I. The Rebirth of African Mission in the Early Modern Period

A. Early African missions:

1. Commonly portrays foreign Christian missionary as hero.

2. Africans often depicted as savage to highlight benefits of Christianity (I 74) (Colonialist discourse).


4. Discussion of foreign missionaries as agents of change necessary, even though missionaries’ understanding of African society was imperfect (I 75).

B. Evangelical perceptions of Africa:

1. Evangelicals characterized by their emphasized rather than doctrines – necessity of conversion, Atonement, operation of Christian doctrine on heart and conduct (Earl of Shaftesbury).

2. Ethical results of these views – anti-slavery movement, philanthropy, missions.

3. Key question related to foreign missions that evangelicals discussed – “Were all non-Christians, including those who hadn’t heard gospel, really destined for hell?” (I 81) Many decided this belonged in category of secret things of God.

4. Belief that heathen were eternally lost declined towards end of 18th c. (I 82)

5. Polarized view regarding heathen strengthened missionary resolve.

6. Tendency to stress darker side of African society such as human sacrifice (including misunderstandings of customs, e.g. Igbo treatment of dead) (I 82)

7. Foreign Christians often viewed African society as demonic.

8. Eurocentric views often transmitted in conversion process – e.g. missionaries condemning circular houses or heavier weight (I 83).


10. View of middle 19th c. British evangelicals – Christianity and commerce went hand in hand (I 83).

C. Keswick’s impact on missions:

1. Keswick – holiness movement emphasizing second blessing under influence of Robert and Hannah Pearsall Smith (sanctification and its practical application) - 1875. (I 89)
2. Keswick produced recruits for mission field and increased proportion of middle class and graduate missionaries.

3. Hudson Taylor 1865 – China Inland Mission became model for African faith missions formed by fundamentalists. Faith missions – anti-clerical, emphasized religion of the heart, and combat with devil (I 89)

4. Sudan United Mission – 1904 Karl Kumm – goal to create chain of mission stations across Africa at places of encounter with Islam and traditional religions (I 89)
   a) Kumm – made journey from Niger to Nile but never worked for long in Africa. His view of Africans – paternalistic, racist (I 89)

5. C.T. Studd – member of Cambridge cricket team who inherited fortuned and went to Africa in 1908, went to Congo in 1916 which was beginning of the Heart of Africa Mission (later the Worldwide Evangelism Crusade) (I 90).

6. Plymouth Brethren – stressed imminence of Second Coming, rejected rituals of established churches, relied on offerings (I 90)

7. Africa Inland Mission – Peter Cameron Scott (1867-96). By 1960 AIM had 600 missionaries – required documentation of conversion and call to ministry, emphasis on individual spirituality, failed to provide adequate schooling for their Christians, preferred direct evangelism, separate church services for blacks and whites, missionaries ran elite schools for their own children (I 90)

8. Holiness missionary ministry often led to intolerance (I 90). Missionaries demanded more from African converts than commensurate English congregations (I 91)

9. Advocates of Christianity and commerce (called the strategy of the Bible and the Plough) believed in progress which they understood as gradual spread of Christianity and western civilization around world (I 91).

10. Mission work justified by Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20). Their eschatology expected eruption of Christ in history but this wouldn't take place until gospel was preached to all nations and this became dominant motive for missions (I 91). Typified by contributor to missions Robert Arthington, a premillenarian who abandoned older mission fields for new ones.

11. Competing missionary strategies – The Bible and the Plough (Christianity & commerce) vs. Keswick holiness emphasis on individual conversion (I 91). Implications:
a) Imperialism and mission emphasized superiority of one's own culture (192). Western theology seen as handmaid of western expansion.

12. Some ecumenism among missions groups in early days, but rivalry also present (193).

13. Implications of foreign missions –
   a) how to introduce Christianity without changing host society.
   b) Some fundamentalist missionaries expected converts to use literacy to read Bible but not to earn a living (93).
   c) Some missionaries hostile to westernization and education, believing it fostered worldliness (94).

