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# Problems of the Church in the Congo of Today\*

## INTRODUCTION

**D**ISCOVERED by the Portuguese in 1482, the Congo remained until 80 years ago a "geographical location." On the inside of a roofing sheet on the Mission station of Quimpondo on the south bank of the Congo estuary I read two years ago the following legend: "Mission Mukinvika, Congo river." There was in the penultimate decade of the last century no land of Congo, no frontier, no nation, only a multitude of tribes speaking for the more part the derivative dialects of an original Ur-Bantu, living imperturbably the static life of closed communities, and transmitting from generation to generation the skills, techniques and traditions that should conserve the solidarity of the group. Legend and folklore preserve something of the primitive history of these Bantu peoples who, a millenium ago, swept through the central uplands of Africa, forcing the aboriginals back into their pigmy fastnesses or away into the far south-west corner of the continent, the bushmen refugees of the Kalahari.

Certain groups of tribes from time to time achieved a wider cohesion under the leadership of outstanding chieftains, as for example the Kongo kingdom of the 14th-17th centuries which achieved a hegemony over the coastal area extending from Pointe Noire in the north to Luanda in the south and inland as far as Stanley Pool. Thanks to one or two outstanding monarchs a large measure of homogeneity was established within this kingdom, with a common language, customs and culture. It impressed the Portuguese explorers to such an extent that Camoens in his great epic "The Lusiads" refers to it as "that exceedingly great kingdom of Congo."

But generally tribal groups were small and, though tribes like the Bangala and the Lokele created their Phoenician settlements at strategic points along the rivers, the bounds of tribal habitation at length became closely defined, with fishing, hunting and tillage rights clearly indicated. A sign of the extensive trading carried out by these Congo peoples is the appearance in upper river areas of the "sea-shell currency" of the old Kongo kingdom, a currency obtained from the island protecting the port of Luanda, at least 1,500 miles from modern Stanleyville.

\* This article was written in June, 1960 on the eve of the granting of independence to the Congo.

## THE NATION

(i) 1878-1908 When Stanley, having crossed the continent on his epic journey of a thousand-days-less-one, arrived at Boma in 1877, thus opening the Congo basin to the influence of the modern world, the history of the new "nation" was begun. During its early years Stanley himself and Leopold II of Belgium were the determinative figures. The appearance of the International African Association, formed in 1876 to direct the scientific exploration of Central Africa, had rendered urgent the solution of its political future and brought about the calling of the Conference of Berlin in 1884. In the following February (1885) a treaty was signed whereby the Congo Free State was established under the leadership of the Belgian King Leopold II: but within twenty years the difficulties entailed in a private individual, even a royal personage, trying to establish the economy of so vast a country on his own, led to such appalling abuses that in 1908 the Congo was entrusted to Belgium to be administered as a colony.

(ii) 1908-1955 The storm of protest that had led to the Congo becoming a Belgian colony made for great sensitivity in the mind of Belgian governments with the result that administrative services during the past fifty years have been of an increasingly high order. Before the First World War inexperience and a shortage of trained administrators meant inefficiency and at times an unsympathetic attitude towards the government's programme of development. The very size of the land added to the magnitude of the task. Communications, apart from the natural waterways, were primitive and the asperities of the climate quickly tore roads to pieces. The population, too, was sparse because of sleeping sickness, infant mortality and (at a later stage) urbanisation—with its dire consequences in broken family life, malnutrition and the civilised diseases of tuberculosis and syphilis.

The disruption caused by the introduction of a unitary administrative system was eased when in 1910 indirect rule was restored: and this system has persisted in the rural areas until the present day. But the exploitation of the country's wealth has been the government's primary concern, and under the policy of paternalism the benefits of increased wealth were passed on to the community as a whole on an increasing scale. In the 1940's it appeared as though Belgium intended to follow the Franco-Portuguese policy of "assimilation," inviting Africans who could meet certain "civilised" requirements to become recognized as citizens and become subject to Belgian law alone: but by 1957 only 116 Congolese and their families had availed themselves of this privilege. In 1955 Governor General Petillon presented to the Council

of Government a policy of "association" but no provision up to this point had been made for any preparation of Africans to participate in political life. In this there was no racial discrimination since the European community in the Congo were in like case, there being no political franchise for anyone.

