

Liturgical initiatives and moratorium debates in Africa: An Afro-ecclesiological perspective¹

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Abstract

African ecclesiology has experienced peculiar theological scenes right from the days of the Arianism and Donatism controversies in the first century to the present moment when a liturgy of Africa is still a pipedream. By use of theo-historical-analytical design, this article explores the quest for a liturgy of Africa by retracing some key trends such as the moratorium debates of the 1970s and other key attempts at the inculturation of liturgy in Africa. In other words, was the call for a moratorium by John Gatu and other African ecclesiastical leaders geared towards a liturgy of Africa rather than a liturgy for Africa? What are the concrete areas that needs “liturgical inculturation” especially in regard to the Eucharist? The article sets out on the premise that the calls for moratorium since the 1970s were part of Afro-Ecclesiastical and Afro-liturgical initiatives, a phenomenon that Africa has yearned for since the era of the 19th and 20th century missionary enterprises. In its methodology, the article has extensively reviewed existing literature in regard to the quest for a “Liturgy of Africa” as opposed to the foreign induced “Liturgy for Africa,” by illustrating from some mainline churches and the African instituted churches’ ecclesiological discourses. The article has also relied heavily on the author’s experiences as a participant observer among some African churches. Certainly, the quest for a liturgy of Africa is in its initial stage; and the task ahead is tremendous. In view of this, we should swing into action, take up the challenge with courage and creativity, till Christianity in Africa is Africanized. In post Covid-19 Africa, a more creative liturgical practicum will be the way to go.

1 This is a substantially revised version of research that first appeared in the edited volume, L.C. Siwila and R. Hewitt (eds.), *Liturgy and Identity: African Religio-cultural and ecumenical perspectives* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publication, 2018) (with the publisher’s approval).

Keywords

liturgy and moratorium debates; African Independent Churches and liturgy; liturgical Initiatives in Africa; inculturation/indigenization

Introduction

Although the first known use of the noun *Afro* was made in the United States of America in 1966,² the spirit has been in Africa since the 19th and 20th century era of colonialism and the missionary enterprise, as theo-cultural clashes became the order of the day.³ Etymologically, “Afro” is derived from the phrase African-American hairstyle, a brand which is typically shorter, natural, less elaborate, untreated with chemicals and displays natural kinkiness.⁴ Liturgical initiatives however go beyond this hair-beauty social-aesthetical debates, as it is a broad-based enterprise that concerns Africa’s religio-social domain. To this end, this article seeks to demonstrate that the quest for a liturgy of Africa is a holistic enterprise that is broad and has a far-reaching historical background; hence, it is an ambitious undertaking that this article cannot satisfy given the limitations therein. To an extent, it turns out as a quest for identity, recognition, freedom, respect, and appreciation of African peoples as God’s *Imago Dei* (within God’s image).

As early as 1888, Mojola Agbedi (1860–1917), a Nigerian Yoruba Baptist minister, had already defected from his Baptist church and founded the Native Baptist Church. In demonstrating his Afro-optimist perspective, he defended the creation of African Churches with the words: “To render Christianity indigenous to Africa, it must be watered by native hands, pruned with the native hatchet, and tendered with native earth ... It is a curse if we intend for ever to hold on to the apron strings of foreign teachers doing the baby for aye.”⁵ Although he may have taken an extreme position,

2 Victoria Sherrow, *Encyclopaedia of Hair: A Cultural History* (Westport: Greenwood, 2006).

3 Julius Gathogo, *The Truth About African Hospitality: Is there Hope for Africa?* (Mombasa: Salt, 2001).

4 Sherrow, *Encyclopaedia of Hair*.

5 Julius Gathogo, *The Truth About African Hospitality*, 75.

his African instituted Baptist church fared well, for by 1914, it had more than twice as many adherents as the American Baptist Mission where he was previously serving.⁶ Like James Johnson (1832–1917), his senior, he had great faith in Africans and feared that the European missionary tutelage had the potential of hindering the full development of the Africans. In the same spirit, as with Agbedi, Johnson attributed the success of Islam in the then Nigeria of 1880s to its use of African customs and institutions. Around this time (1888), Agbedi had changed his westernised baptismal name (David Brown Vincent) as a measure of asserting his Afro-optimist dignity and identity, though remaining an evangelical Christian.⁷ Was this his way of decolonising the mind, in using Ngugi wa Thiong'o's words?⁸ In this book, *Decolonising the Mind*, Thiong'o expresses his Afro-optimist identity when he offers a distinctly anti-imperialist perspective on the destiny of Africa, as he demonstrates the role of names and languages in combating imperialism and neo-colonialism in our minds and in our general social practice.⁹ It is in this book where he bids farewell to the English language and its resultant names, hence his dropping of his “Christian” name, “James” is clearly justified along these Afro-optimist identity lines. Beyond this, wa Thiong'o dedicates his book to “all those who write in African languages, and to all those who over the years have maintained the dignity of the literature, culture, philosophy, and other treasures carried by African languages.”¹⁰ Was wa Thiong'o an ideo-philosophical student of the Baptist, Mojola Agbedi, albeit unconsciously? Was he the originator of “decolonising the mind” concept in African scholarship?

Certainly, the “Black is Beautiful,” as a cultural movement, which is an Afro-optimist phenomenon, has been in the United States of America since the 1960s. In this cultural movement, its proponents, the African-Americans, found its roots in the Negritude movement of the 1930s and 1940s.¹¹ In

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind* (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1986).

9 Julius Gathogo, “Bilingualism in Albert Schweitzer's Works and its Relevance for Africa,” *The Oral History Journal of South Africa* 4, no. 1 (2017):46–58.

10 Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind*, iii.

