



“The global expansion of Christianity under the wings of Western imperialism and colonialism in the late nineteenth and twentieth century: Rethinking the imperialistic aspects of the Bible under the colonial embrace in Sub-Saharan Africa”

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## **Acknowledgements**

*For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed,  
but my steadfast love shall not depart from you,  
and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,  
says the LORD, who has compassion on you.*

(Is. 54:10)

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## **Abstract**

This paper is a study of an exceptional global expansion of Christianity in history which paralleled the colonial expansion of the West, as a result of the extension of the European monarchism into the non-Western world, and which became a worldwide phenomenon in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. The center of my study is how the competition for acquiring colonies overseas among the European nations escalated and prompted the birth of a new imperialism profoundly affecting every aspect of Sub-Saharan African life. While investigating the relationship between the missionaries and the colonialists in my study, I look specifically into the role and function of the Bible within the framework of the European imperialism and colonialism in the Sub-Saharan African setting by applying postcolonial theory.

The work is organized into four main parts. In the first chapter, I set forth the background of my study, personal motivation, aim and scope of the study, my methodology and theoretical framework, literature review, and the structure of the thesis. In the second chapter, I make an overview of European expansionism, its causes, peculiarity, and an analysis of the imperial and colonial systems. The third chapter discusses the impact of the Enlightenment thinking on the Western society and Christian mission, the emergence of the religious revival movements among transatlantic Protestants, and the outburst of the Protestant missionary movement which was concomitant with Western imperialism. The accent of this chapter falls on the colonialist missions, and their use of the Bible in their rhetorical discourses to assert their theocratic imperial view. The last chapter is devoted to the critical evaluation of my findings where I discussed through the lens of postcolonial reading.

## List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations in this paper are taken from *The SBL Handbook of Style for Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Atlanta, Georgia: SBL Press, 2014. Likewise, biblical references and quotations used throughout are selected from *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989.

### Books of the Bible

#### Old Testament

Genesis	Gen.
Deuteronomy	Deut.
Joshua	Josh.
1 Kings	1 Kgs.
Isaiah	Is.
Jeremiah	Jer.

#### New Testament

Matthew	Mat.
Luke	Lk.
John	Jn.
Romans	Rom.
Galatians	Gal.
Ephesians	Eph.
Revelation	Rev.

#### General abbreviations

<b>ed(s).</b>	<i>Edition; Editor(s)</i>
<b>etc.</b>	<i>etcetera, and so forth</i>
<b>i.e.</b>	<i>idemest, that is</i>
<b>MLC</b>	<i>Malagasy Lutheran Church</i>
<b>NY</b>	<i>New York</i>
<b>UK</b>	<i>United Kingdom</i>
<b>viz.</b>	<i>videlicet, that is, namely</i>
<b>ibid.</b>	<i>Ibidem, the same</i>
<b>Ltd.</b>	<i>Limited</i>
<b>et al.</b>	<i>and others</i>
<b>co.</b>	<i>Company</i>
<b>cf.</b>	<i>Confer, "compare."</i>

#### Glossary

Hexateuch	Hexateuch points to the first six books of the Old Testament
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## CHAPTER ONE

### General introduction

#### 1.1 Background of the study

A wide range of recent literary works describe that the close of the twentieth century witnessed the revival of Christianity which was taking a new shape and direction.<sup>1</sup> Several explanations have been provided to explain this current tide. Wesley Granberg–Michaelson has investigated on “the trends and facts reshaping the presence of Christianity around the world” and remarked that Christianity today has radically shifted its center of gravity:

Christianity is in the midst of another dramatic pilgrimage today. Its most obvious expression is geographical. The center of world Christianity, in terms of the sheer numbers of Christians and the growth of their Churches, has moved decisively to the Southern Hemisphere, or the Global South.<sup>2</sup>

This dynamic change of the course of Christianity to the Global South caught the attention of many scholars and prompted them to examine closely its determining factors. Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder advance that this reconfiguration of the map of Christianity resulted from the decline of the church in the West and the emergence of Christianity as a world religion in the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> As a consequence of this new religious landscape, they notice that the twenty–first century witnessed the presence of two realities in terms of Christianity: “a post–Christian West and a post–Western Christianity.”<sup>4</sup> Andrew F. Walls analyzes this paradoxical phenomenon between the West and the non–Western world and sees two tendencies overlapping at the turn of the twentieth century. He asserts: “The period that has seen this great recession from the Christian faith in the West, there has been an equally massive accession to that faith in the non–Western world.”<sup>5</sup> The immediate result was that Christianity ended up as “a non–Western religion” as the Christian faith has lost ground on

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<sup>1</sup> Ogbu U Kalu, “Changing tides: Some currents in world Christianity at the opening of the twenty–first century, in *Interpreting contemporary Christianity: Global processes and local identities*, eds. Ogbu U Kalu and Elaine Low (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 2008), 3–23, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Wesley Granberg–Michaelson, *From Times Square to Timbuktu: The Post–Christian West meets the non–Western Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2013), 1–4.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in context. A Theology of mission for today* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2004), 242.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross–cultural process in Christian history: Studies in the transformation and appropriation of faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Book, 2002), 49–64.



the European continent.<sup>6</sup> Philip Jenkins, however, explains this southernization of Christianity from a demographic perspective. He argues that the rates of birth in the Global South, especially Africa did not stop increasing while it stagnated in Europe and North America.<sup>7</sup> Allister E. McGrath, for his part, advances that one significant cause for the degradation of Christianity in the West was the question of its relevance to modernity and the disposition of the Church to adapt itself to modern circumstances.<sup>8</sup> Wrestling with the same issue, Samuel Escobar observes that what caused the de-Christianization of West was the removal of Christianity from its central role in the societies in modern era.<sup>9</sup> This thought of Escobar is backed up by the position of Terry Eagleton when he examines the cause of secularism in Europe. He maintains that the strength of any culture lies in the religion itself.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the weakness of the one affects the other. Whenever culture is estranged from its source, it generates an alien lifestyle as exemplified in the case of Europe which owes its culture and civilization to Christianity.<sup>11</sup>

Facing the multiple challenges brought by modernity, the Global South adopted a posture of standing firm to evangelical faith.<sup>12</sup> In a global scale, secular culture, circulated under the umbrella of globalization, did not erode religion as many within the academic circles prophesied.<sup>13</sup> Rather, it emerged as a world religion in the form of Pentecostalism and charismatic movements within the mainline churches in the Southern Hemisphere.<sup>14</sup> Hence, the reality in the Global South, according to Grace Davie, falsifies the claim that the case of Europe would determine the future of Christianity in the rest of the world.<sup>15</sup> José Casanova emphasized that “secularization of Europe is a particular, unique and ‘exceptional’ historical process, not a universal teleological model of development which demonstrates the future to

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<sup>6</sup> Walls, *The Cross-cultural process in Christian history*, 49, 64.

<sup>7</sup> Philip Jenkins, *The new faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 8–9.

<sup>8</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *The future of Christianity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 16–21, 40–41.

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Escobar, *The New global mission: The Gospel from everywhere to everyone* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 70.

<sup>10</sup> Terry Eagleton, *The idea of culture* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 66–68.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Donald M. Lewis, “Introduction”, in *Christianity reborn: The global expansion of evangelicalism in the twentieth century*, ed. Donald M. Lewis (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Cambridge, 2004), 1–8, 2.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 1–2.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Williams, “Global Saints: Conservative Christianity in the early twenty-first century”, in *Handbook of global contemporary Christianity: Movements, institutions, and allegiance*, ed. Stephen Hunt (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 101–122, 101.