The physical and social benefits accorded to the population were however of a high order, being rooted in an educational system built up almost entirely with the aid of missions. The literacy rate for adults is given as 35/40 per cent, and 75 per cent for those of school age. Two million children attend school. There are two universities, Lovanium, near Leopoldville, founded in 1954, and Elizabethville, founded 1955. In 1954 the number of hospital beds in Congo was 4.4 per 1,000, as against 0.4 in Nigeria, while in 1958 more than a quarter of the ordinary budget of the country was being spent on social services. The labour laws leapt ahead of every other country in the continent, guaranteeing among other things, a minimum wage, family allowances, free lodging (or indemnity), free medical care and medicines, old age pensions, and allowances for widows and orphans. In the trades, and in commerce, Congolese have revealed outstanding talent. Trade unions have had freedom of action since 1957. In 1958 equality of pay and of opportunity to all members of the Civil Service were accorded without distinction of race. BUT (and here was the miscalculation) it was not until the *end of 1957* that the first political rights were granted to either Europeans or Africans.

(iii) 1956-1960 It was in 1956 that the first portents of change appeared. A Belgian professor published a study entitled "A Thirty Year Plan for the Emancipation of the Belgian Congo," in which he urged the necessity of granting democratic freedom to the Congolese. At the same time the Roman Catholic bishops addressed a declaration to the faithful calling on the government to grant equal pay for equal work, freedom for trade unions, and political rights for the Congolese. And finally a group of *evolués* issued a manifesto calling for progressive emancipation of the Congo over 30 years. *Abako*, Kasavubu's Lower Congo association, criticised this strongly, and demanded immediate independence.

The government's reply to these appeals was to organise local elections in three of the major cities, on a male franchise: and to appoint Congolese mayors for wards in the African quarters of those cities. But the demand for political liberty increased.

Then in 1958 two events outside the country provoked a heightened demand for independence from within. First on August 24th de Gaulle granted the choice of independence to French colonies south of the Sahara and on November 28th the erstwhile

French Congo became the Congo Republic, just across the water from Leopoldville. Second, on December 5th, three Congolese were delegates at the Accra Conference, which claimed self-determination as the right of all African peoples. A month later, January 1959, the banning of a political meeting in Leopoldville started a riot when many Africans were killed and extensive damage was done to property.

Within ten days of the riot King Baudouin had broadcast a message to the Congo, promising independence by stages, and the government drew up a programme of elections, and a progressive devolution of authority on to the democratically elected representatives of the people. But two of the major parties, the MNC and the ABAKO, boycotted the elections for the first stage of this process, with the result that the government, after much hesitation, called a round table conference in Brussels for January of this year (1960). On January 27th it was announced that Independence would be proclaimed on June 30th.

Is there then a Congo nation? The answer must be "Not yet." A new state is being born under the impulse of African nationalism: but the cement which binds a nation together, which has been described as "the daily plebiscite in the hearts of men"—the union of men's wills to exist as a nation—has still to prove itself.

### THE CHURCH

The story of the *pioneering days* of the missions in Congo is well known and we may perhaps be excused from entering into details here. Suffice it to say that up to 1918, 16 missions had established themselves in widely distributed areas of the Congo. Generally speaking, progress was along the lines of the rivers, but, with satisfactory relationships obtaining between the missions, there was little, if any, overlapping between them. Missions of the Roman obedience, however, either fortuitously or by design, were frequently established in close proximity to existing Protestant work. The Baptist Missionary Society, by virtue of its aim to establish a chain of missions across the continent, was left in the distinguished but unfortunate position of having its stations strung out along 1,500 miles of the Congo river, working with a dozen different tribes, using more than twenty vernaculars, and consequently having much difficulty in administration and in the interchange of personnel.