11 Anna Micklin, “Negritude Movement,” *Black Past* (29 June 2008). [Online]. Available: <https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/negritude-movement/> [Accessed: 13

turn, Negritude, as a socially lived philosophy, was a movement that began among the French-speaking African and Caribbean writers living in Paris. They were writing as a protest literature against French colonial rule and specifically the repressive policy of assimilation. By implication, the British policy of indirect rule was also a concern in the Negritude cultural movement.¹² In time, the movement spread its tentacles to the rest of the world, especially in areas that were dominated by the African populace. In particular, this Afro-optimist cultural perspective is evident in the works of South Africa's Stephen Bantu Biko (Steve Biko) in his Black Conscious Movement (BCM).¹³ In all these Afro-optimist discourses, the importance of a Pan-African identity became an essential starting point, even within the ecclesiastical discourses. In the case of Agbedi, he advocated indigenous African Church leadership and its resultant authentic liturgy that captures the African pride and aesthetics amongst other pillars of culture.

Early controversies and liturgy

As we focus on religio-cultural perspectives on liturgy in a globalized Africa, it is worthwhile to consider that as early as 42 CE, St. Mark had already established a Church in Egypt. St. Mark, the writer of Mark's Gospel later died in Alexandria, Egypt, after being dragged by horses through the streets until he was dead. Matthew likewise suffered martyrdom in Ethiopia, killed by a sword wound in the first century. Additionally, North African Christianity produced theological giants such as Tertullian, St. Augustine of Hippo, and Cyprian. The so-called Alexandrian Christianity also produced early Christian apologists such as Clement, Origen, and Athanasius, though this does not translate into a liturgy of Africa.¹⁴ Further, Africa wrestled with the early theological controversies such as Donatism and Arianism, and eventually got the way forward which forms the so-called orthodoxy theology for the globalized world, the 21st century

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12 Anna Micklin, "Negritude Movement."

13 Raymond Simangaliso Kumalo, "Southern African Sources for an Authentic Christian Education for Social Transformation," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 122, no. 1 (2005): 69.

14 Zablon Nthamburi, *The African Church at the crossroads* (Nairobi: Uzima, 1991).

inclusive. In a nutshell, heretics such as the *Gnostics* held the view that Christ was not human, but an angelic being, bringing secret knowledge from God. Arius denied the equality and consubstantiality of the Word (Logos) with the Father. The *Docetics*, in general, held that Jesus only “appeared” to be human, but had no human body and did not die on the cross. Through the various Church Councils (refer to the Council of Nicea of 325 CE, the Council of Ephesus of 431 CE, the Council of Chalcedon of 451 CE), the Christian churches rejected their teachings.¹⁵ In the course of these early conferences, theological debates, and high level of theologizing, African geniuses, by a confluence of history, unofficially began African Christianity whose theological gains can be seen beyond Africa, especially in the West, from the third century to the twenty-first century.¹⁶ Indeed, this globalizing aspect is confirmed beyond the 3rd, 4th and 5th centuries by John Mbiti’s assertion that African theological discourses are kerygmatically universal though theologically provincial.¹⁷ Nevertheless, as the African gains were lost after, and even before the birth of Islam in the seventh century, a clearly defined liturgy designed for indigenous African people cannot be said to have been formulated. Further, despite the many years of attempting to indigenise Christianity in Africa, a liturgy of Africa remains a pipe dream.

Redefining liturgy and its practice

In defining it, liturgy (Greek: λειτουργία, meaning, public work done on behalf of the people) is loosely seen as the order of service in the church. Basically, it is a form or formulary according to which public religious worship is conducted. Some of the most important liturgical elements are the Eucharist, communal prayer, reading the Word according to the lectionary, a response to confession (especially among the protestants where the believer responds to the working of the Holy Spirit), passing

15 For details, see Julius Gathogo, “Reconstructive hermeneutics in African Christology,” *HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 71, no. 3 (2015):1–8.

16 For details, see Julius Gathogo, “Genesis, Methodologies, and Concerns of African Theology of Reconstruction,” *Theologia Viatorum* 32, no. 1 (2008): 23–62.

17 See Gathogo, *Genesis, Methodologies, and Concerns of African Theology of Reconstruction*.

the peace of Christ during the greeting times in the churches, music, and through the Church year – referring to a series of seasons and holy days. Other smaller ways of expressing liturgical elements are the use of colours of the church year, sanctification and/or reverence for places of worship as “sacred places,” reverence for Liturgical leaders and so on.

In this article, and in line with the African theological perspective, liturgy is seen holistically, a phenomenon where it affects socio-religious rubrics, within and beyond the church. Hence, African Christian worship, in the 21st century is characterised by calls for inculturation (or indigenization/Africanization), liberation, renewal, rebirth, reconstruction, and reconciliation. To this end, this article will sample about four liturgical initiatives that have been attempted in Africa mainly by indigenous African people, though this, as we shall see, is not a racial or an ethnic agenda but a schema with kerygmatic appeal.

Some liturgical initiatives in Africa

First is the post-World War 2 (1946 onwards) where the Anglican Churches had their liturgical movement which had far reaching effects to the Anglican Communion world-wide. In particular, the 1958 Lambeth Conference set out principles for such changes for the Anglican Communion.¹⁸ It is from there that “*Liturgy for Africa*” was mooted in the ecclesiastical agenda for the first time. As it turned out, a British national, Leslie Brown (1912–1999), while being the Anglican Archbishop of Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi (1960–1965), initiated a “Liturgy for all of Africa” in 1960. Consequently, this noble initiative did not get acceptance across the continent as some regions, especially West Africa, felt excluded in this otherwise African version of indigenizing worship.¹⁹

Previously, in mid-1950s, Archbishop Brown had been one of the architects of the highly regarded liturgy of the Church of South India; and this

18 Colin Buchanan. *Modern English Liturgies 1958–1968*. [Online]. Available: <http://anglicansonline.org/resources/bcp.html> [Accessed: 26 November 2018].

