

**Shifts in Blood Covenant Theology: A Comparative Assessment of the
Perspectives of The East African Revivaland Contemporary
Christians in Nairobi**

by

Perminus Mburu Mwangi

Department of Theology and Pastoral Studies

Daystar University

P.O. Box 44400 – 00100

Nairobi

Kenya

Email: Pmburu@daystar.ac.ke

Cell phone +254 721234134

Abstract

This study was prompted by a positional shift on blood rituals amongst central Kenya Christians from the stance of the East African Revival (EAR) members. The study compared the position of contemporary believers, with that of the EAR and highlighted the effect the observed shift might have on the Church.

A qualitative strategy with a phenomenological research design and purposive sampling were applied. In-depth semi-structured interviews, Focus Group Discussions and document review were the research tools. Data was analysed using Thematic Coding Analysis. The EDNA model was used as the theological framework. Findings indicate a significant shift from scripture as the default, final authority concerning sin and righteousness, to peers and mentors. The oral nature of the EAR's theological legacy has largely facilitated this shift. Acceptance by the wider society, which values the blood rituals as culture, is valued by the contemporary believer but not by the members of the EAR.

Key Words: Blood covenants, East African Revival, Evangelism, Cultural Discontinuity, Religion.

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The Christian faith has had to antagonize various cultural practices seen to conflict with the New Testament message wherever it has been introduced. This is especially so in Africa where cultural practices with spiritual foundations are prevalent. One of the more poignant examples is the blood covenant also referred to as the blood oath. This may involve two people cutting themselves and then drinking some small amount of blood from each other's wound to form a brotherhood, or a communal sacrifice of an animal which is slaughtered and its blood mixed with some other items like herbs to make a concoction which is drunk by the members of that community. The sharing of this blood is seen as binding the people involved to a royalty pact which if broken would have dire consequences like death coming upon the culprit (Mbiti, 1982, p. 212).

In recent years, however, a different position has emerged whereby some Christians are comfortably participating in these rituals without any sense of conflict with their faith. The purpose of this study was to investigate the transitions taking place from one generation of believers to another with respect to theological understanding in general, and cultural discontinuity in particular. This would result in finding out whether there is cumulative theological understanding taking place or theological lessons learnt and applied by one generation of believers are being lost as the next generation starts anew.

This research investigated the genesis of the stance taken by the EAR members on blood covenants and the underlying ethos of the EAR movement. The study then proceeded to investigate the retention, or loss of the aversion to blood covenants as practised by the EAR members, among contemporary Christians who are members of the All Saints Cathedral (ASC), Nairobi diocese, of the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK).

Rationale of the Study

This study adopted a qualitative research strategy with the philosophical underpinning being phenomenology. When contrasted with the Positivist position, phenomenology is "a philosophy that is concerned with the question of how individuals make sense of the world around them and how in particular the philosopher should bracket out preconceptions in his or her grasp of that world" (Bryman, 2016, p. 26). This philosophical foundation was thought appropriate for the research because in this case the perceptions of the participants to be interviewed, or whose writings would be reviewed, would inform the overall direction and conclusion of the research.

The research design was comparative. Bryman describes a "qualitative interview research with two or more cases" as "comparative" (Bryman, 2016, p. 70). The fact of two groups, the active members of the EAR and the younger believers of ASC Nairobi diocese, being interviewed in this study and the effort to analyse the apparent theological shift made this design appropriate.

Research Questions

1. What plan did the East African Revival movement have on how to perpetuate its values, practices, and beliefs?
2. To what extent has the stance held by the by the East African Revival movement on traditional blood covenants survived in the Anglican Church of Kenya to date?
3. Is the contemporary Kenyan Anglican evidently witnessing for Christ as a personal obligation?

Justification of the Field

The study involved active members of the EAR scattered in Kenya and younger members of the Anglican diocese of All Saints Cathedral, Nairobi. The Sampling was “criterion-based” which “works well when all the individuals studied represent the people who have experienced the same phenomenon” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 230,231).