There remained, however, certain areas that had still not had the Gospel preached to them, notably the Kivu in the east, the Ubangui in the north, parts of the Kwango in the south west, and the northern Sankuru in central Congo. Into these regions came societies of various denominations and of varied nationalities,

American, British and Scandinavian. By the outbreak of the Second World War the number of missions had more than doubled, but thanks to the spirit of comity prevailing between missions, there was still no overlapping.

The 1930's saw the steady development in *urban life* throughout the country and the war years still further aggravated the movement of population with the result that the missions in the large centres were no longer able to cover adequately the needs of the population. The Salvation Army opened work in Leopoldville in 1934 and they have since extended their activity to other large cities—Stanleyville, Elizabethville and Thysville. The American Presbyterian Mission working in the Kasai region of the Congo was invited to open work in Leopoldville in 1954 and has made itself responsible for certain of the new suburbs. Today there are 52 missions and mission agencies at work in the Congo, with some 2,500 missionaries in all.

The *legislation* governing the work of Protestant missions in the Congo basin was determined by the General Act of Berlin signed in February 1885, whereby it was laid down that the signatory powers should "protect and favour without discrimination of creed or nation all religious, scientific or charitable organizations created and organized for ends which aim at instructing the natives and bringing home to them the benefits of civilisation." Christian missionaries were to be specially protected. Freedom of religion and religious toleration were guaranteed to all. On the annexation of the Congo Independent State by Belgium in 1908 the earlier guarantees were repeated and sanctioned by Belgian law: and further confirmation was given in 1919 by the Treaty of S. Germain-en-Laye.

Despite these guarantees, however, *Belgian interpretation* of the laws has been variable. For 25 years (1878-1903) there was friendly co-operation: but this was followed by 45 years of sharp discrimination against Protestant witness, while the most generous aid was being given to Roman Catholic missions. It is argued that this assistance was given to the latter because they were Belgian and therefore "national": while the Protestant missions were with a single exception of foreign origin and allegiance. The beginnings of this discrimination are traced by some to the outcry against the abuses of the administration of the Free State in which Protestant missionaries provided much of the evidence. It is worth noting that Roman Catholics also protested against the abuses, but their protests ceased when King Leopold II signed a convention with the Vatican in 1906. Despite a growing recognition on the part of impartial Belgian observers that the presence of Protestant missions was not inimical to the integrity of the Bel-

gian Congo, privileges granted to the Roman Church increased and in 1924, when a new programme of education was launched, a convention signed with the Roman missions accorded them vast unilateral financial aid during the next twenty years and beyond. Only after the Second World War in 1948 did Protestant missions get put on a footing of equality with the Roman missions in regard to subsidies for educational work.

Despite the disabilities under which they have laboured, Protestant Missions have been singularly blessed during the past 80 years. From their work and witness has sprung a *Protestant community* of some two million Congolese, nearly half of whom are baptised church members. They are to be found in every province and district of the country. They have learned through the traditions of evangelical Protestantism something of the freedom and the discipline of the Christian life. They have not become so involved with government patronage as has the Roman communion, and for this reason have so far shared the relative immunity of Protestant Missions during the recent disturbances. But there are not many highly trained leaders to be numbered among them, largely because of the paucity of first-class educational institutions available to Protestant Christians. "Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble." This is the old cry of a Church being thrust by the march of events into great and heavy responsibilities. But it is a cry, not of despair but of hope, not of fear of failure but of the assurance of victory.

### CHURCH AND NATION

We have looked at the lineage of the nation and at the evolution of the young church, and we now have to look at the relationship between the two. The Bakongo proverb, "Mwan'owutwanga, mbundu a mwana kawutwanga ko" may be translated "the child is born but the soul of the child is not born"—by implication it is given by Nzambi and when life here is ended the soul joins its fellows in the forest shades. But in our present context may we not say that if the nation is being born, the soul of the nation is not born, for the soul of the nation is, or should be, the Church of God, the gathered community that is God's gift to the nation. What are its functions at the present time?