19 Charles Wohlers, *A Liturgy for Africa*. [Online]. Available: http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/africa_liturgy.html [Accessed: 26 November 2018].

certainly encouraged him to design the liturgy for all of Africa.²⁰ Finally, a “Liturgy of Africa” book was produced in 1964, but without substantial influence, probably owing to the nature of its production. Second, it was more of a “Liturgy for Africa” than a “Liturgy of Africa”. Third, the authors were primarily English Bishops serving in various parts of Africa but under the stewardship of Brown. Fourth, for European Bishops to be seen to be ‘suspiciously’ working for the liturgy for all of Africa at a critical moment in African history, where most African nations were buoyant with quests for political independence, the ‘liturgy for Africa’ project could not meaningfully see the light of day. Fifth, there was little input, if any, from indigenous Africans hence it did not reflect African indigenous realities substantially, especially the mediatory roles of the ancestors in African context.²¹ As such, Christ’s ancestral and brotherly role was not captured. Sixth, the Anglican Church, being categorized as low (Evangelical Anglicans) versus high (Anglo-Catholics), could not be fitted in one theological container without raising some eyebrows; and especially if no wider consultations took place. Seen in this way, it could not satisfy individual Dioceses each of which has some autonomy; hence some outrightly rejected it as incompatible to the specific forms of worship. Seventh, the Liturgy for Africa was never translated in African languages. This ultimately limited its use in a predominantly illiterate Africa of the 1960s.²² Eighth, it was composed from a top-bottom form of leadership which assumes that the audience has nothing to contribute and is incapable of bringing any reliable or worthy input; hence, it set out on the wrong premise. Clearly, its introduction clarifies a mistaken notion, and says thus,

The Archbishops of the Anglican Communion in Africa met in April 1961 and asked that consultations should take place between the Provinces with a view to composing a new Liturgy for the Holy Communion. The Archbishops hoped that such a Liturgy might win wide acceptance and form a bond of unity between Anglicans all over the continent. This Liturgy, prepared in answer to that request, was drafted at a meeting in Kampala in April 1963 of representatives

20 Buchanan. *Modern English Liturgies 1958–1968*.

21 Ibid.

22 Wohlers, *A Liturgy for Africa*.

of the Provinces of South Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, East Africa, and Uganda, and has been amended in the light of criticisms made by the Provincial Liturgical Commissions, and by the Liturgical Consultation of the Anglican Communion held at Toronto in August 1963.²³

Eighth, the architects of “Liturgy for Africa” failed to not only appreciate the holistic nature of African religio-cultural diversity. Certainly, as Takatso Mofokeng contends, Africa cannot be identified as a single geo-cultural context.²⁴ Indeed, Mofokeng’s view has serious implications for African liturgical theology: First, it is wrong to deal with Africa as a monolithic entity. Second, any attempt at formulating ecclesiastical liturgy in Africa has to appreciate the wealth of African cultures. These cultures include: the community-minded African indigenous culture (the vast majority), the American ‘globalization,’ the European (as one of the most influential), Arabic, and Asiatic. Third, it implies that although Africa is culturally pluralistic, there are strong presences of other cultures as well. Fourth, it implies that Africa’s theological articulation has been influenced by other cultures, which were not originally African, but have now shifted to Africa as their new home. Fifth, being in the era of globalization (derogatorily called, Americanization) calls for inclusivity as opposed to exclusivity. It means that each of the above components have to be explored as we focus on the liturgy of Africa in the 21st century.

Above all, the challenge by the father of African theology, John S. Mbiti, to indigenize the gospel of Christ in the vast African region cannot be ignored. The striving to ensure that African Christianity remains relevant in post-colonial Africa and thereby withstand the strong anti-faith wave in this era of technology and globalization must remain the goal of any liturgist. Indeed, a liturgy that fails to capture the African values (and vices) in the age of technology remains irrelevant for the modern church. Clearly, the 21st century Africa is characterised by religious and/or social education that is geared towards problem solving, passionate service to God and

23 Wohlers, *A Liturgy for Africa*.

24 Takatso Mofokeng, “Mission theology from an African perspective: A Dialogue with David Bosch,” in J.N.K Kritzinger, and W.A Saayman, (eds.), *Mission in creative tension: A dialogue with David Bosch* (Pretoria: S.A Missiological society, 1990), 168–180.

humanity, critical and creative-innovative thinking, curriculum revision, and reliance on technological resources such as Skype, teleconferencing, the internet and so forth.²⁵ Nevertheless, Mbiti's challenge remains real,

Christianity has made a real claim on Africa ... the question is:
Has Africa made a real claim on Christianity? Christianity has
Christianised Africa, but Africa has not Africanised Christianity.²⁶

The question however is; how can we reclaim ourselves liturgically in the age of technology? Is it enough to talk about African dance, African drama, African music, use of drums in African Christian worship, interaction with ancestral pantheons, and emphasis on African Christological functionalities among others in a globalised Africa? And if liturgy is a public work done on behalf of people, then where do we place ourselves in light of corrupt, shrewd, and divisive politics that characterize the modern-day Africa? How do we factor in xenophobia as a threat to genuine liturgical development in Africa? How do we worship God in times of ethnic, xenophobic, and racial conflicts? Do our liturgies address cutting edge issues facing Africa?

Certainly, Brown's book on *Liturgy for Africa* was a bold step to redefine African Christianity from the perspective of liturgical renewal and reconstruction. It however failed to reconstruct African worship as the walls of racism, apartheid, colonialism, and other mitigating factors were still with us as major impediments. In view of the above, it is critical to appreciate that for quite sometimes, the church in Africa has remained a European church in African soil on the plea that all "European is Christian and all indigenous cultures could intrinsically hardly qualify as Christian."²⁷ Mugambi confirms that,

During the pioneer missionary period, most missionaries expected African converts to abandon and denounce their heritage and imitate missionaries, of course, neither the missionaries nor their

25 See Julius Gathogo, *Pedagogy of the teaching profession: Introducing new skills movement* (Saabrukken: Lambert Academic publishers, 2015).