II. Northern Africa – Egypt, Ethiopia, Muslim North African, Western Sudan

A. Surviving legacy of Coptic and Ethiopian Christianity (I 209)
   1. Western Christians assumed their faith and praxis were superior to Copts and Ethiopians.
   2. Catholics viewed them as schismatic and heretical (211)

B. Ethiopian western mission
   1. Began with CMS in 1830
   2. Ethiopian princes interested in theological dialogue as well as western technology (e.g. firearms) (212)
   3. Protestants wanted to reform Ethiopian Christianity, but Roman Catholics demanded adherence to Rome.
   4. Catholic orders reached Ethiopia in 1838 & 1846 – Lazarists in the north who sought to establish Uniate church with an Ethiopian liturgy and Capuchins in the south who transplanted the Latin rite (212).
   5. Capuchins created indigenous clergy.
   6. Foreign missionaries drew individuals protesting African society from the margins (213).
   7. Ethiopian reformation in Eritrea in 1860 as result of bibles from British and Foreign Bible Societies, rejected saying of Mass for souls in purgatory,
rejection of feast and fast days, western style marriages, worked in mechanical trades and built schools and hospitals (213).

C. Ethiopian Christianity –

1. Liturgy, drumming, dance, married clergy, identification of church and state, casted artisans victims of prejudice, interest in angels and demons (216)

2. Haile Selassie in 1959 – ended practice of obtaining head of Ethiopian church from Egypt (216). Selassie viewed as descendant of Solomon. He was defeated in coup in 1974, country in poverty, military junta dispossessed landlords and resettled peasants (217)

D. Coptic Christianity –

1. Core traditions that shape character of Coptic Christianity:
   a) Tradition that Jesus visited Egypt as an infant (218)
   b) Belief that Coptic church was founded by St. Mark
   c) Memory of the martyrs of Diocletian (303-311 AD) from which the Coptic calendar is dated

2. Character of Coptic church:
   a) Heart of Coptic spirituality is based on the cross (al-Salib) (218)
   b) Distinctive liturgy – hymns to the Virgin Mary, simplicity, popular character, and place given to reading of holy books.
   c) Copts speak Arabic & share many practices with Muslim neighbors, but their Coptic identity has an ethnic quality emphasizing their status as heirs of ancient Egypt.

3. Historical events & changes that have shaped Coptic Christianity:
   a) Numbers decreased by late 18th century.
   b) Their importance increased in society with their increased status as administrative support to Napoleon and Muhammad Ali (1769-1849 pasha/governor of Egypt) (218). They became prosperous professional elite.
   c) In 19th c. some Copts aligned with American United Presbyterian church, leading to the Coptic Evangelical Church in 1957 – the largest Protestant church in the Middle East – as a response to lack of progressiveness of the Coptic patriarchate 218.
   d) Copts flourished under Muslim majority but faltered under Christian ones because British colonialists favored Muslim majority in fear of revolt (219).
e) Rise of Egyptian nationalism in early 20th c. allied Copts and Muslims who were primarily secular in their outlook.

f) Egyptian independence in 1922 was obtained under continued British military presence. True independence realized in 1952 when Farouk was overthrown and Nasser seized the Suez Canal (1956). At this time Egyptian nationalism took on Islamic character with his taking property of 600 wealthiest Copts & eastern Christians 219.

g) Coptic church & monasticism declined in 1960s 219. Often lacked enough Copts to choose patriarch; less educated clergy.

h) After Egypt’s war with Israel in 1973, Copts treated as threat to national unity 220.

i) Revival of Coptic monasticism w/ Matthew the Poor (Matta al-Miskin). Attempts to revive Coptic language & culture in 1960s-70s. Copts – largest Christian community in Arab world (4 million) centered mainly around Cairo, Alexandria & Upper Egypt (southern) 220. Copts better educated & more prosperous than Muslims in Egypt, but they view themselves as victims of discrimination in Egypt.

E. East and East Central Africa 19th century

1. Two successes of Christianity in East Africa – Madagascar & Buganda (area now contained in Uganda). (128).

2. Missions began in East Africa in Mombasa (Kenya) in 1844, but was weak until missions reached interior area of Buganda around 1877. Resurgence of missionary activity in wake of Livingstone’s death in 1873 including the establishment of Livingstonia in 1875. Missions often followed colonialism, taking advantage of improvements in communication and interest in western education (130).


a) Portuguese ruined Swahili states through military aggression and usurping trade.

b) People lived in small mobile communities, rainmaking was important part of religion, but 19th c. time of traumatic change:

c) Mfecane (Zulu for “grinding”) – migrations due to wars among northeastern Nguni tribes in late 18th c. caused by European trade in slaves and ivory, ecological devastation, expanding population (I 101 & 102) brought militarized tribal immigrants from south (I 130)

d) Arab and Swahili merchants began to travel inland creating caravan routes and acting as religious competition (Islam) against
Christian missionaries 131. Africans often chose whether to adopt Islam or Christianity on basis of socioeconomic factors.