#### (1)—PROBLEMS OF SELFHOOD

(i) *Church and Mission.* Twenty-five years ago it was a cliché of the psychology class that "Man is born an individual, that he grows to selfhood and that he achieves personality." The church in Congo is now growing to selfhood. In some places it has lived under the influence and protection of Missions for seventy years :

in others it is still a minor. *Here* the church has experienced a real autonomy from an early stage, with a consistent application of the three-self principle of self-support, self-government and self-propagation: *there* the church may have been very much an appendage of the mission with the will to independence inhibited by too much wealth or wisdom from afar. There is no uniform pattern either in intention or in practice. But in recent years with the urge to self-expression in political life, there has come a surge of feeling in the church for a parallel development in the religious sphere, which means the "taking over" of missions and the integration of their plant and personnel in the body politic of the church.

This is the most urgent problem of the moment, although finally by no means the most important. But it is the contemporary crisis to which an answer must be found very soon. Various solutions have been sought and some tried. Briefly they may be grouped as follows:

(a) Separation. The church enjoys full freedom in all ecclesiastical affairs without becoming involved in the institutional work of the associated mission. This has the advantage of not burdening the church with institutions that it cannot maintain: but the disadvantage of divorcing the church from responsibility in the most striking manifestation of Christian service that the mission affords.

(b) Consultation. The church and mission retain their several independences but form joint boards to control the institutional work of the Church-Mission complex.

(c) Assimilation. The mission conferences include an ever-increasing number of Africans on their councils and boards until control passes to the African church. This ensures African control but tends to make permanent the mission form of organization.

(d) Integration. The missions make over their institutions to the church and missionaries become members of the local church, working within its framework and no longer enjoying extra-ecclesiastical rights as may sometimes have been the case. All financial assistance from abroad is administered by the local church councils.

All four forms of adaptation of the church-mission relationship are found in Congo today and it is the pre-eminent concern of many church leaders, but this is a problem of growth. Problems of achievement are couching at the door.

(ii) *The Witness to Universality.* One of these is the Church's testimony to the universality of the Gospel, the inclusiveness of the family of God. The land to which missionaries came was a land of tribes. There are those who estimate some 200 languages and



dialects in vogue in the Congo and Ruanda-Urundi. Largely because of these language barriers, but also through the vicissitudes of history—the incidence of slave-raids or of attempts at a wider hegemony on the part of a tribe with a rising birth-rate—latent antagonisms would from time to time result in bitter warfare. Some authorities are persuaded that the Bantu-speaking peoples were originally monotheists, and there is considerable evidence to support such a view: but with it was combined a universal dynamism, which at a later stage deteriorated into fetishism and magic. According to some Bantu myths, Nzambi had, in disgust at man's disobedience, abandoned the world for some distant deistic abode, leaving the world, from which he had abdicated, at the mercy of anarchic spirits. The loss of the concept of "One God over all" facilitated the hardening of clan loyalties, ancestor worship and exclusivism, and the entrance of the Christian Gospel did not immediately detach Congolese from this pattern of thought. Because of the vastness of the country, missions were generally widely spaced from one another and served particular tribes. Travel by Africans was limited; and they did not often see African Christians of other tribal groups. Sometimes the acceptance of the Gospel by one group was an adverse circumstance in the attempt to take it to another. On the other hand, early missionaries often lived in very close and intimate fellowship with their early converts and this no doubt was a constant witness to the universality of the Gospel. Many among them had the discernment to make sympathetic studies of the culture and beliefs of the people to whom they went and this was of great value in helping to convince the African that he was not accursed among men, but that the universal God had indeed not left himself without a witness among them, even before the missionary came.

