Contemporary Journal of African Studies Vol. 4. No. 2 (2017) 37-65

World War One in Africa: Implications on Christian Missions

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Abstract

The First World War resulted in serious complexities that had to be surmounted by the missions. In all German territories in Africa that were turned into battle fields as well as in Allied possessions, missionaries suffered at the hands of Allied Forces. This article attempts an analysis of the treatment of the missions during and after the First World War in German possessions in Africa: Cameroon, Togoland, German East Africa and German South West Africa. Based on historical data, the study reveals that the experience of the First World War which destroyed the foundational work of German missions did have lasting implications on the Christian cause in Africa.

Keywords: First World War, Africa, German East Africa, German South West Africa, Togoland, Cameroon, missions, missionaries, churches in Africa.

https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/contjas.v4i2.2

Résumé

Événement cataclysmique, la Première Guerre se révéla empreinte d'un caractère complexe que les missions chrétiennes durent surmonter. Au sein des territoires allemands transformés en champs de bataille, ces missionnaires pâtirent de l'emprise des Forces Alliées. Cet article se veut une analyse du traitement des missions pendant et après la Grande Guerre dans les possessions allemandes en Afrique : au Cameroun, au Togo, en

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Afrique Orientale allemande et au Sud-ouest Africain germanique. En s'appuyant sur des données historiques, l'étude révèle que l'expérience de la Première Guerre mondiale qui détruisit l'œuvre missionnaire fondatrice allemande ne put avoir des implications durables sur la cause chrétienne en Afrique.

Introduction

By the outbreak of the First World War, Christianity was already taking root and shape in Africa and in the consciousness of Christians in the continent. This missiological achievement was the outcome of missionaries' commitment to the worldwide evangelistic task. Although this history of Christian missionaries in Africa is traced to the sixteenth century, it gained intensity only in the first quarter of the nineteenth century when many Protestant and Catholic mission societies emerged in Europe and North America and began deploying missionaries to Africa. This deployment of missionaries to Africa further heightened when the continent was forcibly partitioned and colonized by European powers. By the end of the nineteenth century, Christianity had taken root and shape in many parts of Africa, including German territories. In Cameroon, Togoland, German East Africa, and German Southwest Africa, Catholic and Protestant German and non-German mission boards had employed myriad strategies in their attempt to obey Christ's Great Commission: "go and make disciples of all nations" (Mt. 28: 19). In these German spheres of influence, there was missionary effectiveness in observable ways, despite the fact that many people remained unchurched. Indeed, missionary work in German territories was thriving by 1914 after close to thirty years of evangelization and imperial rule (Pirouet, 1978).

Naturally, the missionary vocation across Africa, like elsewhere, was challenging. This is true considering that missionary action takes place within

ever-changing contexts. In keeping with missionary practice, mission boards in Africa had to address issues at the very heart of mission work: missionary methods, financial support, pastoral care, harsh climates, diseases, and personal relations in cross-cultural settings. Guthrie (2000) builds on these issues to observe that mission work has always been impeded by huge challenges arising from local contexts and global trends. Certainly, missions in German territories faced many challenges emanating from the African local context. But it was the First World War (WW1) that posed the greatest challenge to the activities of German missionaries in Africa. The vitality that characterized the most dynamical mission agencies in German territories was halted by this cataclysmic global confrontation. Allied Powers, led by Britain and France, invaded and occupied Cameroon, Togoland, German East Africa, and German Southwest Africa. On all these various fronts, Catholic and Protestant German missions, as Pierard (1993: 4) observes, suffered regrettable treatment at the hands of the Allies. There was the arrest, imprisonment, and forceful deportation of missionaries deployed by German missions.

The organizational form of German missionary institutions and its mode of operation in the African mission field were vulnerable to the stresses of war from the perspective of missionary deployment and finance allocation. There was the belief that the centre of gravity of missions was in the North and West. Little wonder the missionaries and funds for mission work in Africa came from there. Faced with the war, German missions whose organization built on this premise found it difficult to maintain the flow of personnel and funds to Africa. Hence, the reliance on finance in the institutional framework of the missions that prevailed at the time came face-to-face with its limitations during the FWW. German mission work in Africa was therefore orphaned by the Allied deportation policy and financially strained by the stresses of the war. But while the mission institution was being destroyed, mission work had the opportunity to thrive in German possessions following the departure of

missionaries and the disruption of mechanisms of financial assistance. Without foreign financial assistance, indigenes who had collaborated with missionaries, though in inferior capacities, were able to further the Christian cause according to their thinking and understanding about the Gospel.

German missions, in the understanding of Allied Powers and as used in this paper, were born at a time when processes of nationalization of religion and religionization of Germany were running their course. The missionaries employed by missions that emerged in this context were among the intervening actors in the process of the contact between religion and state, characterized by efforts at nation building. So, the missions that were captioned as "German" were those that were seen by Allied Powers as concerned with the building of German nationalism. It is clear that what it took to be ranked a German mission was not just mission agencies with German roots and in the hands of German missionaries. It was extended to missions that accrued from the Protestant Reformation, which, as a whole, was celebrated as pre-history of the German national unity. Little wonder that the German nation was identified with the history of Protestantism.