The choice of the active members of the East African Revival is informed by their obvious experience of, and involvement, in the activities of the revival. The choice of the All Saints Cathedral diocese for the younger generation (younger in relation to the much older members of the EAR) is informed by two factors. One is the fact that the East African Revival was largely incubated in the Anglican Church (Kevin Ward, 1991, p. 129). The second is that All Saints Cathedral diocese in Nairobi hosts the Archbishop’s seat in Kenya and therefore generally charts the course for the larger Anglican community in the country.

Methodology

The study was done through in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and Document Reviews. Interviews played the central role because they “elicit rich, thick descriptions” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 229). The researcher took time with the respondents to listen and to try and understand both their experiences and their perceptions. Due to the prevalence of the Covid-19 pandemic that restricted movement in some cases, some of the interviews were done via telephone. Most, however, were done face to face in homes and hotel gardens. In total twenty interviews were conducted.

Focus groups are sometimes referred to as group interviews. They make it possible to gather information and opinions from a number of people who consecutively help each other to bring out more detail. This is so especially when the participants in a Focus Group are familiar with one another which was the case with the respondents from ASC Nairobi. Another advantage of Focus groups is that they “possess elements of both participant observation and individual interviews while maintaining their own uniqueness as a distinctive research method” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 156). The researcher used four FGDs with some of the younger participants, for the purpose of enriching the research with the unique depth that they create. All the FGDs were conducted using the ZOOM teleconferencing tool in order to avoid physical gatherings where many people are involved.

On document review, many books, journal articles, biographies, and autobiographies, have been compiled with a focus on the issues this research was addressing. Bloomberg and Volpe note that “Researchers often supplement participant observation, interviewing, and observation with gathering and analysing documents produced in the course of everyday events” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 156). In this study, the documents reviewed helped to augment the findings from the other tools, and in a few cases, to negate the same.

The author had the interview recordings transcribed by an assistant who was fluent in both the English language and the Kikuyu language used in some of the interviews. Since a researcher is expected to write “a description of the phenomenon, maintaining a strong relationship to the topic of inquiry”(Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 49), the author undertook this process while being keen to note “the language of the participants or text” then to “work with the data to identify units of information that contribute to themes or patterns” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 192) to reduce the data without losing the essence of the phenomenon under study. The fact that the author conducted all the interviews himself made this process easier. In the few instances where the one transcribing found a word or two not clearly audible, the journaling done by the author when conducting the interview filled the void. The research questions were ultimately used to guide the formation of themes.

Discussion of Findings

The East African Revival (EAR) began in the 1930s and is credited with being “the longest revival in history, spanning three generations” (Hooper, 2007, p. 71). It is also credited with creating a momentum in the growth of the church in East Africa (Hooper, 2007, pp. 71, 89). However, the researcher noted that in the “Chronology of Faith Building Events” (Ogutu, 2017, pp. 188–189) for the ASC Nairobi, covering the period between 1844 and 2016, the EAR is not mentioned.

During Kenya’s struggle for independence, members of the East African Revival in central Kenya refused to take the Mau Mau oath, which involved taking blood, because they understood it to be in conflict with their Christian beliefs. Some were killed because of this stand (Smoker, 1994, p. 143). Beyond the Mau Mau oath, the ceremonies rejected by the EAR include *engurario*, which is a Kikuyu marriage ceremony involving the shedding of the blood of a goat “in the preliminary arrangements for matrimony”(Kenyatta, 1965, p. 315) and also the *mburiyakiama* rite of passage in which a young man who is recently married “pays one male goat or sheep and then he is initiated into a first grade of eldership”(Kenyatta, 1965, p. 193). In both cases the goat or sheep has to be slaughtered and eaten as part of a traditional ritual.