What in the last forty years has alternately encouraged and threatened the witness to universality has been the movement of population to the towns. Africans plucked from their traditional environments and set down in artificial agglomerations such as Leopoldville or Stanleyville or Elizabethville have been placed under great tension. There is the *desire to be freed* from the restrictions of tribal law for the enjoyment of the fruits of sin for a season: and at the same time the *desire to belong* to some group that retains the interdependence and mutuality enjoyed in tribal society. (Small wonder if the incidence of mental sickness in Africa has increased with urbanisation.) In the church there have been demands for worship services on tribal lines, but these (while understandable and of very real value, if they are thought of primarily as opportunities for evangelism) have in certain places threatened not only the unity of the Christian fellowship but its

witness to universality. Some of the proliferating African sects, such as Kimbanguism, have developed along tribal lines, while others like Kitawala have a broader appeal, having no tribal limitations to their membership. Both types of movement, however, extol the particularity of African religion and show a hostility towards the European and his religion. Unfortunately, in the cities, missionary residences have often had to be built in the white quarter with the result that there has been much less intimate contact between the missionary and his people than on a bush station. The fact that urban Africans are often employed persons in contrast with the self-employed peasant agriculturalist is a further factor limiting opportunities for fellowship. As a result of these and other factors there have at times arisen quite strong anti-white feeling within local churches. The appeal of the African sects is enhanced in African eyes by their African leadership, particularly at a time like the present when the upsurge of nationalism is so strong. It may yet be that, when the Church has won the battle against the exclusivism of the tribe (which is not yet wholly true), it will have to withstand an exclusivism based on race. It is at this point that the missions are called upon to reorientate their thinking and to merge themselves in the life of the Church, so that Church and Mission may be seen together in their essential oneness.

(iii) *The Need for Unity.\** We, in this country, do not doubt the universality of the Christian Gospel; but the appeal for unity, or at least for a unity that can be seen, has not the same measure of popular support. In Congo this has been hitherto a Mission problem, but for the best part of 50 years there was no real difficulty. As already stated the vast size of the country meant that there was little if any overlapping of mission areas: and there was insufficient mobility on the part of the African population for church members to become very conscious of differences in doctrine or practice between the churches or (as was more often said) between the missions. Roman Catholics, arriving in the country ten years later than the Protestant Missions, established themselves everywhere and the sharp contrast between them and the Protestants in regard to forms of worship, discipline and status vis-à-vis the government, helped create a spirit of unity between Protestants of every shade. Inter-mission co-operation was a noteworthy feature of the pioneer days but the first missionary conference was not held till 1902 with 34 missionaries present. In the next 22 years nine further conferences were held. They were con-

\* I am indebted for material in this section to research carried out by Rev. H. F. Drake, B.D., S.T.M.

ferences of missionaries, not societies and they were purely consultative in character. But the principles of comity and co-operation were practised constantly. In 1925 this Missionary Conference ceased to exist and the Congo Protestant Council was born. The first full-time secretary was appointed in 1928 and the HQ were moved to Leopoldville. Important developments in the next ten years were the MOTT conferences in 1934, the creation of a central Bookshop in 1935, and the preparatory work for the Diamond Jubilee of Protestant Mission Work in 1938. The Mott Conference accepted certain proposals, beginning with the words—"A sense of fellowship and unity is already widely spread among the members of the Church of Christ in Congo," and went on to recommend that all Christian churches in connection with Protestant missions in Congo should use a common name, and that members of any Congo evangelical church be accepted by any other Congo evangelical church on presentation of a valid card of membership or letter of transfer. The CPC later recommended the use of the name "L'Eglise du Christ au Congo" and this was accepted by a majority of the missions, but not all. Other recommendations made by the commission on co-operation and fellowship included the holding of Regional Church Conferences in suitable centres and the revision of the constitution of the CPC in order that churches might share in its work.