This Christian missions' collusion with exaggerated nationalism was not unique to Germany. In Britain and France, for instance, there was a causal relationship between the missionary enterprise and nationalism (Dunstan, 1962: 158-160). The complexities of the colonial contexts in which missionaries were deployed and worked caused rival colonial powers that were committed to promoting national interests in the colonies to develop suspicion and hatred towards missions that identified with a rival colonial power. On the eve of World War One, there was mutual suspicion among colonial powers in Africa which did not leave missions neutral. Nationalism, as it intertwined with the mission enterprise, had turned aggressive given that the national identity of every colonial power was linked to hatred of others' national identities. Dunstan (1962: 159) is therefore right in his observation that nationalism

created dichotomies within Christendom, causing Christian communities in each nation to rival those in other nations. This was the context in which German missions came to be defined on the eve of the First World War. It was therefore highly likely that during this period marked by what Goosen (2010: 27) aptly describes as "missionary imperialism", a war between rival colonial powers that were committed to the ideology of nationalism could not have allowed the nationalist-oriented German missions to remain unaffected (Haupt, 2008). While their nationalism caused them to support the German war effort, the Allied Powers saw missionaries as natural targets if complete victory over Germany had to be attained. Without doubt, Germany had a similar attitude towards missionaries bearing the national identity of her opponents.

Irrespective of the sense of patriotism felt by missionaries and the division of Christendom that came with it, a new dimension of ecumenism had begun on the eve of World War One and it was hoped that this could give missions a neutral status in case of any war between rival great powers. I am referring to the 1910 World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh to which Protestant German missions sent delegates. The conference established a basis of ecumenical cooperation in spreading the Christian gospel. This new approach to missionization attempted to drag missions out of the dangerous trap of nationalism and division by stressing the idea that missionary work was the task of the entire church and was not to be linked with any specific nation or country. In mission circles, therefore, there were baseless claims that missions were supranational with no loyalty and patriotism to any nation.

At the end of the conference, the Continuation Committee was put in place to pursue the work that had begun at Edinburgh. It was the responsibility of this committee chaired by John R. Mott to ensure international missionary cooperation, friendship, shared evangelical responsibilities, and the respect of the supranational status of missions (Pierard, 1998: 13). Sadly, very little was done by this committee to entrench this new approach in the missionary

enterprise and to bring rival colonial powers to the understanding that their cooperation with missions in pursuing national interests at home and abroad did not conform to the missions' shared responsibility of spreading the gospel. The First World War, as cataclysmic and global as it was, proved the ecumenical diplomats wrong as both the ecumenical cooperation and supranationality of missions were shattered by the war. The war era rather turned out to be a period when missions sided with their nations to destroy the foundational work of German missionary enterprise. It was also marked by total disregard of the supranational status of German missions by Allied powers.

Hence, analysis on the treatment of German missions in Africa during the First World War should be construed within the double picture of the relationship between missions and nationalism which was used by Allied Powers as a basis for defining German missions and the new ecumenical movement. To put it another way: was the mistreatment of German missions due to their patriotic tendencies going to triumph over the neutrality guaranteed by the renewed ecumenism? As the military operations unfolded, these opposing bases for defining German missions as well as how they were to be treated became evident. This paper builds on these opposing contexts to examine the plight of German missions in Africa during the First World War.

Pre-First World War Christian Landscape in German Africa

On the eve of the First World War, mission societies were well established in German territories in Africa, namely, Cameroon, Togoland, German East Africa, and German South West Africa. In these territories, the German colonial governments had encouraged and promoted the planting of Catholic and Protestant mission agencies with German roots. The huge presence of German missions in these territories is explained by two factors: the creation of

Protestant German missions under the influence of the pietistic revival movement, and the association of Catholic and Protestant missions with the German imperial enterprise.

In the German protectorate of Cameroon, the planting of the Christian faith is traced to the 1840s when English Baptist missionaries began Christianizing the southern region of the would-be Cameroonian territory. In 1879, as Efoua (1981) notes, the English Baptists were joined by the American Presbyterian Mission (APM) whose pioneers started work among the Bulu. In 1884, Germany annexed Cameroon and forced the English Baptists to leave the territory, probably because of heightened colonial rivalries with Britain. With the exception of the APM, the German Government preferred German missions to work in its colonies.

Consequently, the pre-war Christian landscape in Cameroon became dominated by German Protestant and Catholic missions. The Basel Mission which was one of such missions replaced the English Baptists in Cameroon in 1886 (Werner, 1969: 11; Harry, 1968: 364). When the Native Baptists left behind by the English Baptists severed links with the Basel Mission in 1889, they were placed under the Neuruppine or German Baptist mission. The latter took over Baptist churches and sent missionaries to Cameroon, among them Carl Bender, Paul Gebauer, C. Hofmeister Rhode, Adolf Orther and Herman Kayser. Thanks to these men, the Baptists managed twelve mission stations, 32 schools, 100 teachers, 160 church buildings and twenty-three missionaries on the eve of the war (Funteh, 2008: 23).