26 John Mbiti in Richard J. Gehman, *Doing African Theology* (Kijabe: Kesho, 1991), ii.

27 G. Makoka and E. Shomag, "African Customary Forms of Marriage: Are polygamous marriages unchristian? (2003)" [Online]. Available: <http://www.teenet.net/chapters.htm> [Accessed: 24/11/2015].

Christian ancestors had to do this. Yet the African was expected to be divorced from his [sic] culture in order to embrace the Gospel. This was impossible hence the situation, which African designed for themselves, both in spite of and because of the negative attitude of missionaries towards the African Cultural and religious heritage.²⁸

This is further confirmed by Max Warren when he remarks that, “We have marched around ... Jericho [a] ... number of times. We have sounded the trumpets and the walls have not collapsed.”²⁹ We can learn that some western missionaries came with the spirit of subjugation of African culture. In other words, the Church under the influence of western Christianity worked towards the downfall of the walls of Jericho, which was in the real sense African traditions and customs. In order to clear the way for the spread of Christianity on the African continent, “It was taken for granted that western Christianity under the influence of the European missionaries was to be the norm for African life.”³⁰ It is no wonder that the renowned European missionary and a scholar of the mid-twentieth century L. S. B. Leakey saw the conflict between Kenya’s freedom fighters (the Mau-Mau rebels of 1950s) and the colonial authorities as a clash between African indigenous religion and (the westernised) Christianity. Leakey who had invested heavily in the study of the local Kikuyu cultural heritage saw the Mau-Mau rebel movement as a group that owed its “successes to this fact more than to anything else at all.”³¹ He went on to make a strange suggestion that “the ‘cure’ for ‘Mau-Mau disease’ is to encourage the formation of African Independent Churches headed by a European missionary.”³² Without further suppressions of African religious discourses by foreign missionaries and Administrators who had no room for African culture, in pre-colonial Africa, African Christianity now has a chance of flourishing

28 Jesse Mugambi, *African Heritage and Contemporary Christianity* (Nairobi: Longhorn Publishers, 1998), 159–160.

29 Max Warren quoted in W. Niwagila, *From the Catacomb to a self-Governing Church* (Hamburg: Ammerbek Bei, 1991), 406.

30 Max Warren quoted in W. Niwagila, *From the Catacomb to a self-Governing Church*, 406.

31 L.S.B. Leakey, *Defeating Mau-Mau* (London: Methuen, 1954), 41.

32 Julius Gathogo, “The Continuity of Indigenous Rituals in African Ecclesiology: A Kenyan Experience from a Historical Perspective,” *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 3, no. 1 (2017): 115–137.

authentically. Seen in this way, African Christianity can reverse the march “around ... Jericho ...” and re-discover that “... the walls have not [yet] collapsed.”³³

The Moratorium Debate

The call for a moratorium of the 1970s was a call for European missionaries to return to Europe and suspend their missionary activities and leave it to Africans for at least ten years so that Africans can learn to do mission work on their own without outside tutelage. Generally, the early 1970s saw a demand being issued by a number of Third World Christian theologians for all Western missionaries and Western financial support to return home. It was a call for “moratorium,” a suspension of Western missionary activity in the Third World. The word “moratorium” is a word in common usage, especially in economic discussions, and was chosen for its common meaning.³⁴

According to Zablon Nthamburi, the call for a moratorium in mission is not exclusively an African concern; for as early as 1964, an American, James Scherer made this call as he felt that the activities of missionaries and their insensitivity to other cultures contributed to the reality of neo-colonialism.³⁵ This viewpoint was for all missionaries across the globe. Before Scherer, there was Henry Venn (1796-1873) who fostered the concept of a Self-Supporting, Self-Governing, and Self-Extending Church as the aim of mission. Venn argued that the aim of all missionary work should be to set up a local national church. He believed that the missionary work should be like that of scaffolding that is erected around a story building when it is being built. Once the building is complete, the scaffolding is removed, and the building continues to exist on its own without any outside props.

33 Max Warren quoted in W. Niwagila, *From the Catacomb to a self-Governing Church*, 406.

34 Kendall briefly discusses the use of the word “moratorium”: [moratorium] indicates a temporary or permanent halt to an established practice. The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as “a legal authorization to a debtor to postpone payment for a certain time,” *ibid.*, 86. For details, see Elliot Kendall, *The End of An Era: Africa and the Missionary* (London: SPCK, 1978), 9–10.

35 Zablon Nthamburi, *African church at crossroads* (Nairobi: Uzima press, 1991), 71.

So once the local national church has been fully established, missionaries should withdraw from it.

In regard to Africa, the Moratorium call was accentuated by Rev. John Gatu, the then General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in East Africa, in his epoch-making speech at the mission festival at Milwaukee, Missouri in 1971. In this meeting, Gatu gallantly pointed that the continuation of the missionary movement as constituted then was a hindrance to the selfhood of the church. That is, how can they draw their own liturgies that are indigenized unlike that of the missionary Bishop Leslie Brown (1912–1999) from the United Kingdom? How could they adhere to the call by the father of African theology to Africanise Christianity in Africa so as to make it an authentically African religion? How could they reconstruct the church in Africa architecturally, and hence build worship structures that reflect the oval design seen in African traditional huts? How could Africans test their leadership skills as Bishops, Pastors, Archdeacons, Rural Deans, and Church Administrators if when the foreign missionaries from overseas continued to dominate the Euro-African church? Above all, how could the mainline churches stop the influx of people to the emerging African Instituted Churches owing to cultural and theo-doctrinal differences?