Parallel with the Diamond Jubilee Conference of Missions held in 1938 there was held the first General Convention of Congo Christians which was attended by Africans from 34 stations of ten different missions. Eighteen different languages were represented. No resolutions were recorded but the inspirational character of the meetings was high and there was a discussion of common problems and future prospects. In 1946, when a West Central Africa Regional Conference was held in Leopoldville, it was urged that some agreed statement of faith and order should be formulated but this was found to be a matter of great difficulty. A commission on faith and order set up in 1946 was disbanded in 1948: but in 1949 a short doctrinal statement *was* issued as an interpretation of the basis of membership of the CPC. In 1949, also, the first Regional Conference sponsored by the CPC was held at Blukwa when 72 Congolese delegates from 40 mission stations and representing 21 different tribes attended. The conference was called for consultation and fellowship and not to transact business. Two further conferences were held in 1951 in North West and Lower Congo. A conference for Kasai and Katanga was held in 1953.

The proposal that there should be African representation on the CPC, first made in 1946, did not gain every much support; and in

1954 it was decided to organize a separate Conference of African Church leaders with a view to the formation of a Central Church Council for the whole of Congo: but delegates attended from only seven churches. They proposed that such a Central Council should be formed. Regional conferences were to be organized to popularise this proposal but they were *not* held, and in 1956 the CPC, instead of pursuing the idea of a separate church council, voted that from 1957 one African delegate from the "church of each mission" should be admitted as a councillor with full voting powers. Two African pastors attended the Accra Meeting of the IMC in 1957 (Dec.) and the AACC at Ibadan in January 1958.

At the CPC meetings in 1958 the African councillors expressed the wish to see in the near future one Church under the name of the Church of Christ in Congo, and asked for a constitution to be drawn up for discussion in 1959. They also proposed that a number of regional conferences be arranged to discuss the principles involved, but only two such conferences were held before the 1959 meeting and their recommendations reversed the trend of the previous year by "rejecting the idea of organic unity for the Church of Christ, preferring that each church group should remain autonomous and that fellowship with other groups should be maintained by regional conferences and the annual meeting of the CPC."

The lack of consistency in the attitude of the CPC and of Congolese Christians is indicative of the diverse nature of the Protestant Missions working in the country. This resulted in the CPC withdrawing in 1958 from the IMC with which it had been associated throughout its life. The organization of the WCC in 1948 was the cloud on the horizon, for certain missions had objected to the CPC accepting the invitation to send a consultant to the Amsterdam Conference. After ten years of difficult negotiation it was finally decided in 1958 (when the principle of integration of WCC and IMC was accepted) that its link with the IMC should be severed for the sake of continued unity within the Congo.

The Missions, while co-operating generously with one another through so many years, have not been able to move very far along the path to organic union. In regard to order there ought not to be very great difficulty in securing some measure of unity among Africans. Neither episcopacy nor congregationalism are strongly entrenched in Congo, most missions having accepted some form of presbyterian order as being the best suited to Congo conditions. As for doctrine a majority of missions have practised believers' bap-

tism, but certain influential groups in the south, notably the American Presbyterians and Methodists, are paedo-Baptists, and this divergence in practice could cause difficulty. But the chief obstacle to unity at the Mission level has been theological, and it is here that the church also is likely to encounter its biggest problem in seeking to unify its witness to the new nation.

## (2)—PROBLEMS OF THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY

(i) *The Primacy of Spiritual Values.* "The first task of any religion is to witness to those spiritual values which apprehended by the soul, are the basis of that inner order without which no outer order is possible." The Christian Church recognises Jesus Christ as God's revelation to man of those values, values incarnate in a person, and for which that Person died, and it is the duty of the Church in Congo to testify to this fact. Since Christianity entered the Congo in close association with explorers, traders and administrators, who were of the same race and religion, it is not surprising if many Congolese failed to distinguish between what was of the faith and what was simply Western civilisation. I remember very clearly an old man standing at the door of my house in Congo and saying that he wanted his boy brought up in the light. When I asked him what the light was, he opened the skirts of his shabby coat and said, "I don't want him to die in darkness as I shall." Missionaries entered into a nexus of static societies whose material culture had not progressed very far beyond the stone age. They brought with them the tools of societies already well advanced in the industrial revolution and, as new discoveries were made, the Congolese were constantly being startled by the introduction of still further evidences of the white man's resources and resourcefulness. This was often ascribed initially to his superior magic, but many a white man (preferring to pander to his own pride) decried the possibility of there being any extra-sensory sources to account for his technological superiority, and thereby greatly undermined the readiness that the African revealed to interpret that material superiority as being due (as finally it is) to the liberating and creative consequences of Christian faith. In recent years criticism has at times been directed at the African for having a materialistic outlook. Often it has been nothing more than a legitimate desire for a better standard of living: but where there is bitterness it is largely due to the corrosive acids of our own false standards that we have mingled with the cup of cold water of the Gospel. Now we fear the violence that we have practised and the unbelief that we have instilled: and it is left to the little flock to reawaken, if it may, the African's age-old

