2) male Copts turn Muslim if the Maglis (Coptic Church Council) refuses to grant them a divorce, and (3) there is always the temptation to become a Muslim in order to escape from alimony or other distasteful family responsibility.⁶⁴ It is to be noted that he does not charge the Muslim population with actively using marriage as a proselytising principle.

3. Uganda. Years ago a CMS missionary noted that polygyny was a cause of loss from the Christian flock to Islam. 'Many people around us have become Mohammedans lately, not from any religious motive, but simply because they cannot endure having only one wife.'⁶⁵ A return to traditional religion would have involved loss of status, but Islam provided an alternative to Christianity of comparable social standing. More recently the Reverend J. Lanfry, M.A., visited Uganda in the course of a survey of Christian work amongst Muslims in various parts of Africa. 'A priest interrupted me to ask if the task of his priests ought to be to convert the Muslims in the country, or to stop them harming the Christian community by preventing them, for example, taking Christian girls as

wives. This fact which has just been brought to my notice, is a matter of great anxiety for Christian pastors'.⁶⁶

4. Tanganyika. Both the CMS and the UMCA had to face the loss of their converts to Islam in German East Africa in the first two decades of this century. It was a time of rapid expansion of Islam and in many places the traditionalist population was presented with Islam and Christianity almost simultaneously. Where Christianity preceded Islam by a few years, converts might easily decide that they had chosen unwisely, when they considered the different views which Muslims and Christians held on polygyny and divorce.

The UMCA sphere extended along the coastal region and included the off-shore islands. Their contact with Islam was with the Arabs, and with Swahilis whose ancestors had been Muslims for many generations. But they also encountered recent converts in new Muslim areas. Here is Godfrey Dale's assessment of the causes of conversion from Christianity to Islam:

In the past twenty-three years (Canon Dale) has known of isolated cases (of Christians becoming Muslims) but such Christians have often come back again after a short time. He cannot remember a single case in which a native Christian has 'gone over' owing to a careful examination of the Mohammedan religion, and in the few cases which he can call to mind, the cause of such desertion on the part of native Christians has nearly always been the desire to form some sort of matrimonial alliance forbidden by the Christian faith.⁶⁷

This was with particular reference to Zanzibar. Further inland the CMS were sometimes able to reverse the trend and bring people back to Christianity, as the following quotation shows:

One woman . . . has returned after many years of backsliding. She was first taught in the Momboya Valley by one of our missionaries . . . some fourteen to sixteen years ago. Later she married a Mohammedan who took her far away, and she was admitted into the false religion. Since our African teacher went there last year she has broken with the Mohammedans, and joined the inquirers class; her husband, too, evidently through her influence, has also joined.⁶⁸

The Reverend R. Lamburn, a missionary on the coast of Tanzania for many years, was of the opinion that there was, and is, a policy amongst some Muslims in Tanzania to get Christians involved immorally with Muslim women, and then threatening them unless they married the women, which meant that they had to become Muslims. He recognised that the fault lay partly with the UMCA's practice of stationing young bachelor teachers in lonely stations without adequate pastoral oversight. He pointed out that many Muslims would be horrified by any such policy, a view with which the present writer entirely agrees. Muslims often stress that it is important to separate what the followers of a religion practice from what that religion teaches.⁶⁹

5. Malawi. In several field visits to Malawi it was found that there is a fair amount of intermarriage between Muslims and Christians in the predominantly Muslim areas around the southern end of Lake Malawi.⁷⁰ However, the result of this intermarriage is a two-way process and some Muslims become Christians. The difficulty lies rather with church discipline imposed upon the Christian girl who becomes the second wife of a Muslim. This has been common, owing to a dearth in the number of Christian young men, who go to Rhodesia and South Africa as migrant labour. The Muslim men are less adventurous

and, staying at home, they have ample opportunities for taking several wives and thus marry Christian girls who feel the need of a husband. Many Christians are under discipline, but the causes are as much the influence of traditional customs as Islam. In one Anglican parish, for example, the incumbent analysed the causes of the current six hundred cases of discipline as: bigamy, 1 per cent; being the second wife of a bigamist, 10 per cent; divorce and remarriage, 9 per cent; marrying a divorcee, 1 per cent; village marriage to another Christian, 39 per cent; village marriage with a heathen, 28 per cent; various (including conversion to Islam), 2 per cent.⁷¹

The church periodicals have nothing to say about Muslims using marriage as a deliberate method of turning Christians into Muslims.

6. South Africa. In and around Cape Town there is a community of 'Cape Malays' who are all Muslim. Here again it is found that this community gains by intermarriage with Christians, while losing none of its members by the same process. The phenomenon was noticed in the 1880's⁷² and still occurs at the present time. An appreciable amount of intermarriage takes place between Malay Muslims and Christian Coloureds, and in nine times out of ten the Christian spouse is expected to turn Muslim. Marriage, in the opinion of a clergyman working in the area, is the greatest single cause of conversion to Islam, and results in a considerable annual loss of young girls from the Christian community. There are rare exceptions where husband and wife may keep their own religion, or the Muslim may become a Christian before marriage.⁷³

Conclusion

The picture thus drawn from different parts of Africa where Christians and Muslims live in close contact presents a clear pattern, and the situation in Kenya is typical. Where a Muslim man marries a Christian woman various pressures are brought to bear to encourage her to become a Muslim although in Muslim law there is no necessity for her to do so. Where a Christian man wishes to marry a Muslim woman his request is strongly refused unless he agrees to become a Muslim. If he has illicit relations with a Muslim woman strong pressures are put upon him to become a Muslim.

References

1. Mt 24.23-4; 1 Jn 2.22.
2. Muslims see prophecies of Muhammad and the rise of Islam in Dt 18.15-20; SS 1.5-6; 4.9-12; 5.19-16; Is 4.1-3; 5.26-30; 8.13-17; 9.6-7; 19.21-25; 62.2; Hab 3.3-7; Mt 21.33-46; 23.38-9; Lk 24.49; Jn 1.20-1; 14.26; 16.7-14; Acts 3.21-4. See Maulawi Sher Ali (trans.), The Holy Qur'an, Arabic Text and English Translation (Qadian: Nazir Dawat-o-Tabligh, 1955), Introduction, pp. 72-110.
3. Q.2.59, p.344; 5.70, p.493; 22.17, p.454. Verse numbers and page references are to Rodwell's translation of the Qur'an unless otherwise stated. J.M. Rodwell, The Koran (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd, Everymen's Library, 1909).
4. Rom 10.9.
5. Q.3.73, p.393; 43.59, p.138.
6. Mk 10.45; Jn 3.14f; Mk 15.36; 16.6.
7. Q.4.156, p.427.
8. N. Daniel, Islam and the West, the Making of an Image (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1960), p.47. 1 Tim 1.15.
9. Q.4.159, p.428; 5.77, p.494.
10. Q.5.85, p.495.
11. Q.2.23, p.340.
12. Mt 25.31-46.
13. Q.36.47-67, pp.132-3.
14. For a comprehensive survey of the religious communities in the Middle East and their mutual relations, see A.J. Arberry (ed.), Religion in the Middle East, Three Religions in Concord and Conflict (2 vols, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).
15. Q.2.186-9, p.358, allows Muslims to 'fight for the cause of God against those who fight against you: but commit not the injustice of attacking them first'.
16. This continues at the present time. See W.A. Veenhoven (ed.), Case Studies on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, a World Survey (3 vols, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975).

17. A.H. Siddiqi, Non-Muslims under Muslim Rule and Muslims under Non-Muslim Rule (Karachi: Jamiyatul Falah Publications, 1969), p.2.
18. S. Neill, The Unfinished Task (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1957), p.188.
19. For example, Arabia, Spain and Armenia.
20. Lebanon is probably the only country where Muslims and Christians have agreed that they are equally matched and that they should administer the country on a basis of equality. The events of 1976 show the fragility of this arrangement.
21. Arberry, op.cit., I,255.
22. Thus it is unfair of westerners to complain that Archbishop Makarios, the President of Cyprus, is an example of the Church meddling in politics. Under the Turks his predecessors in the role of the Head of the Church has the political position of communal leadership thrust upon them.
23. Arberry, op.cit., I,550f.
24. CMS Gazette 1913, 112. Mrs Binns writing from Frere Town on 3 September 1913.
25. See R. Oliver, The Missionary Factor in East Africa (London: Longmans Green and Company, 1952), pp.53-5, for an account of the early days of the Frere Town settlement.
26. Mr Lance Jones Bengo, a member of the Mombasa Municipality staff and a descendant of the Frere Town community, can trace his ancestry back to the Yao tribe of Malawi. Interview, Mombasa, 5 August 1972. J.D. Holway, 'The Religious Composition of the Population of the Coast Province of Kenya', Journal of Religion in Africa, III (1970), 236.
27. CMS Annual Report for 1919-20, p.26.
28. J. Riddelsdell, 'The Evangelism of Muslims at the Coast'. Unpublished paper read to the Mombasa Archidiaconal Council of the Anglican Diocese of Mombasa, 7 March 1957, p.2.
29. The Reverend Samuel Levi. Interview at Frere Town, 5 August 1972.
30. Evangelist Elijah Shimbira. Interview at Kongowen, 5 August 1972.

31. Salim Hamed Afif. Letter, 24 August 1968. In a further letter of 26 September 1968, three Christian men were named who had become Muslim in connection with marriage to Muslim women.
32. Sheikh Abdulla Saleh Farsy. Letter in Swahili, 25 September 1967.
33. CMS Annual Report for 1908-9, p.51.
34. The Reverend John Monteiro. Interview at Changamwe, 4 August 1972.
35. Pastor Ernest Mrima. Interview at Malindi, 10 December 1967. Pastors' questionnaire, April 1968.
36. K. Jones. Interview at Shimo-la-Tewa School, 10 April 1972.
37. A Report on Islam in Kenya (Nairobi: Christian Council of Kenya, 1960, cyclostyled), p.8.
38. CMS Annual Report for 1905-6, p.58.
39. Ruth Darrington, Ribe. Letter, 14 December 1967.
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CHAPTER VII

TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND CHRISTIANITY

Intermarriage as a converting agency

The subject of intermarriage between Christians and the followers of traditional religion has aroused very little interest among researchers. It is surprising, for example, that a work entitled The Growth of the Church in Buganda makes no reference to the influence of marriage in relation to conversion. The book¹ is a detailed study of Makindu, a parish in south Kyagwe, Uganda, and it develops particularised observations made there to the general history of church growth in Buganda. One chapter² indeed is devoted to marriage, and deals with the tensions between church and traditional marriage. This is relevant to church growth and will be discussed below, but it leaves unanswered the question, How did the church begin at Makindu, and how did it grow? Did the young men who lived in the house of the Reverend George Baskerville,³ an early missionary, take Christian girls as wives, or did they lead their fiancées to Christ before marrying them, or did they marry traditionalists and then hope to convert them, and if so how often did they succeed? One of Baskerville's young men was Yonasani Kaidzi who was later ordained and became a great help in the work of evangelism, but all that is recorded of his wife is that 'as soon as he was ordained he and his wife Ketula joined the mission at Ziba',⁴ and everything else about her is left to the reader's imagination.

Again, Sundkler in Bantu Prophets in South Africa has a section on the women leaders of independent churches.⁵ He states that some churches are dismissed as 'women's churches' because of the high proportion of women in them,⁶ but he does not consider the extent to which wives attempt to evangelise their husbands, nor the degree of success obtained.⁷ A similar gap exists in Survey of African Marriage and Family Life edited by Arthur Phillips⁸ where there is not a single reference to the interaction between marriage and religious affiliation.

Over the past few years the collection of oral material by students at the United Theological College, Limuru, and others at the University of Nairobi, has produced a mass of first-hand data on the experiences and reminiscences of early converts to Christianity in Kenya and of more recent converts to independent churches. In most cases the people interviewed were men. Those who were already polygynists at the time of their conversion encountered problems which will be considered later. For young unmarried men who became Christians in the early days of Christian work in any given tribal area there was usually a problem of finding a suitable wife. It seems to have been a general pattern that the conversion of men preceded the conversion of women. Also they desired to marry Christian girls. This desire may well have been inculcated by the missionaries, who wished to see unitedly Christian indigenous households being founded, and it was fostered of necessity by the reluctance of traditionalist fathers to give their daughters in marriage to young men who had gone over to the strange new religion.

For Christian young men the preference for Christian girls might over-ride tribal considerations. The Africa Inland Mission station at Kijabe was deliberately sited on the border between the Kikuyu and Maasai areas in order to evangelise both tribes. It met with some success, at first amongst Maasai young men. Of one of these, named Taki, it was reported that he became an evangelist. ' . . . he had moved widely among the Masai people before he got married. . . . Since there were no properly enlightened Masaigirls he did not turn to them for a wife. He got his wife from Kikuyu girls who had come to Kijabe Mission and were enlightened on the Word of God'.⁹ His wife's name was Wanjiku. A fellow Maasai named Molonket became a Christian and assisted Taki with his work as an evangelist. He too married a Kijabe Kikuyu Christian girl named Nyakeiru in 1916.¹⁰

There were more males than females amongst the early Christian converts in Kenya and this presented a problem to the young men since it was their aim and that of their missionaries that they should marry Christian girls and set up Christian homes. The problem exists even at the present time for the handful of Somali young men in Kenya who have become Christians. Taki and Molonket were Maasai who preferred to marry Christian Kikuyu girls rather than traditionalist Maasai. However, marriages between Kikuyu and Maasai are not uncommon, so that no great significance should be attached to the intertribal nature of these unions.

There has always been a difference of opinion as to whether the long-term evangelisation of a people was best

begun by making the first converts live out their new faith in situ amongst their non-Christian relatives and friends, or by bringing them apart from the world for a while to build them up in the faith, as Jesus had done with his disciples on occasion.¹¹ One informant in fact commented that the example set by the Christian households of the missionaries was something which influenced Christians to become monogamous.¹² The Holy Ghost Fathers encouraged the growth of Christian villages where a Christian atmosphere should prevail, and the CMS made use of their free slave settlement at Frere Town in the same way.¹³ Christian villages were formed on the Tana River, and in Central Nyanza at Ebwali, where entry to the villages was forbidden to polygynists.¹⁴ At times the missionaries were obliged to provide accommodation for women and girls who ran away to the mission to become Christians. Somewhat to the surprise of all concerned, this worked out rather well, as the following case illustrates. Pastor Douglas arap Mutai described how, after becoming a Christian under the ministry of the Africa Inland Mission, he had difficulty in finding a wife:

Just in the same year (1923) Mr Andersen told me that I should marry a Christian girl so that I could stand firm in the Christian faith. To my surprise I asked him how I could get one as there were very few indeed. He assured me that he would convince one for me from Lumbwa where he has accommodated them. He asked one of them if she could agree to be married by me. The girl was afraid to argue with him for fear that she would be expelled from the mission where she had taken refuge so she agreed on the spot. Then after settling the matter with her parents I got married in 1924.¹⁵

Douglas arap Mutai elaborated further on the missionary method

adopted at Lumbwa. Andersen offered accommodation to boys and girls at the mission because he knew that if they stayed at home they might not be able to resist traditional pressures.

The problem arose because of the women flowing to the mission for safety as the parents were bitterly against the accommodation of their daughters there. The government had authorised Mr Andersen to arrest and imprison someone who used force to remove his wife or daughter from the mission. Girls escaped to the mission because of being beaten by their husbands or being given to be married to men they did not love. . . .¹⁶

The parents believed that their daughters who ran away to the mission would acquire a bad reputation and never find a husband.

The girls may have felt the same. The young men expected to find difficulty in getting a Christian wife. All were therefore pleased to find a solution to their problems. Added to this the missionary honoured local marriage customs by supervising the handing over of a marriage gift from the bridegroom to his wife's parents:

When a Christian boy wanted to marry a girl at the mission he was ordered to negotiate with her parents. After they had agreed on the matter of dowry they forwarded the matter to the missionary who had to go and witness the cows given as dowry after which they were wedded. The parents of the girl rejoiced because they did not expect that their daughter would even marry and living in dowry (sic). The husband as a Christian helped his wife's parents generously. By 1940 the Christians had a better reputation.¹⁷

At the present time amongst Meru young people, Christian young men look first for wives among Christian girls, and in the rare event of one wishing to marry a girl from a traditionalist background he would expect her to become a Christian. She probably would. A young man who had not become a Christian would be unlikely to win the hand of a Christian girl, and if

he wished to marry one he would take the preliminary step of becoming a Christian.¹⁸

These examples suggest that the pattern of marriage between traditionalists and Christians was governed by the two factors of (1) male dominance and (2) the social superiority of Christianity. In the earliest days a girl who became a Christian could be pulled back into the traditionalist camp by being forcibly married to a traditionalist husband, but once Christianity was established the movement was all towards Christianity. Christian young men achieved superiority in the marriage market. At first sight this seems similar to the pattern of marriage between Christians and Muslims, where Islam is socially the superior religion. But there is a distinction. Whereas a Muslim man may seek for a wife amongst non-Muslim women, so that his marriage is potentially proselytising, the tendency amongst Christians is to restrict the search for a wife to Christian girls. Thus Christian marriage is restrictive, rather than proselytising. Christianity tends to be an endogamous community, but on religious, and not ethnic, grounds.

Marriage and denominational changes

It will be convenient to consider here cases of transfer of affiliation from one Christian denomination to another. The mission history of Kenya is such that there are many tribes which have been evangelised by two or more missions. This has resulted in people who have identical social backgrounds and live close together belonging to churches as different as the

Roman Catholic and the Friends. Inevitably the ecclesiastical differences are often viewed as irrelevant and imposed on society from overseas. Despite this, practical social barriers arise between different denominational communities and this results in family tensions when a person converts, or marries someone belonging to a different denomination. That the problem does not originate in Wittenberg is seen by the same tensions appearing when an indigenous denomination springs up de novo in a locality.

In Islam the problems arising from conversion are solved at a stroke by divorce, which separates the convert to Islam from his previous community and insulates him from their attempts to win him back, and on the other hand cuts off the apostate from Islam from his family, so that the disease of apostasy may not spread to his wife and children. In Christianity divorce is forbidden by some denominations and frowned upon by the rest, so that it offers no simple solution to family tensions. In any case inter-denominational Christian marriages are by no means rare, so that where a change of denomination occurs on the part of one partner to a marriage, their new position is the same as that of many other couples who married in the full knowledge that their marriage would remain denominationally mixed. In a nominally Christian country such as England which contains a variety of denominations, inter-denominational marriages are frequent, though not as frequent as would be the case if denomination played no part in people's marriage choice. In 1966 a survey was made of Bishop's Stortford, a small town in England, and it

was found that the number of marriages between spouses of different denominations was one-third of the number which would be expected if religious differences were not a factor in the choice of marriage partner.¹⁹ Thus the survey suggested that there was an inhibiting effect on inter-denominational marriages, but only to the extent of a reduction to one-third of the expected number.

A survey of inter-denominational marriages in Australia revealed that whereas random mate selection irrespective of denominational affiliation would result in 78 per cent of all marriages being inter-denominational, in fact the proportion was 21 per cent, a reduction, as before, to one-third of the expected figure.²⁰ Further, 76 per cent of married Anglicans were married to fellow-Anglicans, 19 per cent to non-Anglicans and 5 per cent to non-Anglicans who became Anglicans on marriage. The corresponding figures for Catholics were 74 per cent Catholic-Catholic marriages, 20 per cent mixed, and 6 per cent conversion marriages.²¹ Altogether 4 per cent of the people participating in the survey had changed their religious affiliation during their lifetime as a result of marriage, 60 per cent of these were women and 40 per cent men. Of those who changed 35 per cent became Anglicans, 24 per cent became Catholics and 32 per cent Methodist or Presbyterian, showing that there is not a one-way flow to Catholicism, as is sometimes thought.²²

One important difference between the populations of Bishop's Stortford and Australia is the higher correlation in

the latter between ethnic origins and religious allegiance. Italian and Irish immigrants are generally Catholic, Scottish are Presbyterian and English are Anglican, so that when Italians marry fellow-Italians they also marry fellow-Catholics. The effect is seen to some extent in Kenya where it is unlikely that a Friend would marry a Presbyterian because this would mean that a Luyia was marrying a Kikuyu. But within the Kikuyu tribe it is quite possible that a Catholic would marry a Presbyterian.

No population survey of Kenya has been made which would enable figures to be obtained like those quoted above for Australia and England. The following case histories taken from the Limuru Archives illustrate a general view gained from extensive fieldwork and research without the resources of a large-scale systematic survey. Three women were reported on who belonged to the Luyia tribe living in North Nyanza District. Their former allegiance was to the Catholic and Friends Churches and they transferred to an indigenous independent church, the Holy Spirit Church of East Africa (HSCEA).