As Zablon Nthamburi perceptively concedes, Gatu's otherwise "protestant affair" landed in the Roman Catholic ecclesiology. In a Roman Catholic Synod in 1974, Bishop Sangu commented thus, "There is a war going on about religious colonialism in Africa."³⁶ Equally, the theological education wing of the protestant churches, headquartered in Nairobi, the All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), joined the debate as well. In its Third General Assembly, the AACC meeting in Lusaka, Zambia, in May 1974, unanimously accepted a corresponding "option" that was strongly supported by its erstwhile Secretary General, Canon Burgess Carr. Interestingly, the AACC Zambia Conference of 1974 called for a temporary moratorium on external assistance in money and personnel as the only potent means of becoming a truly African church, a church that is responsible and a respected member of the universal church within the four marks of the church (One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic church).

36 Ibid., 71.

Beyond Africa, Emerito P. Nacpil made his moratorium call in February 1971, at a Consultation of Methodist missionaries and churches in Asia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.³⁷ In his presentation, Nacpil passionately argued that in the Third World “the present structure of modern missions is dead. And the first thing we ought to do is to eulogize it and then bury it, no matter how painful and expensive it is to bury the dead.”³⁸ He continued by probing the roles and purposes of Western missionaries in Asia and concluded that “the most missionary service a missionary under the present system can do today in Asia is to go home!”³⁹

The importance of the moratorium debate was clear, as perceived by Gerald H. Anderson, president of the American Society of Missiology, when the call was made. He contended that however shocking the proposal seemed, it was imperative that Christians in Europe and North America face the issue squarely. The reason, he contended, was it would probably be a major item for discussion on the agenda, on virtually every mission board and society that “is related to the ecumenical movement; for another, because the feelings voiced by Mr. Gatu are shared by a number of church leaders in Asia, Africa and Latin America, as well as in Europe and in the United States.”⁴⁰

From the above thus, the first two calls for a moratorium on Western personnel and money in the Third World came simultaneously from different locations. That is, John Gatu, a Kenyan theologian traveling in the United States and Emerito Nacpil, a Filipino theologian speaking at an international mission conference in Asia. Even though Gatu and Nacpil were the key proponents of the moratorium debate, it is essential to note that the General Secretary of the All-Africa Conference of Churches at the time, Burgess Carr, believed that the call was not merely made by the individuals who received the most coverage, but was a movement that had evolved over a period of time. Carr saw the movement coming out of an

37 During this time Emerito Nacpil was the Dean of Union Theological Seminary, Manila, Philippines. There were other similar calls around the world, but Nacpil and Gatu were the main published calls.

38 Emerito P. Nacpil, Mission but not Missionaries, *International Review of Mission* 90(1971):359.

39 Nacpil, Mission but not Missionaries, 360.

40 Gerald Anderson, A Moratorium on Missionaries? *The Christian Century* 91(2):43.

earlier discussion in 1961 at the International Missionary Council (newly integrated into the World Council of Churches) in which the theme was “Mission on All Six Continents.”⁴¹

As the ongoing discussion has pointed out, the condition of the African church drove Gatu and others to call for a moratorium. For in the 19th century, European missionary societies held the view that Africans had no suggestions worth considering on issues regarding self-propagation and self-support of ecclesia. Seen in this way, Africans could not make critical and effective decisions about mission outreach, make their own liturgies, could not differentiate between syncretism and inculturation, and were therefore in dire need of assimilation rather than be given a room for dialogue. African converts were largely seen as ill-equipped to manage complex institutions. Instead, it was feared that they needed to acquire more experiences in the process as they undertook limited leadership responsibilities, among other open biases that were prevalent. And due to the financial assistances from Stuttgart, Rome, London, Geneva, and New York, that was needed to run the churches, the African churches under European expatriate missionaries found themselves unable to develop African theologies and liturgies of Ubuntu (humanness), *guciarwo na mburi* (ritual rebirth and acceptance of strangers), reconciliation, reconstruction, liberation, liturgy, hospitality, indigenization, inculturation, and so forth. Instead, they had to dance the tunes that were called out by those who paid their respective pipers, and not employ the melodies of their African ancestors. Seen in this way, the rich African elements such as dance, song, riddles, oral narratives, storytelling, riddles, proverbs, and drama were not entertained in the missionary churches that viewed the African God as a *deus otiosus* (idol god) or *deus remotus* (a withdrawn god), and the general religiosity as animistic.⁴² Or was it the case of losing one’s life in order to find it later as implied in Matthew 10:39?

41 Gwinyai Muzorewa, *The Origins and Development of African Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985), 66.

42 Geoffrey Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion* (London: Sheldon Press, 1962), 21.

Sampling Simon Kimbangu's indigenization strategy

The present day Kimbanguist Church, which is an African Independent Church, headquartered in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was founded by Simon Kimbangu in DRC and spread to the neighbouring countries namely Congo, Angola, Rwanda, and Burundi. It was founded in 1921 after Kimbangu allegedly received two visions of Christ before his call to prophethood. That is, first call in 1918 which he resisted and finally on 6 April 1921.⁴³

As he began his Afro-Pentecostal church ministry, Simon Kimbangu drew huge crowds, to the extent that workers left the plantations to hear him speak, as hospital beds were emptied of those who were hoping for cures. The word spread that a *ngunza* (prophet) and *mvuluzi* (apostle, Messiah) was among the Congo people. Kimbangu cured the sick and was said to raise the dead.⁴⁴ His village, Nkamba, was renamed New Jerusalem. The mission became a mass movement and began to take on nationalist overtones, disturbing both the Baptists and the Belgian colonial authorities. His healing ministry had a powerful impact, as followers proclaimed his cures and miracles. To an extent, these were echoes of the Messianism of Kimpa Vita (1684–1706) two centuries earlier. In turn, Kimpa Vita was captured near her hometown and burned as a heretic on 2 July 1706. She had established a temporary capital at Evululu but the forces loyal to Pedro IV, and with the consent from the Capuchin Friars, could not allow a “witch” and a “heretic” to operate there. Her attempts to lead her own Christian movement, like the Donatists of the 6th century, was ruthlessly suppressed; and in both cases, attempts at indigenizing Roman Catholic Christianity in both Congo and North Africa respectively were nipped in the bud. It was no wonder that she was later given the name “Beatriz” after the Catholic Saint.⁴⁵

43 Zablon Nthamburi, *African church at crossroads*.

44 Marie-Louise Martin, *Kimbangu: An African Prophet and His Church* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1976).