<sup>15</sup> Grace Davie, *Religion in modern Europe: A Memory mutates* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2.

the rest of the world.”<sup>16</sup> In the Global South, Christianity in Africa, viz. in Sub-Saharan Africa is thriving remarkably and has taken the preponderant position that Europe held in the past.<sup>17</sup> Jenkins confirms this predominance of Africa with regards to Christianity and says that “today, the most vibrant centers of Christian growth are still in Africa itself.”<sup>18</sup> Seeing this dynamic growth of Christianity in the African soil, Timothy Yates, a British missiologist and historian, characterizes the twentieth century as “an African century.”<sup>19</sup> Using this presentation of the decline of Christianity in the West as a background of my study is not accidental because it was the Europeans who brought Christianity to the rest of the world. Yet, the majority of the Western societies now have turned their back on it when Western imperialism and colonialism came to its end. This means for me that there must be another relevant reason why colonialists used religion alongside their political conquest.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

If viewed from a historical standpoint, the current global nature of this Christianity is the fruit of the Western missionary movement to the African continent dating back to the late nineteenth and twentieth century.<sup>20</sup> Though the missionary enterprise was motivated by the European enthusiasm to reach out and civilize the non-Western world, the reality in Sub-Saharan Africa during the colonial period revealed another face of this enterprise. Charles E. Farhadian in his edited book *Introducing World Christianity* shows that “Western European Christianity has never been an isolated phenomenon” but came together with the dream of the Europeans to extend their domination overseas.”<sup>21</sup> In light of this context, both the fervor to Christianize Africa and the interest to appropriate lands were central to the arrival of the Europeans to the African continent. One is struck by surprise when knowing that this ambitious project was carried out using religious motives, which shows the Bible as one component of European colonialism as R. S. Sugirtharajah sees it.<sup>22</sup> This other side of the

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<sup>16</sup> José Casanova, “Beyond European and American exceptionalism: Towards a global perspective”, in *Predicting religion: Christian, secular and alternative futures*, eds. Grace Davie, Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 17–29, 22.

<sup>17</sup> Walls, *The Cross-cultural process in Christian history*, 65.

<sup>18</sup> Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity*, 9.

<sup>19</sup> Timothy Yates, *The expansion of Christianity* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 166–181.

<sup>20</sup> Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary movement in Christian history: Studies in the transmission of faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 85.

<sup>21</sup> Charles E. Farhadian, ed., *Introducing world Christianity* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 67.

<sup>22</sup> R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the third world: Precolonial, colonial and postcolonial encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1.

Bible interests me as an academic researcher and has led me to build my own research upon the question:

**“What is the role and function of the Bible within the framework of European imperialism and colonialism of the late nineteenth and twentieth century in Sub-Saharan Africa?”**

### **1.3 Personal motivation**

What motivated me for this research is my personal observation of Western Christianity together with my experience as a Malagasy student coming from the Global South (Madagascar) and living in Norway. During my two years of theological study, I used to collect bottles in town every week–end and it was during this time that I came to know different people and their attitudes towards the Christian religion. Collecting bottles is unusual thing for pastors to do in Norway because of how they are viewed in society. Viewed from this perspective, what I did was against Norwegian cultural expectations. Driven by curiosity, some people started to ask questions related to my home country, and like how was it to be in Norway. In the middle of our discussion, I tried to find an opportunity to talk about Jesus for, as a pastor, collecting bottles for me is a sort of street evangelism. The majority of the people with whom I met, particularly the young, did not feel comfortable when talking about the commitment of one’s life to Jesus and preferred to end the discussion.

I think this cold attitude towards religion, as illustrated in the case of Norway, reflects the overall religious atmosphere in the Western world. This was something that I did not expect to see from the homelands of Christian missions. Being confused, I kept asking the same question raised by one African Anglican bishop when surprised at the liberal tendency of his American colleagues: “If you don’t believe the scripture, why did you bring it to us in the first place?”<sup>23</sup> My desire to find out an answer to the aforementioned question played a crucial role in inspiring me to write this thesis in addition to the course “Reception of the Old Testament in postcolonial Africa, Asia and Latin America” that I had at VID Specialized University, Stavanger.

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<sup>23</sup> Jenkins, *The new faces of Christianity*, 1.

#### 1.4 Aim, scope and limitation of the study

The aim of this project is to investigate particularly the place of the Bible within European imperialism and colonialism of the late two decades of the nineteenth century. My research focuses on the way the Bible was read, understood, translated and interpreted by the Europeans during the colonial period.

The temporal scope of this research is on the climax of modern European imperialism and colonialism (1870–1914), sometimes called “the Scramble for Africa”, in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>24</sup> The geographical range of my survey comprises the West which represents the dominant metropolitan world, and the Global South, exclusively Sub-Saharan Africa as the focal point of my paper, that constitutes the subjects of the Western empires. In my reference to the European nations in my study, I point chiefly to Britain, France, Germany, and Belgium as the four principal colonial powers in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. The North Americas will also have a special place in my research.<sup>25</sup>

For the sake of limitation, European imperialism and colonialism prior to the nineteenth century or in other continents such as in Latin America, Asia, etc. will not receive much attention. I have to overlook as well some events related to colonization in Africa because the purpose of the study is not to give a full account of European colonization but to bring to the fore the use of the Bible in the hands of the white man, be that missionaries or colonists, during colonial period. This special focus will determine the direction of my thesis.

#### 1.5 Methodology and theoretical perspective

Since my study concerns a historical time period, I will present a historical interpretation of selected literature focusing on the main subject of my research. For the theoretical perspective, I will reference postcolonial theory which “introduces an important new set of concepts into colonial discourse.”<sup>26</sup> This lead to a particular way of interpreting<sup>27</sup> how postcolonialism contested the hegemonic western ways of seeing things. Sources are re-read

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<sup>24</sup> Robin Brooke-Smith, *Documents and debates: The scramble for Africa* (Hampshire: Macmillan Education, 1987), 1.

<sup>25</sup> Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in context*, 214.

<sup>26</sup> John Corrie, “Colonialism/Postcolonialism”, in *Dictionary of Mission Theology: Evangelical Foundations*, ed. John Carrie, J. Samuel Escobar, and Wilbert R. Shenk (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 62–64, 63.

<sup>27</sup> Bill Ashcroft, “Introduction: A Convivial critical democracy—Post-colonial studies in the twenty-first century”, in *Literature for our times: Postcolonial studies in the twenty-first century*, eds., Bill Ashcroft et al (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012), xvi–xxxv, xvi.

and reinterpreted from the standpoint of the marginalized people who were victims of Western domination, and “continue in a new way [their] anti-colonial struggles of the past.”<sup>28</sup> This particular reading will be the basis of a point of view in this paper. Accordingly, my project presents a critical reflection and view from the margins into colonial and imperial discourse in order to understand the past. Regarding the sources, this paper is a literature-based research whereby I have collected and analyzed data that is relevant to my topic with the help of the above approach.

### **1.6 Literature review and to whom the current study is relevant**

Before I report in my research, it is important to mention selected authors who have written on matters related to my topic and to give an outline of their thoughts. I would like to start by presenting the work of Sugirtharajah, a Sri Lankan biblical hermeneuticist, in *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters*. He surveys the use of the Bible in the third world through three different periods: pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial. He asserts that before the colonial time, the Bible in Asia, and Africa was considered as a minority text due to the paucity of copies and its unavailability in the vernacular languages. Similar to the case of Europe in the pre-Reformation era, the Bible did not play a central role in the lives of individual believers.<sup>29</sup> It was not until colonial times that the Bible became accessible to everyone through the effort of Bible societies to disseminate the scriptures to the colonies. He notices that the circulation of the Bible plus its translation propagated the European culture; albeit the Bible helped the people discover the truth by themselves. The interpretation of the Bible during the colonial embrace was intended to support the status quo. The third period was characterized by the appropriation and the use of the Bible by the colonized as a powerful tool to affirm their identity and emancipation via theological discourse from Western domination.<sup>30</sup>

Musa W. Dube and her colleagues in *Postcolonial Perspectives in African Biblical Interpretation* analyze closely the liaison between Christianity and colonization in Sub-Saharan Africa. In their analysis, they point to the Christian missionaries as being responsible for the misery and loss of lands, cultures and everything that was valuable to Africans due to their collaboration with the colonists. They advance the argument that the propagation of the

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<sup>28</sup> Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: A very short introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 4.