e) At end of 19th c. African pastoralists were seriously affected by pests attacking their herds leading to resurgence in traditional religious cults, while some choose to look to Christian God. 131.

f) Responses to Christian mission in East Africa:

(1) What was known was colored by the selective self-disclosure of East Africans. (Points to naïve paternalism of missionaries). Choice was not simplistic – Christianity vs. traditional religion. Choices often involved synthesis (132).

(2) Exacerbating choice – Christian stereotypes about acceptable behavior including neutral local customs (e.g. Ganda bride sitting on lap of each parent 3 times before she leaves house symbolizing she is always welcome 133 – inculturation, not syncretism).

(3) Limitations of western acquisition of African languages and translation to indigenous languages:

(a) John 1 (“hunchback Spirit”) 133.

(b) Hero of Mbasi religion chosen to represent Satan.

(4) Missionaries viewed as magicians & diviners (they used their technological knowledge to reinforce this image such as a solar eclipse after chiefs didn’t attend church) 133.

(5) Some elders resisted Christianity in fear it would give young independence from tribe through education 134.

(6) In East Africa, Christianity undermined king’s role as rainmaker as well as other traditional religionists’ roles 134.

(7) First Christians were from indigenous society's outcasts – disabled, lepers, former slave, but there were also Yao aristocrats.

(8) Independent rulers also welcomed missionaries, being seen as go-between with European powers (135). Another draw – trade followed missionaries.

4. David Livingstone & the Zambezi (1813-73)

a) Livingstone's history: Medical missionary who planned to go to China, but met Moffats and chose Africa, but found southern Africa too crowded so he chose to go inland and reached Zambezi in 1856 (138).

b) Results of the Zambezi mission – though well funded by govt and intended to supplant slave trade, it failed. Livingstone thought the Zambezi river would be gateway to interior, but he exaggerated the resources of the area which deteriorated by the time the expedition arrived 138.
c) The expedition didn’t find much cotton though they brought a cotton gin, and their freeing of slaves by force brought British criticism (139). Given the negative physical factors, it failed and some of it participants tried to go elsewhere and Livingstone was viewed negatively and could not be found until Stanley, the journalist, found him in 1871 at Lake Tanganyika (139-140).

F. East & Central Africa – 20th c (1900 to 1960s)

1. Attitudes of European powers towards African missionaries & Africans:
   a) hostility & also resentment of Christian-educated Africans (Why?) 233.
   b) Some colonial officials supported traditional religions because they were more willing to cooperate with colonial powers. Also, traditional religionists were often linked to tribal govts.
   c) Young Africans often drawn to mission schools to gain marketable skills, but some missionaries worried about their loss of tribal identity 233. Some viewed education as dangerous to their national identity 234.
   d) This highlights ambiguity of western missions – idealization of rural life, anti-intellectualism yet the missionaries wanted education for their own children and supported colonialism, supported taxation (an idea rejected by Africans) in spite of its contradiction to their idealized rural life 235.

2. Gender issues in East Central Africa
   a) Threat to polygamous marriage from western missionaries, but in societies where older men controlled resources, younger women were more willing to move towards monogamy 239.
   b) First convert at Taganyika mission was woman whose confession of sin was rejected at first by missionaries.
   c) More boys went to mission schools than girls, although the girls had higher attendance rates, especially has Africans saw economic benefits of education 240.
   d) Contradictory views about the church’s influence on marriage: On one hand, young people had greater freedom, marrying members of their church groups without the control of their elders & need for a bridewealth (paid by groom to bride’s family to ratify marriage), but Christian doctrine prohibited divorce (240).
e) Many African women drawn to church by their personal misfortunes such as concerns about barrenness and child mortality and illness leading to poverty. They also fled accusations of witchcraft. 240.

f) Colonialization & Christian missionaries also challenged status of titled women. 241 African women who chose missionary orders of nuns were contradicting two social norms – their elevated status and the cultural emphasis on child bearing 241.