45 Julius Gathogo, *Ecclesia Anglicana* Conference of September 2020: Cooking Anglican ecclesiology in a Kenyan Pot? *JJEOSHS*, 3, no.1 (2020):1–17.

In his extreme theo-doctrinal position, Simon Kimbangu employed Christian symbolism, seeing himself as a Christ figure. He appointed 12 apostles to assist him and laid down three moral rules: the abolition of all traditional religious symbols, the eradication of erotic dancing and the destruction of dance drums, and the end of polygamy. He opposed witchcraft and sorcery. To the shock of the missionaries, who had worked toward these goals for years with little results, Kimbangu's disciples conformed to his rules without a murmur.⁴⁶ Like any other African Instituted Church, Kimbanguist Church is a bulwark of liturgical indigenization. Some of Simon Kimbangu's indigenization strategies are seen in the following areas:

African Ethos are recaptured

It has effectively captured the African ethos of wholeness. For instance, sickness is not only a physical but also spiritual issue. Certainly, as John Mbiti tells us, Africans look to religion for the solution to every life problem, including health. To many Africans, evil and sufferings is associated with Satan or bad spirits. Evil may come about through the curse, evil eye, malicious spirits, or abuse of mystical power. There may be diseases and calamities that are attributed to bad spirits. Such bad spirits may cause famine, plague, smallpox, mental illnesses or even barrenness. For Kimbangu therefore it was easy to convince his adherents that the devil is the prime cause of diseases, physical, and mental problems. Faith is therefore a necessary component of healing sessions.⁴⁷

The Eucharist

Another aspect of indigenization is with respect to the Eucharist. The Kimbanguist church celebrated its first Eucharist in April 1971, during the 50th anniversary that commemorated the beginning of Kimbangu's ministry. 350,000 pilgrims converged at N'kamba for the occasion. The Eucharist elements consisted of African food. The bread was made from a mixture of potatoes, maize, and bananas – which is a common African dish – along with honey diluted in water. The mixture of maize, potatoes,

46 Marie-Louise Martin, *Kimbangu*.

47 See John Mbiti, *African religions and Philosophy* (Nairobi: EAEP., 1969).

and bananas symbolized the body of Chris which is formed of people of all races. Honey was traditionally used by African on very important occasion such as the pouring of libation. Its usage therefore shows that this is an important event in the life of community.⁴⁸

Ecclesiology

The Kimbanguist ecclesiology reflects the African eponyms' hierarchy. The church of Jesus Christ on Earth through Simon Kimbangu has exalted their prophet Kimbangu as the centre of authority that holds the whole community together. This has become hereditary in that the ministry of the first prophet Kimbangu is continued through his sons. This hierarchical nature of the church is characteristic of the traditional chieftainship. In such cases, the charisma rests on the leader who passes it to the next kin as the opportunity arises. His eminence Joseph Kuntian Dangienda Kimbangu, the youngest son retained the mantle of his father. Finally, the faithful go on their knees as they receive handshakes from their spiritual leader or elder which is a characteristic of the African respect for elders and leaders.⁴⁹

On the whole, when the Belgians tried to crack down on Kimbanguists, the church went underground, led by Kimbangu's son, Joseph Dangienda. Several related sects soon appeared, all acknowledging Kimbangu as their spiritual father. Kimbangu also became a symbol of Congolese nationalism, and Kimbanguism fostered group cohesion. A church council was established in 1956, five years after Kimbangu's death, and his three sons, led by Dangienda, took over. In 1959, the Kimbanguist Church was recognized by the then Belgium government and could then conduct prayer freely. Today, the Kimbanguist Church is well established in many countries. However, when Kimbangu passed on, his son Joseph Dangienda took over the Church ministry. Joseph Dangienda (chief spiritual) organized the contemporary Church. In 1991, President Mobutu Sese Seko, who had legalized the church, posthumously amnestied Kimbangu and awarded him the National Order of the Leopard. Dangienda (born 22 March 1918)

48 Zablon Nthamburi, *African church at crossroads*.

49 Martin, *Kimbangu: An African Prophet and His Church*.

died on 8 July 1992 in Switzerland and his son, Simon Kimbangu Kiangani, is the spiritual leader based in the Church's headquarters in Nkamba.⁵⁰

Some concrete areas in need of inculturation

In addressing the concrete areas where the 21st century church is in dire need of inculturation, I suggest that it will need to have a positive attitude to African Religion so as to use the same or similar concepts in order to eliminate dualism. Such concepts include: a shrine for church and a medium for priest, among others. The beauty of the local language, the use of Proverbs and local expressions must clearly appear. The prayers as found in the Roman Missal must be adapted to the African reality. Composition of new prayers structured on African spirituality and concerns is long overdue. African can produce its Psalms to compliment the Biblical Psalms. I also suggest the family as the domestic church should be made the centre of inculturation. The role of the father and mother as the parents and priests of the family; their ability to bless, pray over the children, to initiate, to share roles with all members of the family, to involve everyone, to express worries and joys – such should be emphasized. Again, more creativity in celebration of sacraments and feasts such as:

Advent

The Day of Advent fits within the schema of liturgy of Africa, as it is celebrated across Christian denominations as a preparatory period for the celebration of the birth of Christ at Christmas. It is also celebrated as a preparation for the second Coming of Christ. It begins on the Sunday nearest to November 30 of every year. As a season of waiting for a new birth, hence a period of pregnancy and reconciliation, Advent as a season will aid a liturgy of Africa by driving us to recall the indigenous moments of pregnancy, the period of purification, the naming ceremonies, the relevant ululations that marked the gender of the child, the seclusion period, and the public appreciation of the new birth, the expectations of the born child to the community (as warriors, mothers, elders, leaders, fathers, medicine practitioners, blacksmith and other professional dexterities). This buoyant mood should

50 Ibid.

inform the making of Advent liturgies, and this can be communicated through oral communication, write-ups, drama, music, poetry, dance, and ordinary hymns. The vital role of pregnant women and the risks involved, the image of a church as a pregnant mother, and the justice, counselling, and peace that the anticipated child will bring to Africa has to be factored within the liturgy of Africa, especially as we mark Advent annually.

Christmas

For Christmas, themes that can be addressed include: the birth of new life, birth of someone special; ‘beginning of a new era’ etc. The feast can also focus on areas such as how the birth of a baby is announced in African indigenous context; the role of mothers in the birth of new life, the centrality of motherhood that ushers societal saviors; appreciation of all families – including childless families in post-missionary Africa vis-à-vis the joy of children in Africa; the value of children and affirming the continuity of life in society; dedication and the attention of children and especially in addressing their unmet needs right from Sunday School, teenage-hood, and general youthfulness (cf. Luke 2:2040). The symbols of the crib can furthermore be appreciated as part of the celebration. In a nutshell, Christmas ought to liturgically take us to the whole drama of life, a phenomenon where concepts of birth, rebirth, renewal, rejuvenation, reconstruction and reconfirmation of vows made to individuals, society, and to God needs to be brought back in our holistic rubrics.

Good Friday

As a holiday where Christians commemorate the crucifixion of Jesus and death at Calvary, Good Friday ought to be equated to some of the most important days in African indigenous society. In particular, some special days in an African calendar remained so, and were religiously observed in the indigenous society. In the case of the

Day of Rituals [where *Ethaga* rainmakers prayed for rain after a prolonged dry spell], the locals were not allowed to go to work, and/or to farm [It was simply a day that was dedicated to prayer rituals under the leadership of the indigenous priests, within the Holy Shrines]. [The Day was also] called, *Muthenya wa Mutiro* (the Day of Abstaining). It was also called the Day of the Goat or the Day of the

Sheep (*Muthenya wa Mburi or Muthenya wa Ng'ondu*).⁵¹

With the Good Friday being celebrated during the Christian Holy Week, as part of Paschal Triduum, the Day is equally seen as holy and great; a day that is viewed so by Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, the Lutherans, the Methodists, the Oriental Orthodox, and some Reformed traditions such as the Presbyterians, Continental Reformed, and the Congregationalists Churches, all of whom observe Good Friday with fasting and elaborate church services. In understanding the concrete areas where the Good Friday will need inculturation so as to fit within the schema of *Theologia Africana*, the end result of the event ought to be taken into account. This will drive our inculturation and/or indigenization strategy to the value of forgiveness and conflict settlements. In this respect, areas that are prone to banditry, inter-clan conflicts, xenophobia, inter-ethnic tensions, Marxist dichotomies of rich versus poor, and where families are in perpetual conflicts due to scarcity of resources (land, water, common wells, grazing lands and so on) should be encouraged to turn up to the Church and openly offer unconditional forgiveness to one another. The African Christian Pastor should more than ever before should lead the parade in making the adherents to appreciate that “road to Golgotha is not without stumbling blocks” and that true faith “must be based on the costly grace and not on the cheap grace”⁵² hence reconciliation after the crucifixion is not an option but an imperative in African liturgical Christianity. All these can be put in very appropriate contexts via symbols, music, poetry, and drama.

Ascension

The Christian belief in the ascension of Jesus is clearly reflected in the creeds, confessional statements, and oral proclamations through poetry. It contends that Jesus ascended to Heaven after resurrection where he earned his exaltation as Lord and Christ who sits at the right hand of God. In light of this, artistic-liturgical theology in Africa has to employ rich symbolism

51 Julius Gathogo, “The Continuity of Indigenous Rituals in African Ecclesiology: A Kenyan Experience From a Historical Perspective,” *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 3, no. 1 (2017):115-137 (130).

52 Julius Gathogo, “The struggle against patriarchalism in Kenya (1980 - 1992): Revisiting the history of women ministries,” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 34, Suppl. 1 (2008): 1-17 (15).

by drawing an ascending Jesus who blesses masses of people in Africa and beyond who are walking like sheep without a shepherd, and who are walking through the hills and valleys of death and promising hope, peace, and joy after overcoming the humiliations that punctuated the journey to Golgotha, West of Jerusalem where he carried the Cross as the ultimate symbol of victory (Matthew 27:27-56; Mark 15:16-41; Luke 23:26-49; John 19:17-30). With the Feast of Ascension being celebrated on the 40th day of Easter, especially among the Anglicans, ritualistic songs and dances with African melodies ought to be creatively engaged with intent to mock architects of evil, jealousy, prejudices, negative ethnicity, xenophobia, and mass impoverishment of the poor through corrupt practices. By reminding one another how humiliations and evil schemes, in history, have never succeeded in stopping ascensions and/or subverted the will of God completely, the liturgy will evidentially speak to the soul of Africa where architects of colonialism, slavery, inferior education, starvation on a mass scale, blind nationalism and denominationalism, neocolonialism, divide-and-rule policies, assimilation policies and other forms of crucifixions, forms part of the dark history. In turn, such liturgical trajectories will always trigger and inspire a triumphant spirit among the worshippers. In any case, an ascending Christ reminisces the double image of a departing and triumphant ancestor whose spirit remains with the society in diverse ways.