<sup>29</sup> Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the third world*, 13–41.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 45–140, 175–263.

Gospel often preceded the arrival of the Europeans who came and appropriated the lands of the indigenes. The Bible became a powerful tool to justify European imperialism because the scramble for African land was made through the Bible. The attitude of the missionaries gave a wrong picture of the Christian God because the African saw nothing else than a God who supports injustice, the destruction of their cultures, and the loss of their lands. This situation is reflected in the popular saying in Africa that the whites had the Bible and the Africans had the lands and after the missionaries had prayed, they had the lands and the Africans had the Bible.<sup>31</sup>

In the book *The Routledge Companion to Christianity in Africa* edited by Elias Kifon Bongmba, the discussion led by Dube centers on the translation of the Bible during the colonial period. She explains that the history of Africa is a history of loss as it is politically, economically, religiously, and culturally translated to fit the interest of the colonial power. Thus, contemporary Africans are the product of colonialism because they were colonized by the triple Cs: commerce, civilization and Christianity. She claims that the translation of the Bible was the source of the establishment of the patriarchal structure in Africa because everything is narrated from the viewpoint of the colonists who saw themselves as male, strong, and dominant in relation to the colonized who were considered as women, weak, and fit to be dominated.<sup>32</sup> Hence, through the process of translation, the imperial policies eclipsed the African cultures and gave birth to Westernized Africans. Due to lack of communication and the disregard of the local cultures, Dube advanced that the translation of the Bible in some ways has become a source of confusion in the understanding of the divine in some tribes, e.g. the Zulu where a foreign name was introduced to denote their local god. The European missionaries presumed through this attitude their superiority regarding religion and assumed that the Africans had no knowledge of God until their arrival.<sup>33</sup>

Gadji, in his Masters thesis *The Understanding of the Divine among the Dii Tribe, and its Implications for their Christian faith*, made a comparative study of the biblical God and that of the divine among the Dii tribe. He discovered that they shared similarities and differences in the concept of the divine. Gadji considered these similarities as fundamental elements which he saw as “common attributes of the biblical God and that of the divine which helps the

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<sup>31</sup> Musa W. Dube, Andrew M. Mbuvi and Dora R. Mbuwayesango, eds., *Postcolonial perspectives in African biblical interpretations* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 1–16; 221–233.

<sup>32</sup> Musa W. Dube, “Christianity and translation in the colonial context”, in *The Routledge companion to Christianity in Africa*, eds. Elias Kifon Bongmba (NY and London: Routledge, 2016), 156–172, 157–171.

<sup>33</sup> Dube, “Christianity and translation in the colonial context”, 161–162.

Dii to welcome Christianity or to live this faith.”<sup>34</sup> This common ground facilitated the task of the missionaries in spreading the Gospel among the Dii people, and in many other places in Africa. In quoting the words of Joseph Ngah in his own work, Gadji said that “Christianity did not bring God to Africa. God was in Africa before the arrival of Christianity. In other words, the Africans knew God and that is what enabled them to accept the God of the Bible. The task was made easier for the missionaries by the notion of the supreme God already existing in Africa.”<sup>35</sup> The work of Gadji demonstrates that the Dii tribe already had the notion of God. Nevertheless, we have to say that this understanding of God was incomplete until the arrival of the missionaries.

I wish to mention Knut Holter, a preponderant of African biblical hermeneutics, and the arguments that he sets forth in his book *Contextualized Old Testament Scholarship in Africa*. Throughout the book, the main focus of Holter is to bring to the fore what the Old Testament says about Africa and the ways the African cultures and experiences can serve to interpret the book. He concludes that Africa had an important place in the history of the Ancient Near East, and the narration of the Old Testament. Whenever Africa is mentioned in the Old Testament, it is to admire her wealth, wisdom, and military reputation. Unfortunately, the contemporary view of Africa is unbiblical because everything related to Africa is read from a Western perspective which sees the asymmetry of power between the white and the black, the rich and the poor. The West consider themselves as superior, educated while the Africans were barbarians, inferior, and live in the darkness. What is appropriate for them is to be colonized and educated in order to become civilized. Moreover, the whites justified their enslavement of the Africans based on biblical passages such as the incidence where Israel chased the Canaanites from their lands. Colonial hermeneutics justified Western imperialism and enhanced the acceptance of colonization as part of natural order. In agreement with Dube and her colleagues, Holter maintained that the Bible was used in establishing colonial occupation of Africa.<sup>36</sup>

This research may be relevant to other continents that shared a similar history with Africa during colonial period and were also victims of the Western domination. Besides theological students in Sub-Saharan African, this research is equally valuable for Madagascar and the

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<sup>34</sup> Gadji, “The understanding of the divine among the Dii tribe, and its implications for their Christian faith”, unpublished Master thesis (School of mission and theology: Stavanger, 2007), 21–43.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>36</sup> Knut Holter, *Contextualized Old Testament scholarship in Africa* (Nairobi, Kenya: Acton Publisher, 2008), 1–78.

MLC to which I belong. Like the majority of the countries in Africa, the arrival of Christianity in Madagascar and the introduction of the Bible can be traced back to European missionaries. Sadly, research dealing with my theme is uncommon in the theological centers in the MLC, or even in Madagascar because most of the relevant sources related to colonialism and the works of Missionaries in Sub-Saharan Africa were written by the Europeans and are kept in Western Universities/Museums. There are some parts of the history of the Sub-Saharan people which remain hidden from their views because not everyone has access to these sources. If there are any theological students within the MLC who wrestle with the issue that I address in this paper, I may be among the few. Otherwise, I may be the first native student within the MLC to pioneer this kind of study using postcolonial perspectives whereas the theory is already popular in other parts of Africa. The scarcity of researchers investigating the matter under discussion validates the freshness of this work in my home country and church.

### **1.7 Structure and rationale of the thesis**

I have organized my research under four main headings. Those divisions correspond to the four chapters of this present paper, and are arranged progressively and coherently in the presentation of my arguments. This structure is very helpful because it lets my readers follow the logical flow of ideas that run throughout the thesis.

The first chapter is a general introduction of my work. It is within this chapter that I have presented the background of my study; the main research question; my personal motivation for the research; the aim toward which I am heading; the scope, and limitation and methodology used in collecting data, the literature review and how I structured this study.

The second chapter is devoted entirely to the survey of European imperialism and colonialism in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. Some key terms and theories around which the chapter revolves will be clarified. After that, I will proceed to make a brief survey of European imperialism; its causes and the foundation upon which it rests.

In the third chapter, my main focus is to examine the role of the Bible within the context of the European colonization of Sub-Saharan Africa. Under this heading, my center of interest is on the place of the missionaries within the colonial enterprise; the Bible as a powerful tool for Western imperialism; and the distinguishing features of the colonial hermeneutics.



The last chapter of this work is left for the discussion and critical evaluation of my own findings as an academic researcher. I will conclude this investigation by answering the central question that I have raised in the introduction.

## CHAPTER TWO

### European imperialism and colonialism in the late two decades of the nineteenth century (1870–1914)

#### Introduction

This chapter is an overview of European expansion that stretched back from the fifteenth century when the Western world came into contact with new lands and peoples up to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The focus will be on the connection between Western imperialism and colonialism and the transmission of the Christian faith. Providing this background is important for my project because it covers everything necessary to understand my presentation regarding the colonial expansion of the West and its assertion of its rulership over foreign territories that keeps running throughout this paper. My study will center on the analysis of imperial/colonial systems, the fabrication of imperial/colonial myths, the beginning of Western expansion and its motives, and the singularity of European imperialism in world history. Before engaging on this venture, some key terms and theories must be elucidated because the bulk of my presentation centers on them.