3. African Spirituality & Revival generated through missions:
   a) Contradiction of European missionaries who expected African converts to live better life than European Christians 241.
   b) Evangelical emphasis on conversion with public confessions and attempts to create small communities of converted 242.
   c) Revivals in Uganda and Nyasaland in 1890s with further revival in Rwanda and Uganda in 1930s. Revival made sin an issue important to all of society.
   d) Vestiges of the second Revival gave way to breakaway groups including those who rejected bridewealth and insurance, showing many offshoots were more strict in rejecting African societal values (sect mentality requiring more religious rigor). These revived, including the Balokole, were often spiritual elitists, viewing others as unsaved 242-3.

4. The impact of the interaction between missionaries and African society:
   a) Variables of governmental structure (kingdom, village), commerce (migrant labor, peasant cultivators), specific colonial European government, location of missionary activity (close to a specific village vs. far away) impacted nature of Christian expansion. 244.
   b) Two case studies of mission/society interaction: Kikuyu tribe of Kenya and the Hutus & Tutsis of Rwanda:
      (1) Kenya – colonialism began in 1887. White settlement established by early 1900s with their economic & political dominance 245.
      (2) First mission to Kikuyu 1898, famines w/ failure of traditional religions to meet their needs, led Kikuyu to convert to Christianity. Attraction to modernity increased interests in Christianity.
      (3) Major crisis in Christian church resulted from missionary attitudes toward female circumcision, but it was viewed among Kikuyu as rite of social identity, leading to backlash against missionaries 245. Nationalist tendencies blamed
influence of missionaries for loss of cultural identity as well as deficient quality of education.

(4) Offshoot groups with prophetic strands rejected Africa Inland Mission, rejecting modernity and preferred customs rooted in Old Testament 246.

(5) Rwanda: Tutsi – aristocratic pastoral caste with oral tradition & court culture; Hutu – agricultural tribe of lower status originally. 246

(a) Germans 1897 brought missionaries and their first converts were poor Hutu, leading favored converted Hutu to become new elite.
(b) Tutsi began to realize benefits of Christianity and western education, leading to mass conversions of Tutsi in 1930s-40s.
(c) After Rwandan independence, Tutsi were killed or exiled in Hutu uprisings, in Burundi, Tutsi killed Hutu 247.
(d) Before Rwandan independence, after WWI, Belgian rule accompanied by rhetoric differentiating between the two groups, giving Tutsis dominance until 1950s when they began to favor Hutus leading to conflicts between the 2 groups.
(e) Economic crises of the 1980s led to govt measures in 1990 which was met with rebellions and rise of RPF (Rwanda Patriotic Front). Extreme elements of govt & army began planned massacre of Tutsis, beginning with rhetoric propaganda.
(f) In 1995 when President was killed in plane crash, Hutus began slaughter of 800,000 Tutsis over 100 day period – the Rwandan genocide.

G. Prophetic African churches:

1. Proliferation of independent churches in Kenya. Characteristics:

a) creative liturgies, holistic views re mind & body
b) prophetic churches protected against witchcraft (253)
c) Some absorbed elements of traditional culture such as polygamist bishops
d) Prophetic churches defined group identity through dress, dietary rules, some Sabbatarianism, abstention from alcohol and tobacco, traditional dancing and ceremonies (254.
e) On issues where there were no Christian directives, prophetic churches followed tradition (e.g. clan exogamy and bridewealth).
f) Some women were founders of prophetic churches (254).

H. Esotericism of traditional African religions & influence on Christianity (257)

1. Emphasis of secret knowledge drawing initiate through grades in cults, such as mask societies. Secret seen as source of power
2. Christianity welcome in part because it was seen to hold key to modernity, prosperity, and power (257).
3. Some believed parts of the Bible had been suppressed and there was secret knowledge in Christianity (258)

I. Syncretism

1. Mumbo – giant water serpent of Lake Victoria (1913) – one of the oldest Kenyan independent religious movements. It was hostile to European influence and Christianity (258). But it had biblical themes such as belief in imminent judgment, Mumbo swallowing a prophet, but it isn’t certain if these similarities might be due to the European who reported it.

2. Traditional religions that rose in response to conflict – traditional religion was ethnic and provided unifying ideology for Mau Mau, a Kikuyu movement. 1952-4 – squatters on white land, had mystical attachment to land. To British settlers and administrators, Mau Mau was mixture of pseudo-religion, nationalism, and black magic, and oathing ceremonies that included bestiality (259). Independents supported Mau Mau, but followers of mission churches supported the govt (259).