Sabeti Anyika was a member of the Friends African Church at Lusiola village before her marriage in 1933 to Shadrack Mwiroti, who was the leader of the HSCEA. She continued to worship with the Friends for several months after her marriage, but then, she said 'I listened to my husband's preaching and also attended many of the Holy Spirit Church services. I became more and more involved and eventually received a calling to become a full member'. Her parents and the Friends Church elders 'disapproved, and for a long time

continued to do so, but lastly they accepted me with the Holy Spirit religion'.²³

Sabeti's transfer of religious affiliation from the Friends to the HSCEA would appear to have been inevitable, seeing that her husband was a prominent member of the Church. It is surprising that it had not been anticipated by her family and friends.

A similar case from the same source was Siriya Shiyombe who, with her husband and family, was a member of the Roman Catholic Church. In 1941 when she was about thirty years old and married, she joined the HSCEA. Her parents objected but were not hostile. Her husband completely rejected the idea, and when she persisted he beat her. The Roman Catholic Church leaders also brought pressure to bear to make her return, particularly because she held a responsible post in their Church and they feared that she might lead others astray. The Church leaders even invoked the secular authorities and Siriya had to appear before the village assembly and be publicly rebuked. But she persisted, encouraged by the support of the HSCEA members. Eventually opposition died away and even her husband came to accept the situation, though apparently no further members of the family changed their allegiance. In fact this may have helped the family to accept Siriya in her new role. Also as a Catholic her husband could not divorce her.²⁴

A more complicated case was that of Ruth Shiyayo who was raised in the Friends Church. She married a staunch Roman Catholic when she was about sixteen years old, but he

allowed her to remain a friend. However a year later she too joined the HSCEA. Her husband became very hostile and reported her to local government officials, 'and authorized them to deal with me. I received rough treatment in their hands'.²⁵ Apparently she persisted in her new belief.

In another part of Kenya Paulo Mugo was a Kikuyu living in Murang'a District. He was brought up in a Roman Catholic family, but lapsed when he went to work at a place which was a long way from a church. Then a muroti came to reach at the farm where he was working. A muroti (plural aroti, Kikuyu) is a dreamer; it is the name given to members of the Kenya Foundation Prophet Church (KFPC), an independent church in the Kikuyu tribe, also known as the Arathi (singular murathi, Kikuyu) or prophets. In 1945 Paulo returned home as his father was ill. Two months after his father's death he married. His wife was not a muroti, but became one. 'I converted her to my faith. And all our children are aroti. And I pray to be a servant of God'.²⁶

These illustrations are consonant with the view that, generally speaking, when a man changes his denominational allegiance he takes his wife and family with him, but that if a wife, or an unmarried woman, converts, she does so alone, and against social disapproval. Only after she has patiently endured their efforts to bring her back may she be left in peace by her former co-religionists. An unmarried woman in particular may find that a forced marriage to a former co-religionist is one form of social pressure applied, with

slight chances of her winning him over to her religion, and a high probability of finding herself pulled back. If she is able to be independent of her family her salvation may lie in marrying a member of her new church, but in the case of independent churches she is likely to find an excess of women and few male suitors. Conversion to an independent church with a majority of female members would be more conveniently executed after marriage, rather than before. Barrott comments on the remarkable independence of mind sometimes possessed by African Christian women, leading them to form their own women's organisations within existing churches. Some outstanding women occasionally accept the role of prophetess and found a new denomination. Two examples are quoted from Kenya, Mariam Rogot and Gaudencia Aoko, both Roman Catholic Luos, who caused a series of Catholic secessions in Kenya, the chief of which is the Legion of Mary Church.²⁷ The Church of Christ in Africa is also mentioned as an independent church in Kenya having a considerable majority of women in the church community, and it appears that here again women have been unsuccessful in bringing their husbands with them to the new denomination.²⁸ It would be interesting to know whether they try, or whether they prefer to keep the church as a largely women's preserve, and to what extent the women are allowed by their husbands to raise their children in the new church.

Initiation rites

Tribal initiation rites were intimately bound up with

traditional ideas of marriage. They involved the instruction of young people in their domestic duties as well as sexual behaviour. They involved surgical preparation of the reproductive organs for adult use.

No equivalent rites exist in the Bible. Male circumcision was performed in the Old Testament,²⁹ and still is today amongst the Jews in a private ceremony at the age of eight days. Baptism in the New Testament was not performed at any particular age. There is no specific condemnation of puberty rites and the Bible is silent on the subject. An inclusive view would be to say that the rites are neither obligatory for Christians, nor are they wrong in themselves, unless they include practices which offend other parts of the Christian ethic. While they have deep religious significance in traditional religion, they are simply social customs as far as Christianity is concerned. The opposite, exclusive view would regard them as incompatible with Christianity since they already possessed traditionalist connotations.

Missionary reactions to initiation rites were mixed. The Roman Catholics took the view that there was nothing in the rites which constituted a mortal sin.³⁰ The rites would disappear with the passage of time and the spread of education. In Tanganyika the Universities' Mission to Central Africa attempted to Christianise the jando male circumcision rites, with limited success.³¹ In Kenya the Protestant missionaries working amongst the Kikuyu tribe took the view that the initiation rites were anti-Christian, and this for two reasons. One was that the rites contained a good deal of instruction in

sexual behaviour which Europeans of those days condemned as obscene. The second was on account of the seemingly unnecessary suffering, sometimes resulting in death, to which the girls were put, both at the time of clitoridectomy and at subsequent childbirth. The Church of Scotland Mission happened to be led by two medical practitioners, Dr Philp and Dr Arthur, who were able to make clinical observations of the results of the operation. Dr Philp once witnessed the actual operation and vowed that he would never allow anything of the kind again.³²

In taking a firm stand on the matter they made 'female circumcision' into a major political issue which goes far beyond our present field of investigation.³³ As far as conversions from traditional religion to Christianity are concerned the controversy probably did not greatly reduce the flow of conversions to Christianity, but the direction of the flow was changed. The first independent church amongst the Kikuyu was founded in 1921.³⁴ Since then a number of churches have been founded, including the Arathi mentioned above, and these were not dominated by expatriate missionaries, neither did they take such a rigid line on initiation, thus they made gains where the mission-founded churches encountered losses. But it seems that the Kikuyu tribe as a whole accepted that the future lay with Christianity. By 1962 more than half of the tribe claimed to be Christian, in Fort Hall District the proportion of Christians was nearly seventy-five per cent.

Because of the insistence of the missionaries that to participate in the rites was to commit a grievous sin, there

were many people under discipline, generally for a fairly short period, three months or so.³⁶ In many tribes in Kenya the missionaries had to face the question of female initiation rites, but only in the case of the Kikuyu did it become the centre of a major political issue.

The extent to which clitoridectomy is practised in Kenya at the present time was discussed in Chapter II above. Since education and profession of Christianity go hand in hand it is probable that the incidence of clitoridectomy is substantially less amongst Christians than amongst traditionalists. It would be anticipating developments to suggest that it has died out altogether amongst Christians.

In Tetu Presbyterian parish near Nyeri interviews with church members revealed that clitoridectomy was still being practised.³⁷ Amongst the Nandi the hope has been expressed that 'as everybody slowly becomes educated in Nandi, the custom will die a natural death'.³⁸ Here, as amongst the Kikuyu, the missionaries condemned the practice, and Christians continued it secretly, but it never became a political issue.

In Meru in 1950 the African District Council made the act of participating in, or permitting, clitoridectomy, a punishable offence, and from 1956 to 1959 heavy fines were imposed, but in 1963 the law was repealed and people were declared free to submit their daughters to the operation or not as they preferred.³⁹

At the present time Kinyua reports that the majority of girls are not getting circumcised, especially round Tumumu Tumumu,

and yet they are very nubile. He regards this as a sign of victory for the church in an area which was the locus belli of the circumcision conflict.⁴⁰

None of the early converts described in the Limuru Archives left the church because of practising initiation rites and none gave it as their reason for transferring from one denomination to another.

It seems that the general opinion, while over-optimistic, is substantially correct, namely that with the growth of education those harmful aspects of the initiation rites to which some early missionaries took exception will pass away; thus the policy followed by the Roman Catholic missions would appear to be vindicated.

Bridewealth

There was early missionary opposition to the custom of bridewealth, which is the exact opposite of the European custom of a bride bringing her dowry to the new home. At a time when slavery was still a live issue, bridewealth looked remarkably like the girl's parents selling her off to the highest bidder, and in some vernaculars the words used are the same as those used in commerce. The missionaries therefore decided that bridewealth was detrimental to their ideal of Christian marriage, and through their superior position they were able to impose their views on their converts. Thus Taylor records that a Church Council in Buganda passed a resolution in 1897 in favour of abolishing the custom.⁴¹ However, when some of their converts explained the true position to them the

missionaries were prepared to change their views.⁴² Even so, theologically it was an unnecessary intrusion into traditional life. There is no evidence that views held on bridewealth, strictures against it or support for it, ever had any effect on the transfer of religious affiliation of young people wishing to get married, although it may be conceded that the custom may be more prevalent at the present time than it otherwise would have been because of the acceptance of the system by missionaries and the administration.

Polygyny

Polygyny has been a problem confronting Christian work in Africa from the beginning of the modern era.⁴³ It forms an integral part of African social life, and was widely accepted, whether or not it was widely practised. In a representative sample of 157 tribes in Africa, Barrett found that in 81 per cent of the tribes polygyny was widespread and practised more or less generally throughout the tribe, while in most of the remaining 19 per cent polygyny was an acceptable form of social behaviour but restricted in some way, such as being regarded as the prerogative of the chief or of a particular social caste.⁴⁴

There is thus a sharp contrast between traditional marriage and Christian marriage, as construed by the missionaries, which is monogamous from the outset and intended to be so for life. A Christian young man may take a wife in a Christian marriage with the approval of the Church, whether or not he privately thinks of it as potentially polygynous, but when he

actually takes a second wife the conflict between traditional and Christian ideas becomes manifest and he risks being placed under ecclesiastical discipline. It is at this time that he may be tempted to change his religious affiliation, and it is our purpose to examine to what extent he will take one of the options open to him. For example, he may become a Muslim, or he may decide to join an independent church which permits polygyny without censure, or he may become a lapsed Christian, attending his original church under the stigma of 'discipline', or he may abandon Christianity altogether and either return to traditional religion or adopt a secular attitude.

The extent to which polygyny affected the faithfulness of early converts may be illustrated by the following example. The first baptisms recorded in the CMS registers in Nyanza Province consisted of fifteen boys from Maseno School who were baptised in 1910. In 1940 it was possible to state that four or five of them were still faithfully members of the church. The others had fallen by the wayside and had become lapsed members on account of polygyny.⁴⁵

Regret is a frequent feature of the testimonies given by early converts who had succumbed to taking a second wife. It is as though they wished to lead a monogamous life but were impelled by other social forces of whose strength they were unaware. A convert who was born about 1894 was accepted into the Friends African Mission at Kaimosi in 1918, when he was about twenty-four years of age. But he left the Church only two years later, the reason being, as he put it, 'I wanted to have many children, and in this way I took some more wives.

My life before was a happy life, but now it is full of troubles and sorrows'.⁴⁶ Many wished it were possible to take a second wife and at the same time somehow to remain a Christian. Also, although they did not realise it at the time, they were entering upon polygynous commitments at a point in history when polygyny was beginning to lose its economic advantage and would begin to be a liability. School fees for a large number of children would become a burden. A recent polygynist pointed out: 'I left the church because of many secondary wives. That was 1952. This grieved my fellow Christians and missionaries. My life before was good, but now it is a very hard life. I have some problems which I did not have before. Feeding these wives and children and buying them clothes. I have not grown away from the church in my heart'.⁴⁷ Another, a backslider from the Africa Gospel Church, said 'I fell into the trap of marrying a second wife because of human desires. No-one told me to stay out of the church, but I was ashamed because of what I did'.⁴⁸

In other areas where traditional religion retains more of its vital force there may be less regret at leaving the Church because there is something more positive to turn to. In a case recorded at Rabai, several young Christian men took second wives 'and consequently they left Christianity completely'.⁴⁹ They may have become Muslims, but Rabai is in the Giryama area, in a tribe noted for its retention of traditional religion in the face of close contact with both Christianity and Islam over a period of many years, and they probably reverted to traditional religion.

It was suggested above that the occasion of taking a second wife might be the time when a Christian man might decide to change his religious allegiance. Missionaries often looked upon independent churches as a refuge for their miscreants. As one leading missionary wrote to another 'All the bad characters from our church tend to go to them'.⁵⁰ Again, where there was a number of competing churches in an area, there was the inducement for a person under discipline in one church to transfer to another.⁵¹ It is therefore all the more remarkable that so many people prefer to remain loyal to their original church or mission, even though they are placed under discipline in it. And the numbers under discipline are by no means small. For example, in the Maua Circuit of the Methodist Church in 1972 it was reported that 'Polygamy and marriage outside the Christian Marriage Ordinance still remain major problems, and almost half the total membership are under discipline because of this',⁵² while for the neighbouring Tharaka Circuit the number of full members was 757 of whom 565 were under discipline.⁵³ It would seem that amongst the Meru Methodists, anyone with any degree of leadership potential would have little difficulty in gathering a large following into an independent church if the issue of polygyny were a major predisposing cause.

In Schism and Renewal in Africa, Barrett made an analysis of the causes of the rise of independent churches in Africa.⁵⁴ Taking a sample of 157 tribal units he tested one hundred different factors which could possibly have some relevance in causing the phenomenon of independency. Of these, twenty-four

factors were found in which there was a significant correlation between the factor and the existence of the independency within the tribal unit. Of these the existence of polygyny as a general practice in the tribe came twenty-first in order of significance, having a correlation coefficient with respect to independency of 0.20 where the threshold value for significance at the five per cent level for the data used (157 tribal units) was 0.17.

Clearly while some significance can be attached to polygyny as a causative influence in the formation of independent churches, its significance is not very great in comparison, for example, with the influence of independency in a geographically adjoining tribe, a factor whose correlation coefficient with independency is 0.57 (the maximum possible value being 1.00). In fact Barrett gives no instances where independency arose expressly on the issue of polygyny, and remarks that it has been the immediate cause of secession 'in a very few cases. From the historian's point of view, it is often regarded as quite irrelevant as a causative factor'.⁵⁵

Pre-Christian polygyny

A second question relating to polygyny was the acceptance of people who were already polygynists. When the missionaries started preaching and making converts, amongst those coming forward for instruction and baptism were polygynists, men and their wives, who had already married before they heard the Gospel. The missionaries were in a quandary as to the course they should take. The Bible appeared

to offer no clear guide. In the development of doctrine in the Bible there is a historical trend towards monogamy, but the polygyny of people in the Old Testament is not censured by Jesus or by anyone else in the New Testament. In the New Testament there are no polygynists, and when people are baptised it is upon profession of faith and repentance of sin. The scriptural view would appear to be that if a polygynist confessed his sins and professed faith in Jesus Christ he should be baptised. The same would apply to each of his wives. J.W. Colenso, the Anglican bishop of Natal, accepted this view,⁵⁶ but he was not followed by any missionaries in Kenya. Although they were mostly conservative in their theology, taking a literal view of the Bible, they were unable to accept Colenso's view, even as a temporary measure. They saw polygyny as a sin. If a polygynist confessed his sins before baptism, his polygyny would be one of them, and as a sign of contrition he should put away his wives before baptism and henceforth live with one only.

Various courses of action were pursued: (1) the polygynist was refused baptism altogether,⁵⁷ (2) the polygynist could be baptised after he had put away all his wives except the first one he married,⁵⁸ (3) he could be baptised after he had put away all except the one of his choice,⁵⁹ or (4) after he had put away all except the first one to be baptised.⁶⁰

Some of these courses of action could cause grave disruption to tribal life. One obvious difficulty was to know what to do with the wives who had been put away. To insist that they remain celibate for the rest of their lives was

contrary to tribal custom, and quite harsh when, as sometimes happened, they were still merely children. It was difficult for missionaries to recommend that they be divorced, since whatever Jesus omitted to say about polygyny, he spoke quite categorically against divorce.⁶¹ It might have been possible to marry them to young men of the village, but in some tribes to marry the ex-wife of a chief carried overtones of enhanced social status and political aspirations.⁶² There was a danger of a situation arising in which the missionaries felt that they might be countenancing legalised prostitution. Taylor states that in Uganda the women were easily provided with husbands and caused no social upset,⁶³ but this was probably accepting Bishop Tucker's view. A government questionnaire circulated in Uganda in 1937 suggested a less happy state of affairs.⁶⁴

Conclusion

The attitude of the independent churches towards pre-Christian polygynists has been one of acceptance. They have recognised that polygyny was an accepted social custom in traditional religion and have seen no reason why Christian polygynists should not exist as an interim category in the process of Christianising Africa. It is, in the matter of 'heart versus mind' that they differ from the missionary approach.

To the missionary there was always the stumbling-block of the theological presupposition that polygyny was sinful. Therefore it had to be eradicated, no matter what the social

cost might be. Barrett aptly describes this as a 'failure in love' on the part of the missionaries.⁶⁵ It could equally well be described as a 'triumph of law' over grace, a resolute implementation of the logic of a particular theological point of view pressed to its conclusion. The missionaries were also afraid that by allowing an interim ethic they were compromising the eternal truth of their gospel.

The results are somewhat surprising.

(1) It is of course useless to speculate on what might have been the numerical results in terms of converts if the missionaries had appealed to grace rather than the law in the matter of interim Christian polygyny, but the fact is that mission-founded churches have grown apace, with a nucleus of full members obedient to the monogamous rule, surrounded by a larger body under discipline because of polygyny, but still holding their spiritual links with the church. They prefer to be 'disciplined members' rather than to break their links with the church.

(2) The mission-founded churches, now that they are under African Christian leadership, have made latter-day concessions to the acceptance of pre-Christian polygynists, providing that they had not heard the gospel before becoming polygynists.

Obviously this applies to a small and decreasing number of cases as the knowledge of Christian faith and practice spreads and is really only relevant in as yet unevangelised tribes. It savours of a concession without substance; nevertheless it is a concession on a point of principle and reflects African

Christian sentiment on the subject.

(3) The independent churches which allowed the baptism of pre-Christian polygynists have not become thorough-going polygynous churches. The African Brotherhood Church is an example in Kenya of a church which baptises polygynists but bars them from holding office in the church. It seems that in many cases the independent church leaders recognise the orthodox view that monogamy is the Christian ideal and is to be actively encouraged in Christian instruction.

(4) To a large extent the independent churches attract women, rather than men. Some are even known as 'women's churches'.⁶⁶ This suggests that the facility of full church membership was not one which was eagerly sought after at any price by Christian polygynists. In fact, as has been indicated above, the correlation of the existence of polygyny with the rise of independency in a tribe is barely statistically significant.

(5) In passing, therefore, it may be suggested that one cause of the rise of independency may be its attraction for African women, and pressing this further, this may be because it is seen as a means of escape from female disabilities in a male-dominated society. Christianity as seen through the Bible remains a male-dominated religion in company with the other major world religions, but the character of Jesus comes through in the Gospels as that of a person who respected women and treated them as individuals. Resources are not available to test this hypothesis with the statistical rigour with which Barrett obtained his twenty-four correlative factors of

independency, and in any case it would be a matter of testing the subjective view of the members of independent churches, rather than evaluating factual material, but it is suggested that in relation to our thesis, (1) in Kenya independency has not been a major factor in attracting polygynists from traditional religion or from mission-founded churches, and (2) independency has been an attraction to women, particularly those in mission-founded churches, but that they have not had much success in bringing their husbands with them. Generally, however, they do not seem to have encountered opposition from their husbands in joining an independent church.

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66. Sundkler, *op.cit.*, p.140.

CHAPTER VIII

MARRIAGE AND SALVATION

In seeking an explanation for patterns of marriage behaviour in relation to religious allegiance, one aspect which needs further exploration is the connection between marriage and a belief in salvation. The problem is to inquire into why people hold religious views, often with great tenacity, and endeavour to convert others to their point of view; to ask what advantages they see in holding their particular corpus of religious beliefs.

Religion is notoriously difficult to define, but for people who hold any religious beliefs at all there is an awareness of a spiritual dimension which transcends the material environment in which they find themselves, and without which the meaning of the material universe is incomplete. Part of this involves consideration of continued personal existence when the physical body has died. The question of a continued existence after death is asked, and demands an answer, in all three religious systems found in Kenya, traditional religion, Islam and Christianity. One aim of religious exercises is to ensure that existence continues after death in an agreeable manner. In traditional religion the continued existence itself has to be ensured, and great importance is attached to procreation as a means of survival. A person continues to exist in, or through, or by means of, his descendants, and without descendants he ceases to exist

spiritually as well as physically. This is a terrible fate, to be avoided at all costs. Traditional religion has a higher theology in this respect than much of the Old Testament, where human existence after death appears to be a matter of some doubt. Sheol, the place of departed spirits, is like a dusty Government archives where one's personal file is closed and deposited, never to be referred to again.¹

In Islam and Christianity the eternal existence of the soul, the spiritual part of a human being, is not in doubt. It is an accepted doctrine, so that there is no comparable striving to achieve immortality. Instead the emphasis is turned to the quality of eternal existence, and both religions believe in two alternative destinies of bliss or suffering.² A major aim of the followers of these religions is to achieve eternal bliss and avoid eternal suffering.