#### 2.1 Defining Key terms and theories in the study

Since dictionaries vary in their definitions of the words “expansionism”, “colonialism”, and “imperialism”, I have decided in the first place to deduce the meaning of each word from their etymology and/or morphology, plus their derivative. This venture will be followed by the presentation of what dictionaries and scholars say about them. As for the words “colonialism” and “imperialism”, both their historical and conceptual meanings will be covered in my study.

##### 2.1.1 *Expansionism*

Etymologically, the word “expansionism” comes from the verb “to expand”, which is a combination of the prefix “ex-”, meaning “out of” or “away from”,<sup>1</sup> and the verbal root “pandere”, which signifies “spread.”<sup>2</sup> Based on its etymology, “to expand” is a verb that expresses mobility. Therefore, the basic meaning of the verb “to expand” is “to increase in

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<sup>1</sup> *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, 1996, ed., s.v. “ex-.”

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, s.v. “expand.”

size” or “to become bigger”<sup>3</sup> through moving away from a certain place to another one. The noun “expansion” suggests “the act of expanding”, or “making something bigger.”<sup>4</sup> When the suffix “-ism”, which denotes “a practice”, “a theory”, “a process”, “conduct or character” peculiar to,<sup>5</sup> is added to the noun “expansion”, then expansionism literally means the expanding attitude of a state. My definition of the term derived from its etymology does not show any difference from the Oxford English Dictionary of English because it defines “expansionism” as “a practice”, “belief”,<sup>6</sup> or “a policy of increasing a country’s size by expanding its territory.”<sup>7</sup> In simple terms, expansionism, from its etymological meaning, is first of all a tendency or disposition of a nation, or an empire to expand. Complementing this with what the dictionaries say, expansionism refers to a political tendency of a country to extend its territorial and economic zones through moving away from its homeland.

### **2.1.2 Colonialism**

To get the full meaning of “colonialism” the words “colony”, and “colonial” are included in my elucidation. A “colony” is “an area that is controlled by or belongs to a country and is usually far away from it.”<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, “colony” stem from a Latin word “colōnia”, which literally means “farm”, “settlement” or “landed estate.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, a colony is a distant territory owned and run by a nation remotely or through settling in the area. The noun “colonial”, which in its adjectival form, means something “of or related to a colony”; “owning or made up of a colony.”<sup>10</sup> Like in the case of expansionism, if “-ism” is suffixed to the adjective “colonial”, “colonialism” describes a policy or behavior characteristic of a state to acquire a colony.

According to dictionaries, “colonialism” can be explained in two different ways. When spatial and temporal senses are implicated, it signifies “a policy or practice by which a country increases its power by gaining control over other areas of the world”<sup>11</sup> outside of their borders. Furthermore, the definition includes occupation and appropriation of overseas

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<sup>3</sup> *Merriam-Webster’s Advanced Learner’s English Dictionary*, 2008 ed., s.v. “to expand.”

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, s.v. “expansion.”

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, s.v. “-ism.”

<sup>6</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2010 ed., s.v. “expansionism.”

<sup>7</sup> *Merriam-Webster’s Advanced Learner’s English Dictionary*, s.v. “expansionism.”

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, s.v. “colony.”

<sup>9</sup> *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, s.v. “colony.”

<sup>10</sup> *Merriam-Webster’s Advanced Learner’s English Dictionary*, s.v. “colonial.”

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, s.v. “colonialism.”

territories by permanent settlement and economical exploitation.<sup>12</sup> Edward Said, a Palestinian American cultural theorist, states that “colonialism,” which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory.”<sup>13</sup> In terms of influence, “colonialism” is “the effect that a powerful country or group of countries has in changing or influencing the way people live in other poorer countries.”<sup>14</sup> In short, colonialism characterizes attitude or policy applied by a powerful distant nation vis-à-vis other countries by regarding them as their colonies. In its essence, colonialism is meant for a pragmatic way whereby a state settles and economically exploits its subjects.<sup>15</sup> Under a colonial system, the assertion of economic, social and political policies is prioritized.<sup>16</sup> In my usage of the terms in this project, I stress both the disposition and the policy of a state towards a country, i.e. domineering attitude, settlement, and economic exploitation.

### 2.1.3 *Imperialism*

Defining the word “empire” raises controversies among scholars. Moreover, definitions offered by dictionaries seem to be limited in their scope. Therefore, opinions of different scholars will be presented to shed light on the word. Michael W. Doyle defines empire as follows:

Empire is a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social, or cultural dependence.<sup>17</sup>

Restated, imperialism is a great effort made by one nation through different means to wield its influence over other countries. The Oxford Learner’s Dictionary of Academic English includes colonization in reiterating what has been mentioned in this definition: “Imperialism is a policy of extending a country’s power and influence through colonization, use of military force (...)”<sup>18</sup>; through “business, culture or language. Doyle confirms this view in his own

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<sup>12</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2010 ed., s.v. “colonialism.”

<sup>13</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and empire* (NY: Vintage Book, 1994), 7.

<sup>14</sup> *Merriam-Webster’s Advanced Learner’s English Dictionary*, s.v. “colonialism.”

<sup>15</sup> Young, *Postcolonialism*, 27.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>17</sup> Michael W. Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1986), 45.

<sup>18</sup> *Oxford Learner’s Dictionary of Academic English*, 2014 ed., s.v. “imperialism.”

statement: “It is then “simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire.”<sup>19</sup> Doyle continues:

Empire (...) is a system of interaction between two political entities, one of which, the dominant metropole, exerts political control over the internal and external policy—the effective sovereignty—of the other, the subordinate periphery.<sup>20</sup>

Apart from a policy that was intended to assert the dominion of one nation over others, an imperial system forms a relationship where two political societies interact asymmetrically towards each other in terms of power. Doyle’s claim that the effort to ascertain one’s influence over others is never accidental but has its own driving force: “The forces and institutions that drive and shape imperialism, moreover, are neither primarily economic nor primarily military but also political, social, and cultural.”<sup>21</sup> For Doyle, imperialism is the disposition of an imperial state to establish its dominion over other nations where the contrast between those who are superior and inferior is distinctly drawn in their interaction. This policy is driven by an imperial pursuit of economic and political influences in its essence through controlling a foreign nation. This position of Doyle is strengthened by Stanley, a British scholar who specialized himself in Church history, in his assertion: “The essence of imperialism is control by an alien national or racial group; such control may be primarily political or primarily economic, and need not imply formal territorial rule.”<sup>22</sup> Said also acknowledged the spirit of imperialism as a tendency to take control over other distant countries without official settlement and said: “Imperialism” is “the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory.”<sup>23</sup> Young understands imperialism as a power. He writes: “Imperialism is characterized by the exercise of power either through direct conquest or (...) through domination: both involve the practice of power through facilitating institutions and ideologies.”<sup>24</sup> Moreover, “it is the deliberate product of a political machine that rules from the centre, and extends its control to the furthest reaches of the peripheries.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Doyle, *Empires*, 45.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>22</sup> Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the flag: protestant missions and British imperialism in the nineteenth and twentieth century* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), 34.

<sup>23</sup> Said, *Culture and empire*, 7.

<sup>24</sup> Young, *Postcolonialism*, 27.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

In sum, imperialism is an imperialistic attitude of a state from the centre in order to establish or maintain its power to its peripheries through trade, culture, civilization, language, religion, and military means. Unlike colonialism, imperialism is more about ideology than visible settlement. Wholly, it represents the global policy used by an empire or state in order to achieve a territorial and economic expansion. In the following section, I will push further my study by viewing colonial and imperial systems.

## **2.2 Analysis of imperial/colonial structures and its modes of operation**

Determining the differences and similarities between colonialism and imperialism is difficult because scholars explain these words from different angles and focuses. Investing time to study the concepts and analyze the imperial and colonial structures as well as their modes of operation helps solve this issue.