History shows that during the years when the East African Revival thrived, a sizeable number of Christians in East Africa were zealous and conspicuous in opposing certain stances they considered unbiblical in society. They were also more committed to personal spiritual growth and discipline. Hooper shows how the East African Revival of the 1930s is special when he notes that it is “the longest revival in African history, spanning three generations”, also creating a momentum in the growth of churches in East Africa (Hooper, 2007, pp. 71, 89). Dryness further strengthens this position by crediting the revival with giving “impetus to the rapid growth of the church in East Africa” (Dryness, 1992, p. 118) in the first half of the twentieth century. The movement is therefore a good benchmark for today’s church in gauging how she is relating with society. The followers of this movement managed to avoid many of the snares mentioned earlier in their walk of faith. They resisted corruption and the general decadence of their day, especially as witnessed in Kenya, standing tall as witnesses of the righteous living demanded by what they understood to be authentic Christian faith (Hooper, 2007, pp. 72, 89). This did not make them popular in the wider society, but popularity was not one of their pursuits. From the perspective of the community, they were perceived as enemies of societal cohesiveness, and their leaders as a threat to the political powers of the day (Peterson, 2013, p. 49). As an example, “the call for change in the Church of Uganda was perceived by many as an attack on the social order as a whole” (Shaw, 2010, p. 98). The revival turned the hearts of its followers from the traditional ways of worship to a deep form of Christianity which was non-compromising in its zeal and beliefs.

The depth of commitment and the love for God and his commands were displayed in the whole of East Africa and every other place where the movement’s impact was felt. The EAR is a good point of reference for the “decolonial epistemic perspective in African Christian Theology” (Sakupapa, 2019) if only because of its deep and authentic African roots and leadership (Church, 1981, p. 248). The EAR members held the authority of the Bible high above other sources of instruction. They interpreted scripture with a focus on how God wanted them to relate with himself and with fellow men. Their understanding of the Bible was not tainted by the Enlightenment or the philosophical arguments of their day. Bishop Festo Kivengere of Uganda wrote about his experience;

...the dear people of my Kigezi Province conducted a mission ...Sixty volunteer teams of men, women, and young people went out on foot to every corner of the diocese, sharing Christ with the people in the fields, in the towns, and in the villages. They were full of love and quick to tell what Jesus had done for them. Thousands came to Christ during that month. ...All sorts of people found Jesus. Almost the entire student body of a Roman Catholic school came into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The following day, the teachers spent the whole day receiving stolen books and school supplies, which the children were returning, each giving a testimony and praise to God! (Kivengere & Smoker, 1977, p. 34)

Kivengere’s narrative here largely captures the ethos and basic tenets of the East African Revival movement. The members believed in sharing public testimonies as well as public confession of sin. At the point of conversion the individual would undertake to publicly announce their new relationship with Jesus Christ, return anything they had stolen, seek forgiveness from anyone they had wronged, replace old friends with the members of the movement as far as regular companionship was concerned, and hold onto the new commitment to Jesus Christ with a sense of exclusivity.

Mau Mau Oath

The level of devotion the revival followers had was demonstrated when those among them in central Kenya refused to take the oath which was being administered by the Mau Mau freedom fighters to the Gikuyu, Embu, and Meru communities as a way of unifying them in the war against the colonialists (Smoker, 1994, p. 29). The oath entailed “the killing of a goat, drinking its blood, eating its flesh, and swearing both to support the freedom army and to give up Christianity” (Smoker, 1994, p. 22). The followers of this movement had their own convictions based on their understanding of the Bible hence their refusal to take the oath. One hymn that was popular in their meetings had these words:

*“Mhuri Cianathinjwo,
Cia ngoma nacia Ngai;
Cianaagagututheria,
Na gutuhe Muoyo.
Jesu niokirethi,
Agikuamuti-ini;
No thakameyakeiki*

Ingitheriangoro” (SPCK, 1974, p. 68)

(Goats have been slaughtered, both for the devil and for God, none has been able to give us eternal life; Jesus came to earth, he died on the cross. Only his blood alone can cleanse the heart). The reference is Hebrews 10:14 which says that “... by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy” (NIV). It was used to strongly teach the exclusivity and completeness of the sacrifice made by Jesus Christ at the cross.