As regards the Catholics, their missionary efforts were represented in Cameroon by the Pallotine Fathers who began work in the territory in 1890 (LeVine, 1964: 73). In all, the Pallotines had 157,934 faithful, 17,650 catechumens, and 19,576 pupils on the eve of the war. This was the outcome of the work carried out by thirty-four priests, thirty-six brothers, twenty-nine sisters, and about 223 indigenous catechists (Messina & Slageren, 2005: 146-

147). In 1912, the Sacred Heart Fathers from Germany joined the Pallotines in Cameroon. They were given the task to plant the Catholic faith in the interior of the territory (Ndi, 2005). In order to render the work of the Sacred Heart Fathers more evident, the Adamawa Apostolic Prefecture was created in 1914 and placed under them.[1] It is clear from the preceding that after thirty years of its imperial rule, missionary work in Cameroon was thriving. Apart from the APM, all the other missions had German origins. These German Protestant and Catholic missions were operating mission stations, schools, and health units and provided many other services. By 1913, for instance, there were 631 mission schools, with 49,000 pupils throughout German Cameroon (LeVine 1964: 72).

The situation in German Togo was not very different from what was happening in Cameroon. Prior to the German annexation of the territory in 1884, some mission agencies were already evangelizing there. They included the Methodists from Britain who reached there in 1843, the Bremen Protestant Mission from North Germany in 1847, the *Société des Missions Africaines* (SMA) from Paris in 1861, and the Basel Mission from Switzerland, a majority of whose staff came from the German Province of Wurttemberg, the region around Stuttgart, in 1863 (Tsigbe, 2013: 12). Following the 1884 annexation, the Germans terminated the activities of the British Methodists in Togoland, while permitting the Basel Mission and the Bremen Protestant Mission to carry on with mission work due to their German links. The activities of the lone Catholic mission (SMA) were terminated due to suspicion that it could promote French imperial interests. In 1892, following negotiations with Germany, Pope Leo XIII established the Prefecture Apostolic Togo and assigned it to missionaries of the Society of the Divine World (Stornig, 2013:

[1] An Apostolic Prefecture refers to a missionary area where the Catholic Church is not yet sufficiently developed to have it made a diocese.

1). The latter, which up to the outbreak of World War I, had over 109 missionaries across Togo was later joined by Servants of the Holy Spirit. The latter deployed mostly female missionaries (nuns) to Togo and established five convents between 1897 and 1912 (Stornig, 2013: 13). Up to the outbreak of the First World War, these Catholic missions established and managed schools, health services, and mission stations and sought to maintain close contact with the indigenous populations.

Hence, as Stornig (2013: 1) observes, "Catholic missionaries thus not only formed an important social group along with their Protestant counterparts, administrators, traders and merchants but also constituted a considerable part of the European population in Togo." It is important to note that in an effort to encourage competition between the Catholic and Protestant missions, the German colonial administration in Togo gave them freedom to function across the territory, contrary to the situation in Cameroon where different areas were attributed to mission societies to avoid competition (Cogneau & Moradi, 2011: 7). By 1913, the Christian population of Togo stood at 17,052 Catholics and 7,780 Protestants (Tsigbe, 2013). The First World War therefore intervened at a time when the missions were successfully planting Christianity in Togoland. They had already trained some indigenous clergy, such as the numerous Catholic catechists and seven Protestant pastors.

In German East Africa, the first missions to work among the indigenous populations were British, namely, the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) in 1864, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1874, and the Africa Inland Mission (AIM) in 1895 (Sanders, 2011: 2). But following the annexation of parts of East Africa by Germany in 1884, German mission boards expanded towards Tanganyika, Rwanda, and Burundi, replacing the ones that had been established there before German annexation. Throughout East Africa, there were six Protestant German missions that were working among the indigenous populations, namely, Moravian, Berlin, Leipzig,

Breklum, Neukirchen, and Bethel mission agencies (Pierard, 1993: 7). It was in Rwanda that the Bethel Mission focused its activities. It was involved in evangelization, health, education, and other holistic missionary endeavours during the period before World War I. In the case of the Leipzig Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society, its activities were manned by 29 missionaries working in sixteen stations spread across the Chagga community in the foothills of Kilimanjaro. In Burundi, the Breklum and Neukirchen missions stationed missionaries whose activities covered evangelization, education, and health. The principal Protestant missions that operated in Tanganyika were the Berlin Lutheran Mission and the Moravian Mission. As Pierard (1993: 8) notes, these two missions had thriving educational and medical works in this German possession.

Regarding the Catholic mission boards, there were three in German East Africa at the time of the German takeover, notably, the Benedictine Fathers of St. Ottilien, the Black Fathers (Congregation of the Holy Spirit), and the White Fathers (Society of Missionaries of Africa). While the Benedictine Fathers had German roots and enjoyed numerous favours from the German colonial administration, the other two were seated in France. The French Black Fathers who were Spiritans began work in Zanzibar in 1862 with the intention of using it as a centre from where other East African regions could be reached (Sanders, 2011: 2). Nonetheless, these three Catholic orders worked throughout the German era to plant Catholicism in the East African German possessions of Rwanda, Tanganyika, and Burundi. As Sanders (2011: 5) has noted, the German missions differed from the French and English ones in that they were the direct by-product of German imperialism and were made to serve the colonial interests of the Fatherland. This is the background against which German missions were targeted by the Allies during World War I in what was German East Africa.