Mark Lewis Taylor, a professor of religious practices, analyzes colonialism and imperialism and their connection to Christian theology. He observes that “colonialism and imperialism are closely related phenomena. Both are complex forms of organized power, and both predate Christianity and its theologies.”<sup>26</sup> In the same way, Young, a British postcolonial theorist, underscores that “both colonialism and imperialism involved forms of subjugation of one people by another.”<sup>27</sup> Stanley takes the sixteenth century as a starting point of his study to recall the different meanings that imperialism has taken on through ages:

From the sixteenth to the mid–nineteenth centuries European imperialism most frequently took the form of colonization, the movement to establish white settler communities in the non–European world. In British history this process led to the growth of the ‘first’ British empire in North America and subsequently to the colonization of Australasia.<sup>28</sup>

Stanley implies that if imperialism was understood as a global policy that seeks to exercise power by means of economic and territorial expansion, the settlement by Europeans of the New World from the sixteenth century on has given it another meaning. He states: “The alternative (...) expression of imperialism known as ‘colonialism’ is distinguished from colonization by the fact that the alien dominant group remains non–resident in the

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<sup>26</sup> Mark Lewis Taylor, “Colonialism and imperialism and Christian theology”, in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*, ed. Daniel Patte (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 259–260, 259–260.

<sup>27</sup> Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An historical introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2001), 15.

<sup>28</sup> Stanley, *The Bible and the flag*, 34.

imperialized territory.”<sup>29</sup> He adds: “Colonialism, therefore, may be defined as that form of imperialism in which the imperial power imposes governmental control on a territory without resort to large-scale human settlement.”<sup>30</sup> What Stanley shows from this statement is the original sense of the word colonialism which is another facet of imperialism and does not necessarily involve settlement. Therefore, colonialism used to identify territorial occupation within scholarly debate presently is another form of it as well:

Colonialism in most current scholarly usage is also characterized by the existence of formal territorial control; legal sovereignty has been ceded to or usurped by the imperial power. A third form of imperialism may therefore be defined, namely that of informal imperial control, in which the imperial power wields predominant influence in a territory without resort to either human settlement or formal political rule.<sup>31</sup>

It can be concluded from above that colonialism is a manifestation of imperialism since it consists of governing distantly or settling a territory. However, the course of history and the attitude of the Europeans towards the non-Western world have altered its meaning. This makes me turn my attention to Young because he engaged in a thorough survey of colonialism and imperialism under three main headings in the first chapter of his book: analysis of a historical account of the evolution of the forms of imperialism and colonialism, contrast between colonial and imperial structure, and the two types of colonial/imperial ideologies.<sup>32</sup>

Young argued that in its traditional use, empire represented a single land mass. Imperial expansion started from the centre and did not go beyond that geographical area. It gradually took another meaning and a global dimension after the Europeans set foot on the new continents and started subjugating the local authorities to the jurisdiction of their Crowns. Two imperial structures emerged from this new attitude: a) an imperial structure which is “an empire that was bureaucratically controlled by a government from the centre, and was developed for ideological as well as financial reasons”, and b) the colonial structure which represents “an empire that was developed for settlement by individual communities or for commercial purposes by a trading company.”<sup>33</sup> Young clarified that “colonization was

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<sup>29</sup> Stanley, *The Bible and the flag*, 34.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An historical introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2001), 15–42.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 15–17.

pragmatic and until the nineteenth century generally developed locally in a haphazard way (...), while imperialism was typically driven by ideology from the metropolitan centre and was concerned with the assertion and expansion of state power.”<sup>34</sup> It entails that “colonialism functioned as an activity on the periphery, economically driven; from the home government’s perspective. Imperialism on the other hand, operated from the centre as a policy of state, driven by the grandiose projects of power.”<sup>35</sup> In such a way, imperialism should be analyzed as a concept whereas colonialism as a practice.<sup>36</sup>

This clear distinction has led Young to outline the ways imperial structures operated. First, there was the traditional style which corresponded to the Roman, the Ottoman, and the modern Spanish and Portuguese models of imperialism. This first style was pre-capitalist and was a bureaucracy-focused imperial policy. It manifested itself in taking possession of lands through military conquest, extracting riches, direct taxation, and the conversion of the local people to the faith of the conqueror. The modern mode of imperialism, in contrast, was established by Europe in the nineteenth century. It was multi-faceted and changed according to colonial needs. Nevertheless, there is historical continuity between the two structures because imperial ideology affirmed to those subjects “a formalization of the administration, an increased separation between ruler and ruled, plus a visibly increased cult of masculinity in the rulers.”<sup>37</sup>

Young closes his survey by showing the existence of two trends of imperial ideologies – French and British. According to Young, French imperial theory was typically about colonization and domination, whereas the British one reinforced dominion and dependencies. He advances that French imperialism was fueled by nationalism and an interest to secure political stability at home and the welfare of France. Likewise was the pursuit of the glory of France, particularly the recovery of its image under the magnificent Napoleonic empire on the European continent. Driven by this ambition, France left Europe and set out to conquer the world. The sweeping moves of France in colonizing the world went hand in hand with the assimilation of its culture at the cost of the rejection of the inhabitants’ own culture and beliefs. In such a way, France thought of itself as an agent of civilization in its colonial enterprise. I will come back to this point later because forging theories to justify this undertaking was one of the cornerstones of the classical European imperialism. For French

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<sup>34</sup> Young, *Postcolonialism*, 15–17.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 16–17.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.



imperial ideology, the policy of assimilation was very crucial because it was aimed at integrating the colonies in French territories which implied that technically they were not colonies at all. Subsequently, British and other European monarchs adopted the French imperial ideology, albeit they were poles apart in how they treated their colonies. If French imperial ideology rested on the centralized assimilation, the British imperialism was founded on the loose association.<sup>38</sup>

Before leaving this section, I will bring in the explanation elaborated by Stanley regarding the historical meaning of the word imperialism. In restating what Young has said, Stanley stressed that the word imperialism originated in France in the 1840s and was about “the revival of romantic nationalism” undertaken by the Emperor Louis Napoleon III to bring back the lost glory of France.<sup>39</sup> So until 1880, imperialism was looked at with contempt in Britain because it contained the policy of self-aggrandizement of France in its desire to be powerful in the eyes of the world. Later, the meaning changed when Britain used imperialism to describe a policy that incorporated its overseas colonies in an imperial federation so as to “guarantee Britain’s preeminence as a world power.”<sup>40</sup> To simplify what has been said so far, imperialism originally describes the general policy of France to provide domestic security and the welfare of its population. Internationally, it reveals its dream of political preeminence through conquering the world and acquiring colonies. Thus, the meaning of imperialism evolved progressively. Ever since, imperial dominion has covered both the homeland of the monarch and the detached territories whether settled or administered distantly. In due course, the two-fold ambition of France, together with the concern to civilize its subjects, dominated European policy and mobilized the various crowns to conquer the world at the height of imperialism in the nineteenth century.

As imperialism became ‘High Imperialism’ it also became broader, incorporating enthusiasm for tropical Africa as well as India and the older imperial territories, and combining calculated national self-interest and lofty philanthropic idealism without awareness of incongruity.<sup>41</sup>

This statement explains how imperialism allowed the Europeans to pursue their personal interests disguised under the motive of bringing their civilization to the world. This is the point I am going to consider now.

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<sup>38</sup> Young, *Postcolonialism*, 28–30.