confidence in the reality of the spiritual world. Not a few who call themselves Christians in Congo have been drawn to a confession of faith by the clear signs of material benefits that surround a mission. The schools and hospitals, the orphanages and social centres, begun as they were in response to human need, have often been regarded as nets or fish-traps and the use of such metaphors has even been sanctified by the approving lips of African pastors: but the very obtrusiveness of institutions has at times obscured the church building that has stood behind them. Should it so happen that the State, whether by design or accident, dooms our institutions to starvation by the denial of Government subsidies, this may yet be the greatest blessing of independence for the Congo church. Her first task is surely to insist on the centrality of a religious interpretation of life, and upon Jesus Christ as the one Lord and Saviour. Untrammelled by the institutions, she would then seek other means to influence the nation, and other methods to draw men to the Cross of Christ. But at least she would be seen to be what she is claimed as being, "The Bride of Christ" and not the "Woman of Samaria."

(ii) *The Call to Service.* "I have come among you as one that ministers," said our Lord. And the missionary church has accepted the three-fold commission, "Go preach!" "Go teach!" "Go heal!" as waymarks of its ministry. We have already noted the dangers that can arise by a too great concentration upon schools or hospitals, and Protestants in this country have pressed for long enough that the education and health of a people is primarily the function of the State. There is no doubt that at certain times and in certain places the establishment of Christian institutions has been necessary, where the State for instance has been unable or unwilling to develop such services. This was the truth in our own country, and it has been true in the Congo. It is also the tenacious attitude of the Roman Church. But, for all the superficial benefits (and they are often more transitory than we care to admit), it is gravely to be questioned whether the true health of the church is conserved by its institutional work. Better that Christians should participate in the social institutions of the State, acting as true leaven in the body politic than establish their own. The churches' concern with social issues is not to be flattered and bowed out with kind words concerning schools and hospitals: but rather to be implemented by the creative intervention of its membership in any and every legitimate activity of society—be it trade unionism, journalism, learned society, local authority, or any other public or voluntary service. Christian workmen in Congo have won for themselves a name in many places for serious-mindedness and integrity. Nurses and teachers

in the public service will often have opportunities of witness denied to those who work in missionary institutions, with two additional benefits, to wit, on the positive side, the provision of adequate financial aid and the statutory amenities; on the negative side, a disassociation from the charge of proselytism through loaded institutions. This is not to say that the church should retreat hastily from all its existing hospitals, schools and colleges, but that it should not regard their eventual loss (if such be the final outcome) as an unmitigated tragedy. It is highly probable that there will continue to be groups of people whose needs the State will be unable to meet, the blind, the aged, the delinquent, the mentally ill, in whom the church can show its interest and among whom pioneer action in the realm of social service may be undertaken, until such time as the public conscience and the public purse provide an alternative solution.