Even though some of the EAR members were killed because of this stand, the rest still refused to take the oath (Smoker, 1994, p. 31). Nine respondents in this study knew at least one person each, who was murdered by the Mau Mau for refusing to take the 1952 oath. One respondent narrated how his own paternal grandmother had stated repeatedly that she would rather die than mix the blood of Jesus with the blood of goats. She was one of those killed. (Respondent A1 interview, January 12, 2021).

The EAR conventions held in 1947 at Kahuhia, 1948 at Kangaru, 1949 at Kabete, and 1950 at Thogoto had strengthened the faith of the members greatly before the onset of the 1952 Mau Mau oath (Respondent D interview, January 21, 2021). The dates of these conventions are also confirmed by Kariuki (Obadiah Kariuki, 1985, p. 5). This study established that the revival members had no problem with the fight for independence. They were as deprived as the rest of the central Kenya people and they felt greatly aggrieved. According to one respondent, they did not essentially refuse to take the oath or to fight the colonialists, they refused to take the blood in the oath. They refused the idea of being transformed by the blood of goats to belong to Mau Mau. They saw spiritual infidelity in that process (Respondent S interview, January 19, 2021). Kariuki affirms the same, noting that he and his family had experienced loss of land and dignity. He saw the problem as being that of political leaders who thought that the only way to be assured of full support by the people was through oath-taking. He further explained that “they made it impossible for many Christians to join the movement because such oath-taking called for a spiritual commitment which Christians could give only to Jesus Christ” (Smoker, 1994, p. 29).

Two respondents who are retired Anglican clergy, however, expressed support for the Mau Mauoathingas well as the now revived *Mburiya Kiamaritual*, which entails a young man paying “one male goat or sheep and then he is initiated into a first grade of eldership” (Kenyatta, 1965, p. 193). They were also in support of the *Ngurarioritual*, where the act of “pouring out the blood of unity”(Kenyatta, 1965, p. 161)is performed in an effort to unite the families of two people getting married. They saw no conflict between these rituals and the Christian faith. They termed the EAR position as naïve and sectarian respectively. They both opined that the three practices should be viewed as mere cultural practices meant to unite the community and having no theological implications. (Respondent N interview, December 14, 2020, Respondent P interview, January 20, 2021). Their stand helped to explain the overall reticence in the leadership of the Anglican Church Of Kenya on these issues since a common ground among the clergy is lacking.

This study found that Kenya’s post-election violence of 2007 and early 2008 triggered Kikuyu nationalism, when the Kikuyu community felt under attack from the rest of the country. This eventually triggered the rebirth of the *Mburiya Kiama* ritual.This tradition had largely been existing in a latent form. The thinking behind it is the same as that of the Mau Mauoathing mentioned earlier, namely to hold the community together politically and ideologically (Respondent L interview, January 8, 2021). This reality islargely lost to the younger members of ASC Nairobi diocese. It was also clear from this study that though some of these younger believers have been brought up in the city, that did not mean that they failed to understand the rituals in question. Both those brought up in the city and those raised in the countryside, but now members of ASC diocese, displayed a good understanding of the rituals but to a large extent saw no spiritual connection, conflict with, or threat to the Christian faith.

Members of EAR interviewed viewed the younger generation of Christians as exposing themselves to alliances that are discordant with the Christian faithas a result of their love for fun and comfort.

Whereas the members of the EAR demonstrated a love for the scriptures and a consistent proximity to the same in response to any question brought their way during the interviews, the younger Christians seemed to draw their answers more from their social interactions than from the scriptures. Occasionally one would say “I am sure we can find a scripture to support this” or “I know the Bible refers to this in some place but I am not sure where”. But the EAR member would go straight to the verse. At one instant anelderly respondent was using a cell phone torch to illuminate the page of the Bible so as to read a scripture for the researcher. None of the younger members of ASC Nairobi opened the Bible during the interviews and FGDs. The emerging reality here is that though the EAR members have all along carried a clear scriptural foundation for their beliefs, the same has not been passed on to the younger generation. This reality is reminiscent of the “theological deficiency” in the EAR as expressed by Nthamburi (Smoker, 1994, p. iv)and which now seems to have gradually created a void thatproponents of cultural rituals are exploiting.