Mission agencies had also succeeded in planting Christianity in the German territory of Southwest Africa up to the outbreak of the First World War. In fact, missionaries were present in Southwest Africa before 1894 when the territory was officially acquired by the German government. Prior to the official imposition of German imperial rule in Southwest Africa in 1894, mission work in the territory was linked to mission boards in South Africa. Consequently, most of the missionaries were English and were dispatched by English missions that were already based in South Africa. In this connection, the London Missionary Society (LMS) and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society were the first to establish in Southwest Africa in 1805 and 1825 respectively. They were later joined by the Rhenish Missionary Society (RMS) and the Finnish Missionary Society (FMS) in 1840 and 1870 respectively. It is important to note that when the RMS arrived in 1840, the LMS transferred all its mission stations to her. The RMS was a German Protestant organization headquartered in Barmen (Ryland, 2013: 3). It quickly emerged as the dominant mission society in Southwest Africa until the First World War. Prior to the war, its missionaries had worked among the Herero, Nama, Damra, and Koi-San. Their participation in the genocide of the Herero and Nama from 1904 to 1908 accounted for their fortunes during World War I. Ryland notes that during the German-Herero war, Rhenish missionaries took the lead role in rounding up the Herero and transporting them to concentration camps. Clearly, they served the aims of empire by aiding the destruction of Herero communities. On their part, Finnish missionaries established close contact with indigenous populations as they were not directly linked with German imperialism.

Overall, the church was well established in Cameroon, German East Africa, Togo, and Southwest Africa during the period that preceded the First World War. It was a very fruitful period from the mission perspective as thousands of people had converted to Christianity. In these German possessions,

missionaries promoted education, healthcare delivery, implemented scientific agricultural methods, and introduced new crops. It was this strong presence of German missions in German possessions that pushed some scholars to associate them with German colonialism (Pierard, 1993: 5). In fact, collusion between missions and the colonial government was to some extent the hallmark of German colonial enterprise. This lends credibility to Strayer's (1976) observation that missionaries willingly served colonial regimes. No wonder the Entente Forces characterized German missions as nothing more than an "arm of the German colonialism". Accordingly, missions became the target of Allied military operations during the African campaign.

Missions' Plight during the War Era

The pro-German stance of German missions along with Allied imperial ambitions made World War I a cataclysmic event for missions in German possessions. It is evident in mission literature that the period of the First World War was a very difficult one in the history of missions in German Africa. In the course of the war, four German possessions—Cameroon, Togo, German East Africa, and Southwest Africa became targets for Allied military onslaughts. Scholarship on the First World War reveals that seizing these territories from Germany could have shaped the course of the war elsewhere as well as post-war territorial bargaining. Njung (2014) argues that the Allies were determined to invade and deprive Germany of the multifaceted assistance she was drawing from Africa. This was a masked justification for the turning of German colonies into theaters of confrontation in World War I with serious consequences on missions. In the section below, focus is on the fate of the missions in Cameroon, Togo, German East Africa, and Southwest Africa during the war.

The Cameroon campaign started in August 1914 when the Allies decided to invade the territory. Up to February 1916 when the territory fell to the Allies,

the plight of missionaries worsened as they were arrested and deported. The missionaries were left with no choice than to yield to the commands of the new military and political officials at a time when there was no German protection. As a military strategy, a majority of the able-bodied male missionaries were interned long after the end of the war to ensure that they did not enlist in the German army back at home. Indeed, all Basel missionaries to Cameroon were targeted during the war. Werner observes that in the course of the Douala campaign in September 1914, all the German missionaries in the town were interned (Werner, 1969: 47). Following the fall of Victoria, seat of the Basel Mission in Cameroon, and Buea, capital of German Kamerun, later in 1914, many other Basel missionaries were captured by British and French forces and held captive until the end of the war in 1915 when they were repatriated. They included Friedrich Bartschi, J. Buhrer, C. Gehr, and J. Gutbrod, among others. In the interior, missionaries working with the Basel Mission, such as Adolf Vielhauer, M. Gohring, Gottlieb Ammann, Friedrich Spellenberg, and others, were interned in Foumban before being deported to their countries of origin. The work of the Baptist Missionary Society of Germany was equally disrupted due to the departure of about twenty-three of its missionaries, most prominently Carl Bender, Paul Gebauer, C. Hofmeister Rhode, Adolf Orther, and Herman Kayser. The mission stations that were left behind by these missionaries were adversely affected (Messina & Slageren, 2005: 90).