(iii) *The Question of Relevance.* It is sometimes charged that loyalty to the world fellowship implies disloyalty to the nation (as is allegedly the case with communism). It is equally the church's duty to dispel this doubt by making use of such elements in the local culture as may assist in communicating the Gospel. One complicating factor is that we all tend to confuse Christianity with the form that Christianity takes in our own culture. Inevitably therefore missionaries in all ages have spread the culture of their own lands of origin and have sometimes created great confusion in the indigenous mind as to just what Christianity is. Elements in Congo cultures have sometimes been exercised high-handedly without a true appreciation of their values to the community. The "bride-price" for example, "initiation," "libations," "ancestor worship," "rogation ceremonies." It is noticeable that first generation Christians are often more rigorous in their rejection of certain such practices than the missionaries themselves, but that second and third generation Christians who had no direct experience of the old way of life are able to readopt or baptise into the church cultural elements which are meaningful to the nation and no longer, even by association, at variance with the interests of the Christian community. This is surely much to be desired. The Book of the Revelation gives the promise that the "kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honour" into the Kingdom, and it is when we see the Church moulding the life of Congo society and adapting its worship and church order to something more akin to the culture of its peoples: when we see the truths of the Christian revelation interpreted afresh in the light of the natural religion of the African which is the witness that God did not fail to give: then shall the triumphal day arrive for the little flock to whom God will give the Kingdom.

## (3)—THE PROBLEM OF CHURCH AND STATE

One serious problem remains to be considered, the problem of Church and State.

(i) *Privilege.* The terms on which missionary work was begun in the Congo were terms of special privilege. It has been shown that Roman Catholic missions in particular benefited enormously from State Aid and protection: Protestants less so, until the year 1948, when subsidies for education were made available to them. The fact that Protestants were in a position of diminished privilege and that their missionaries were mostly non-Belgian has meant in recent years a more friendly attitude towards them on the part of the Congolese, particularly as the demand for independence has increased. On the other hand Protestant missions have been strongly criticised by their adherents at times for not having done more for them in the realm of education. Certain missions which on conscientious grounds refused to accept subsidies in 1948 have even been threatened with secession by their associated churches, because of their failure to provide better educational facilities. In the cities for the past ten years the State has intervened directly in the educational field, since it was quite beyond the capacity of missions to provide the necessary buildings or teaching staff. Will the State continue to subsidise the educational and medical services of the Christian churches in the Congo Republic? Provided the stability of the national economy is maintained, it is difficult to see how they could do otherwise *at this stage*, since the contribution of churches to these services is so great. But what is possible is that Separatist movements like Kimbanguism which already has its "personnalité civile" may also seek the establishment of schools subsidised by the State. However, much we may deplore the recognition of these "sects," the removal of the charge of privilege from the relationship between the Christian communities and the State is all to the good.

(ii) *Establishment.* Both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism are established in Belgium, but the Belgian Protestant Synod has been extremely weak and dilatory in responding to the missionary opportunity in the Congo. Various attempts have been made through the years to relate the Protestant community in Congo to the Synod, but the fact that it was in receipt of State Aid for ecclesiastical purposes strengthened the resistance of missions to any such suggestion. Nevertheless for the State schools in Congo the Belgian Synod became the recognised agency a year or two ago through which appointments of "full-time teachers of the Protestant faith in official schools" were made. Some churches in Congo may look to the government for financial aid for their church work, particularly for the payment of pastors: e.g. the



meeting of the Congo Protestant Council Lower River Regional Conference requested that this should be examined. The reasons for this move are not hard to find and may be stated thus :

1. The present State Aid to the Roman Catholic church.
2. The relative poverty of the Protestant churches.
3. The recognition of the Church as part of the Welfare State.

It is a tempting vision for the Congolese Church—but it is strongly to be hoped that churches will set themselves against such an involvement so that their monitory function vis-à-vis the State may not be jeopardised.

(iii) *The Dual Citizenship.* Christians are citizens of this world : but they also have a citizenship which is in heaven : and this dual citizenship inevitably brings its tensions. The Congo Church, *learned* to some degree in the problems raised by the impact of the Christian Gospel on tribal society, has now to apply its knowledge to the problems of church and state, which have hitherto been the concern of the missions. The history of missionary work in the Congo records many instances of men and women who have not been ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, and who have endured persecution for the sake of Him in whom they had believed. The future at present is uncertain, but of this we may be confident—the Church for all her weaknesses is firmly planted in Congo soil, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.

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