Loyalty to the Jealous God

In Exodus 34:14 God declares himself jealous. He makes it clear that his people should never double up in spiritual interactions other than solely with him. This is a challenge in the modern pluralistic society. Contemporary society is replete with choices for spiritual interaction. C.S. Lewis rightly pointed to Christianity and Hinduism as the two religions which modern society has to ultimately choose from because Christianity is exclusive and Hinduism accommodative of many deities (Martin & Zacharias, 2003, p. 403). The command to serve the God of the Bible exclusively is also a challenge in the African context where interaction with the spiritual world is part of the day to day life with many activities involving sacrifices and other rituals meant to appease God (Mbiti, 2012, p. 306). The choice to have spiritual interaction only with the God of the Bible must therefore be a personal one. The God of the Bible demands absolute loyalty as opposed to lip service where one declares him God but also acknowledges other gods. In Judges 10:3 he declared that his people had forsaken him, and this was not acceptable. In the Gospels, Jesus declared that not all who call him Lord will enter the kingdom of God but rather those who do the will of God. This separation of words and actions is further emphasis of the need for complete loyalty to God even in the New Testament era. The views expressed by Respondents N and P in support of the blood rituals in question as traditional practices with no religious bearing run contrary to the views of Kenyatta, who describes the Kikuyu community social ranking as one which progressively leads its men to become members of “the religious or sacrificial council (*kiamakiamaturanguru*)” (Kenyatta, 1965, p. 197) and they then assume the role of “Holy men” and “high priests” of the community (Kenyatta, 1965, p. 197). This strengthens the EAR notion that the whole Kikuyu social setup is religious in nature and ultimately spiritual in its substance.

The EAR's fierce loyalty to Christ even to the risk of one's life was well captured in the words of the Ugandan Anglican Bishop, Festo Kivengere, who after managing to escape the murderous reign of Idi Amin was asked by a journalist: “Knowing how evil Idi Amin is, if you and he were in a room alone, and you had a gun and he did not, what would you do?” Kivengere replied, ‘I would give him the gun for that is his weapon, not mine. Mine is the love of Jesus’” (MacMaster & Jacobs, 2006, p. 265). It is this level of commitment that Christianity in East Africa in general and Kenya in particular, needs so as to effectively change evangelise and transform society.

The Youth Factor

Out of the twenty interviews conducted, ten active members of the EAR who are now more than seventy years old got saved and joined the fellowship when they were less than twenty years old. The remaining got saved between the ages of 20 and 30 years with only two having crossed the thirty year mark. This finding refutes the prevailing feeling that the EAR has always been synonymous with the aged members of the church. This study shows that the revival was largely started, embraced, and driven by the youth of those days.

In the case of the younger respondents from the ASC Nairobi diocese, what comes through is the view that the EAR has not been welcoming to the youth. One of them whose parents were staunch members of the EAR said “we were never invited into the fellowship unless it was happening in our house and we had to be there” (FGD 1 interview, January 26, 2021). Another, who is currently a senior clergy, narrated the embarrassment himself, another young man, and two young ladies experienced when they were rebuked by a leader of the EAR because of sitting next to each other in an EAR conference. He explained that each of them had been brought to the conference by an elder from their respective villages. They naturally gravitated to sitting together since everyone else was much older. The respondent never attended another meeting of the EAR. (Respondent Q interview, December 12, 2020). A number of others had similar encounters including being rebuked for their dressing or hairstyles. These occurrences gradually pushed the youth away from the EAR movement. There were also some pull factors like the growth of school and college fellowships ran by the Kenya Students Christian Fellowship (KSCF) and the Fellowship of Christian Unions (FOCUS). These were a more comfortable place for the younger believers whether they had received Christ within the EAR or not. Those who joined the EAR as youth seem to have been unable, later in life, to attract and accommodate youth into the fellowship.