Regarding the Catholic missions, the work of the Pallotine and Sacred Heart Fathers was adversely affected by the war since their missionaries were also arrested, interned, and repatriated. Throughout the war, British and French forces targeted the Pallotines who were working along the coast of Cameroon. This Allied mistreatment of the Pallotines was perhaps at the origin of the cardiac arrest that resulted in the death of Mgr. Vieter, Vicar-Apostolic of Cameroon in November 1914. This greatly disrupted the activities of the Pallotines since the war prevented Mgr Vieter's successor, Mgr. Franz

Heinemann from taking office (Messina & Slageren, 2005: 151).[2] As if this was not enough, the Allied Forces rejected the Pope's appointment of Father Karl Hoegen as Mgr. Vieter's successor because he was German. After flatly rejecting the appointment, General Aymerich, Commander of the French forces, ordered the arrest and imprisonment of Father Hoegen (Ndi et al., 2014: 16). This was followed by the arrest and internment of Pallotine missionaries in Douala and other coastal towns. In the newly created Apostolic Prefecture of Adamawa which was manned by the German Sacred Heart Fathers, missionary work was stalled by the military operations. As a matter of fact, the six Catholic missionaries (Fathers Gerhard Lennartz, August Mannersdorfer, Robert Mannersdorfer, Johann Emonts, and two Rev. Brothers, Gabriel and Felix Lennartz) who had opened stations in Kom, Nso, Foumban, and elsewhere were interned until the end of hostilities when they were arrested and escorted out of Cameroon as prisoners-of-war (Ndi et al., 2014: 12). Even more disturbing was the fact that more than 500 Catholic faithful in the Western Grasslands were recruited into the *Schutztruppe* and interned at Fernando Po with the Germans after the fall of Yaoundé.

In addition to these deportations, church buildings, farms, schools, and residences of the missions were destroyed during the war. For instance, APM stations in Elat and Metet were attacked and occupied by the retreating German troops for over three weeks (Efoua, 1981: 56). The Basel Mission station at Sakbayeme was almost completely destroyed during the war, and its debris was used to construct retrenchments. In addition, the Sakbayeme residential home for missionaries was transformed into a fort by the Allied Forces (Messina & Slageren, 2005: 91). In the domain of education, the proper functioning of mission schools was adversely affected. In Bamun, for instance,

[2] Mgr. Hennemann had travelled to Germany in June 1914 after his ordination as Bishop on 26 April 1914. The war, which broke out while he was still in Germany, was what stopped him from returning to Cameroon.

the mission schools where 600 pupils were pursuing education were destroyed by British troops (Dah, 2003: 36). In fact, all the 631 mission schools in Cameroon were closed during the war, forcing about 49,000 pupils to abandon their education (LeVine, 1964: 75). This was aggravated by the incorporation of most of the German teachers into the German forces.

The situation in German Togo was similar to what transpired in Cameroon. The extension of the war to this German possession was a huge impediment to mission work. Just like in Cameroon, the war in Togo amounted to the defeat and eviction of the Germans by the Allied forces. Although the military operations in Togo were fierce, the war lasted only three weeks, with serious consequences on missions. In the course of the war, missionaries were placed under house arrest and eventually deported to their home countries. Stornig (2013: 15) stresses that the Togo-based Catholic nuns were all expelled as the British and the French who replaced the Germans ensured that these sisters terminated their activities in the territory. Consequently, the ten convents the nuns had established before 1914 were closed during the war. Another Catholic mission whose work was disrupted was the Society of the Divine Word. Its over 109 missionaries were either interned or forcibly deported. These wartime disorders were also suffered by the Basel Mission and the Bremen Protestant Mission as their mission work came to an abrupt end (except that the Swiss missionary couple working for the Bremen Mission, Rev. and Mrs. Burgi, were allowed to remain in Togo until the early 1920s). Another aspect of the expulsion of the missionaries was that their schools, health services, stations, and economic projects were abandoned. Focusing on education, Tsigbe (2013: 19) observes that the war stalled mission schools in Togo as they ceased operating. Besides, some missionaries of German origin were conscripted into the German army resulting in the stalling of mission work.

In German East Africa, all the German possessions were conquered in 1918 by the Allies after four years of military operations. During this period of fierce fighting, the Christian population suffered as the faithful were directly or indirectly involved in the war as soldiers, carriers, and victims. Concerning mission agencies, their evangelical, educational, health, and other activities were significantly disrupted by the war. This was worsened by the forceful conscription of Protestant and Catholic missionaries into the German army, most of whom ended up in the camps as war prisoners. The Moravian, Berlin, Leipzig, Breklum, Neukirchen, and Bethel mission agencies were left with no missionaries to continue their work. The few missionaries that were permitted to carry on with their activities were all deported after the war. Pierard (1993) writes that the number of active mission stations greatly reduced during this period of missionary absence. He notes how Belgian forces took Rwanda from the Germans in 1916 and ousted all Bethel missionaries that were at work there. Parsalaw has also observed that World War I was cataclysmic for mission agencies in Tanganyika (2008: 55). In Burundi, the stations that were operated by the Breklum and Neukirchen missions were destroyed and orphaned. As a direct by-product of German imperialism that was made to serve the colonial interests of the Fatherland, the Catholic Benedictine Fathers were seriously targeted by the Allied Forces. Their missions in Tanganyika and elsewhere were dislocated and stalled. This merciless destruction of mission installations along with the forceful repatriation of missionaries amounted to a severe trial period for Christianity in German East Africa.