Even for those secularists³ for whom attitude towards the spiritual dimension includes a more or less thorough-going disbelief in human survival after death, there is still a remarkable persistence in the view that there is good and bad in human purposive activity. For all except the most selfish hedonist, secularists believe that there would be something 'lost' in life if they were not able to contribute personally towards making the world a better place for their contemporaries and descendants. Seen from the Christian point of view, and in the Quaker phrase, there is 'that of God in every man'.⁴

In Christianity the word 'salvation' is used to describe the achievement of the state of eternal bliss, and this word, without its Christian connotation, will be used here in discussing

Islam and even the secularist view. Thus everyone strives for continued existence after death and sees his religion as a means to this end.

Salvation in Islam

In Islam, according to J. Windrow Sweetman,⁵ the means of salvation is found in being a Muslim, in belonging to the Islamic community.

The word najāt (salvation, Arabic) is not used in Muslim doctrine. There is only one occurrence of the word in the Qur'an, where Moses is represented as saying to the children of Israel, 'And, O my people, how is it that I bid you to salvation, but that ye bid me to the fire?'⁶ In Muslim theology salvation, in terms of eternal bliss, is contrasted with Hell, and is primarily concerned with avoiding going to Hell. Salvation lies through 'accepting Islam', which is the same as 'submitting oneself completely to God's will' (kusilimu, Swahili). In Muslim's collection of traditions the first book, on faith, opens with the question 'What can bring me to Paradise and keep me away from Hell?' Salvation in Islam is conditional upon the inscrutable will of God, and the one who accepts Islam and acts according to the five obligations can paradoxically claim to be in a state of potential salvation, while at the same time he cannot say whether he will be saved.

Islam is not a present state of salvation, as Christianity claims to be, but it is the interim state of the theocracy with which men should become associated and from which they

remain separate at their peril. Though not in itself salvation, Islam is the means of salvation. Salvation is obtained by identification with a community. This is the concrete conception which has a firm hold on the Muslim heart. The answer to the question about how to escape from Hell is wholly answered by the one word 'Islam'.⁷

To the Christian observer of Islam in Kenya it appears that Islam the religion takes the place of Jesus Christ the person as the salvific principle in belief, in conversation and in writings,⁸ and Muslims mention Islam as much in conversation on religious matters as Christians mention Christ.

At the same time it is recognised that profession of Islam does not guarantee escape from Hell. Islam has no doctrine of Assurance. All is dependent upon the inscrutable will of God, who remains unlimited in his power so that he may act in an arbitrary way, should he wish to do so.

In Swahili myth Muhammad is depicted visiting the spiritual realms.⁹ In Paradise he finds the faithful Muslims. In Heaven he finds a range of pre-Islamic prophets and spiritual apparatus, but no ordinary mortals. In Hell he finds a range of sinners including Muslims, enduring ghastly torments. 'Hell has seven gates, one each for the hypocrites, the worshippers of the devil, the sorcerers, the Christians, the Jews, the Parsees, and finally the Muslim sinners who did not repent before they died'. Sexual sins are well to the fore, nearly half of the sins committed by these Muslim sinners being of this nature.¹⁰

However, if profession of Islam does not guarantee escape from Hell, it is certain that those who are not Muslims are sure to go there. Islam, while not completely efficacious, is the only means of salvation.¹¹ This means that apostasy is the most serious offence which a Muslim can commit. It is an offence against himself, by casting away the means of salvation, and against God, by abandoning belief in him, and against the Muslim community, by denying belief in itself as a salvific community. If one Muslim apostasises, and gets away with it, it may encourage others to do the same. The penalty for apostasy is death. This is the reason why Christians have failed over the centuries to make any significant impression on Islam, despite immense expenditure of human and material resources. Salvation in Islam is somehow felt to rest upon a principle of solidarity, the Muslim sense that we all sink or swim together. The principle of kafa'a as it is applied to the prohibition of Muslim women marrying non-Muslims is based on the Qur'an, but its rigid implementation in Kenya is assisted by this belief in communal solidarity and the assertion of 'no apostasy from Islam'.

A popular Muslim tradition records Muhammad as saying 'My people will never agree upon an error',¹² and to the Christian observer Muslims appear to rest their hope of salvation upon the desperate belief that a thing is right because a majority of human beings agree that it must be so. Ultimately this is to place one's hope of salvation on Human rationality.

Salvation in Christianity

In comparison with traditional religion and Islam, Christianity is a religion pre-eminently concerned with salvation.¹³ The Christian doctrine of salvation has given rise to an enormous literature.¹⁴ The following brief statement is offered in a Kenyan context and as a comparison with what has already been said about salvation in other religions.

In the Old Testament God is seen as the redeemer (Mkombozi, Swahili) of his chosen people Israel. Time and again they forget about him and he allows them to be oppressed by one or other of their neighbour nations. Then they turn to him and he buys them back, generally in the earlier historical period by raising up a leader or 'judge', and in the later period by sending a prophet to lead them back to God. His redemption is from current political oppression rather than from anything of an eternal nature. Life after death is not a developed concept in the Old Testament.¹⁵

In the New Testament Jesus Christ identifies himself with God the redeemer,¹⁶ but the preferred word is 'saviour' (Mwokozi, Swahili) rather than redeemer. He is called 'Jesus' because he will save his people from their sins,¹⁸ the Greek name Yesous coming from the Hebrew for 'he saves', and the means by which he saves is by his death on the Cross. He himself said that 'as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.'¹⁹ Salvation (wokofu, Swahili) by 'belief in' or 'having faith in' Jesus Christ

(the same word in each case in Greek) is a prominent feature of the teaching of the Apostles.²⁰

From this Biblical material Christian doctrine developed the following account of the universe, in which salvation is an essential ingredient: God created the universe, and in it he set the human species, distinguished from other creatures by the possession of eternal souls and²¹ an awareness of right and wrong, and possessed of a natural propensity to do wrong. Because of this they are punished by the eternal suffering of their souls in hell after their physical death. Salvation in Christianity is a way of escape from this fate and the means has been provided by God himself who died in human form on the Cross. All who have faith in this act of divine and sacrificial love are saved and their eternal destiny becomes bliss in heaven. The act of putting one's faith in the salvific efficacy of the death on the Cross is termed Conversion, and it reconciles the human soul to God there and then,²² so that the state of salvation is not only eternal but begins from the moment of conversion.²³ God enters the human soul and dwells there from that time onwards.

Christians believe in one God who exhibits a threefold relationship to human beings, described in Biblical language as the Father (God as Creator), the Son (God as Saviour) and the Holy Spirit (God existing in the human soul).

In holding that human existence after death is either in suffering or in a state of bliss, Christian doctrine closely resembles Muslim belief. There is also a less exact parallel

with traditional religion, where there is benefit in continuing to exist through one's descendants and a sense of loss and of ceasing to exist as a punishment for allowing one's line of descent to come to an end by not procreating.

Conclusion

The three religions differ in the manner of achieving salvation. Also in Christianity Christians are assured of salvation by the promises of Jesus Christ,²⁴ whereas in Islam to bind God even by his own promise would be an unacceptable limitation of his power, contrary to the Muslim doctrine of absolute divine omnipotence. The Muslim polemical rejoinder to the Christian doctrine of assurance is to throw doubt on the veracity of the Biblical text.²⁵ Salvation in Christianity thus depends upon whether one is converted, and in Kenya the act of conversion is also described as 'being saved'.

Marriage has different salvational interpretations in the three religions. In Christianity it has no salvific significance, and marital irregularities associated with traditional religion are regarded as sinful. Polygyny in particular is not accepted as justified by the necessity to produce offspring. Marriage with non-Christians is viewed with suspicion as tending to lead Christians astray.

In traditional religion the production of offspring is paramount, and this belief persists into the nominally Christian community to such an extent that sometimes up to one-half of the community prefer to be under discipline rather than to forego traditional means of ensuring offspring.

Inter-marriage between different tribes or between traditionalists and Muslims may encounter social barriers, but salvific considerations play no part since these forms of inter-marriage do not hinder procreation. Logically there should be no objection in this respect from traditionalist parents towards their children's marrying Christians since the traditionalist bride, if barren, is barren whoever her husband may be, and the traditionalist bridegroom can always take a second wife despite his Christian wife's remonstrances. The evidence suggests that in fact a traditionalist young man wishing to marry a Christian girl would take the preliminary step of becoming a nominal Christian.

In Islam marriage with a non-Muslim is acceptable provided it results in accretions to the Muslim community. Children of a mixed marriage must be raised as Muslims. The Non-Muslim husband of a Muslim must become a Muslim. The Christian wife of a Muslim need not become a Muslim, but her children must be raised as Muslims, and no effort should be spared towards her conversion and integration into the Muslim community. Inter-marriage is favoured as an accretional factor, in contrast to the Christian attitude towards it.

References

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3. The word secularist is taken here to include self-styled atheists, agnostics and humanists.
4. L.H. Doncaster, God in Every Man (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1963), p.xiii, quoting A.W. Brayshaw, The Personality of George Fox (1933), p.18.
5. J.W. Sweetman, Islam and Christian Theology (London: Lutterworth Press, 1947-67, two Parts, each of two Volumes). A detailed survey of Muslim theology by a Christian scholar. A planned third Part was never written.
6. Q 40.44, p.243.
7. Sweetman, *op.cit.*, Part I Volume III (1947), 209-213.
8. Much of this was in the course of the author's personal contact with Muslims in East Africa over a period of seventeen years. Orthodox written Muslim contributions originating in Kenya are sparse, but are found in the special supplements of The East African Standard marking the beginning and end of Ramadhan and the publication of the Qur'an in Swahili.
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10. *Ibid.*, pp. 79f.
11. Though there are Traditions in which it is suggested that there may be non-Muslims in Paradise. A.J. Wensinck, A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971, first published 1927), p. 48, s.v. 'Community'.
12. *Ibid.*
13. An introduction to Christian doctrine which takes the evangelical standpoint common amongst Protestants in Kenya is T.C. Hammond, In Understanding Be Men (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1936). Christianity is so thoroughly a religion of salvation that the word 'Salvation' occurs neither in the Table of Contents, nor in the Index of this primer of Christian doctrine.

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15. Dan 12.2f is one of the very few passages in the Old Testament which express belief in a resurrection. See W.O.E. Oesterley and T.H. Robinson, An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1934), pp. 342f.
16. Mk 10.45.
17. From the verb kuokoa, 'to save'.
18. Mt 1.21.
19. Jn 3.14f referring to Num 21.9.
20. Peter in Acts 3.16, Paul in Acts 16.31, John in 1 Jn 2.23, Jude in Jd 20f, James in Jas 2.1.
21. Gen 1.27.
22. 2 Cor 5.19.
23. Jn 3.36; 5.24.
24. Jn 5.25f.
25. Quranic verses appealed to in this connection include Q 2.100, p. 349; 22.51, p. 458; 26.103, p.107. Some Christian commentators hold that these verses refer to other parts of the Qur'an itself. See G. Dale, Islam and Africa (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1925), p. 126.

CHAPTER IX

MARRIAGE AND CONVERSION

Admission to membership of the Christian Church

Baptism is the initiatory rite by which a person becomes accepted as a member of the Church. In New Testament times baptism usually followed immediately after profession of faith in Jesus Christ.¹ There was no probationary period of instruction. This was because in the New Testament the missionaries worked amongst people who were either Jews or who knew the Jewish scriptures used as background material by the Christians in preaching about Jesus the Messiah.²

On the East African mission field most missionaries felt that a preliminary period of instruction was necessary, since traditional religion did not appear to them to relate directly to the Gospel message.³ An adult who wished to become a Christian was first of all called a 'Hearer' (msikiaji, Swahili), then after a short while he was accepted for instruction and made a learner or catechumen (mwanafunzi) and when he completed his course of instruction and showed evidence of living in an acceptable Christian manner he was baptised and given a Christian name. He could then call himself a Christian (Mkristo).⁴ The details of this process varied from one mission to another. The period of probation varied considerably even within the same mission, depending upon individual missionaries. Amongst the Holy Ghost Fathers, in 1892 the kind-hearted Bishop de Courmont accepted one month, to be spent

at the mission station, as sufficient, but in 1912 a three-year catechumenate became the rule of the day for adults, and in more recent years nearly all mission stations prescribed a minimum of two years, part of which was to be spent in or close to the mission.⁵ Without exception all missions required an extended period of instruction before converts were accepted from traditional religion or from Islam. The Quaker mission at Kaimosi used different terminology from the Holy Ghost Fathers, but the method was the same. Careful instruction of 'inquirers' continued for two or three years before converts were 'received' into full membership.⁶

Children of Christians were generally baptised in infancy except in missions which practised 'believers' baptism', that is, baptism on profession of faith. The instruction of baptised children proceeded as they grew up. Thus they were within the Christian community even though they had not fulfilled all the requirements expected of adult candidates for baptism. Seen in this light other members of the family also might enter the Christian community prematurely, especially wives, and so for some marriage became an acceptable means of entry into the Church. This explains why in the account of the lives of early male converts their wives are rarely mentioned. They simply came along too. In traditional society they were bound to obey their husbands, and the missionaries took a reasonable view of the situation. Besides, a New Testament parallel existed in the case of the Philippian jailer who was baptised 'with all his family' who 'rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God'.⁷

Conversion in Protestant Christianity

There is another aspect of becoming a Christian, however, which is strongly emphasised in the Protestant Churches in Kenya. Baptism, particularly infant baptism, is a means of admitting individuals to the Christian community who may have no appreciation of the spiritual issues involved and may be unaware of the spiritual changes wrought by the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian's heart. Jesus commanded his followers to 'make disciples of all nations, baptising them. . .',⁸ but he also said 'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven'.⁹ The word 'conversion' in Christian theology means something more than merely joining the Christian community.

Change is a fact of human life, an inevitable product of temporal existence. 'Conversion' is the word used to describe any change which is deliberately brought about. It has many secular uses, generally with reference to things. When it is applied to human beings, 'conversion' is used chiefly in a religious sense with reference to a deliberate change in a person's religious allegiance, a change in his beliefs which has profound religious significance. Conversion, since it involves a choice of a different path to salvation, is fraught with important consequences to the eternal destiny of the human soul.

At the risk of pedantry the phrase 'transfer of religious allegiance' has been employed in this dissertation, rather than the single word 'conversion'. The reason for this is that

amongst Christians in Kenya the word 'conversion' has considerable theological significance, whereas it is possible to use 'transfer of religious allegiance' to describe an observed event without making further implications.

In evangelical parlance one cannot be born a Christian; one becomes a Christian through the spiritual experience of conversion, often described as being 'born again'.¹⁰ Thus only those who can tell of a converting experience are counted as Christians. Others may call themselves Christians, but the validity of their claim is denied by converted Christians. To ask A whether B is a Christian means that A has first to know if B has been converted, and A may also have to make a value judgement on the validity of B's testimony regarding his conversion, before he can answer the question.

This situation is not peculiar to Kenya, but it assumes particular importance in Kenya for historical reasons. The majority of the early Protestant missionaries to Kenya were Britons and Americans who had been influenced by the evangelists Moody and Sankey. Dwight L. Moody (1837-99) was an American evangelist who began his work in America in 1840 and visited Britain to conduct five extended preaching missions, commonly called revivals, between 1867 and 1892.¹¹ A simple calculation will show the relevance of this to the evangelisation of Kenya. Supposing that in round figures Moody's main period of influence in Britain and America was from 1870 to 1890, and that those who became missionaries as a result of his preaching were young people aged twenty years, who came to Kenya and had an active missionary life of forty years. Their period of missionary

work would extend from 1870 to 1930. It was during this time that most of the pioneer missionary work was done and the pattern of Christian life visible in Kenya today was established. In this way Moody has exerted an important if indirect influence on Kenya.¹² His fellow-worker Ira D. Sankey (1840-1908) made their preaching missions attractive by providing a bright musical accompaniment in the shape of new hymns and new tunes, more cheerful than the rather laboured tunes hitherto used in Christian worship, and the missionaries brought these tunes with them to Kenya, setting Swahili and vernacular words to the music. This music proved attractive to Africans and transcended mission and denominational boundaries.¹³

Protestantism in Kenya, despite its many denominational labels, was united in its evangelical witness and in its hymnody. Hymns make up a major part of most Protestant services of worship. An illustration of the common theological stand is seen in an incident in 1922 when the AIM, by threatening to break up the Alliance of Protestant Missions, was able to force a resolution through that body's Representative Council that henceforth all member societies of the Alliance would send out as missionaries to Kenya only those 'who hold the conservative Evangelical position'.¹⁴ The resolution was aimed at the Anglo-Catholic UMCA of Zanzibar, who were represented on the Alliance, and were wrongly suspected by the AIM of being modernist, but the fact that such a resolution could be passed shows how united the missionaries were in their theology, whatever their denominational allegiance. Rosberg and Nottingham express the opinion that

the theology of most CMS missionaries was closer to that of the AIM than to that of the more High Church group within their own missionary society.¹⁵

A feature of Moody's preaching was his emphasis on instantaneous conversion. This became a dogma held by all missionaries in Kenya of the evangelical persuasion, many of whom had had a spiritual experience of this nature under Moody. Although many people in Britain and America called themselves Christians, instantaneous conversion was used by those who had experienced it as a criterion for being a 'Christian' as opposed to being a 'nominal Christian', and this terminology has become widespread in Kenya.

One practical result of this is that estimates of the size of the Christian community in a given place vary widely, depending upon the source, and the more thoroughly Christian the source the smaller the estimate is likely to be. This produces unexpected answers to demographic questions on religious affiliation. One may go to a village on a Sunday and see the churches well-attended. The following conversation with a villager may ensue:

Q: Are there any Muslims in this village?

A: A few Asian shopkeepers.

Q: Or Catholics?

A: About half of the village.

Q: What about the rest?

A: They are nearly all AIC.

Or, in the same village, the conversation may develop as follows:

Q: How many people live in this village?

A: About five hundred.

Q: How many of them are Christians?

A: There are ten of us. The pastor is unfortunately not a Christian, and the Catholics are very strong.

The difference seems to depend to some extent upon whether the conversation is introduced in terms of religious denominational categories. Catholics are unlikely to be called Christians in the second conversation because they place more emphasis on baptism as the admission to the Christian community than on the instantaneous converting experience. It must come as a surprise to Muslims to find a Christian describing his own pastor as 'not a Christian'. But, for example, when the revival movement came to Tumutumu Presbyterian parish in 1948, 'members of the movement believed that unless people joined the movement and proclaimed Christ as their personal saviour they had no place in the kingdom of God. This claim not only surprised the ministers who had taken for granted that they belonged to the flock of Christ but it angered them'.¹⁶

No value judgement ever seems to be made upon a person's claim to be a Muslim, nor even upon membership of a Christian denomination, and a person can transfer his denominational allegiance for marriage or other reasons without necessarily incurring theological odium. But if the word 'conversion' is used other considerations apply. Conversion is quite impossible for any but the orthodox reasons. One cannot be converted through marriage, hence the careful choice of phraseology in the title of this dissertation.

In passing it may be observed that this categorising tendency in Christianity raises a problem for demographers. In estimating the size of the different religious communities in Kenya it is necessary to have a yardstick which applies equally to all religions. The most suitable one appears to be that of 'self-styled religious affiliation'. This is the criterion which was applied in the question on religion in the population censuses of 1948 and 1962. Members of the public were simply asked to state their religious affiliation.¹⁷

Conversion in traditional religion

Followers of traditional religion in Kenya do not proselytise. Traditional customs and beliefs are the possession of the tribe or community into which one is born, inherited from one's ancestors, hallowed by antiquity, to be passed on unchanged to one's descendants. As far as can be ascertained from research and field work all the people of Kenya are virilocal. This means that whenever there is a marriage between members of different tribes, or clans within a tribe, the wife becomes a member of her husband's social group. Amongst the Meru, for example, the bride lives with the husband's mother for a short while after the marriage in order to learn the family customs, ranging from culinary peculiarities to the details of the deceased members of the family.¹⁸ A description of family life amongst the Meru brings out forcefully the extent of male dominance in that tribe, and male dominance appears to be general throughout the country. Only recently a case was reported where a Maasai clan leader

in the Kajiado area endeavoured to solve a dispute with another clan by 'giving' two of his daughters in marriage to sons of the leader of the hostile clan. In circumstances such as these the question of 'conversion' from one form of tribal religion to another scarcely arises.¹⁹

In his book on conversion, A.D. Nock suggests that the idea of individual conversion is only significant in a certain type of religion, 'the religion of a prophetic movement in the first ardour of the founder'.²⁰ He calls this a dynamic type of religion. The other, which he calls static, would include African traditional religion along with the official religion of ancient Greece which is included in his study. Static religion, according to Nock, is a 'system of religious observances of a small social unit with elementary needs and interests', a religion which 'makes no sudden imperious demands--except on any who feel a vocation to be shamans or medicine men--and it asks of him action and not belief', a religion in which 'the essential element is the practice and there is no underlying idea other than the sanctity of custom hallowed by preceding generations', in which 'there is no religious frontier to cross, no difficult decision to make between two views of life which makes its every detail different'.²¹

Where conversion is significant it comes as a result of challenge, brought about by the possibility of change. In such circumstances a choice is forced upon the individual, and he has to decide whether to stay with the old or to move over to the new. Either course of action may be taken actively or

passively, depending on the behaviour of the rest of his community, but it is a personal choice, nonetheless. Historically the coming of Islam and Christianity has produced a choice of religion in Kenya which was lacking in earlier times.