<sup>39</sup> Stanley, *The Bible and the flag*, 36.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

### 2.3 The fabrication of imperial/colonial myths, and the civilizing mission

I have mentioned that the European colonial enterprise was followed by social transformation through the agency of the culture and the religion of the colonists.<sup>42</sup> To reach this goal, forging theories that vindicated the European domination was imperative according to Said:

Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people *require* and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination.<sup>43</sup>

This quotation shows the invasive attitude of the Europeans towards the local inhabitants in their effort to enforce their domination. Stephen Neill, when describing the Portuguese and Spanish enterprises, mentions three approaches that they always used when they came to a new land: “The approach of these two powers to the New World of the West was always marked by three considerations – conquest, settlement, and evangelization.”<sup>44</sup> By reinforcing their superiority over the population, the Europeans saw the rest of the world as uncivilized and waiting to be enlightened:

A core element in the colonizing rhetoric is that the adventurous Europeans pioneered in a savage wilderness and brought civilization to it. Such myths disguise the truth that Europe's glory was gained at the expense of the tragedy of the indigenous populations. In rationalizing the subjugation and near-extirmination of the indigenes, these myths stifle moral scruples and suppress embarrassing facts.<sup>45</sup>

This assertion indicates that cultural imposition was one important constituent of European imperialism and colonialism.<sup>46</sup> Thus, Said explains that “the vocabulary of classic nineteenth-century imperial culture is plentiful with words and concepts like “inferior” or “subject races,” “subordinate people,” “dependency,” “expansion,” and “authority.”<sup>47</sup> Through their fabricated theories, the metropolitan West could manage to reorganize the politics of the

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<sup>42</sup> Michael Prior, *The Bible and colonialism: A moral critique* (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 174.

<sup>43</sup> Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 9.

<sup>44</sup> Neill, *Christian mission*, 143.

<sup>45</sup> Prior, 176.

<sup>46</sup> Stephen Neill, 122.

<sup>47</sup> Said, 7.

occupied societies to respond to the needs of colonists as Michael Prior, a Catholic priest, perceives it:

Colonization results from the determination of a group to encroach upon a foreign terrain. The social transformation that follows is not the result of *laissez faire* policies, or of unpredictable changes in the body politic, but proceeds according to an overall plan which is put into place with some haste, reflecting the determination of the colonizers to alter radically the politics of the region in favour of the colonists.<sup>48</sup>

I will critique this insight of Prior together with the reflection of Taylor regarding the social, cultural, and religious transformation brought by Western imperialism and colonialism to a foreign society. Taylor comments:

Colonialism involves three interactive processes: (1) a society's will to dominate people of another society, setting up structures for controlling those people; (2) rationalizing this domination by marking dominated people as dissimilar and inferior, usually in terms of race; and (3) masking both the domination and the racism by claiming a necessary or virtuous vocation to "Christianize," "civilize," or "develop the dissimilar and inferior others."<sup>49</sup>

Two things can be observed from these quotations: 1) it unmask the willful attitude of a nation to put another society under its domination. The colonial enterprise is embedded through the establishment of a colonial infrastructure together with cultural and religious reorientation. 2) We learn from those thoughts that the invention of terms that emphasized the polarity between the Europeans and the indigenes such as "superior and inferior", "civilized and uncivilized", "black and white", was important. They were devised to demarcate the spatial, social, cultural, and religious boundaries between the colonists and the colonized. Jonathan Ingleby strengthens those points and underpins that "the idea of colonialism usually has a civilizational component, not simply the occupation of territory, but also cultural and religious transformation."<sup>50</sup> He adds that "the almost universal use of the term as a pejorative refers not only to the use of force against indigenous peoples, but also the imposition of a 'foreign' world-view on them."<sup>51</sup>

It is within this framework that one can understand why Christian missionaries came on scene and played a central role during colonial times. The fact is that Christianizing and educating

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<sup>48</sup> Prior, *The Bible and colonialism*, 176.

<sup>49</sup> Taylor, "Colonialism and imperialism and Christian theology", 259.

<sup>50</sup> Corrie, "Colonialism/Postcolonialism", 62.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

the non–Western world were part of the imperial mission to bring the taste of European civilization to uncivilized people.<sup>52</sup> I will develop this point in the third chapter. Dana L. Robert, a historian of Christianity, elaborates on the connection between Western imperialism and the propagation of Christianity. She explains that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, thanks to the translation of the Bible, marked the revitalization and the wide expansion of Catholic missions to recover from the great damage caused by the Reformation.<sup>53</sup> Catholic missionaries from different orders, especially Jesuits, set out to reach the world through the grasping of the Gospel. During the Spanish and Portuguese conquests in Latin America, the Catholic missionaries came together with these two colonial powers to convert the local inhabitants to the Catholic faith. Underscoring the cooperation between the colonial powers and the overall Catholic missions, Robert says that “the majority of Catholic missions from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth centuries coexisted with the colonial expansion of Catholic countries in the Americas and Southeast Asia.”<sup>54</sup> Christian missionaries from Protestant countries, however, still struggled to handle their internal affairs in the sixteenth century.<sup>55</sup> They started looking beyond Europe up through the seventeenth century in order to start trade and plant colonies but were also reacting to the fact that the non–Western world already belonged to the Portuguese and Spanish crowns according to a papal edict of that time.<sup>56</sup> Lamin Sanneh, a Gambian mission historian, says that Christianity emerged as a world religion simply because it came together with Western imperialism and “Europe was a world power” during the phase of its propagation.<sup>57</sup> Next I will review briefly the history of European expansion.

## 2.4 An overview of European expansion and its motives

Historically speaking, the account of European expansion falls into two periods of time. Its early phase was characterized by the predominance of Spanish and Portuguese imperialism in Latin America during the Age of Discovery (1492–1773). Catholic missionaries were very

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<sup>52</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *Disciples of all nations: Pillars of world Christianity* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 218–220.

<sup>53</sup> Dana L. Robert, *Christian mission: How Christianity became a world religion* (Chichester: Wiley–Blackwell, 2009), 35–37.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>57</sup> Sanneh, 217.

active in this period.<sup>58</sup> The second phase of the expansion occurred during the Age of Progress in Europe (1792–1914) when Western imperialism was at its high noon in the nineteenth century. This second period was marked by the emergence of new imperial powers like Britain, France, Belgium, Germany and so forth in Europe during the Age of Progress. This was the era when Protestants became active in Christian missions.<sup>59</sup>

Although scholars agree on the fifteenth century as the beginning of the European colonial expansion, the motives behind this opening out to new territories are a source of divergent opinions. Their arguments range from economic and political emphases to military conquest and the desire to explore the new world. I am going to consider these ideas by setting the fifteenth century as my starting point. Horst Gründer, a modern German scholar, advanced four important motives for the European colonial expansion: overpopulation and hope for a better life, economic drives, pursuit of power and glory, and the civilizing mission.<sup>60</sup>

According to Gründer, European people became dissatisfied with the religious, political, and economic situations in their homelands and emigrated to the newly discovered territories in their dreams of finding better life. Besides emigration, Gründer says that “economic profit and wealth constituted a decisive factor in colonial expansion (...). The dynamism of the growing commercial capitalism must be seen as the primary cause of European colonialism in Latin America.”<sup>61</sup> He advances that “in the mercantile system, the colonies had to contribute to the enrichment of the homeland and in the nineteenth century the search for raw materials and new markets became particularly important.”<sup>62</sup> The fact is that “the acquisition of colonies – according to socioideological for colonialism – was also interpreted as a solution for the inherent economic and social disparities of the modern industrial society.”<sup>63</sup> Moreover, the political landscape in Europe was characterized by rivalry among crowns who struggled for supremacy during the age of imperialism. This context made it more desirable to move elsewhere where it was easier to acquire colonies in order to enhance one’s national prestige.

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<sup>58</sup> Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in context*, 171–203, 206–263.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Horst Gründer, “Colonialism”, in *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, history, perspective*, ed. Karl Müller, Theo Sundermeier, Stephen B. Bevans et al. (NY: Maryknoll, 1997), 67–71, 68.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

As we have seen before, Gründer underscores that the propagation of the Gospel occupied an important place within the framework of colonial enterprise.<sup>64</sup>

Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder interpret European colonial expansion from two angles: a) first it was a consequence of major socio–political and religious changes that occurred in Europe in the second half of the fifteenth century. This period was distinguished by the transition of Europe from a traditional society, based on a feudal and agricultural system, to a modern one which adopted totalitarian monarchial regime.<sup>65</sup> This new political orientation paved the way for European imperialism because it was linked to the rise of monarchism: “The beginning of European overseas imperialism in the late 1400s and early 1500s was, through no coincidence, connected to the rise of absolutist, unified monarchies in Europe.”<sup>66</sup> The peculiarity of this new form of government was its neglect of religion or the use of it as “a tool of the state.”<sup>67</sup> b) Another important event that made this century unique was the European contact with new peoples and lands,<sup>68</sup> which began with the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus in 1492:

Christopher Columbus’s act of writing to the Crown to announce the Discovery was an event almost as momentous as the act of discovering itself. Not only did his letter make the fact of the historical event known to others, but the very future of the enterprise depended on how it was represented to those who were in the position to decide its fate.<sup>69</sup>

The content of this letter produced a great enthusiasm to explore the New World and prepared the way for European expansion. Ultimately, this love for adventure stimulated the European dream of widening of their territories and justified the political nature of the voyages they undertook.<sup>70</sup> It is not surprising consequently to see soldiers, colonists, and Christian missionaries rushing into the new territories in the wake of the discoveries in order to find a way to conquer them.<sup>71</sup> This first interaction between the West and the non–European

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<sup>64</sup> Robert, *Christian mission*, 68.