In Southwest Africa, the war was fought from January 1915 through July 1916 when the colony fell to Allied troops from South Africa. During this period of military operations, the treatment of German missions at the hands of Allies hinged on the collusion between missions and the colonial administration. The local population along with Allied powers had accused missionaries of involvement in the Germans' murderous assault on the Herero

during the 1904-1908 war which Hull (2005) and Steinmetz (2005) describe as genocide. It was this complicity that served as a basis for the Allied mistreatment of missions during World War I. When Southwest Africa was attacked in January 1915, the gains the missions had made dissipated. In addition to the Allied internment and deportation of missionaries, Germany conscripted Rhenish and Finnish missionaries into its army (Nangula, 2013: 31). When the German troops surrendered in July 1916, a new administration was installed by the South African government. The military governor, P. S. Beves, made things more difficult for the missions. He repatriated three Rhenish missionaries: Heinrich Vedder, Wilhelm Eich, and Johannes Olpp Jr. because of their continued nationalist loyalty to Germany. But as Ryland (2013: 234) notes, the military administration allowed the rest of the missionaries who accepted to shift their loyalty to the new officials to continue their work. This was contrary to what was happening in Cameroon, East Africa, and Togo during the same period. The missions in Southwest Africa also faced a financial crisis caused by the war to the extent that some mission property was auctioned to settle debts. In fact, missionaries were dependent on credit from South Africa due to the termination of assistance from home.

This ruining of the German missionary enterprise necessitated the response of the German missionary leadership. As early as 1914, the Director of the Berlin Missionary Society, in consultation with close to thirty missionary leaders circulated a manifesto in Allied and neutral countries. Apart from rejecting the accusation of Germany for causing the war, it denounced military action in German possessions which was damaging missionary achievements. Through this manifesto, the German clerics expected the international missionary community to rally behind them in the defence of their neutrality and supranational status. But the war had let loose the harmful nationalism ideology to which missionaries were closely associated. Consequently, replies to this manifesto from the missionary leadership in Britain and France had a

devastating impact on the German mission in Africa. Without doubt, Christians in the Allied camp approved the actions taken by the Allies against German missions. The entry of the United States into the war and the persistence of the forced closure of German missions caused the resignation of German missionary representatives in the Continuation Committee. The latter had ceased to exist by the end of the war, while the abandoned mission work became the responsibility of indigenous clerics.

Indigenous Clerical Leadership

With German missionaries interned or exiled, some indigenes who had been associated with mission work replaced the white missionaries. Their commitment to maintaining schools and mission stations during the absence of their white counterparts enabled mission work to continue despite the destructive disruption of the war. This put to serious question doubts expressed by white missionaries that the indigenous clergy could not fit appropriately into missionary shoes. But the achievements that resulted from the intervention of these indigenous clergymen justified the rejection of these doubts and their labelling as racist thinking. In fact, it was this indigenous clerical leadership which was not trusted by the missionaries that resuscitated and kept alive the Christian church in Cameroon, Togo, East Africa, and Southwest Africa during the war era.

In Cameroon, the indigenous ministry was manned by people who had aided missionaries, in one way or the other, in planting Christianity in the territory. They started their work during the war by keeping some of the mission stations alive following the abrupt departure of the missionaries. When the military operations ended in February 1916 following the defeat of the Germans, Cameroon was partitioned between Britain and France. This affected the manner in which the indigenous clerics deployed themselves in rescuing Christianity. In the French eastern portion, the leading Basel Mission pastors

and evangelists who survived the church were Pastors Jacob Modi Din, Joseph Ekollo, Martin Itonde, Lotin a Same, and Joseph Kuoh (Messina & Slageren, 2005: 46-47). Regarding German Catholic mission work in the French section, indigenes such as Thomas Omog (Edea), Jean Melone (Edea), Andre Kwa Mbange (Douala), and Alphonse Bapiter (Kribi) worked hard to keep stations and schools operational (Messina & Slageren, 2005: 152). In the British section, the situation was not very different. Here, Catholics quickly responded to the situation caused by the war by reviving the progress of Catholicism. The outstanding ones among them included Henri Wanti, Peter Wame, Michael Tim, and Paul Tangwa, just to name a few (Ndi et al., 2014: 26). They maintained the Catholic faith on a good course despite all sorts of odds. The Basel Mission work in the British sphere also continued in the hands of a good number of zealous "self-appointed evangelists". They preached and taught almost singlehandedly during the immediate post-war years. In every mission station, there were Christians and catechumens under their care. Dah (2003: 45) refers to these evangelists as indigenous missionaries and observes that they saw the task of Mission as rightfully theirs for which white missionaries were needed as helpers. Throughout the period of missionary absence, these evangelists committed themselves to missionary work in their villages while the senior ones conducted supervision tours. They included Jacob Shu, John Ashili, John Mosi, John Mukum, Daniel Foningong, Abel Mbong, Chief Abel Mukete, William Nku, Heinrich Eseme, Jacob Kwo, and Elisa Petha, among many others. Indeed, it was the courage of these indigenes that sustained mission work in Cameroon until the return of their white bosses.