F.B. Welbourn sees in traditional initiation rites something which corresponds to conversion in Christianity.²² He describes the stages leading to conversion as (1) deep dissatisfaction, (2) an emotional crisis brought on by external circumstances, (3) a feeling that the crisis demands the surrender of much that has been valued in the past, (4) a decision to make a change, accompanied by intense joy and a feeling that the decision was a free choice. Welbourn applied these stages to traditional initiation rites, which he sees as an engineered equivalent to the conversion experience. The essence of tribal life is solidarity and uniformity of experience, and the initiation is arranged, he thinks, so that all the young people have a feeling of dissatisfaction inculcated in them that they are not yet adults. An emotional crisis is forced on all through the brutalities of the initiation rites, and, as he puts it, 'in a sense the agreement to be circumcised is free. At the cost of ostracism a candidate is free to refuse'.²³

There may be some truth in this analysis, although it probably tells us more about the way in which a conversion experience is produced in young people in Welbourn's denomination than it does about the overt rationale of traditional rites. Trimmingham observed in Tanganyika that the jando

traditional male initiation rite frequently became the occasion for a young man to become a Muslim, so that there would appear to be some consciousness of decision-making associated with the rite in certain situations. But Nbiti does not mention the possibility of choice in discussing the symbolic meaning and practice of the rites.²⁴ To an outside observer the rites would seem to be imposed on young people as an unavoidable stage in the process of growing up, as natural and as unavoidable, say, as menstruation. They are in the form of a group activity and may be postponed for several years in order to make them so, whereas the convert to Christianity is asked to express his individuality. He comes out from the crowd and stands alone before the Cross. He accepts Jesus as his personal Saviour.

Thus Nock's view would appear to be nearer the truth when he avers that the conversion experience is lacking in traditional religion. For the most part it is women who transfer their religious allegiance from one social group to another when they marry, and it is the man in whom the religious traditions of the group are vested.

Entry into Islam

There is less emphasis placed in Islam upon any spiritual experience accompanying conversion. Nevertheless it is generally taken for granted that the convert is genuine in his intention. 'To become a Muslim' in Swahili is kusilimu (aslama, Arabic). The word kuokoka (to be saved, Swahili)

used by Christians, is not employed. There is no special ritual or legal requirement in Muslim law when a person becomes a Muslim, but in practice in East Africa (and elsewhere in the Muslim world) an adult male is required to be circumcised. A declaration before witnesses may be required, or even a declaration in public, including a public recital of the shahadah, the Muslim creed. Other practices have crept in in East Africa, possibly under Christian influence, including a form of baptism and a naming ceremony. Muslim and traditional initiatory rites may be combined.²⁵

The Ahmadiyya sect have adopted a number of Christian missionary methods, and have printed in their newspaper²⁶ a form of application (bayat) to join Islam, but in contrast to the Christian missionary method of placing inquirers on probation during an extended period of instruction, people wishing to join the sect are accepted immediately without demur, although in some places the candidate for orthodox Islam may be required to make himself an embroidered Muslim cap. Any instruction which he may receive in Muslim rites and beliefs takes place after he is accepted. Islam thus offers an immediate welcome, in contrast to the Christian period of probation. This difference has been remarked upon by European observers, often in disparaging terms. The following assessment is typical:

Conversion to Islam is an easy process, complete in a few minutes, and merely consists in a recital of the statement of faith, that there is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet. . . . For the Moslem no doctrinal standards are necessary, and thus a wide difference enters when considered with the Christian

religion which demands the acceptance of doctrinal standards and their strict observance, and membership is conferred in the Christian Church only after a probationary period.

The comparison between the best of one religion and the worst of another is always facile, rarely profitable, and generally leads to a reply in kind. However this quotation illustrates the basic difference of approach. In Islam the emphasis is on belonging to the Muslim community, rather than on the intensity of one's personal religious experience. This is not to share the view of some Christian missionaries that the quality of religious belief and practice is never a matter of concern to any Muslims. There are some Muslim leaders in East Africa who are anxious to raise the general level of Muslim belief and practice. But the basic difference between Muslim and Christian thought on this subject is made clear by an illustration. There would be no point in asking a Muslim, 'Do you accept Muhammad as your personal saviour?', or, 'Are you truly spirit-filled?', since Muhammad is not regarded as a saviour and the Muslim does not hope to make contact with him through prayer, and Islam has no doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Again, two questions which are more in accord with Muslim theology, 'Do you truly believe in God?' and 'Do you believe that Muhammad is the prophet of God?' would be answered in terms of Muslim practice rather than of personal faith: 'I affirm both of these in my ritual prayers several times each day. They are not matters of doubt'. So the question 'Are you truly a Muslim?' is rarely asked, and when it is it probably springs from a Christian context.

The question was raised, significantly, in the East African Times. As mentioned above it is the Ahmadiyya sect which has made a policy of adopting Christian missionary methods. Someone had stated rather exacting conditions for a person to be regarded as a Muslim. He should have a good knowledge of the Qur'an, comparable to the Christian's knowledge of the Bible. The editorial discussed the question 'Who is a Muslim?' and asserted that 'everybody who calls himself a Muslim is a Muslim, whatever his shortcomings'.²⁸ A verse was quoted from the Qur'an, 'the true believers are those only who believe in God and His Apostle, and afterwards doubt not; and who contend with their substance and their persons on the path of God. These are the sincere'.²⁹ Actually this does not appear to be a very suitable text to bring in support of a claim that 'everyone who calls himself a Muslim is a Muslim whatever his shortcomings'. It illustrates the dilemma produced by seeking quantity rather than quality; of enlarging the community to include everyone uncritically, while at the same time trying to raise standards within it.

Nevertheless it means that anyone professing conversion to Islam is sure of a warm welcome, and the convert to Islam through marriage represents an addition to the Muslim community which is an encouragement to Muslims in Kenya, always conscious of their minority position compared with Christianity. If the convert was formerly a Christian the ceremonial act of allegiance to Islam may be made an opportunity for celebration.³⁰

Personal and communal religion

Every religion contains the two ingredients of personal faith and communal worship blended in different proportions. The present survey has illustrated the effect these have on attitudes towards marriage as a means of recruitment to, or escape from, the community. In traditional religion the communal aspect of religion is paramount. Traditional religion embodies the tribe's corporate encounter with the spiritual dimension. A wife joining the tribe or clan automatically begins to live and to worship in their way. In Islam the traditionalist woman who marries a Muslim is obliged to become a Muslim, since she does not belong to the ahl al-kitāb.³¹ The Christian woman is allowed to retain her faith, but her children are to be raised as Muslims and every effort is made by the Muslim community towards her conversion.

In Catholic Christianity great importance is attached to the unity of the family within the worshipping community, but mixed marriages are permitted occasionally in which either husband or wife may be the non-Catholic. Every encouragement is given to the non-Catholic to convert, and, until recently at any rate, the children had to be raised as Catholics.

In Protestant Christianity the missionary emphasis was on conversion through a personal spiritual experience, so that to give marriage as a reason for conversion was unacceptable; at the same time transfer from one evangelical Christian denomination to another through marriage aroused little concern, in fact it was sometimes considered preferable for both partners to belong to the same religious denomination.

However in the wide fringe community surrounding the Protestant churches communal considerations are more important than expressions of personal faith, and while conversion by marriage is acceptable at the personal level the communal implications of even interdenominational marriage may not always meet with approval.

To return to Nock's categorisation, the parallel may be drawn between his (a) static and (b) dynamic forms of religion on the one hand, and with religions which emphasise (a) communal worship and (b) personal commitment on the other. Nock's definition of dynamic religion is restricted to a prophetic religion in the first ardour of the founder.³² It was the aim of the missionaries to keep Christianity in Kenya in that category. To some extent they succeeded and there is a nucleus of vital 'revived' Christians in the church at the present time, but for the most part Christianity, in company with Islam, has become 'static' in Nock's terminology -- it is difficult to see how this could be avoided -- and the acceptability of conversion by marriage has become in consequence governed by communal rather than spiritual considerations.

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CHAPTER X

PASTORAL PROBLEMS (1)

Ever since New Testament times the Christian Church has had a distinctive form of organisation. The group of Christians in any given place is gathered from the population as a whole and formed into a church. Within the church there is a sharing of duties according to the various individuals' spiritual gifts.¹ One of these is the task of overall leadership which falls to one man, the episkopos (overseer, Greek).² The post of episkopos developed in course of time into that of bishop, but there is no New Testament equivalent to the modern bishop, charged as he is with the administration of a diocese often containing thousands of Christians and hundreds of local churches. In fact the function of the New Testament episkopos is performed in the churches in Kenya by the pastor of the local congregation. Known also as the minister (mchungaji, Swahili) or in Catholic terminology the parish priest (kasisi), he is responsible for the spiritual welfare of the congregation corporately and each member individually. He, above all, ought to be concerned with the spiritual consequences of marriages which cause transfers of religious allegiance. In some churches, such as the Presbyterian Church and the East African Yearly Meeting of Friends, the pastoral function devolves to a greater or lesser degree on to a body of elders within the congregation.³

The image of a pastor and his congregation resembling a shepherd and his flock of sheep is characteristically

Christian, and was frequently used by Jesus, himself 'the great shepherd of the sheep'⁴ and by the writers of both the Old and New Testaments.⁵ Neither Islam nor traditional religion has a comparable organisation for exercising pastoral care. Insofar as religious duties may be entrusted to one man in the local setting, Trimmingham⁶ describes the functions of the mwalimu and sheikh in East African Islam, and Mbiti⁷ devotes a chapter to religious specialists, medicine-men, rainmakers, kings and priests. In neither is there any evidence of a pastoral function being exercised. Titles on pastoral theology are noticeably absent from the catalogues of Muslim booksellers. But in both traditional religion and Islam communal pressure and tradition are strong and able to keep individuals within the accepted modes of behaviour, which is one of the functions of pastoral work.

It is therefore the Christian pastor who is chiefly concerned with the spiritual implications of the marriage which causes a transfer of religious affiliation. Generally a transfer into his congregation is welcomed, since the pastor would hardly be worth his name if he did not believe in the spiritual efficacy of membership of his congregation. There are pastors, however, who have stated in interviews that they were reluctant to accept a person such as a remarried divorcee, or a troublemaker likely to cause dissension in the congregation. But the chief problem which the pastor has to solve is whether a person's transfer of religious affiliation out of the congregation is likely to affect the eternal destiny of that

soul. Can the pastor rest assured that salvation can be found elsewhere? The word 'church' in the age-old adage 'outside the church there is no salvation'⁸ can be applied to the local congregation, to the denomination, or to the world-wide Christian Church. Can it be extended also to include Islam? This is a matter about which pastors in Kenya express great uncertainty, and the reason behind this uncertainty, as well as its consequences, form the subject of this chapter.

Christian attitude to Islam

An earlier chapter analysed the extent to which ideas of salvation were present in traditional religion, Islam and Christianity. The relationship between the idea of salvation and the attitude of Christians towards intermarriage will now be examined.

Christians never seem to have been able to make up their minds whether Islam should be regarded as a Christian heresy, or a Christian denomination, or a different religion altogether. For many centuries it was held in Europe that Islam began its separate existence as a schism of Christianity.⁹ A clear difference between the two was the factuality and significance of Christ's death upon the Cross, but there have been many Christians for whom the Cross has not been central to their religion. Unitarians and Deists in eighteenth century Europe could see close similarity between their forms of Christianity and Islam.. This attitude persisted into the imperial era in Africa.

Norman Daniel describes how a young Egyptian student

in England in the early nineteenth century was told that he would be eternally damned if he did not become a Christian. He asked a certain Godfrey Higgins his opinion. Higgins asked the student about his own religion, whether it taught (1) adoration of God, (2) resignation to his will, (3) heavenly reward for earthly good conduct, (4) justice in dealings with one's fellow-men, and (4) to do to others as one would they would do to oneself. The student replied that it did, and Higgins saw no reason for him to change.¹⁰

Higgins' summary omitted everything from Christianity to which Muslim might take exception. As a programme of salvation it completely omits all Christian doctrine on the subject. It is difficult to say to what extent this represents the Christian beliefs of the British administrators who first came to Africa, but it is likely that they shared his attitude towards Islam as an acceptable alternative to Christianity.

European administrators' attitude to Islam

In East Africa many Government officials were impressed with Islam. They saw it as a civilising influence. Ingrams' comment is typical:

The Mohammedan law and religion is, I think, pretty well recognized as being the most suitable for the natives in their present condition and mode of living. Certainly the Holy Sharia seems much fairer than even the English system as far as distribution of property goes.¹¹

J. du Plessis reviewed the attitude of administrators towards Islam in Africa in an article entitled 'Government and Islam in Africa'.¹² He referred to several people with some contact

with East Africa, including General Gordon, Lady Lugard, C.H. Becker and Joseph Thomson. 'General Gordon', he wrote, 'was undoubtedly a most sincere if somewhat peculiar Christian, and his relations with the Moslems over whom he ruled are therefore of the greatest interest'. He quoted Gordon writing from Dara, Sudan:

when the Egyptians seized the country they took the mosque here for a powder-magazine. I had it cleared out and restored for worship, and endowed the priests and crier, and had a great ceremony at the opening of it. This is a great coup. They blessed me and cursed Sebehr Pasha who took the mosque from them. To me it appears that the Mussulman worships God as well as I do, and is acceptable, if sincere, as any Christian.¹³

Du Plessis summarised the official arguments for favouring Islam at the expense of Christianity in this way: (1) Christian missions in Muslim areas are a menace to peace and quiet, (2) Christian schools and missions generally exercise a denationalising influence on the indigenous people and destroy racial identity, (3) Experience proves that Islam is better adapted to the African than Christianity, and in point of fact it is making much more rapid headway.¹⁴

A.H. Hardinge, the first Commissioner of the East African Protectorate, would have agreed with these sentiments. As Dr A.I. Salim points out, service in Muslim capitals like Constantinople and Cairo gave him a sympathetic understanding of Islam and Muslims.¹⁵ Mombasa was then the seat of administration, and Hardinge copied the Egyptian and Turkish systems which were familiar to him, assigning religious duties to kadhis and the dispensing of justice to liwalis, and setting up a Wakf Commission for the administration of religious trusts.

He planned to train Arab and Swahili officers for service beyond the coastal strip, and, had he done so, the degree of Muslim influence in Kenya today might well be similar to that in Tanzania. But the seat of government was moved to Nairobi and Hardinge's successor, Sir Charles Eliot, diminished the contribution of the Arabs to administration.¹⁶ Even Eliot, however, was prepared to assert in a missionary gathering that 'Mohammedanism civilises African races to a certain extent as quickly as Christianity does'.¹⁷ Sir Donald Cameron, Governor of Tanganyika in the nineteen-thirties, thought that Africans were 'better as Mohammedans than as pagans'.¹⁸

Missionaries fulminated against what they saw as a government policy of favouritism towards Islam. B.H. Barnes, who wrote the biography of Archdeacon Johnson of Nyasaland, gave an illustration of the behaviour of British officers in Muslim areas:

There was at one time a mistaken notion among the powers that be in Nyasaland that Mohammedanism was a faith to encourage as being better than heathenism and more suited to the native than Christianity with its heavy demands. Indeed it is on record that one British official, presumably himself a Christian, solemnly presenting native chiefs with copies of the Koran and his blessing. . . . Tolerance is one thing, such encouragement as the presentation of the Koran as a valued gift from a Christian official to a heathen chief is as mischievous as it is absurd and uncalled for.¹⁹

Daniel remarks that Christian men who behaved in this way and admired Islam from outside without having the courage to become Muslims probably harboured a secret envy of the sexual freedom, as they saw it, enjoyed by Muslim men in being able to have four wives simultaneously and to divorce any at

will.²⁰ At the same time the situation suited ideas of racial superiority. The superior white races had the superior religion. The 'uncivilised natives' had paganism. In between, on the social, racial and religious ladders, came Arabs, Swahilis and Indians with Islam. In accord with this view it was held that Islam was a stepping-stone to Christianity. Hence, by encouraging Africans to become Muslims, the government official was doing his bit of evangelism in his own peculiar way. These views were the more acceptable to officials in that they pleased the Muslim community and thus avoided social unrest.

For those who held racial views African Christians upset this comfortable pattern. They became objectionable in official eyes by being 'uppish' and claiming equality with Europeans on the grounds of a common faith and a common Saviour. It is not surprising that Europeans who valued their personal status more than obedience to their faith preferred Muslims to those whom they stigmatised as 'mission boys'.

The missionary attitude to Islam

As Kenya opened up so Muslim traders began to spread inland to the remoter up-country settlements and missionaries viewed them with alarm as possible sources of Islamic growth.²¹ But by 1920 the position had become clearer. Christianity was pressing ahead and the Muslim traders were not making very much progress. Islam was remaining in the towns and small settlements while Christianity was spreading into the countryside. The missionaries tended to avoid the predominantly

Muslim area of north-eastern Kenya and concentrated on the tribes which practised traditional religion, so that contact between Islam and Christianity was very largely confined to Mombasa, and this contact diminished in proportion as Christian work expanded. The missionaries accepted the view that it was practically impossible to convert Muslims to Christianity and devoted their efforts to converting traditionalists.

From the point of view of conversion of Christians to Islam by marriage, however, this meant that the process was accepted as a small but inevitable leakage, an inevitable consequence of Christian contact with Islam. The chief incidence of loss through marriage occurred at Prere Town, but between the wars the Prere Town Christian community and the CMS were at loggerheads over the ownership of the land, and this did not encourage the missionaries to be sympathetic about their pastoral problems.²² For up-country missionaries the lapse of Christians on account of marital irregularities was common enough, and cases of apostasy to Islam through marriage were few in comparison. There was of course an important difference, that a lapsed Christian in a traditionalist area might always return, and that even if he did not his children would probably become Christians, whereas the convert to Islam and all his family were permanently lost, but the distinction between the two was of minor significance in missionary organisation. In pastoral work it was more important to build up the faithful than to reclaim the many lapsed, and more important to revive the traditionalist lapsed than to waste time with the Muslim lapsed who were impossible to reclaim.

The influence of syncretism

It was easy for missionaries to adopt a syncretistic attitude towards Islam. Other Europeans took that view and the missionaries came to agree with them. They regarded the whole world as a field for Christian evangelism, but for practical reasons they left one community, the Muslims, unevangelised. The Muslims encouraged this view. The missionaries bequeathed their attitude towards Islam to their successors, the Christian pastors of Kenya.

The average pastor in Kenya is ill-equipped to handle a situation in which a member of his congregation secedes to Islam. There are a number of reasons for this.

(1) As described above the Europeans bequeathed to the church in Kenya an attitude towards Islam which rendered positive Christian witness ineffectual. Islam was regarded by unreligious persons as 'just as good as Christianity' or 'more suitable for Africans at their present stage of development', and by missionaries as 'impregnable'.

(2) In the early stages of missionary outreach comity arrangements were sometimes observed between different Protestant missions, under which they refrained from overlapping geographically as long as unevangelised areas remained, and refrained from deliberately proselytising each others converts, a practice known as 'sheep stealing'. This was particularly true of Kenya where a number of missions recognised each others evangelical theology as practically identical to their own. African catechists and evangelists were instructed not to proselytise members of other denominations,

and the rule became extended in practice to include Islam.