Resurgence of African Traditional Religions (ATR)

The resilience of culture is mainly given prominence through “basic world-views, basic values and social structures”(Mugambi, 2002, pp. 14–15). The same aspects named by Mugambi also happen to be greatly impacted by the Christian faith whenever it penetrates a community. O’Donovan observes that the church in any locality is meant to provide the kind of social structures and healthy community life that the African culture is generally known for(O’Donovan, 2000, p. 160). No doubt then that Christianity has over the years relatively reformed the African cultures of the communities in which it has been embraced. Currently, African Traditional Religions seem to be re-emerging with a new momentum in the Kenyan society. Mugambi further observes that “The re-emergence of a culture after a period of suppression will be accompanied by appropriate adaptations and ideological defences which would otherwise have been unnecessary”(Mugambi, 2002, p. 114). This poses a huge challenge to the Christian community especially when addressing social issues. Challenges like fragmentation of the nuclear family due to rural urban migration and the increase in immorality may be blamed on Christianity by those who oppose it since they lamp it together with anything from the Western world.

This study found that the rites of passage ceremonies conducted by churches among young boys and girls in central Kenya have in recent years incorporated cultural teachings and cultural regalia and in some cases involved community elders who are not necessarily Christians to teach the youngsters on cultural values. This has largely undermined the Church and the Christian ethos in the minds of the youth. One long serving youth pastor at the ASC Nairobi diocese narrated how difficult it has become to teach Christian values to the youth when at the time of the rites of passage they are shown that another authority at par or above the church leadership exists in the name of the community elders. He felt that the church had erred by opening doors to adherents of traditional ways of worship during the rites of passage seminars. (Respondent V interview, February 10, 2021).

Modern day materialism also plays into cultural practices designed to regularly raise money and other material resources for the elders. Four respondents, a retired Anglican clergy, a retired Anglican bishop, a retired clergy of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), and a university lecturer who is also a retired PCEA clergy, said in separate interviews that the Kikuyu *Ngurario*, and *Mburiya Kiama* rituals are part of a wider scheme designed to meet the money and material needs of community elders, and also give them positions of leadership and significance. The rituals are then presented as critical milestones in the growth of every Kikuyu man. A number of events are anticipated in the Kikuyu culture where a goat has to be given to the elders for them to sanction varying needs of individuals. They include “*Mburiyalhaki*, a goat or sheep given by a junior warrior to his seniors as entrance fee to a higher grade” (Kenyatta, 1965, p. 311) and *Ngurario*. In some cases clergy have been paid substantial amounts of money to preside over *Ngurario* hence making it seem acceptable to Christians (Respondent C interview, January 12, 2021).

The choice of the community elder as opposed to the pastor being the person requested to pray when a tragedy occurs in the community is becoming increasingly visible. In one example, Nandi county leaders were reported requesting their elders to “carry out a cleansing ceremony” (Chiseremi, 2019) because of a number of suicide cases involving top county officials as well as corruption cases involving the county government (Chiseremi, 2019). The Christian approach where people repent and seek the forgiveness of God is not the default position for the political leaders in this case. Yet there is syncretism in the kind of action mentioned above. This is so because the same people involved with consulting the village elders and having them undertake traditional rituals and ceremonies will at the same time be holders of influential leadership positions in the local churches.

Practices in any community help to get things moving (Immink, 2014, p. 131). This brings out the need to identify what a certain community believes will make things happen when, and in the way, they need them to happen during a time of crisis. In many Kenyan communities, just as demonstrated by the Nandi community above, notwithstanding that they are perceived to be predominantly Christian, the people fall back to their traditional ways of looking for help whenever a crisis comes as opposed to seeking the God of the Bible through prayer. Knighton opines that even those who have abandoned old ways that are not consistent with Christianity may not have done so because of their faith conflicting with these practices, but the reason is that those practices fail the modernity test administered by the church (Knighton, 2006, p. 76). If this be the case, then the question of the depth and sustainability of the Christian faith in the people under observation arises. Whether the foundation of their Christian faith is solidly scriptural or is based on temporary conveniences like access to modern facilities for better living will determine whether they stay in the Christian faith or they will become syncretistic.