Just like in Cameroon, the departure of the white missionaries from German East Africa was seen by their African counterparts as an opportunity to showcase their prowess in mission work. As a matter of fact, the decline of the Christian communities and the surge in unchristian practices caused these indigenes who had collaborated with the missionaries to engage in evangelism.

Across the region, indigenous pastors who had been ordained by Protestant missionaries along with Catholic Catechists kept many stations alive. In Shambaa, Kilimanjaro, Bokuba, Dar es Salaam, Usambara, and other places, groups of unpaid self-appointed missionaries enabled mission work to thrive during the period of white missionaries' absence. Among these indigenes, some emerged as leaders, such as Andrea Kadjerero, Luka Jang'andu, and Martin Ganisya (Pierard 1993: 9). These lay leaders organized the indigenous clergymen in ways that permitted them to continue the work when most of the missionaries were forced to leave.

In Southwest Africa and Togo, the participation of the indigenous clergy in mission work was not very evident since not all the missionaries were deported. The case of Southwest Africa is particularly interesting as some of the local evangelists manifested reluctance in taking up mission tasks when some of the missionaries were repatriated. This attitude was fed by the open collusion of the missionaries with the German colonial government in the maltreatment and exploitation of indigenous populations. Another peculiarity of Southwest Africa is that the Allied forces from South Africa along with the immediate post-war military administration were not too hostile to the German missions. On the overall, not more than ten missionaries were ousted since most were allowed to continue with their work amid numerous impediments. Irrespective of this, a few indigenous people heightened their commitment to mission work. In Ovamboland, for instance, indigenous church elders such as Simson Shituwa and Wilhem Kafita provided spiritual care to Christians left behind by the Rhenish missionaries (Nangula, 2013: 31). In Togo, the arrest and deportation of almost all missionaries came as a surprise to those whom they had converted to Christianity. Without any proper preparation, the indigenous clergy had to shoulder the task of mission work in the absence of German missionaries. Church literature on Togo reveals that the departure of the German missionaries placed an unexpectedly huge responsibility on the

local clergy. Amazingly, these indigenes succeeded in keeping the Christian faith alive until the return of white missionaries.

As earlier pointed out, the Caucasian missionaries doubted the clerical leadership of these local evangelists. Scholars of missions attribute this lack of confidence in African clerics of the war era to the growth of racist thinking among white missionaries. Oduro (2006: 1) maintains, however, that these Africans were instrumental in the life of the church in Africa during this period. In all former German possessions, mission work fared better than the missionaries had anticipated, although there were a few places where mission work failed to survive when the missionaries left. However, it is generally accepted that Africans were effective church planters in the war years. It is worth noting that these indigenous clerics suffered persecution at the hands of chiefs and other traditional authorities who saw the absence of white missionaries as an opportunity to promote other faith traditions. In Cameroon, for instance, traditional rulers in Bamun, Kom, Nso, and Bali Nyonga persecuted indigenous clerics. The Fon[3] of Bali Nyonga, in a royal act, ended Basel Mission work in his fondom (chiefdom), while in Bamun, King Njoya officially welcomed Islam as a replacement to Christianity (Dah, 2003: 36). In Kom, Catechist Michael Timneng was persecuted by Chief Ngam while Paul Tangwa and the Christians he led in Nso became easy targets of the Fon's anti-Christian policies (De Vries, 1998). Generally, it was the courage of the indigenous clerics that enabled them to keep the Christian faith alive in German possessions until the return of their white counterparts. They laboured unpaid for over six years to keep the faith alive and their endeavour was rewarded. Surprisingly, these African lay leaders were hardly considered and

[3] In the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon, traditional rulers (chiefs) are generally known as 'fon' and the polities they head are called fondoms. Thus, the term *fon* denotes the chief at the head of a chiefdom, as in the example of Bali Nyonga.

consulted by the Allies when they decided to invite new mission agencies to take over the work of the German missions during the immediate post-war era.

Post-War Mission Treatment

The termination of military operations in Africa did not end difficulties for the missions. The post-war treatment of missions went beyond the deportations of the war era as the Allies pursued anti-mission laws that were imperially motivated. Apart from intending to confiscate and annex the orphaned German mission assets, Britain and France sought to officially terminate the work of these missions and to invite specific nationals to take over. This policy was inherent in imperial thought since they had a burning desire to annex the German territories seized during the war. Faced with the fact of not returning to Africa to continue their work, German mission authorities argued that the ideal of missionary freedom and neutrality was being violated (Pierard, 1993: 12).

The British and the French did not accept the neutrality of the missions in the political maelstrom at the time. Following the end of the war, therefore, the Allies in their respective zones started confiscating the property of the German missions. The Anglo-French partition of Togo in 1914 heightened the dilemma of the missions due to the anti-mission reforms of the post-war era. The French in their section swiftly ended the work of German missions and invited two French missions to take over. Indeed, the missionary service of German Protestant missions was taken over by the *Société des Missions Evangeliques de Paris* in 1927 while Catholic ones were succeeded by the *Société des Missions Africaines* (SMA) based in Lyon. In 1922, the SMA sent Father Jean-Marie Cessou to Togo to lay the groundwork for the takeover. A year later, he became the Vicar Apostolic of Togo and was ordained as the Bishop of Lomé (Tsigbe, 2013: 19). Regarding the Servants of the Holy Spirit, France objected to the readmission of its nuns in Togo. In the British section, the deportation of

missionaries was intensified in 1917. British missions that were operating in Ghana and elsewhere were encouraged to take over the work of the German missions.