(3) This attitude towards Islam was encouraged by the Muslims themselves. They were not averse to saying that there was no essential difference between Islam and Christianity: 'True Islam and true Christianity are akin: the mission of each is fundamentally identical. Let, then, Islam and Christianity be henceforth faithful allies in the liberation of humanity'.²³ Muslims, particularly Ahmadiyyas, cultivated the idea that they were fellow-missionaries with Christians, working for the conversion of the pagans of Kenya, thus further confusing Christian pastors. There is even a case of a Christian missionary in East Africa lending support to this view to the extent of advocating joint action by Christians and Muslims to oppose the advance of Communism, and, of course, the notorious paper read by Canon Isaac Taylor at the Anglican Church Congress in England in 1887, not specifically referring to East Africa, but condemning in sweeping terms all Christian efforts to evangelise Muslims.²⁴

(4) Pastors in Kenya are not well acquainted with Islam. There are only one or two inexpensive books on sale in Kenya dealing with the Christian approach to Muslims, and scarcely one in a hundred pastors owns or has read a copy. When asked if they know of a good book on Christianity which they could recommend to a Muslim, most pastors will suggest the Bible, or a Gospel.²⁵ It is surprising, but true, that a pastor can live in a strongly Muslim environment, such as Zanzibar, for many years, and yet have only the sketchiest knowledge of Muslim

beliefs. It will be recalled that Godfrey Dale did his controversial translation of the Qur'an into Swahili in order to acquaint pastors, teachers and other Christians with its contents.²⁶ It has been pointed out above that a fundamental difference between Islam and Christianity hinges on the way of salvation, yet few pastors can explicate the difference. Pastors who live away from Muslim areas know practically nothing about Islam and generally regard it as just one more Christian denomination. The present writer has been taken to task for making this assertion elsewhere, but repeats it here.²⁷

(5) The Government of Kenya follows the policy of earlier colonial administrations in maintaining complete impartiality towards all religions and denominations, provided they are not subversive. Freedom of worship is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic. President Kenyatta is on record as saying that no individual had the right to criticise his fellowman because of belonging to a different religious denomination, as there was no superior religion.²⁸ Kenya is not alone in this. With a large number of different tribes in each country, and with artificial boundaries for the most part, leaders of African independent countries are all anxious to avoid religion becoming yet another divisive issue. Hence, wherever there is not a Muslim majority, governments try to encourage the view that all religious groups are equally acceptable.

(b) The modern attempt, particularly by Catholics, at holding a dialogue with followers of other religions, affects the issue. The view that followers of natural religion can find their way

to God has scriptural support;²⁹ whether this includes Muslims who have not heard the Christian message is debatable.

Catholics have in the past justified their choosing to work amongst Protestants rather than non-Christians on the mission field on the grounds that 'We do not go to the heathen, because they may possibly be saved by the light of reason; but we are sure that you Protestants must perish, and so we come to you'.³⁰

In recent times the hostility and rivalry between Catholics and Protestants has diminished, but at the same time Catholic mission work has been affected by the attempt to engage in dialogue with non-Christian religions, particularly Islam.

The Catholic Guidelines for a Dialogue Between Muslims and Christians virtually accepts Islam as an alternative way of salvation.³¹

Following the Vatican Council every Catholic diocese was supposed to have someone appointed to be responsible for organising the dialogue with non-Christians, but at the time of writing only one diocese in Kenya, appropriately the Diocese of Mombasa, has taken this step.³²

Interest in Islam amongst Catholics in Kenya is very low.

Elsewhere at places such as the monastery at Toumliline and the Dominican Institute of Cairo, Catholics attempting a dialogue with Muslims have foresworn any further evangelistic aim.³³ They may be right in asserting that 'pre-evangelism' is the only way forward in the Muslim-Christian impasse, but for a Muslim minority area such as Kenya a more active evangelistic approach would seem to be more appropriate.

(7) Finally there is the problem of terminological confusion.

In English there are two words in general use, 'religion', to describe a system of beliefs such as Christianity or Islam, and 'denomination', used for a sub-division of a religion, distinguished by peculiarities of faith and practice. In coastal Swahili these are translated dini and madhehebu respectively, both words being of Arabic origin. In up-country Swahili the word madhehebu is not in general use, so that dini is used for both 'religion' and 'denomination'. Thus CMS, AIC and Islam are different dinis, and the difference between Islam and Christianity is consequently blurred. Also a follower of traditional religion is regarded (and may describe himself) as 'a person without a dini'.

The result of these seven factors is that pastors in Kenya are confused about the salvific implications of a Christian becoming a Muslim, and generally they present a weak front to Muslim insistence that a Christian man must become a Muslim before marrying a Muslim woman, or that the children of the Christian wife of a Muslim must be raised as Muslims. Also, where church leaders offer advice it is exclusivist. In contrast to the practice of Muslims, who welcome a non-Muslim into the Muslim community through marriage, hoping eventually to bring about a conversion, Christians discourage mixed marriages altogether, so that marriage is not the same advantageous means of recruitment into Christianity as it is into Islam.³⁴ One researcher found at Ribe in the Coast Province that the number of Muslims in the area was growing because of a deliberate policy on their part of marrying Christian girls. The Muslims openly confessed that

they preferred the Christian girls because they were considered more stable than their Muslim sisters.³⁵ The researcher's comment on this situation was 'Generally speaking Mombasa and the coast presented a Church conscious of the Muslim block, but without any signs of a determined united effort to seek ways and means by which to fulfil its obligation to people for whom Christ died'.³⁶

In a course on Islam for Christian pastors the present writer raised the question of young Christian women who are married by Muslims. It was difficult to convey the point of pastoral responsibility. The following conversation was typical:

Question: What are your views about young Christian women being married by Muslim men?

Pastor: It is very bad.

Question: Why?

Pastor: Because the Muslim insists that the children are brought up as Muslims, and so they are lost to the church.

Question: What about the woman herself?

Pastor: Well, she may remain a Christian, but if she becomes a Muslim she is lost to the church.

Question: But what are the implications for the woman?

Pastor: It is for her to choose.

Further prolonged conversation was needed to establish that from the Christian theological point of view the woman's soul was imperilled by her denial of her Lord through conversion to Islam.

Pastoral care and oversight would seem to be inadequately

taught in theological colleges. At the United Theological College, Limuru, inquiry revealed that expatriate members of the staff were not confident that the subject was receiving adequate treatment. They felt that the same had been true of their own training when they were students. The library at Limuru did not have a very wide selection of books on the subject. The most comprehensive work was by a Catholic writer. However a member of the staff of the Saint Thomas Aquinas Catholic Seminary at Langata was scarcely more encouraging about the teaching on pastoral theology at his institution.

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CHAPTER XI

PASTORAL PROBLEMS (2)

Few Christian pastors in Kenya have any contact with Islam, and for most of them the pastoral problems which arise are those which are common to humanity, sickness, bereavement, drunkenness, unbelief, wayward children, broken homes and so on, all the ways in which Christians in every place fight the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil. In Kenya their work is added to by the continuing presence and influence of traditional religion, from which many members of their flocks have only recently emerged. Polygyny, participation in initiation ceremonies, and witchcraft, for example, are not the daily problems of pastors in America, as they are in Kenya.

Polygyny

Polygyny has been a real pastoral problem for both missionaries and African Christians ever since missionary work began in Africa south of the Sahara. There has been a universal feeling against polygyny amongst Christian missions,¹ but it cannot be said that a satisfactory theological solution has yet been found. In the long run the theological issue may be evaded altogether, since it appears that polygyny will die out in Africa for economic reasons.² The Commissioners inquiring into the law of marriage and divorce in Kenya thought that it was in the national interest that it should.³

Some early Christian converts have remained in a state of life-long monogamy.⁴ Without being cynical it may be

suggested that for some of them their success was the result of good fortune and they would have taken a second wife, as did their disciplined fellow-converts, if their first had proved barren. Under the missionary regime the polygynous Christian was perforce placed in a state of lifelong discipline. Despite this many remained faithful to Christianity. For example in the Maua Circuit of the Methodist Church in 1971 almost one-half of the membership were under discipline because of polygyny and of marriages contracted outside the Christian Marriage Ordinance. In the neighbouring Tharaka Circuit out of 757 members 565 were under discipline.⁵

These figures refer to rural areas where Christianity has yet to win the bulk of the population,⁶ and where the economic factors referred to above have scarcely begun to affect the life of the people. With one-half of the membership under discipline the situation looks desperate and the non-Christian observer may well ask what kind of Christianity is being practised in Tharaka. But the positive side should not be overlooked. More than half of the Christians, while under the stigma of discipline, and having knowingly followed traditional customs instead of Christianity in the matter of polygyny, nevertheless continue to belong to the Christian community and to value their association with it.⁷ Whatever the theological difficulties which Christianity has with polygyny, these people seem able to combine the two in a harmonious way in their own lives.

For the pastors as successors of the missionaries the issue is perhaps even more testing because they have a knowledge

of the Bible, missionary teaching and traditional customs, and so might be expected to have a wider and more sympathetic understanding of different points of view. But neither in mission-foundation churches nor in independent churches is much concession made to polygyny. The mission-foundation churches are beginning to allow the baptism of polygynists in new areas of evangelism where they are sure that the men became polygynists before hearing the Gospel. In this they follow the somewhat freer practice of the independent churches. But even the independent churches generally refuse to allow polygynists to hold office, and their attitude seems to be more one of making loving exceptions in a transitional situation, rather than allowing unbridled polygyny within the church. Polygyny has been the immediate cause of secessions leading to the formation of independent churches in only a very few cases in Africa.⁸ In the rural areas of Kenya the baptised Christian who takes a second wife is disciplined. In Nairobi a number of African pastors have stated that they would terminate his church membership.⁹

The need to have offspring

The strongest theological factor which has passed over from traditional religion into Christianity in Kenya concerns the need to perpetuate the succession. If our view of the salvific implications of physical succession is correct, the reason for the strong persistence of this factor is clear.

The personal problem may be stated in its simplest terms as follows: An African Christian man has married a wife and

they have no children. He must have children. What is he to do? Several courses of action are possible:

(1) He could take a second wife. This is something about which traditional religion and Christianity have clashed wherever they have met. As a Christian he will be placed permanently under discipline.

(2) He could divorce his wife and take another. Both traditional religion and Christianity are opposed to this move. Some Christian churches allow divorce for a grave reason. Not all of them allow remarriage. In traditional religion divorce was regarded as a last resort and the bride wealth and courtship customs were all designed to avoid divorce.

(3) He could adopt children. Strangely there appears to have been no machinery in traditional religion for this step. Fostering was common. Children were sent to live with their grandparents, and at the present time children of parents in rural areas are frequently sent to live with relations in towns, partly to assist them in the home and partly to obtain the better educational facilities or urban life. But fostering is distinguished from permanent adoption. A commission of inquiry into the laws of adoption in Kenya was at work at the time of writing. They found that there was no word in the Luo language for 'adoption',¹⁰ and the Kadhi of western Kenya informed them that adoption was unheard of among Muslim families. In fact, as Schacht points out, adoption is expressly rejected in the Qur'an.¹¹

Adoption appears to be an acceptable Christian solution to the problem of the childless couple, and a way of eliminating

the residual major reason for the practice of polygyny. The idea of adoption is not so remote from traditional life as the evidence given before the commission of inquiry into the laws of adoption might suggest. Proxy parenthood, in which a brother fathers a child for an absent or impotent husband, is described by Mbiti.¹² Woman-to-woman marriage takes place among the Kamba and the Kipsigis, whereby an old woman 'marries' a girl by paying bridewealth in the ordinary way and appoints a man to have intercourse with her in order to produce children for the old woman.¹³ The acceptability of these customs shows that a break in physical succession can be circumvented without resorting to polygyny or divorce. It is surprising that the churches in Kenya have not done more to encourage and popularise the idea of adoption. It was recommended for childless Christian couples by the Hindolo seminar on the Christian home and family life.¹⁴

(4) A fourth possibility is for the man to make sure that his fiancée is pregnant before he marries her.

Premarital pregnancy

Premarital sexual intercourse by young people is taking the place of polygyny as the major pastoral problem in the churches in Kenya. In a questionnaire survey of Christian Unions in secondary schools conducted in 1970, 64 out of 118 Christian Unions described immorality as a 'problem' in their school.¹⁵ The Minister for Education, Mr Towett, has warned secondary school girls of an alarming increase in pregnancies which was causing many girls to leave school prematurely.¹⁶

Kaaga Girls High School reported for 1971 that 'One of the disappointments of the year was the loss of a total of six girls because they became pregnant. This was the largest number we have lost for several years. It points to the continued need for sex education and supervision of girls during their holidays'.¹⁷ In Meru the condition of the bride is recorded in the church marriage files. At Nukongorone Catholic Church the proportion of pregnant brides rose from 87.5 per cent in the three years 1966-8 to 95 per cent in the four years 1969-72. The corresponding figures for Mwiteria Methodist Church were 87.5 per cent to 95 per cent, and for Nthimbiri Methodist Church from 90 to 97.5 per cent.¹⁸

There are several reasons for this high incidence of premarital pregnancy.

(1) The principal reason has been advanced above, namely that it represents a logical solution to the dilemma faced by those who wish to be Christians but are still held by strong traditional customs. To ensure at least one child of the marriage, and to verify that the girl is not barren, and to avoid the odium and expense incurred by taking a second wife, young men in Kenya make sure that their fiancées are pregnant before marriage. A young person assured me that in 1971 one of the theological students at the United Theological College, Limuru, married a pregnant wife, and as he was allowed to continue with his training she concluded that the practice was becoming accepted -- almost respectable.¹⁹ Her view on its respectability would seem to be confirmed by the caption to a

wedding photograph in a recent Nairobi newspaper, which read: 'After having been married for more than two years, Mr and Mrs Nicholas Ochieng Onyong decided to confirm their marriage with a religious ceremony at St Theresa's Church, Eastleigh. The ceremony was attended by their one-year-old son'.²⁰

(2) In traditional society some tribes esteemed virginal marriage while others did not. Generally a birth out of wedlock incurred disapproval. There were punishments of varying severity which could be applied to young people who transgressed the accepted code of behaviour of their particular society. These punishments have now been reduced in severity or allowed to lapse altogether, so that young people flout traditional and parental authority with impunity. The traditional punishments have become meaningless to them. For example, one punishment in Meru which was formerly greatly feared was the curse of the parents upon their children. Curses are losing their power.²¹

(3) Young people have found that premarital pregnancy offers a neat solution to the problem of bridewealth. Parents of educated girls frequently claim that their daughter represents an investment of thousands of shillings in school fees, which is due to them from her suitor. The debt is a heavy burden on the young couple and may take several years to pay off by instalments. But if the girl is pregnant her 'market value' immediately drops and her parents may be glad to marry her quickly to her suitor to avoid disgrace. The high incidence of premarital pregnancy in Kenya presages the end of extortionate

bridewealth demands.

(4) There is some support for the practice in traditional custom. The Elgeyo and Marakwet have a custom of 'trial marriage' whereby a man and woman begin living together but the marriage is not confirmed until the woman conceives or gives birth to a child.²²

(5) Finally it has to be realised that youth in Kenya is in easy contact with the rest of the world through the media of radio, television, cinema and journals. The retreat of moral authority from the sexual realm in the 'permissive society' has had its effect in Kenya as elsewhere in the world village. Magazines whose contents would have been classed as pornographic and obscene a few years ago are now sold openly. They advocate an experimental approach to sexual activity with a complete disregard for the moral standards of Christianity, Islam or traditional religion. Southall has set the problem of chastity in Uganda in historical perspective in a paper which compared the incidence of premarital sexual activity in that country in 1960 with that found in various other countries. It serves as a reminder that the question is unique neither to the present time nor to one particular continent.²³

Decline in pastoral activity

One result of these modern developments in standards of behaviour is that Christian pastors are baffled and uncertain of their role in society. They inherited a stern paternalistic disciplinary system from the missionaries. They accepted it as the norm and have endeavoured to perpetuate

it. They have been reluctant to change the system for fear of the charge of allowing standards to fall (a favourite with Europeans in Kenya) and because they genuinely believe in the efficacy of the missionary methods and could not think of anything better to put in their place.

An examination was made a few years ago of the working of the disciplinary system in force in the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. A survey was made in Tetu Parish near Nyeri by Hannah Gathii.²⁴ She was able to study the records of the parish Kirk Sessions for the ten years from 1956 to 1966. The Kirk Session consisted of the minister, elders and deacons of the parish. It met monthly and in the ten years 258 cases were dealt with. In summary there were 139 cases of premarital pregnancy, 55 of elopement and marriage outside the church, 23 connected with female circumcision ceremonies, 18 of polygyny, 15 of adultery, 6 of oathing and 2 of divorce. It will be seen that almost all of the cases concerned sexual offences. Of these, 132 people were suspended from communion, 67 were reinstated, and 59 were either counselled by the Kirk Session or asked to arrange a marriage.²⁵

Gathii found a grave inability on the part of the Kirk Session to discriminate between and assess the gravity of different cases. The punishment meted out automatically in nearly every case was three months' suspension from communion. The elders made no background inquiry such as a welfare worker is trained to do. In fact most of the offenders came to the Kirk Session voluntarily to confess as a formality in order after punishment to be reinstated.²⁶ The conclusion reached

was that the disciplinary system had very little effectiveness and that pastoral oversight was sadly lacking.

The pastors themselves consider that they spend a fair proportion of their time in pastoral work. In a questionnaire survey of forty-nine ministers in East Africa, Miller found that on average they claimed to spend sixteen hours (29 per cent of their working week) in visitation and counselling.²⁷

He comments:

If all of these hours spent in visitation are merely the sharing of innocent gossip with dependent and passive people, aimless chit-chat and light conversation, then the church is sick right unto death. If, however, the pastor is conferring with laymen and women about real issues which they encounter in being faithful in the world, if God's Word is being related in depth to real anxieties members are feeling, then the church may be alive and healthy.²⁸

He does not venture a judgment on the issue. A woman in Tetu parish spoke bluntly on the subject:

A woman put it this way. She compared the behaviour of the secular and ecclesiastical authorities. In the administrative location where she lives there is the chief, his headmen and the raia (common people, Swahili and Kikuyu). The chief may visit headmen, a headman may visit another headman, but they never remember the common man. In the church it is the same. Elders may visit elders or distinguished Christians, but the raia are never visited. The raia are just preached to in church. 'I go to church, listen to sermons and then go home to brood over my troubles', she said.²⁹

The woman, like so many on the fringe of the church, was clinging to Christianity despite a complete lack of concern on the part of those who should have been giving her some pastoral encouragement.

Church weddings

In his book on Christian Marriage in Africa³⁰ Adrian Hastings devotes his attention to the paucity of church weddings in comparison with the size of the Christian population in South Central and East Africa.³¹ He found that one of the principal causes for the relatively low incidence of church weddings was the shortage of clergy. 'If one priest has more than five thousand people regarding themselves as Anglican in his care, scattered across many miles and villages and worshipping in some fifteen different churches, and he himself has no more than a bicycle with which to visit them, it is clear that most Christians will have almost no personal contact with their pastor and will receive little encouragement to have their marriage blessed in church'.³² From this it can be deduced that there is a larger number of people wishing to be Christians than the organised church can provide clergy for, and that their desire to be Christian is not affected by the question of whether their marriages can be blessed in church. The problem hinges partly on ecclesiology. Hastings, a Catholic, carried out his investigation at the request of the Conference of Archbishops of the Anglican Communion in Africa. Both the Catholic and Anglican Churches attach a greater sacerdotal importance to the clergy than do the other Churches in Kenya. A church wedding is not essential to the Christian way of life and in the first three centuries of Christian history there was no special Christian wedding ceremony.³³ The present research has not revealed any tendency for Christians in Kenya to change to another faith merely because their marriage could

not be blessed in church. To this extent the question of church weddings is irrelevant to the present study. However, traditionalists becoming Christians may wish to have their marriage blessed in church, and this may encourage the conversion process.³⁴ In Nairobi it is noticeable that where there is an interdenominational marriage the ceremony tends to take place in the church building which offers the prettier wedding spectacle, but there is no evidence that this affects the subsequent denominational allegiance of the married couple. Where there is a mixed marriage there may be pressure on the part of one denomination to have the wedding ceremony held in its church. This appears to have taken place on a substantial scale with the Catholic Church at Meru and Nyeri.³⁵ At Meru it has not resulted in any substantial accretion to the Catholic Church.³⁶

On the other hand there are church weddings which are made to be demonstrations of disciplinary disapproval by having their ceremonial reduced, and the stigma attached to these has been responsible for driving young people away from organised Christianity.³⁷ In the AIC amongst the Kamba the reduced wedding is known as an 'unclean wedding' (mutwaano muvuko, Kamba). This ceremony took place at the church door or in the middle of the church as distinct from a ceremony near the pulpit. The bride was not allowed to carry flowers and no bells were rung.³⁸

In the Meru area both the Methodist and Catholic Churches disciplined a girl who was found guilty of fornication, for a

period of six months. If she married within the six months it had to be a civil ceremony and was known as a 'sinful wedding'. If they waited until after the six months the couple could repent to the Catholic priest or the Methodist minister and then they could have an 'impure wedding' of reduced ceremonial, with no white wedding dress being allowed, and the parents might not attend. This style of 'impure wedding' was intensely disliked by the young people and the church authorities realised that many members were being lost for this cause, so in 1965 the rule was changed and all weddings in church were 'holy weddings'.³⁹

The generation gap

The examples given above show that there is a lack of contact between pastors and people, especially young people. One of the problems frequently mentioned by young people in discussion is the lack of rapport between themselves and their elders. Boarding school students going home for the holidays expect that when they attend the village church they will have to sit through hour-long sermons containing frequent references to the evils of city life and the waywardness of youth, all delivered in a reproofing and unsympathetic spirit. It is this lack of sympathy which affects their attitude to the church and their behaviour in regard to marital arrangements, sexual and family problems.