<sup>65</sup> Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in context*, 171–2.

<sup>66</sup> Robert Aldrich and Cindy McCreery, “European sovereigns and their empires ‘beyond the seas’”, in *Crowns and colonies: European monarchies and overseas empires*, ed. Robert Aldrich and Cindy McCreery (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 1–26, 23.

<sup>67</sup> Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, 172.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>69</sup> Margarita Zamora, “The Writings of Christopher Columbus”, in *Bloom’s literature themes: Exploration and colonization*, ed. Harold Bloom (NY: Infobase Publishing, 2010), 15–30, 31.

<sup>70</sup> Prior, *The Bible and colonialism*, 49.

<sup>71</sup> Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, 172.

societies evolved gradually and put the new lands under the domination of the European crowns:

The chronicle of the links between monarchies and overseas empires is, thus, a long and complex history, extending from the *prises de possession* of new territories in the Americas under European monarchs in the late 1400s and early 1500s down to ongoing rule, in name, over residual colonial possessions around the world.<sup>72</sup>

The statement hints that the absolute monarchical regime was already in place in Europe but did not have a global shape until the discoveries of new territories where the course of history took a particular direction. After all, colonial enterprise is not a new phenomenon in world history. Gründer took this stand to interpret the extension of the European empire over the world:

From a historical point of view, colonialism is that process of Western expansion which began in the fifteenth century with the explorations by the Portuguese and Spaniards and which resulted in the extension of European rule over more than half of the land surface of the earth and over a third of the world's population. In the perspective of world history, the spread of European colonial domination over a great part of the earth must be understood in the broader context of migrations, colonial undertakings, and empire-building throughout history.<sup>73</sup>

Gründer here implies that a colonial enterprise was something very common in world history which means that the European colonization was another face of it. When pointing to the spirit of imperialism, Said holds that land and the desire to accumulate it are crucial in the imperial policy:

Territory and possessions are at stake, geography and power. Everything about human history is rooted in the earth, which has meant that we must think about habitation, but it has also meant that people have planned to *have* more territory and therefore do something about its indigenous residents.<sup>74</sup>

Said indicates that in order to pursue their political aim, Western crowns aggrandized their images and empires<sup>75</sup> through conquering many foreign territories. Aldrich and McCreery notice that monarchical regimes distinguished the hallmark of the world polity after the Age of discovery:

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<sup>72</sup> Aldrich and Cindy McCreery, "European sovereigns and their empires 'beyond the seas'", 8.

<sup>73</sup> Gründer, "Colonialism", 67.

<sup>74</sup> Said, *Culture and empire*, 7.

<sup>75</sup> Aldrich and Cindy McCreery, 6.

In the mid-1700s, virtually every polity in the world was, in some way, organized according to monarchical principles, with rule exercised by a figure who inherited his or her rights, or had wrestled them from a predecessor and hoped to pass them on to family members of the dynasty. Even in the late nineteenth, republican governments remained an exception (...) in a world where crowned heads reigned and ruled. Many monarchs ruled extensive domains, either continental or overseas, that encompassed a wide variety of people, cultures and territories.<sup>76</sup>

I will end this examination of European expansion by commenting on the peculiarity of this pillar of Western imperialism.

## 2.5 The peculiarity of modern European imperialism and colonialism

In reviewing the past, the Europeans' crowns were not the first to take control of other nations because imperial and colonial structures are as old as the world itself.<sup>77</sup> Doyle maintains that “empires have been key actors in world politics for millennia.”<sup>78</sup> Yet, European imperialism and colonialism were very singular compared to foregone empires because of their long-lasting influence among their colonies even though they presently live in a post-colonial era. This is clear in the affirmation of Gründer: “This process of “Europeanizing the earth” forced indigenous societies to undergo profound social and cultural changes; some of these changes are still going on, and the long-term effects of others are still being felt.”<sup>79</sup> Said has investigated on this matter and argued that the cornerstone of Western imperialism was neither military superiority nor political power but the culture and ideology that the Europeans imposed on their colonies.<sup>80</sup> Said implies that non-European forms of imperialism and colonialism were simply driven by military conquest, political and economic ambition. Therefore, when those empires fell, everything about them vanished with the history.

## Summary

The main task of this chapter was to map out the process of Western expansion which overlapped with the global extension of Christianity up to the fifteenth century. Firstly, my study has shown that the words expansionism, imperialism, colonialism and their derivatives altogether describe the global policy of the Europeans toward the non-Western world which

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<sup>76</sup> Aldrich and Cindy McCreery, “European sovereigns and their empires ‘beyond the seas’”, 6.

<sup>77</sup> Taylor, “Colonialism and imperialism and Christian theology”, 259–260.

<sup>78</sup> Doyle, *Empires*, 12.

<sup>79</sup> Gründer, “Colonialism”, 68.

<sup>80</sup> Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 64–66.



became their vassal states in their dominant system. According to my examination, the territorial expansion of Western Europe was driven by its profit capitalism, economic interests, the search for raw materials, and the pursuit of national greatness. Secondly, depending on their imperial policy, European monarchs could also bureaucratically control other nations for ideological and financial purposes which do not necessarily require a territorial settlement. This is an old style imperial system and was employed by the Spaniards and Portuguese and their predecessors the Romans and Ottomans. Colonial administration however was established for pragmatic purposes where economic exploitation, social, political, and cultural transformation together with financial concerns were very important for the colonizing nations. This was a new face of modern imperialism which was applied by the Europeans at the height of European colonial expansion. Finally, Western imperialism was very singular in history because, unlike its precursor, it was founded on the strength of its cultures and ideologies rather than military forces.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **The Bible vis-à-vis European imperialism and colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa in the late nineteenth and twentieth century**

#### **Introduction**

After having sketched the trajectory of European expansion in its broader scope, in this chapter, I will focus on its arrival on African soil. However, my study does not claim to be a comprehensive account of the missionary activity and colonial history in each country in Sub-Saharan Africa. Rather, I will give a broader picture of the enterprises and motives behind their undertakings while investigating simultaneously the use of the religious tradition that connects them. My presentation will touch on the following points: the modern missionary movement in the context of the Enlightenment and the colonial period, the colonialist missions, and their use of the Bible. That being said, the study of Protestant missions in Sub-Saharan Africa should be viewed side by side with European expansionism.

#### **3.1 The modern missionary movement in the context of the colonial period**

By the end of the eighteenth century, the Roman Catholic missions which were in driving force in the early phase of Western expansion regressed considerably because, besides the dissolution of the Jesuit order and other relevant factors,<sup>1</sup> “competition for empire among European nations marked the ebb and flow of missionary activity.”<sup>2</sup> The Protestant nations exemplified by Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Denmark became powerful in control of naval routes and began engaging in missions in the seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> They confronted the Catholic patrons and eclipsed them in international affairs.<sup>4</sup> The new international scene made the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries a great century of missionary movement and it came at the same time as the height of European colonial expansion. In this connection, the missionary activity in the second half of the nineteenth century, despite the recovery of the

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<sup>1</sup> Sebastian Kim and Kirsteen Kim, *Christianity as a world religion* (London: Continuum, 2008), 43.