The issue of discontinuing some of the traditional rituals upon conversion, and hence being substantially separated from one's ancestral community can be traced back to the Early Church (2 Corinthians 6:17). This has, however, not stopped the debate concerning the place of the cosmologies of the pre-Christian ancestors in Africa with respect to conversion. Some have even suggested that conversion to Christianity for the Africans may result from "the active collusion of spirits, Jesus and the Christian God" (Bruner, 2019). Whether this thinking has contributed to the resurgence of traditional ways of worship in central Kenya or it is diluting the boundaries between Christianity and tradition ways of worship is an area of serious theological interest.

This study found that the EAR members succeeded in publicly displaying their many rules, regulations, and practices, but not the crucial explanations as to why these were necessary. This does not negate the fact that their inward transformation was real and effective. For example, in regard to the traditional worldviews of their day, the Kikuyu Christians in the East African Revival got transformed from norms of their day as described by Lonsdale where he observed that "Kikuyu abused sex and alcohol, their circle of love was narrow, they laughed at the afflicted, and were terrified of death" (Lonsdale, 1999, p. 211). Instead, they became responsible members of society who took care of their families and were ready to die and meet their maker any time (Smoker, 1994, pp. 23–24). The problem, then, is that these theological transitions were not elucidated, and documented as rear guards for future generations of Christians in the Kikuyu community. Testimonies of the EAR members and their experiences exist and are documented in biographies and autobiographies. The theological explanations however, remained oral and therefore not readily available whenever sought.

This omission may have contributed to the opinion expressed by some researchers that the compilation of the revival's history has largely been hagiographic (Peterson, 2013, p. 5). This is however contradicted by Gatu who portrays the EAR members as resisting publication of their experiences for fear of "self-glorification" (Smoker, 1994, p. 9). The legacy the revival members have bequeathed those coming behind them, being largely oral, is devoid of answers when confronted by a generation which asks questions and seeks understanding. The EAR members have failed to leave behind referential materials that can sustain the young believer in a sceptical environment.

Evangelism

In the great commission, Mathew 28:19, Jesus commanded his disciples to go and make other disciples from all nations. These in turn would become his followers and doers of his will. This is how he intended to impact the world and to change social life. No doubt he intended the change to be real and drastic bearing in mind the many things in society he had expressed dissatisfaction with. He especially wanted people to exercise love for God and for one another regardless of the circumstances they were in (Matthew 22:37-39). This command is as relevant to the Church today as it was then. To implement the command effectively Christians need to have a perspective which demonstrates that; “It is not so much the case that God has a mission for his Church in the world, as that God has a Church for his mission in the world” (Wright, 2010, p. 62). The Church therefore exists to fulfil God’s mission of changing the world from its sinful state to a state acceptable to the righteous God of the bible. In light of this understanding, the East African Revival movement as part of the Church, owed Christ the propagation and intentional handing over to the next generation, the truths revealed to the fellowship by God. These truths would be epitomised by the overall ethos adopted by the fellowship.

The oldest interviewee in this study, at 101 years, expressed his disappointment with Christians who have joined the *Withike* (bury yourself) village groups. These groups collect money on an agreed upon regular basis to be kept for use in burial expenses when the contributor dies. A register is kept and a binding agreement is maintained where every contributor adheres to the rules set by the community on how the burial is to be done. The respondent saw this as a violation of the separation Paul demands from the believers in 2 Corinthians 6:14,17. He argued that the Christian who joins *Withike* submits themselves to the community code rather than to Christ. It then becomes very hard for the same Christian to try and evangelize fellow villagers when they already share adherence to another code, or to refuse to do some of the other things demanded by the community along the way (Respondent D interview, January 27, 2021).