The problem is not confined to Kenya, but it is particularly acute in this country, and it is relevant to the present study. In all parts of the world where there has been rapid

social change older people have found difficulty in keeping up with changing conditions and making the necessary adaptations. Young people have the advantage of being able to take the wonders of the modern world for granted. The frame of reference for their attitude to life, which is established in adolescence, is thirty years ahead of that of their parents. There are still some people living who were born before the Uganda railway was built. In contrast modern youth takes space travel for granted.

The generation now at marriageable age in Kenya was born in the 1950's and grew up in an era when political independence was confidently expected and freedom was a word on everyone's lips. Not surprisingly young people have adopted the word and demanded freedom of personal action, a development not foreseen a decade ago. People who thought of colonial rulers being replaced by indigenous rulers did not anticipate the youth of the nation in turn wanting to throw off the yoke of parental authority. Yet this is what is happening. Young people in Kenya have had a powerful weapon in the form of education, provided for them often at great sacrifice by their parents. Unfortunately the attitude of many of them towards their parents is 'They are uneducated; they do not understand our problems'. In this they also include church pastors and elders, few of whom are educated.

It is noticeable that young people often seek advice from their elder brothers and sisters rather than from their parents, and from their school teachers rather than from their pastors and church elders. The teachers may come from a

different tribal or racial background, but they are often closer in culture and thought patterns to the young people than are their parents. At times one finds older people so baffled by the problem of how to help their children that they relapse into inactivity. The traditional remedies and disciplinary actions appear not to work, or to be irrelevant to the modern situation.

Undoubtedly young people in Kenya suffer from this generation gap. They lack the authoritative advice on moral issues which might keep many of them from foolish sexual escapades. They see their pastor as an old man, censorious of all that is youthful, ~~in~~stead of as a shepherd, ready to listen to their problems and help them through.⁴⁰

With pastors and young people so greatly at variance, pastoral oversight is not very successful. A book which has provided some of the guidance which is badly needed is Walter Trobisch's I Loved a Girl.⁴¹ It is very popular in East Africa and is probably the best book of its kind available in Kenya at present to help young people with their sexual problems. Although partly fictional, the story matches the situation of many of its readers: A young man gets into trouble with girls. He consults a missionary friend in a defiant and truculent correspondence in which the moral issues at stake are patiently brought home to him by his friend. He does not take his problem to his own pastor, despite the missionary's encouragement to him to do so. The girl in the story is also counselled by the missionary's wife. She is urged to speak to her father or write to him about her situation. At first she finds this quite impossible as it runs counter to the traditional

relationship between daughter and father. Ultimately she manages to overcome her reluctance, and the reader is left hoping that some steps have been taken towards bridging the generation gap.

Matters relating to marriage and sexual relationships are acknowledged to be amongst the most intimate subjects of conversation and they can cause acute embarrassment to many people, but it is clear that pastors are neglecting their duty and calling if they are unable to share the problems of the young people in their congregations. If Christianity is felt to be irrelevant to daily life and its difficulties, young people will conclude that it has nothing to offer them, and they will go elsewhere or abandon religion altogether.

Transfer of allegiance between Christian denominations

The reasons advanced earlier for the syncretistic attitude of Christians in Kenya towards Islam apply with added force to the different Christian denominations. The existence of a large number of denominations in the country is a result of historical processes which has been deplored by the missionaries themselves, particularly those belonging to established missions who objected to newcomers interloping. The growth of independent churches has multiplied the number of denominations considerably. They are particularly prolific in Western Province. In Vihiga Division for example there are reputed to be eleven different denominational places of worship in the space of one mile.

The multiplicity of denominations has had an influence

on politics in some places and the government's policy in recent years has been to encourage a united religious approach. Thus the Minister for Finance and Economic Planning, Mr Kwai Kibaki, said in Nyeri that churches have a great role to play in moulding and creating a strong and stable Kenya by preaching unity among all Kenyans regardless of religion, denomination or faith. He stressed that the time was over when the colonialists used various religions to create divisions and hatred amongst the people due to minor differences in people's beliefs.⁴³

To many Christians it seems as though the missionaries imported a kind of European tribalism when they came in their different competing missions, and that this has only added to the problems of the independent republic. Pastors, all of whom must necessarily belong to one denomination or another, are therefore uncertain about the doctrine which they should preach. Some are conscious that denominational differences are more than just 'minor differences in people's beliefs', but that they may have salvific significance. Others come to terms with the spirit of the times. They realise that the government and members of the public dislike any emphasis on distinctive denominational beliefs, and in consequence they find it difficult to discourage interdenominational marriages, even though they are aware of the spiritual difficulties which lie ahead.

A survey was made in 1974 by the present writer of the characteristics which educated young people in Nairobi would look for in choosing their future marriage partner. Fifty

secondary school students were first asked to write down any number of these characteristics in order, the most important first. In these lists ethnic and religious characteristics received a very low rating. The eleven most commonly occurring characteristics from these lists then had an additional four added on race, tribe, and religion, to make a new list of fifteen characteristics. These were printed in random order on a questionnaire form and another fifty-five senior students in several Nairobi schools were asked to make a selection in order of importance. It is perhaps comforting to learn that 'true love' scored highest in popularity. This was followed by (2) good companionship, (3) respect to my parents, (4) a potentially good parent, (5) a good social background, (6) good appearance and dress, (7) same standard of education as myself, (8) good health, (9) beauty and (10) ability to make a good hostess. It was only in the last five places that any consideration was given to ethnic and religious differences: (11) exactly the same ethnic group, (12) same race, (13) exactly the same religious denomination, (14) same religion, and (15) a good cook.

Clearly these educated young people on the threshold of adult life esteem the social graces (apart from cooking!) more highly than compatibility of religious belief; the latter characteristic was virtually rejected in both rounds of questioning.

Large towns like Nairobi and Mombasa are melting pots for denominational differences. In the rural areas a person belongs to a particular denomination for geographical reasons,

there being probably only one place of worship within easy reach of his home. Thus he grows up accepting the peculiar tenets of that denomination, and although this is true of the vast majority of believers of all faiths (namely, that their beliefs are determined by circumstances of birth rather than of conviction), the process seems particularly artificial in Kenya where each mission had its own geographical area. At any rate, when the man from the country arrives in town he finds a wide choice of denominations available. Van Tate made a study of the composition of ten Nairobi congregations (belonging to nine Protestant denominations) in terms of individuals' ethnic and denominational origins.⁴⁴ From the data he collected it can be deduced that on average six different denominations were represented in each congregation. Altogether sixteen denominations were represented in the ten congregations. The worshippers came from at least eighteen different ethnic groups. The two Anglican congregations were the most cosmopolitan, both by religion and ethnicity.⁴⁵

Further observation suggests that the mixed nature of these congregations is characteristic of many urban churches in Kenya, although at the same time there are town churches which use a vernacular and which are a home from home for an ethnically and denominationally homogeneous congregation, all of whom originate from a geographically restricted area. Where the congregation is mixed, opportunities arise for mixed marriages. A survey to investigate interdenominational marriage and transfer of religious allegiance among these congregations was contemplated by the present writer, but

several considerations suggested that the results were unlikely to be statistically meaningful:

- (1) Van Tate's investigation showed that there were difficulties in getting an adequate response from his churches to a questionnaire inquiry. One congregation refused to answer at all. The present writer's experience with other surveys requiring written answers from the considerably more sophisticated congregation of Nairobi Baptist Church suggested that a satisfactory response was unlikely.
- (2) Denominational affiliation is not very meaningful in a situation where a person worships in one denomination in Nairobi but has his roots in another in the rural area which he regards as his home.
- (3) It would be difficult to decide whether marriage was the real reason for a person changing his denominational affiliation. He might have chosen to go to the church in the first place for other reasons, and then the marriage merely cemented his new allegiance.
- (4) The marriage registers of some churches in Nairobi were examined, but discussion with the pastors concerned revealed that the number of entries did not bear any close relation to the size of the congregation, since many people return to the rural areas for the wedding ceremony.

The conclusion drawn from observation and many discussions and interviews is that denominational allegiance sits lightly on many Christians and offers little impediment to a denominationally mixed marriage. Any resistance which occurs is likely to be where a Protestant and a Catholic wish to

marry, and even here both sides are far more agreeable than they were even ten years ago.⁴⁶ The Nairobi pastors interviewed for me by Mr Aoko thought that it was more important for a couple to worship together than for them to retain the loyalty of one spouse in their own church at the expense of united family worship. It is true that mixed marriages occur less frequently than would be expected from a random mating distribution, but this is due to cross-linkage between religious affiliation and a number of different social factors of which language, tribe and geographical proximity in rural areas are the most important. In Meru, for example, Methodists generally marry Methodists, except to the south where Methodist-Presbyterian marriages occur because of the presence of a Presbyterian mission there.⁴⁷ It appears that in Kenya the general climate of opinion at the present time is against the emphasis of denominational differences. The most the pastor can do is to offer his services when called upon, and to be available to people who need him. He welcomes new people to his congregation who have been recruited through marriage, but little notice is taken of his remonstrances when a member of his church marries out. The pastor then tends to take a passive role. This is both a cause and a result of pastoral inactivity.

Remarriage of divorced persons

As a Christian pastoral problem the remarriage of divorced persons principally concerns the small European community at the present time. The majority of Europeans in

Kenya are English, owing allegiance to the Anglican Church. It is the practice of this church in England and in Kenya not to remarry divorced persons, following the teaching of Jesus that 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery'.⁴⁸ The Anglican Church in England has an Inquiry Centre to which people may write in on any topic. Its director, Mr John Prior, states that forty per cent of the questions received are concerned with remarriage after divorce. 'This type of query is often the saddest to answer', he says.⁴⁹ Where a faithful Anglican wishes to marry a divorcee and the original partner is still living, a civil marriage has to be performed, but the clergy are allowed to conduct a service of blessing afterwards, depending upon the circumstances of the case. The Methodist Church takes a more lenient view and is prepared to remarry divorced persons. A survey of Methodist ministerial opinion in England showed that many felt that their willingness to conduct a remarriage gave them added evangelistic opportunities which resulted in the persons concerned, and sometimes their relatives as well, becoming church members. 'I have found that remarried persons have a special place in their heart and home for the minister who was willing to officiate', commented one minister.⁵⁰

Lavington Church in Nairobi, while declaring itself to be an interdenominational Anglican-Methodist-Presbyterian congregation, has in practice been entrusted to the Methodist Church for much of its life. This has enabled its clergy to remarry divorced persons. The church's marriage register

shows that this facility has been used frequently by the European community, and it appears that Anglican clergy in Nairobi, when approached with a request for a church wedding by a divorced person, have been glad to be able to recommend Lavington Church. The pastoral opportunities described by the English Methodist ministers should be borne in mind by Kenyan pastors, since it is likely that the number of Kenya divorcees will rise in the future, owing to the increased registration of marriages which will necessitate formal divorce and remarriage, and the increasing sophistication of the urban population. Willingness to conduct remarriages could result in recruitment to the churches prepared to allow such ceremonies, as well as saving some people from leaving the church altogether.

Conclusion

This chapter presents some disturbing problems which should challenge the church in Kenya. There has been a rapid growth in the number of people calling themselves Christians in recent years,⁵¹ but old customs incompatible with Christianity have not been eradicated. The need to beget descendants, which was suggested earlier as one of the most powerful motivating factors in traditional religion, is seen to be powerfully at work in the Christian population. Because of it many people prefer to be in the category of 'Christians under discipline' and to remain on the fringe of church life, rather than to abandon traditional beliefs and become full church members.

Yet they prefer to be fringe members rather than

ceasing to be Christians altogether. It is impossible to say for how long this large body of people will be content with their second-class status. What will the church do about them, and where will they go?

The evidence presented here suggests that greater importance should be attached to Christian pastoral work, both by full-time clergy and by church elders. More adequate training in pastoral theology should be given. An attempt ought to be made to reduce factions and divisions within the congregation. The exclusive attitude of Revival and Pentecostal groups should give way to a recognition that theirs is only one of several ways of worshipping God. The attitude of members in good standing to those under discipline should change from criticism to helpfulness. And the censorious attitude of older people towards the youngsters in the congregation should become one of understanding and co-operation.

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CHAPTER XII

THE STATUS OF WOMEN

In this chapter it is proposed to examine the status of women in Kenya and the effect of their status on their ability to transfer their religious allegiance. There are three aspects to be considered: male dominance, home and family life, and the growth of secularism.

Male dominance in traditional religion

Much is said by the protagonists of the different religions, chiefly male, about the high status enjoyed by women in their particular religious system. The hypothesis put forward for examination here is that traditional religion, Islam and Christianity all give tacit acceptance to a greater or lesser degree to the idea of male dominance as part of the natural order of things, and that therefore wives tend very largely to follow the religion of their husbands.

In traditional society the husband reigned supreme over his household. Early European visitors to Meru remarked on the enslaved status of women. To them they appeared to be nothing better than beasts of burden.¹ All the wife's possessions belonged to her husband, even her own body. It was observed earlier that a Maasai clan leader felt perfectly within his rights in offering his daughters in marriage in order to bring peace between two warring clans.² Middleton describes peace being established between the Maasai and the

Kikuyu in the same way.³ Girls were often given in payment of debts among the Kikuyu, or in payment of blood-money.⁴ These instances furnish examples of the concept of women being an alienable part of the material wealth of the community, comparable in status to domestic animals.

Yet as elsewhere it has to be realised that traditional customs differ considerably from tribe to tribe, and this was also true of the attitude of a husband towards his wife.

Dorothy Sargent observed that the Giriama of Mariakani had a particularly happy mutual marital relationship:

There is one thing which struck me very forcibly when I first arrived here, and that was the general cheeriness of the native, and especially the Giriama. Both the man and the woman always appear happy and they have a very definite sense of humour and play jokes on each other, and no one seems to take offence; and it is quite a common thing for them to sing while working. . . there does seem to be quite a family love amongst them, and a love of children, and the woman is not treated as a beast of burden as the Wakikuyu are---poor cowed souls who drag behind their lords and masters like pack oxen while the man walks in front burdenless, very often strutting and swaggering.⁵

It is difficult to generalise. Barrett points out that in many African cultures women have long held prominent positions and that certain categories of women stood to lose much of their traditional status when missionary work began.

'Polygyny, although it reflects the fundamental inequality between the sexes typical of many African social systems, nevertheless provides women with status, security and a considerable amount of economic and religious power'.⁶

On the other side, reports in the press from time to time of wife-beating and the physical ill-treatment of wives by their husbands suggests the persistence of a traditional view

which expects the wife to be the completely submissive possession of the husband. The extent to which wives were beaten in traditional society in former times is probably impossible to determine now. If less than at present, the present situation could be seen as an attempt to assert male dominance against a rising tide of female independence of action; if more than at present, the trend would indicate a welcome liberalisation of domestic arrangements. The beating of a wife by her husband might be regarded by the English observer as utterly reprehensible, unchristian and ungentlemanly, but it has to be seen against a background of inherited ideas of husbandly behaviour and in the context of frequent drunkenness. Nor is it the prerogative of any one nation.

Male dominance in Islam

The question of male dominance in Islam is an extremely sensitive issue with Muslims. Divorce and the status of women in Islam have been the subjects of much polemical writing by Christians, and in consequence practically every Muslim writer trying to explain his religion to western readers has felt compelled to offer a lengthy defence on this matter. At the same time Muslim views on the subject have diversified, so that there are at the present time some Muslims who hold the orthodox historical position, while others have tried to make the Qur'an more relevant to modern conditions by means of a judicious reinterpretation. In consequence even the most sympathetic comments by a Christian writer are likely to be challenged by one group of Muslims or another.

The Christian polemical attack has of course resulted in a rejoinder in kind. Some Muslim writing on the status of women consists of an attack on Christianity, pointing out the misogynous sentiments of pre-Islamic Christian writers such as Paul, Tertullian and John Chrysostom. In books on Islam written in English Muslim writers almost always include a chapter on the status of women in Islam, one half of which is devoted to showing that if their status in historical Islam was not very high, it was far lower in other faiths and civilisations, notably Christianity. For example The Spirit of Islam,⁷ Islam the Misunderstood Religion,⁸ and a booklet circulated by the Islamic Foundation of Nairobi, The Position of Women in Islam,⁹ all devote about half of their space to a criticism of the place of women in other religions. Islam a Religious, Political, Social and Economic Study¹⁰ is one of the few books whose author is content to be informative and relevant.

The Qur'an has more to say on the position of women than on any other social question.¹¹ It contains the verse which has been held to justify (or not to justify) polygyny,¹² allocates twice as much by way of inheritance to males as to females,¹³ rules on the superiority of men over women,¹⁴ and permits divorce to be pronounced, without a reason, by the husband,¹⁵ to mention but a few subjects which engage the attention of Muslim writers. The modern view seeks to justify the Quranic pronouncements, with the exception of the verse on polygyny, which is now held to be a virtual prohibition. On other matters appeal is made to reason, for example the rule

on inheritance is described as 'quite natural and justified, for it is man alone who is charged with shouldering all the financial obligations'.¹⁶ Muhammad Iqbal wrote 'From the inequality of their legal shares it must not be supposed that the rule assumes the superiority of males over females. Such an assumption would be contrary to the spirit of Islam'.¹⁷

Both the orthodox and modern Muslim views find adherents in East Africa, although their opinions are chiefly gained through conversations and meetings, occasional newspaper articles and letters, and radio programmes, since Islam in Kenya is singularly barren in academic literary expression. In his commentary on his Swahili translation of the Qur'an, Sheikh Abdulla Saleh Al-Marsy, the Chief Kadhi, comments on the verse sanctioning polygyny that while one can marry up to four wives 'it is better to have one wife only'.¹⁸ The interpretation which holds that the verse really forbids polygyny receives no mention. He accepts the view that Qur'an 4.34 refers to the superiority of men over women: 'Present-day knowledge--Biology and the like--clearly show that men are superior to women in practically everything'.¹⁹

The orthodox view was the one submitted again and again to the Commission inquiring into the law of marriage and divorce and the status of women, so much so that ultimately the Commission simply recorded in its minutes that 'The Muslim representatives answered the questionnaire according to their view of Islamic law. They feel that Government must not interfere with religious laws'.²⁰

Not only are the orthodox Muslims in Kenya unyielding

on the unchanging nature of Islamic law, they are also unaware of developments in other parts of the Muslim world. At Mombasa, for example, when the Commission mentioned to Muslim representatives changes in Islamic law which had been introduced in other countries whose allegiance to Islam was unquestioned, some witnesses said that they did not know of any such laws, while others said that such laws had only been introduced by dictators, contrary to the wishes of the people.²¹

In contrast to the orthodox view, educated Muslims in Kenya are prepared to take the view that Qur'an 4.3 outlaws polygyny. This is particularly relevant in Kenya where educated women see in polygyny, traditional or Muslim, a sign of female inferiority. Another change which does not seem to contradict the Qur'an is the withdrawal of the husband's right of divorce without a cause. Lyndon Harries, writing about the position of women in Islam in East Africa, pointed out that 'One factor which accentuates their inferiority in Islam, and indeed makes family life in Islam generally unstable, is that divorce is the sole right of the man, a right which he can exercise at his pleasure without giving the least explanation'. This, it is true, is a missionary seeing things from a Christian point of view, but some progressive Muslims would agree with him. The Marriage Commission found at Mombasa that

One witness suggested certain changes which Muslims could accept: a compulsory system of reconciliation, a prohibition on divorce without a cause; a prohibition on forced marriages and child marriages; the imposition of conditions upon which alone polygamy may be permitted. This witnesses views were, however, repudiated by the official Muslim delegations.²³

The great weight of conservatism seems likely to prevent

any changes coming from within the Muslim community, and progressive Muslims will have to look to the Government for support. This support was forthcoming from the Marriage Commission. Their Report was at pains to point out that none of its recommendations were contrary to the Qur'an, although some of them restricted the 'wide personal liberty enjoyed by men under Islamic law'.²⁴ This would appear to support the progressive Muslim view.

By and large male dominance remains a feature of Muslim social life in Kenya. When a man changes his allegiance from one Muslim sect to another he takes his wife with him. When a non-Muslim man desires to marry a Muslim woman, her menfolk insist on his conversion, and when a Muslim man marries a non-Muslim woman every effort is made to convert her to Islam. By Muslim law if a man apostasises his marriage becomes invalid and his wife remains a Muslim. No cases of this nature were reported in Kenya, but a few cases are known in Kenya and Tanzania where a Muslim man became a Christian and his wife and family followed him. In these instances family loyalty or subservience was stronger than religious law, illustrating once more the force of male dominance on transfer of religious allegiance by women.