Pentecost

The Day of Pentecost is celebrated on the 7th Sunday after Easter. Pentecost is rooted in the Old Testament Feast of Weeks (Lev 23:15, Deut 16:9). It is a commemoration of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles and other disciples after the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ (Acts 2). As the day when the disciples (learners from Christ's table) experienced the promise of God sending the Holy Spirit that united across the social divides, the Day of Pentecost inspires African liturgical discussions as it builds confidence in not just God's promises but also the necessity of keeping our words, our promises amongst ourselves are indeed a huge lesson for all disciples across the centuries. The Day of Pentecost saw the birth of the universal church, where the African church proceeds from. The coming of the Holy Spirit ushered in several gifts: fortitude,

counsel, understanding, wisdom, fear of the Lord, piety, and the gift of knowledge. In view of this, a liturgy of Africa has to factor in the gifts of the Holy Spirit that changed world history to date. This further drives us to embrace the value of building a new multilingual African community that transcends racial-ethnic divides and appreciates its unique positioning in the twenty-first century. As African liturgies emerge from various tongues and languages, we take a cue from the fact that Parthians, Medes, Galileans, Elamites, Mesopotamians, Judeans, Cappadocians, Pontus, Asians, Phrygians, Pamphylia, Egyptians, Libyans, Romans, Cretans, Arabs, and others who assembled in Jerusalem during the Day of Pentecost were enabled by the Holy Spirit to understand each other's tongues and languages in a manner that mesmerized themselves. A liturgy of Africa will likewise need to factor these groundbreaking realities and reflect on diversity as a strength in the Africa of the twenty-first century, which can be likened to the gospel saying that 'My Father's house has many rooms' (Jn 14:2). Further, with symbols of fire and wind remaining strong images in Africa, a liturgy practicum will certainly have to employ it so as to authenticate it. Certainly, major ceremonies that strive to make major turning points in our lifetimes will always need to draw some lessons from the Day of Pentecost where learners (disciples) overcame trivialities and embraced an all-inclusive spirituality that ideally symbolised the body of Christ.

Uganda & Mau-Mau Martyrs and other African saints

"While the Uganda martyrs of 1885-1887 died under Kabaka Mwanga II's orders, and died in their passionate defense of the Christian faith, the Mau-Mau martyrs of central Kenya also died after refusing to take the freedom fighters' (Mau-Mau) oath of 1950s for similar reasons. Indeed, the drama of their death; as martyrs for justice and freedom of conscience, is indeed our own blood.

Besides the concrete areas, noted above, the need to revise liturgical practicum and align it to the realities of the twenty-first century is undoubtedly the right way to go. In light of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and other related concerns, the liturgy that addresses such realities is a positive step. In demonstrating the meaning of liturgy practicum, it is necessary to make practical exercises for Morning and

Evening worship, Service of Baptism, a Revised Catechism, Confirmation and Commissioning, Service of Holy Communion, making of Deacons, Consecration and enthronement of Bishops, Wedding service, Burial Service, Reconciliation of a penitent, Commissioning of Evangelists, Visitation of the sick, Healing Service, Thanksgiving Service, teaching priesthood candidates on the ministries of celebrating Eucharist and other sacramental liturgies, including: Baptism of Children, Marriage, Funerals, sacramental ministry to the sick and dying, Benediction, and other forms of liturgy, among others. Such liturgical practicums must appreciate the importance of communality in African theological discourses.

Conclusion

In reassessing the quest for liturgy of Africa rather than the liturgy for Africans, the article has demonstrated that the birth of both Kimbanguist church, like other African Instituted Churches and the Moratorium calls, were all a progression of the liturgy of Africa. This quest for liturgy of Africa is indeed as old as the birth of the church in Africa when St. Mark established a Church in Alexandria where he served as the first bishop, and where he died a martyr's death. This watered Christianity with Mark's own blood. By dismissing the African heritage as *deus otiosus* (idol worship of god) or *deus remotus* (a withdrawn god), a room for dialogue is certainly lost. Clearly, African liturgical initiatives have experienced peculiar theosocial scenes, such as in the case of Arianism, Donatism, the liturgy for Africa which had no African input, the extremism of Simon Kimbangu's liturgy, the burning of Kimpa Vita, the moratorium debates, and the liberation-reconstruction strand in theological thinking among other emergent issues. This now leads us, in the twenty-first century, to explore the concrete areas that need inculturation and/or indigenization. Such concrete areas must factor in the pragmatic communal-humane (*Ubuntu/Utu*) philosophies of care and concern for the other in devising the liturgy of Africa.

Finally, inculturation requires an in-depth study of our own cultures. This does not mean to do a philosophical archaeology of digging up and preserving our cultural past or promoting our culture's wholesale. But it is to have a clear understanding of the cultural reality that has to be transformed

in our given context. Culture is a dynamic reality that is ever changing and ever growing. Clearly, our quest for a liturgy of Africa is in its initial stages. The task ahead is remarkable. This calls us to take up the challenge with courage and creativity till Christianity in Africa is Africanized, as the guru of African theology, Mbiti, noted above.⁵³ For instance, African naming ritual and the Christian baptism can be conducted the same day so that the two rituals can be performed simultaneously on the same child. In the process of inculturation Jesus Christ will give more value to African rites and customs as he did to the Jewish customs and practices. Certainly, there is future for a liturgy of Africa. Clearly, Afro-Ecclesiological perspective in drawing a liturgy of Africa will require an appreciation of Africa's unique positioning in God's economy for the world. Such theo-historical considerations will amount to an authentic liturgy in the twenty-first century.

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