In Cameroon, France placed the Catholic mission work in its section under Father Douvry, a Frenchman who was confirmed by Rome in February 1917 (Ndi, 2014: 20). This marked the beginning of the de-Germanisation of the German missions, a French colonial goal. Before the end of 1916, the Holy Ghost Fathers from Paris had effectively replaced the German Pallotine Fathers in the French sector (Messina & Slageren, 2005: 153). In 1922, Mgr. Francois Xavier Vogt was appointed as the Apostolic Administrator of Cameroon. Similarly, the Paris Evangelical Mission (PEM) replaced the Basel Mission in 1917 when four of her missionaries, Reverends Elie Allegret, Andre Oechsner, Etienne Bergeret, and Frank Christol started work in the territory (Werner, 1969: 50). In the British sphere of Cameroon, Basel missionaries were readmitted only in 1925. Regarding the German Baptist Mission, its work was taken over by the British Baptist Mission. The German Sacred Heart Fathers expelled from the British section during the military operations were banned from returning to the territory after the war. The London-based Saint Joseph Mill Hill Fathers took over from them in 1923.

In German East Africa, Britain and Belgium did everything to keep German mission assets for themselves. But Article 438 of the Treaty of Versailles protected mission assets as it provided that the Allied powers should hand over German mission property to a board of trustees. It was within the framework of the provisions of this article that German mission work was handed over to other missions in East Africa as follows: Livingstonia replaced the Moravian and Berlin missions in Tanganyika, the Church Missionary Society took over the work of the Bethel Mission, the Methodists succeeded the Neukirchen, while the Leipzig Mission was taken over by American Augustana Lutherans

(Pierard, 1993: 13; Wright, 1971). But in the course of the 1920s, efforts were made by the German missions to return to their stations in East Africa.

The case of Southwest Africa was not very pathetic given that the military government set up by South Africa allowed German missions to continue with their work after the war. It was only the Rhenish Mission that faced a lot of difficulties after the war. In 1919, the atrocities committed by the Germans in complicity with the Rhenish Mission were dragged to the forefront of debates at the Paris Peace Conference. Since this amounted to the official termination of German colonialism in Southwest Africa, it made the work of the Rhenish Mission difficult. Besides, a greater portion of Ovamboland that was covered by the Rhenish missionaries became part of Angola after the war. This marked the end of Rhenish Mission efforts in the area since the Portuguese authorities expelled all German missionaries from there (Nangula, 2013: 31).

Overall, the post-war treatment of the German missions, fed by imperially-motivated policies, was injurious to the Christian cause because German mission work was handed over to other mission agencies. This was a clear transgression of Article 438 of the Versailles Treaty of 1919. This article which was introduced in the treaty thanks to the newly created Emergency Committee of Cooperating Missions stated, inter alia, that the property of German missions in the confiscated territories be handed over to a board of trustees composed of persons belonging to the faith of the mission whose property was involved. Given that one provision of Article 438 prohibited German nationals from carrying out mission work in the former colonies, the Allies continued the forced deportation policy in the early 1920s, while at the same time refusing to place the property of these missions under a board of trustees. In 1924, Britain, under the influence of missionary advocates lifted the ban on missionaries with German roots in the mandates she administered. But in the mandates under France and Belgium, the ban was sustained and strictly implemented. These difficulties were worsened by the National

Socialist regime's anti-foreign mission policy. The survival of German missions in this era right through to the challenges of the Second World War rested on the weight of the ecumenical movement that culminated in the birth of the World Council of Churches in 1948.

Conclusion

This article has examined the treatment of missions during and after the First World War in German possessions in Africa. The findings of this analysis indicate that the war was injurious for German missionary agencies in the continent. During the unfolding of military operations in Cameroon, Togo, German East Africa, and Southwest Africa, mission work and missionaries were targeted. From 1914 through 1918, the arrest, internment, and deportation of missionaries were recurrent. The study also found that the targeting of German missionaries by the Allies resulted in the emergence of an indigenous clerical leadership. The indigenous clergy, despite their persecution by chiefs, responded to the situation caused by the war by engaging in mission work in a way which surprised the missionaries who had doubted their effectiveness. In Cameroon, Togo, and East Africa, the Allies implemented imperially-motivated mission policies that caused German mission work to be taken over by those mission agencies having British and French roots. Overall, the preceding analysis suggests the rather obvious conclusion that the experience of the First World War which disrupted the foundational work of German missions did have lasting implications on the Christian cause in Africa. The situation was so bad that not even the new ecumenical movement that came with the 1910 World Missionary Conference could surmount it. The neutrality and supranationality that was guaranteed to missions could not be protected by the Continuation Committee. The latter even ceased to exist under the stresses of the war.

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