Male dominance in Christianity

Barrett suggests that in the Old Testament women have status and respect.²⁵ It is difficult to agree entirely with this view. Proverbs³¹ is a song of praise for the good wife; this shows respect but not high status. 1 Samuel 1 shows

marital love. But women never held office, apart from the charismatic office of prophetess. Judah and Israel never had queens reigning in their own right. Certain prominent queens exerted authority through their sons, or their husbands.²⁶ Apart from the prophetesses religious offices, priests, Levites, Temple servers and choristers were exclusively male. Not for nothing do male Jews at the present time include in their daily prayers an expression of thanks that God did not make them women.

In the New Testament there are signs of better things. Jesus broke with the conventions of his day in his conversations with women, for example the woman of Sychar²⁷ and the woman taken in adultery.²⁸ Prophetesses and deaconesses are mentioned in the New Testament²⁹ and Paul appears to have established an order of widows within the church organisation which has not survived.³⁰ He wrote to the Galatians that in Christianity ethnic, social and sexual differences are immaterial, 'there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus'.³¹

Yet when all this has been said polemical Muslim writers are not wrong in pointing out that there is a very pronounced attitude of male dominance running through subsequent Christian history. The source of this is found in the New Testament itself. Jesus' twelve apostles were all male,³² so were the first seven deacons,³³ so by implication are bishops,³⁴ so that most ecclesiastical offices are barred to women. Despite Paul's universal claim to the Galatians, a different tone is observed when he writes to the Christians at Corinth: 'As in all the

churches of the saints the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak but should be subordinate, as even the law says'.³⁵ Writing to Timothy he says: 'I permit no woman to teach or have authority over men; she is to keep silent'.³⁶

These restrictions on women holding office have not prevented them finding other ways of serving their Master, and not a few Christian women from Europe have found their way to East Africa as missionaries, sometimes outnumbering the men. In 1915 the Anglican diocese of Mombasa had on its missionary staff 25 clergy, 3 laymen, 23 wives of missionaries and 18 other women, making 41 women out of a total of 69 missionaries.³⁷ In the one hundred years from 1860 to 1960 the number of missionaries who joined the Universities' Mission to Central Africa and the related Community of the Sacred Passion included 379 priests, 341 laymen and 670 women (scarcely any of them wives) a total of 1390 persons of whom 48 per cent were women.³⁸ In the Catholic diocese of Nairobi in 1968 the diocesan staff of 455 included 30% women, 6% per cent of the whole.³⁹

Over the years many of these single women have worked in rural areas in close contact with their African sisters. They showed that it was possible for women to hold positions of responsibility and to be relatively free of male domination. The social circumstances of African life and the great importance attached to procreation did not encourage female celibacy, but African wives have taken responsible posts within the

women's organisations of the mission-foundation churches, and they are often active in the leadership of the independent churches.

Women scarcely feature at all in the collection at Limuru of accounts of the lives of early Christian converts. It is pertinent to point out that the researchers were the male theological students at the college. Again, in describing the foundation and growth of Tumutumu Presbyterian parish, Kinyua makes no reference to the women.⁴⁰ It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that there has been a male bias in the selection of material. In contrast women researchers have readier access to women informants, and by combining reports from men and women researchers the bias can be reduced.

For example, Gathii, investigating Tetu parish, which is quite near Kinyua's Tumutumu parish, was able to treat the women's situation in some depth.⁴¹ She found that the old traditional view of women as persons of no account persisted strongly amongst the church elders. She observed that hardly any men were brought before the Kirk Sessions, and when she asked the reason for this a minister replied by giving an illustration from his own experience. He had once had to deal with a pregnancy case where both boy and girl were still at school. He said

when I suggested to the Kirk Session that the boy should be called in order to be disciplined the elders were very annoyed. They said I was trying to ruin the career of the boy. . . . There was a lot of dispute . . . and the reason for this is that we have many old traditional elders who do not think much about girls.⁴²

The elders did take action in cases where school teachers had made the schoolgirls in their charge pregnant, perhaps because of the greater scandal involved. The schoolteachers of Totu Parish actually had the impudence in 1962 to bring a complaint to the Kirk Session that when they made girls pregnant they lost their posts while people doing other jobs did not.

In another case a young woman communicant member was married by customary marriage outside the church. Later she felt guilty about it and tried to have the marriage regularised with a church blessing, but her husband refused, so she went to the Kirk Session to ask the elders to discipline her with six months' suspension, after which she would be reinstated. Instead the Kirk Session told her that an elder would come and see her and her husband together, but the husband refused to see the elder. Her husband told her that she could go to church but he would not have their marriage blessed, nor could their children be baptised. She went to see the elders again and they would not believe her. They said they knew the husband to be a good man.

So she felt herself to be in a spiritual dilemma. Her husband was unco-operative, the elders would not help, and she felt guilty before God. 'Sometimes I wish I have never been taught these things', she said, 'I do not know where to turn'.⁴³

It is not surprising to find that in these circumstances not a few women have transferred their religious allegiance to an independent church where the influence of male dominance is much diminished. Barrett and Sundkler observe that independent

churches often have a majority of women members.⁴⁴ Sundkler gives instances of independent churches among the Zulu of South Africa which are entirely female, though this extreme situation is not known in Kenya. But Welbourn records that in the African Israel Church Nineveh women outnumber men in most congregations by two to one.⁴⁶ And the top leadership is not a male preserve. Two women became leaders in a series of secessions from Catholicism in western Kenya in the 1950's.⁴⁷ In the African Israel Church Nineveh women may take the lead in singing in church, and may preach to mixed congregations.⁴⁸ In western Kenya women have gained fame as hymn composers.⁴⁹

The precise mechanism would be difficult to isolate from other processes at work in Kenya during an era of rapid social change, but it would seem that for many women allegiance to Christianity has been a two-stage process. Firstly, in their role of submissive traditionalist wives, they followed their husbands into Christianity. Secondly, perhaps a generation later, having learned about Christianity for themselves, they became aware of themselves as living creatures with souls. In some mission-foundation churches they found acceptance, and women's organisations gave them a sphere of work of their own. For others the only way of liberating themselves from male dominance was to transfer their religious allegiance to the independent churches.

Family life and welfare

Educated women in Kenya are under no illusions about their subordinate status and the need to advance their cause.

Many town-dwelling women, even the less-educated, are aware that early marriage and frequent child-bearing are some of the shackles which bind them.

W.T. Martin made a survey of family planning attitudes in Nairobi in 1970.⁵⁰ He found that wives were more likely than husbands to disagree with the statement 'A woman has a duty to her husband and his relatives to have as many children as possible', and the longer the wife had lived in the city, and the more educated she was, the more likely she was to disagree.⁵¹ Not a few men and women favoured the timing of the first birth less than six months after marriage, but the most favoured time was during the second year of marriage. More women than men were acquainted with contraceptive methods and prepared to use them.⁵² More than half of the less literate husbands believed that girls should be married by the time they reached eighteen years of age. Educated city women favoured delaying marriage until over twenty. They also favoured a higher age of marriage for men, many said thirty or over.⁵³ Age-superiority of husbands over wives is a widespread phenomenon and no doubt makes a contribution to male dominance. Calculations performed on data published by the Registrar General for 1969 show that the average age of African bridegrooms was 27.8 years, compared with 24.9 years for the bride. For Europeans the corresponding figures were 34.6 years and 27.2 years, and for Asians 28.6 and 24.4 years. The data referred to only 1056 marriages, probably all from the educated sector of the community, but the bridegroom's age-superiority is quite definite.⁵⁴

Polygyny is an institution which educated women see as symbolising their present inferiority. Curiously, educated men sometimes defend its continuation, probably more as a sexual fantasy-wish than with any likelihood of practising it.

Dr Aylward Shorter read a paper to the At Augustine's Society at Makerere on 'Christian and Traditional Ideals of Marriage and Family Life'.⁵⁵ In the discussion afterwards the men advocated greater freedom in sexual matters and asked if the church could not take over polygynous marriage as an ideal, rather than tolerating it as an exception. The women on the other hand were almost unanimously against polygyny and concubinage in traditional society.⁵⁶ Several women's organisations submitted statements to the Marriage Commission containing an outright condemnation of polygyny, including the Kenya Association of University Women, the National Council of Women, the Maendeleo ya wanawake (Women's Progress Movement, Swahili), and the Young Women's Christian Association.⁵⁷

Southall points out that one female egalitarian reaction to polygyny at the present time is for women to demand for themselves the same standards of sexual behaviour as they see practised by most men. 'If the latter obtain sexual access to numerous women, both before and after marriage, women as a whole see no reason to restrain themselves from complementary behaviour'. The general availability of contraceptive devices facilitates this female reaction by making it possible for promiscuous women to avoid bearing unwanted children. Southall feels that 'most Africans still consider that sexual access to a plurality of women is a male right. Islam supports this and

Christian teaching has made little headway against it.'⁵⁸

In view of what has been written earlier regarding the unsympathetic attitude of church elders towards women's pastoral problems, it is not surprising that women in Nairobi often prefer to take their problems to City Council welfare workers, who provide what might be described as a secular equivalent to pastoral work, with the added advantage that the workers can be female without running counter to New Testament teaching. To find out the effectiveness of this 'secular pastoral work' interviews were arranged with senior officers of the Nairobi City Council's Department of Social Services. Sixteen full-time women social workers are employed and each conducts about sixty interviews a week. Case-work is very varied, marriage problems arise amongst others. Generally the case-worker sees each partner separately and then meets them together. The more she knows about the different tribal customs the better. Many people living in Nairobi still have their roots in the rural areas. The case-worker may therefore refer a case to the appropriate District Commissioner, or the the Chief of the home location. These administrative officers tend to look at the legal aspects of a case, for example they will consider who should have the custody of the children if the marriage breaks down.

If the couple suggest it the case may be referred to their church. This is found to be a protracted process as the elders go into all the circumstances and perhaps attempt a reconciliation when it is far too late. If the case is referred to a clergyman his approach was described as one of 'talking

about God and the Bible' rather than of dealing with the case in a practical manner. The case workers feel that they have received more training and practical experience in these matters than the clergy, and it would seem that this is often the case. Many of the case-workers are practising Christians but they are not allowed to bring religion into their job directly, so the the impression conveyed is of a secular body doing a better job than the religious bodies, and this does not encourage people to maintain their religious allegiance.⁵⁹

Secularism

Women's struggle to assert their rights and equality with men has run parallel with a wider historical movement towards a secular society. The word 'secularisation' has been given many meanings since C. J. Holyoake first coined the word.⁶⁰ The definition of Harvey Cox will be preferred here. He describes secularisation as 'the loosing of the world from religious understandings of itself, the breaking of all supernatural myths and sacred symbols'. Secularism is 'an acceptance of this process as good'.⁶¹

Secularism may be neutral to religion, or it may be aggressively anti-religious. Cox considers anti-Christian zeal as something of an anachronism today, the battle for secularism having already been won.⁶² In communist countries this is not realised and great efforts are made by communist governments to abolish religion and achieve a state of affairs which is brought about in the free world through public indifference to religion. In Kenya there is freedom of worship

and anti-Christian activity is confined to intellectuals of the old school.⁶³ Some of those who have been educated in schools with a strong missionary background repeat the old cliché, common in England, about 'reacting against religion because it was forced down my throat when I was at school'. Most non-Muslim states in Africa are secular. They recognise religion as a widespread human activity and provide for freedom of worship constitutionally, but they are unable to use religion as a national unifying influence, as Muslim states do, because of the multiplicity of religious denominations.

On a personal level secularism is generally an attitude of indifference towards religion, and its growth is most marked amongst younger educated people in the towns. The seasons pass unremarked in the city, and no libations are needed at the beginning of the rains to ensure a clerk a successful year in his government office. Traditional religion is difficult to uproot from its rural setting and transfer to the town. Witchcraft, however, is widespread, and newspapers carry photographs of the captains of leading football teams taking precautions to prevent the football being charmed against them. Education has played its part in the decline of traditional religion. Children who have studied science in school see much traditional custom as superstition. An attempt by the present writer to persuade a class of sixth-formers in Nairobi that there might be something worth learning from a scientific investigation into the different traditional rain-making techniques was dismissed by the class as a pointless exercise.

The secular attitude also affects the practice of Christianity. Most school-children in Kenya are nominally Christian, if only because no-one seems prepared to admit to practising traditional religion. But the degree of active commitment to Christian faith and practice varies enormously. Christian youth organisations exist in practically every secondary school, but only a minority of the pupils attend. Most young people in schools subscribe to the view that religion is a personal matter. It is when a young couple marry that difficulties arise. Marriage involves the surrender of a considerable amount of personal freedom, and when children are born the question of the family's religious affiliation arises, if it has not arisen before. If the husband is indifferent to religion the burden of maintaining a religious atmosphere in the home is thrown upon the wife. Christian propaganda tries to encourage daily family prayers and Bible reading,⁶⁴ but the success of this really depends upon the father being willing to lead the worship.

Wilson found that in Mombasa the urban environment presented a serious threat to the security of the African family. Yet he noted that the Christian had a better chance than the traditionalist of keeping his family intact, because of 'his new system of values to provide controls and to evaluate behaviour, particularly if he is a member of the evangelical revival missions which enforce rules by discipline'.⁶⁵

Lethargy is the great ally of secularism and the enemy of religion. It is easier to allow a religious practice to drop than it is to start it and keep it up regularly. City

life also has its greater variety of interests and activities than country life, and this frequently means that religious devotions are crowded out. The desire to 'get on' in material terms means that the wife may go out to work in the city, reducing her influence on her children during the day and leaving her too tired for any religious instruction or devotions at night. The weekend is spent on jobs not done during the week, and the husband too may use the weekend for business or recreational purposes. Where a religious person marries a non-religious partner the trend is towards a non-religious family life.

Muslims may have been affected less by this secularising influence,⁶⁶ yet to judge from Muslim writings it is something which alarms the devout. While pointing a finger of scorn at the retreat of Christianity in 'Christian countries' the tone of their writings often reveals an unexpressed fear that the same may soon take place in Islam.⁶⁷ The Muslims of East Africa have always suspected secular education as a means of infusing Christian teaching into the minds of Muslim children, but the more perceptive now see that secularism may be the real enemy. In fact the two may not be unrelated. Secularisation, in the opinion of the German theologian Friedrich Gogarten, is 'the legitimate consequence of the impact of the biblical faith on history'.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, Muslims concede that their children must receive education if the Muslim community is to advance with the rest of the population of Kenya.⁶⁹ But the impact is delayed and so far it would seem that secularism has had little

effect on Islam in Kenya. Women are generally less educated and more secluded than men and play a less prominent role in religious affairs. The Muslim family remains male-dominated and secularism, if it makes its mark, will probably spread, as in the Christian family, from husband to wife and children.

Conclusion

p'Bitek in his book African Religions in Western Scholarship would question whether secularism has invaded Africa from the West. He asserts that traditional religion was already this-worldly and had little to say about the world beyond. Christianity and Islam, which he describes as foreign religions, brought other-worldliness with them and the atmosphere of materialism, about which complaints are made by Christians today, is simply a reassertion of traditional values.⁷⁰

If this is the case women in Kenya would be advised to halt their progression of religious allegiance at the independent churches and not to advance with Bitek to the stage of neo-materialism, lest they find themselves once more relegated to the status of one of their husbands' possessions. Some women are aware of the danger. The Uganda Report on Marriage and Divorce and the Status of Women observed sadly, if realistically 'We live essentially in a man's world. . . . The complementary nature of woman to man is often blurred into a state of affairs in which woman becomes subservient to man and his needs', and further observed, not with complete accuracy, that 'all the world religions teach otherwise'.⁷¹

Women's danger is even more pronounced when Evans-Pritchard concludes from his studies of human society, in widely differing forms round the world and down through history, that 'in all of them, regardless of the form of social structure, men are always in the ascendancy, and this is perhaps the more evident the higher the civilization . . . so far as I can see, it is a plain matter of fact that it is so'.⁷²

Two categories may be distinguished, (1) wives and (2) single women, and the question may be put, who most desires female emancipation, and who benefits most from it? Evans-Pritchard points out the part unmarried women in a monogamous society played in the emancipation of women. 'It was one of the chief, and most telling, feminist arguments that since many women in our country (sc. Britain) cannot marry, they should be given greater opportunities to engage in professions and other public activities'.⁷³

Coupled with this greater freedom which single women have won for themselves at the present time goes freedom to choose their religious allegiance, to change it, or indeed not to owe allegiance to any religion at all. This is commensurate with the freedom enjoyed by the unattached male. In contrast for married people the situation is different. They have surrendered some of their personal freedom in the various spheres of life, including religion. They have become husband and wife, father and mother, and have undertaken new responsibilities. As Evans-Pritchard points out, and pace the women of Uganda, human society and divine revelation agree that this is

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CHAPTER XIII

CONCLUDING ASSESSMENT

Direction of transfer of religious allegiance

In Chapter I it was pointed out that several possible transfer movements could occur between traditional religion, Christianity and Islam. The evidence suggests that only four of these are of any significance. The movement from traditional religion to Christianity is the one of major importance at the present time, and it seems likely to continue to be so in the future. The movement from traditional religion to Islam possesses historical significance, but was probably never very large in Kenya. It was certainly less menacing to Christian evangelism than missionary literature would suggest. It has declined in recent years. Movements between Islam and Christianity take place on a small scale. Conversion from Islam to Christianity is chiefly associated with education, and may increase, although missionary influence in secondary schools is decreasing.¹ On the other hand many Kenyan teachers are convinced Christians. Government policy is to run the schools in a strictly non-partisan manner.

The extent of transfer

The present investigation did not include any attempt to quantify these various movements, for reasons given in Chapter I. Undoubtedly the transfer from traditional religion to Christianity is by far the largest. The estimate given by

Kritzeck and Lewis, and others, that for every convert to Christianity in Africa today there are ten converts to Islam, is not true of Kenya, and probably never has been since the modern missionary era began with the arrival of Krapf.² In fact it would be closer to the truth to reverse the ratio. These movements would be numbered in thousands and tens of thousands each year. In contrast the other movements involving marriage are small, numbered merely in hundreds each year. The universal tendency towards homogeneity in marriage makes mixed marriages (mixed in any sense) less frequent than that which would be obtained by random mate selection.

The influence of marriage on transfers of religious allegiance

There are three situations in which marriage and related matters significantly influence the transfers of people's religious allegiance. Firstly, in movement from traditional religion to Christianity marriage has had an inhibitory effect. Traditionalists become Christians for various reasons, but they do so despite the Christian ethic on sex and marriage, and rarely because of it. Secondly, as a result of this there is a pronounced subsequent movement within Christianity from active membership to the disciplined or lapsed state. The independent churches are generally more lenient in their attitude towards polygyny. They will accept polygynists and their wives who are converts from traditional religion. They will also accept members of the mission-founded churches who have subsequently become polygynists.

Thirdly the limited polygyny available in Islam has

encouraged a movement away from traditional religion in the past in places where Islam was a monotheistic polygynous alternative to the stricter regime of Christianity, but Islam had fewer material benefits to offer, and with the increase in the number of polygynous Christians the main reason for the movement withered away and this particular transfer has practically ceased at the present time. It is difficult to see any sociological reason for it **to revive.**

Marriage as a factor affecting the transfer of religious allegiance may be further divided into a number of contributory factors, including male dominance, the rise of secularism, and attitudes towards inter-ethnic marriages. Conclusions reached on the importance of these will now be given.

Male dominance

Male dominance is considered to be a factor of major importance in causing wives to adopt the religion of their husbands. In traditional religion the wife had to accept the customs of the family, clan or tribe into which she was married. In Islam the children of a mixed marriage have to be raised in the faith **of** their Muslim father and often the wife has to become a Muslim. A Muslim woman has a male guardian, her walī, who can refuse to allow her to marry a non-Muslim unless he converts to Islam. In Christianity the Old Testament decreed a male-dominated congregation of Israel and the New Testament decreed a male-dominated Church. European and African cultural

traits incorporated into the practice of Christianity have done little to alter the situation. Women have their own organisations in the mission-founded churches, and there is evidence of some independent churches having a particular appeal to women, but in the latter case leadership remains firmly in male hands. Nevertheless all religions have had to recognise an improvement in the status of women in recent years. Some have even claimed the credit for it.

The influence of secularism

The rise of the secular society, which has diminished the importance of religion in many spheres of life, has paradoxically given wives greater freedom of choice in practising religion, in proportion as their religious allegiance becomes less important in their husbands' eyes. For single women too the secular society offers greater freedom of action in all spheres of life, including the religious; the exception to this is when indifference happens, and the husband or father attempts to re-assert his authority over his womenfolk.