The apostle Paul commanded the Corinthian believers to have clear boundaries between themselves and the non-believers. “Therefore come out from them and be separate”, he wrote in 2 Corinthians 6:17 (NIV). These words guided the followers of the East African Revival in their daily lives hence they lived a life of being set apart. The need for the church to stay focused on this calling cannot be gainsaid. Many are the distractions along the way. The resurgence of African Traditional Religions and practices stands out as one major distraction from evangelism. The spirituality inherent in the ATR and the current debate on decolonising (Sakupapa, 2019) African Theology may slow down evangelistic efforts in African congregations depending on how the debate is handled. To avoid being derailed by these distractions Christians need to capture the fact that “The Church exists not for her sake but her Master Jesus. The Church is expected to do the bidding of her Master by reaching out to the whole world that her Master died for through the shedding of His blood on the cross of Calvary”(Pam, 2014). The church is hence obliged to occasionally take stock of herself in relation to God’s mission and establish how she is progressing. Looking at the legacy of the practices espoused by the East African Revival movement is therefore an important part of that introspection by the church of Christ.

One respondent, who upon retirement has undertaken to evangelise and mentor many younger people on the Christian faith, narrated how he tried to help a young man who asked him to steer the negotiations with his future father in law. When the demand for a goat to be sacrificed in *Ngurario* persisted the respondent suggested that the young man could take meat from the butchery equivalent to the goat being demanded. This offer was rejected with the statement that the slaughtering and spilling of blood to the ground is an important part of *Ngurario*. This confirms the views of a number of the respondents that these rituals are based on a system of belief. The elders actually call them *Igongona*, which, beyond the word's basic meaning of sacrifice, also denotes a service of worship or veneration to ancestors or to a deity (Respondent T1 interview, January 30, 2021). Among the Kikuyu "religion is interwoven with traditions and social customs of the people" (Kenya, 1965, p. 232). This reality becomes a hindrance to evangelism because the young people already initiated into Kikuyu religious activities will find Christianity as a foreign religion opposed to their spiritual heritage.

The younger believers of the All Saints Cathedral diocese of the ACK largely displayed indifference to the rituals mentioned above and which are happening all around them. One opined that little can be done until Christianity becomes the prevailing culture. Asked how this would come to be, no concrete response was forthcoming. The group seemed undisturbed by the cultural resurgence. The need to evangelize and the impact this resurgence of cultural rituals has on evangelism was also largely lost to them. The issue of spiritual fidelity did not carry weight in this group. One respondent said there is need to respect everyone's religion rather than trying to push your own conviction to others. Another respondent expressed the fear of appearing bigoted to the wider society (FGD 3 January 30, 2021). Members of ASC have also expressed discomfort with door to door evangelism in the past, terming it "queer" (Ogotu, 2017, p. 120). This stance is very far removed from the one held by the EAR members which carries a sense of urgency for evangelism, a strong conviction that Christianity is the only true religion and a serious jealousy for their God.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study found that the foundation on which the EAR thrived was the youth of the days when it began. The movement however, invested in only one strategy of perpetuating its ethos i.e. teaching its ethos within the fellowship meetings. The expectation then being that the youth would continue to join the EAR, attend the fellowship meetings, and learn the EAR ethos from those meetings. The prevailing reality is different since the EAR made no adjustments over time so as to accommodate the youth as the social and spiritual landscape changed. This has over time alienated the youth from the movement. The overall result is that the EAR ethos is largely fading out of the Kenyan society as the aging members of the EAR fade out of the public arena, whether through death or frailty due to aging.

Concerning the blood covenants being revived in central Kenya, the younger believers display indifference to the theological significance inherent in those rituals. They are more concerned with being accepted by their peers who may not even be Christians. They also lack zeal for evangelism as well as the realisation that they should be the salt of the world outside the church. The study concludes that had the ethos introduced by the East African Revival movement been upheld and sustained up to date, the Kenyan Christian community would be much more vibrant and effective in both evangelism and discipleship. The rapid fading out of the strong EAR ethos depriving the Kenyan society of one of its most authentic expressions of the day to day life of a Christian in an African context.

This study recommends that the ASC diocese of Nairobi and the wider church in Kenya undertakes to educate the younger generation concerning the different cultural practices in their communities and their place in the Christian faith. Materials detailing the stance of the EAR on different cultural practices and the theological relevance of these stances should be compiled and availed to all via the ASC print and electronic media outlets. The younger believers should also be taught the need for evangelism and the cost of becoming a disciple of Christ.

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