A Muslim man is unlikely to adopt a completely secular position. Muslim communal attitudes allow the individual to be ever so lax in his religious observances provided his allegiance is still to Islam, but arouses great opposition to anyone wishing to leave the community altogether. From the legal aspect a man has every advantage in being married under Islamic law. It gives him permission to be polygynous, and facilitates divorce while avoiding divorce actions initiated

by his wife. These advantages are lost in a civil marriage.

Attitudes to inter-ethnic marriage

The refusal of Asians to intermarry with Africans has kept their various religions ethnically exclusive and alien and inward-looking. Their impact on religious life in Kenya is minimal.

Arabs by marrying African women in the past produced a mixed community of Swahili who assisted the spread of Islam considerably in the nineteenth century. In recent times the refusal of Arabs to allow Africans to marry their women has widened the racial gap. African Muslims now think of themselves as Africans first and Muslims second.

Europeans avoided inter-racial marriage in the past, but at the present time the number of such marriages with all the other races is increasing in Kenya. The principle of male dominance appears to apply in determining the religion of most of these couples, except where European men marry Muslim women. Amongst Africans inter-tribal marriage is on the increase, particularly among urban educated Kenyans. Inter-denominational Christian marriages are increasing, both as a result of inter-tribal marriages and also because denominational labels are becoming less important.

The motivating factor in religion

There is a considerable amount of inertia in the practice of religion and most people automatically follow the religion of the family into which they were born, but when a

choice of religion is forced by circumstances the influence of the motivating factor in religion appears. In a plural society such as that in Kenya in the last one hundred years there have been many people who have had a choice of religions thrust upon them by circumstances. Evidence has been brought forward in the present work to suggest that the desire for continued existence after death is a strongly motivating factor in traditional religion, as it is in Islam and Christianity, and that the way in which this is ensured is by begetting offspring. This explains why marriage and related matters, including initiation rites and the practice of polygyny, feature largely in traditional religion, and why these practices are carried over strongly by converts into Islam and Christianity.

The apparent conflict between missionaries and their converts from traditional religion was over the practice of polygyny. The real issue was the deeper theological one of the means of achieving salvation. As polygyny dies away (for economic reasons as much as anything) and monogamous marriage gradually prevails, pre-marital pregnancy is replacing polygyny as the outward manifestation of the fact that most Christians still think of salvation in traditionalist terms.

Pastoral concern

Organised pastoral oversight is scarcely a feature of either traditional religion or Islam, as it is of Christianity. Some of the material presented in earlier chapters strikingly

reveals the apparent lack of concern on the part of some pastors for Christian girls who are lost from the Christian fold through marriage to Muslims. The feeling seems to be that it is the fault of the girl and no business of the pastor. A similar indifference is shown towards those Christian men who are disciplined for taking a second wife. Both courses of action are dismissed as irremediable and the offenders are abandoned to their fate.

Pastoral oversight is lacking in both its preventive and curative aspects. If pastors and elders took their responsibilities in this direction more seriously it would do much to prevent lapses and leakages from occurring in the first place. Curative measures are generally limited to a rigid and unimaginative imposition of punishment which places one-third or more of the members of a congregation under discipline at any given time. Punishment on this scale quickly loses its impact, but it is easier to impose punishment than to undertake time-consuming pastoral visitations. Elders and pastors prefer with Paul to deliver offenders to Satan,³ rather than to search for the hundredth sheep with Jesus.⁴

More adequate training in pastoral work would seem to be called for, and a thorough overhauling of disciplinary systems currently in use should be undertaken by church leaders, preferably on a nation-wide inter-denominational scale.

An African Christian theology

The cultural clash which developed in Kenya through the

missionaries bringing in the Gospel in European guise had led to suggestions that African Christians should attempt to compose a distinctively African system of Christian theology. Every effort to relate Christian theology to human culture, African or otherwise, is commendable. There are possibly certain pitfalls which await the unwary.

In the first place, those who call for a distinctively African theology often have in mind matters which have formed the subject of the present dissertation. A few years ago it might have been expected that an African theology would say something new on the subject of polygyny, which was a burning issue at the time. Fortunately economic factors are steadily eliminating polygyny and the church in Africa has been spared the embarrassment of making possibly heretical pronouncements on it.

The moral problem which has taken the place of polygyny is pre-marital sexual intercourse, condemned by the missionaries and apparently condemned as fornication by the New Testament, but accepted at the present time by most young African Christians as normal Christian behaviour, and tacitly accepted by the church in Kenya. This may be a fruitful subject for African theologians to explore. A scripturally-based solution to the problem is urgently needed, but again the question arises as to whether there is a danger of straying into heresy.

The Christian doctrines of great antiquity, such as the doctrine of the Trinity and of the Person of Christ, were hammered out on the anvil of controversy as a result of a compelling need to come to terms with the words of the Bible.

There is the same compelling need in Kenya at the present time to match Christian belief and practice with the words of the Bible, particularly the New Testament, on the subjects of marriage and sex and the nature of salvation. It may be that the distinctively African contribution to Christian thought will lie in the neglected field of pastoral theology.

Missionary Christianity placed great emphasis on the individual; his individual instantaneous conversion, his need to save his own soul, his daily private quiet time, his lonely passage through the valley of the shadow and his solitary appearance before the judgment throne. It is not surprising that pastoral work diminished in importance. In contrast African traditional religion was societal. Life was lived in the family, the clan and the tribe, surrounded by the living-dead. It is to be hoped that African theologians will make a new appraisal of the societal aspects of Christianity, beginning with marriage, which is a part of pastoral theology, which in turn is a part of the doctrine of the Church the body of Christ.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The usual abbreviations are employed for references to the books of the Bible. References to verses in the Qur'an are given in the form: Q 2.222, followed by the page reference in J.M.Rodwell, The Koran (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Limited. Everyman's Library, 1909).

- AIC: African Inland Church.
AIM: Africa Inland Mission.
CMS: The Church Missionary Society.
HSCEA: Holy Spirit Church of East Africa.
KFPC: Kenya Foundation Prophet Church.
KNA: Kenya National Archives, Nairobi.
UMCA: The Universities' Mission to Central Africa.

GLOSSARY

This glossary lists all non-English words and phrases used in the dissertation.

ahādith (Arabic), plural of hadīth, q.v.

ahl al-kitāb (Arabic). People of the Book. The Muslim term for Christians and Jews.

ḥudūd al-nikah (Arabic). Contract of marriage.

arathi (Kikuyu), plural of murathi, q.v.

aroti (Kikuyu), plural of muroti, q.v.

aslama (Arabic). To become a Muslim.

bāya^c (Arabic). Allegiance.

bayat (Urdu). The process of becoming a Muslim.

bikr (Arabic). Virgin.

buibui (Swahili). The enveloping black garment worn by many Muslim women in Kenya.

dini (Swahili). (1) Religion, such as Christianity or Islam.
(2) Used also of denominations.

eda (Swahili), from ḥidda, q.v.

episkopos (Greek). Overseer, bishop.

hadīth (Arabic). Tradition.

ḥid al-fitr (Arabic). The feast marking the end of the fast of Ramadhan.

ḥidda (Arabic). Woman's period of waiting after being divorced.

ihrām (Arabic). Holy state.

jam^c (Arabic). Prohibited marital relationship.

jando (Swahili). Traditional male circumcision ceremony.

kadhi (Swahili), from qadī, q.v.

- kafā'a (Arabic). Principle determining who may marry a Muslim woman.
- kasisi (Swahili). Priest.
- kitābī (Arabic). One of the ahl al-kitāb, q.v.
- kitābia (Arabic). Female kitābī.
- kufuu (Swahili), from kafā'a, q.v.
- kuokoka (Swahili). To be saved.
- kusilimu (Swahili). To become a Muslims.
- madhehebu (Swahili). (1) One of the four Sunni schools of law ,
(2) a Christian denomination.
- mahaji (Swahili). Converts to Islam (especially from the Giriyama).
- maharimu wake (Swahili). Persons (such as his wife's sister) with whom a Muslim stands in a prohibited marital relationship. See jam.
- mahr (Arabic). Islamic marriage payment.
- mahunda (Kigiryama). Bride-wealth.
- mburatu-iti-luga (Kikeru). People-who-do-not-matter.
- mchungaji (Swahili). Pastor, minister.
- millet (Turkish). Administrative religious community.
- mkombozi (Swahili). Redeemer.
- mkristo (Swahili). A Christian.
- mohar (Hebrew). Marriage payment.
- motu proprio (Latin). A letter published by the Pope giving 'his own opinion'.
- msikiaji (Swahili). Hearer.
- mudir (Swahili). Former administrative officer.
- murathi (Kikuyu). Prophet.
- muroti (Kikuyu). Dreamer.
- mutwaano muvuko (Kikamba). Unclean wedding.

mwalimu (Swahili). Teacher.

mwanafunzi (Swahili). Student, catechumen.

mwokozi (Swahili). Swaviour..

nāfila (Arabic). Meritorious act.

najāt (Arabic). Salvation.

ne temere (Latin). 'Lest at random'. Opening words of the papal decree of 1907 under which marriages between Roman Catholics and others are not valid unless solemnised by a Catholic clergyman.

nikāh (Arabic). Marriage.

qādī (Arabic). Judge.

raia (Swahili). A subject (of a king). One of the common people.

sawahila (Arabic). Coastal inhabitants.

shahada (Arabic). The Muslim confession of faith.

shangazi (Swahili). Father's sister.

sharī'a (Arabic). Islamic law.

sheikh (Swahili). Honorific given to mwalimu, q.v.

sunna (Arabic). Custom (of Muhammad).

talaka (Swahili), from talāq, q.v.

talāq (Arabic). Divorce.

tametsi (Latin). The decree of 1563 prescribing the formal mode of celebrating matrimony among Catholics.

thaiyib (Arabic). Non-virgin woman.

walī (Arabic). Legal guardian of a Muslim bride.

wokofu (Swahili). Salvation.

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THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

The history of the United States is a subject of great interest and importance. It is a subject which has attracted the attention of many of the most distinguished historians of the world. The history of the United States is a story of a people who have grown from a small colony of settlers to a great nation of free men and women. It is a story of a people who have fought for their rights and their freedom, and who have shown the world that a government can be based on the consent of the governed.

APPENDIXES

The following are the names of the authors of the various volumes of the series. The first volume was written by John Jay, the second by John Adams, the third by Thomas Jefferson, the fourth by James Madison, the fifth by James Monroe, the sixth by James Jackson, the seventh by James M. Smith, the eighth by James M. Smith, the ninth by James M. Smith, the tenth by James M. Smith, the eleventh by James M. Smith, the twelfth by James M. Smith, the thirteenth by James M. Smith, the fourteenth by James M. Smith, the fifteenth by James M. Smith, the sixteenth by James M. Smith, the seventeenth by James M. Smith, the eighteenth by James M. Smith, the nineteenth by James M. Smith, the twentieth by James M. Smith, the twenty-first by James M. Smith, the twenty-second by James M. Smith, the twenty-third by James M. Smith, the twenty-fourth by James M. Smith, the twenty-fifth by James M. Smith, the twenty-sixth by James M. Smith, the twenty-seventh by James M. Smith, the twenty-eighth by James M. Smith, the twenty-ninth by James M. Smith, the thirtieth by James M. Smith, the thirty-first by James M. Smith, the thirty-second by James M. Smith, the thirty-third by James M. Smith, the thirty-fourth by James M. Smith, the thirty-fifth by James M. Smith, the thirty-sixth by James M. Smith, the thirty-seventh by James M. Smith, the thirty-eighth by James M. Smith, the thirty-ninth by James M. Smith, the fortieth by James M. Smith, the forty-first by James M. Smith, the forty-second by James M. Smith, the forty-third by James M. Smith, the forty-fourth by James M. Smith, the forty-fifth by James M. Smith, the forty-sixth by James M. Smith, the forty-seventh by James M. Smith, the forty-eighth by James M. Smith, the forty-ninth by James M. Smith, the fiftieth by James M. Smith, the fifty-first by James M. Smith, the fifty-second by James M. Smith, the fifty-third by James M. Smith, the fifty-fourth by James M. Smith, the fifty-fifth by James M. Smith, the fifty-sixth by James M. Smith, the fifty-seventh by James M. Smith, the fifty-eighth by James M. Smith, the fifty-ninth by James M. Smith, the sixtieth by James M. Smith, the sixty-first by James M. Smith, the sixty-second by James M. Smith, the sixty-third by James M. Smith, the sixty-fourth by James M. Smith, the sixty-fifth by James M. Smith, the sixty-sixth by James M. Smith, the sixty-seventh by James M. Smith, the sixty-eighth by James M. Smith, the sixty-ninth by James M. Smith, the seventieth by James M. Smith, the seventy-first by James M. Smith, the seventy-second by James M. Smith, the seventy-third by James M. Smith, the seventy-fourth by James M. Smith, the seventy-fifth by James M. Smith, the seventy-sixth by James M. Smith, the seventy-seventh by James M. Smith, the seventy-eighth by James M. Smith, the seventy-ninth by James M. Smith, the eightieth by James M. Smith, the eighty-first by James M. Smith, the eighty-second by James M. Smith, the eighty-third by James M. Smith, the eighty-fourth by James M. Smith, the eighty-fifth by James M. Smith, the eighty-sixth by James M. Smith, the eighty-seventh by James M. Smith, the eighty-eighth by James M. Smith, the eighty-ninth by James M. Smith, the ninetieth by James M. Smith, the ninety-first by James M. Smith, the ninety-second by James M. Smith, the ninety-third by James M. Smith, the ninety-fourth by James M. Smith, the ninety-fifth by James M. Smith, the ninety-sixth by James M. Smith, the ninety-seventh by James M. Smith, the ninety-eighth by James M. Smith, the ninety-ninth by James M. Smith, the hundredth by James M. Smith.

APPENDIX A

HOW POLYGYNY IS POSSIBLE IN A BALANCED POPULATION

At first sight it may appear that where polygyny is practised some men in the community are unable to marry, owing to other men marrying several wives each.

This is not necessarily the case. Suppose an idealised but plausible population in which the numbers of male and female children born each year are practically equal. Suppose also that on average each person lives for sixty years and becomes marriageable at the age of twenty years. Then if the population is monogamous each couple would marry at twenty and have forty years of married life.

Alternatively in a bigamous society a man B (Benjamin), could delay marrying until the age of forty. He would then marry two wives, Bella, aged twenty, and Ada, aged forty, the widow of Arthur, who has just died aged sixty. Benjamin and his two wives then have twenty years of married life, at the end of which Ada and Benjamin die and Bella, now aged forty, is married by Charles, also aged forty years.

Thus each woman still has forty years of married life as in the monogamous society, but for the first twenty years she is married to one husband twenty years her senior, and for the second twenty years she is married to a second husband who is her contemporary. The men have only twenty years of married life, but having two wives they still have

$$20 \text{ years} \times 2 \text{ wives} = 40 \text{ year-wives}$$

of married life. It can be seen that if men defer their age of marriage they can have the same number of year-wives of marriage as in a monogamous society. They have their marriage in a more concentrated form. This was in effect what Spencer found in his study of the Samburu.¹

It also follows that plural marriage reduces the chances of a man being without offspring because of the barrenness of his first wife, indeed in such an ideal society arrangements could be made for a particularly fecund widow of forty to be married to a husband without children.

The illustration also shows that venereal diseases are more likely to be transmitted through a polygynous community, and these diseases are known to reduce fertility. In a monogamous society each married couple is, in theory, sexually isolate, but in a polygynous society there may be a chain of sexual contact passing from one marriage to the next.

If matters are arranged with the mathematical precision supposed above the system does not increase the number of year-wives of married life before the menopause. A community practising plural marriage gains over a monogamous society if it is the practice of the latter for males to delay the customary age of marriage. Each man then 'loses' several years of potential married life which cannot be made up in the community as a whole by having two wives simultaneously. Table VIII shows the different ages at which, on average, the different communities marry. The lowest age given here is 17 years. Suppose that this represent the onset of marriage-ability, then the disparity in marriage age between the sexes

ranges from three to six years. The Table also shows the number of year-wives (cumulative married life) which a man can experience if all live seventy years.

TABLE VIII
COMMUNAL MARRIAGE DATA, KENYA 1962²

Community	Average age at first marriage		Length of cumulative married life for males	
	Male	Female	Without polygyny	With polygyny
	(years)		(years)	
African Catholic	24	18	46	52
African Protestant	24	19	46	51
African Muslim	23	17	47	53
African traditionalist	24	18	46	52
Asian	25	22	45	48
European	25	20	45	50
Arab	23	18	47	52

Thus the lowest number of year-wives (cumulative married life) is that of the monogamous European with 45 year-wives, and the greatest is the polygynous African Muslim with 53, an excess of 18 per cent. This could be substantially increased if the number of women available to the Muslim men were to be increased by their marrying women from other communities, but it would be decreased if they permitted their women to be married by non-Muslim men. It is therefore greatly to the sexual and reproductive advantage of Muslim men to uphold the principle of kafa'a.

References

1. P. Spencer, The Samburu. A Study of Gerontocracy in a Nomadic Tribe (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), p.319.
2. The numbers in the first two columns of the Table are taken from Kenya Population Census, 1962, Volume III African Population (Nairobi: Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, 1966), p.68, and Volume IV Non-African Population, pp.34, 55, 68.

APPENDIX B

METHODOLOGY

The problem

As the title of the dissertation indicates, the main problem was to investigate to what extent marriage is a factor affecting the transfer of religious allegiance in Kenya. This question can be broken down into a number of subsidiary problems:

1. At the individual level, to find out how many people in Kenya change their religious allegiance because of marriage,
2. At the communal level, to find out to what extent religious doctrines about marriage affect the success of the different religious communities in gaining recruits.
3. In sociological terms, to investigate the factors affecting the contemporary pattern of marriage, so far as these are relevant to the transfer of religious affiliation.
4. In theological terms, to investigate the church's awareness of the problem, and to assess its reaction to the situation.

The type of data used

Seven different types of data were used:

1. Anthropological: this included a number of studies of tribal societies.
2. Ecclesiastical: church and National Christian Council reports were used where they were relevant to the study.
3. Missiological: various mission reports, periodicals and

surveys.

4. Theological: Christian and Muslim theological studies, especially those dealing with marriage, salvation and conversion.
5. Sociological: works on marriage and divorce in contemporary societies, and on urbanisation and secularism.
6. Statistical: reports on population censuses, registrations of marriages and divorces, and church membership data.
7. Informed opinion and personal knowledge of the local situation contributed by a wide range of informants.

Sources of data

1. Primary

Criteria applied: the primary data obtained were subjected to the researcher's appraisal, based on his graduate status in both science and divinity, his knowledge of English and Swahili, his residence for eighteen years in East Africa in Zanzibar and Kenya and travel in Uganda and mainland Tanzania, and his close and frequent contact with the various Christian and Muslim communities and their leaders and with informed observers of the religious scene. In the case of discrepancies between data from different sources a judicious assessment was made of the reliability of the sources.

Methods of gathering primary data

1. Interviews with religious leaders and welfare workers.
2. Interviews with persons who had transferred their religious allegiance, or who had **resisted** pressures to **change**.
3. Personal correspondence with religious leaders and with researchers in closely-related fields of study.

4. Questionnaires, used principally as a means of improving the preciseness of information obtained in interviews and personal correspondence.
5. Archival material in the archives of missionary societies in London, the Kenya National Archives in Nairobi and the United Theological College, Limuru.
6. Material gathered by other researchers, contained in unpublished essays and dissertations.
7. Local newspapers and magazines.

2. Secondary

Criteria applied: Published material by reputable authors in books and academic journals was drawn upon. Material was also used from other sources, some of it of doubtful academic merit, the reason being that the researcher considers that the representation of biased and polemical views is relevant to the study.

1. Works on Islam, Christianity, African traditional religion, secularism, marriage, sociology and conversion, which are general in coverage and not confined to Kenya.
2. Works on Islam, Christianity, African traditional religion and Government publications, which make specific reference to the situation in Kenya.
3. Muslim, church and missionary reports and periodicals containing special reference to Kenya, and literature which is relevant to the situation in Kenya.

Methodological problems

1. Sampling. The material gathered did not lend itself to rigorous statistical analysis.
2. Lack of objectivity in the information supplied. This had to be continually guarded against. To give an illustration, Christians generally regard marriage, economic advancement and educational advantage as unworthy reasons for becoming a Christian. These reasons are therefore rarely advanced by converts themselves.
3. Indefinite borderlines between the religious categories. The census method was adopted of accepting a person's own stated religious allegiance, but religious population estimates based upon this method differ considerably from those based on church and mission sources (much smaller) or Muslim sources (much larger).
4. The absence of a question on religious affiliation in recent population censuses.
5. Difficulty in making contact with, and obtaining information from, followers of traditional religion. Instead, information was obtained from educated indigenous researchers, some of whom were specially employed for the purpose.