<sup>2</sup> John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith and Justice Anderson, eds., *Missiology: an introduction to the foundations, history, and strategies of world mission* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 220.

<sup>3</sup> J. A. B. Jongeneel, “The Protestant missionary movement up to 1789”, in *Missiology: An ecumenical introduction: texts and contexts of global Christianity*, eds. A. Camps, L. A. Hoedemaker, M.R. Spinder et al. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1995), 222–228, 224.

<sup>4</sup> Terry, Ebbie Smith and Justice Anderson, 197.

Roman Catholic from this major setback,<sup>5</sup> was chiefly a Protestant movement initiated by Protestant missionary societies.<sup>6</sup> The reference to the nineteenth century in this chapter, however, positions my narratives in a period when Western society had undergone a profound change and embraced completely a new mindset due to the influence of the Enlightenment.<sup>7</sup> Acknowledging that the modern missionary movement was “a child of the Enlightenment” as it greatly shaped “mission thinking and practice”,<sup>8</sup> becoming familiar with its own world will provide a key to unlocking the remainder of my research. My presentation will stretch back from the seventeenth century when the modern era dawned to the zenith of modern imperialism<sup>9</sup> which preceded the events of 1914 that shattered the European optimism.

### **3.2 The world that conceived the modern missionary movement**

My overview of the modern period, which dates from the seventeenth century when it dawned<sup>10</sup> to the crux of Western imperialism and colonialism will be brief because it ranks secondary to my project. I will focus mainly on two things in my inquiry: a) delineating the characteristics of the Enlightenment which emerged in the seventeenth century, fully established in the eighteenth century, and applied in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to reorient the direction of the Western society,<sup>11</sup> and b) considering the religious revivals that arose within Anglo–American Protestantism in order to respond to the challenges raised by the Enlightenment.

#### **3.2.1 *The modern time and its intellectual, scientific, and cultural revolution***

Firstly, the seventeenth century, which was marked by the transition of the West from a traditional society to a modern one, was a turning point in history because it radically altered Europe in terms of religion, politics, culture, and thinking. In sharp contrast to the medieval Christendom world where Christian worldview, ecclesiastical authority, communal life, and spiritual things occupied a central place in the society, the modern world was characterized by

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<sup>5</sup> William A. Smalley, *Translation as mission: Bible translation in the modern missionary movement* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1991), ix.

<sup>6</sup> Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 206.

<sup>7</sup> Garrett Green, “Modernity,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology*, ed. Gareth Jones (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 162.

<sup>8</sup> David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming mission: Paradigm shifts in theology of mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 280.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Neill, *Christian mission*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Revised ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1964), 207.

<sup>10</sup> Garrett Green, 162–178, 163.

<sup>11</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 342.

its radical anthropocentrism,<sup>12</sup> secularism, liberalism, individualism, rationalism, and cultural optimism. Under the Enlightenment influence, people were so rationally<sup>13</sup> and scientifically-oriented that they became skeptical about the dogmas of the Church and pre-modern truths. To be in line with modern thinking, pre-modern traditions must be reconsidered in harmony with the Enlightenment perspective.<sup>14</sup> Secondly, the modern period was an era when technological innovations and scientific progress flourished in order to better human conditions related to the philanthropic concerns of the day.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the period was an age when the European economy underwent a significant change as a result of the Industrial Revolution which began in Britain in the eighteenth century and reached the majority of the European countries. Culturally speaking, the emphasis on individualism, the rise of German Romanticism and the French Revolution altogether prompted the birth of modern nationalism among Western nations and caused in turn the imperial expansion of the West. In short, “the spirit of the Age of Reason was nothing less than an intellectual revolution, a whole new way of looking at God, the world, and one’s self.”<sup>16</sup> The optimism of the Enlightenment overshadowed the Protestant orthodoxy and affected the human view of God. “Under its influence, the Churches tended to view God as the benevolent Creator, humans as intrinsically capable of moral improvement, and the kingdom of God as the crown of the steady progression of Christianity”, notes Bosch.<sup>17</sup> However, the reason-only approach of the Enlightenment created a spiritual thirst among believers and drove them to seek God in their private gatherings. They sought to renew the Church from its inner circle by stressing religious piety and rebuking the Protestant formalism of the day.<sup>18</sup> Thus, different religious revival movements under the influence of the old Pietism, which were energized within Lutheranism and spread to transatlantic Protestantism, constituted one of the hallmarks of the modern period, a theme I shall develop.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Norman E. Thomas, ed., *Classic texts in mission and world Christianity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 50.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Jones, “Introduction”, in *The Enlightenment world*, eds., Martin Fitzpatrick, Peter Jones, Christa Knellwolf, et al. (London, NY: Routledge, 2004), 3–7, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, and Roger E. Olson, *20th century theology: God and the world in a transitional Age*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 17.

<sup>15</sup> Eckman, *Exploring Church history*, 73.

<sup>16</sup> Shelley, *Church history in plain language*, 312.

<sup>17</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 342.

<sup>18</sup> Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist, *History of the world Christian movement: modern Christian from 1454–1800* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), “Three important movements within Protestantism.”

<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Strom, “Introduction: Pietism and community in Europe and North America”, in *Pietism and community in Europe and North America: 1650–1850*, ed. Jonathan Strom (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2010), 1–14, 1

### 3.2.2 *The conversionism and the millennial kingdom of the Pietism*

Between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, important religious movements broke out among in Anglo–American Protestantism. The first movement which occurred in 1730s and 1740s concentrated on two places: in Britain it was called “the Evangelical Revival”, whereas “the Great Awakening” was used to refer to its manifestation among the Dutch Reformed congregation in the thirteenth colonies.<sup>20</sup> The movement was very pivotal because it gave to the Church a new consciousness for worldwide mission and this eventually led to the creation of Protestant missionary societies supported by individual spirit–enlightened Christians.<sup>21</sup> Despite the active involvement of the Moravian Brethren and Bohemian in mission,<sup>22</sup> the first revival did not produce a dramatic missionary movement<sup>23</sup> because it was much more about rekindling the spirituality of the Anglo–American Protestantism than passing the message to the outer world.

The Second Great Awakening in the early nineteenth century centered on the North American Protestantism. It differed from the first one by the explosion of worldwide missions alongside the creation of missionary organizations among Protestantism.<sup>24</sup> Secondly, an optimistic view of the world derived from eschatological expectations dominated North American Protestant theology in particular and mission thinking in general during the nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup> Both religious and secular motives were contained in this theological perspective because the betterment of the human society replicated the dawning of the Kingdom of God on earth. Protestant missionaries therefore were zealous to usher in the reign of Christ by mass converting sinners. This theological stand categorized Protestant missions in the nineteenth century as Postmillennialists according to Bosch.<sup>26</sup> The reality in the thirteen colonies, however, posed a central problem for this theology due to social injustice. Such an issue necessitated the reconsideration of the existing theology so that it could address social problems. The Social Gospel was born to respond to this new concern.<sup>27</sup> These religious revivals played a considerable role in stimulating the modern missionary movement which

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<sup>20</sup> Jim Wallis, *The Great Awakening: reviving faith & politics in a post–religious right America* (NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), 2.

<sup>21</sup> Robert, *Christian mission*, 44–45.

<sup>22</sup> Roger Bowen, ‘...So I send you’: *a study guide to mission* (London: SPCK, 1996), 95.

<sup>23</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 283.

<sup>24</sup> Terry, Ebbie Smith and Justice Anderson, *Missiology*, 228–229.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas, *Classic texts in mission and world Christianity*, 58–59.

<sup>26</sup> Bosch, 288.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 285–290.

was their “autumnal child”<sup>28</sup> according to Walls. Additionally, they provided missionaries, and networked interregional, interdenominational, and international societies in carrying out this task.<sup>29</sup> Everything I have said so far shows that the foundation of the modern missionary movement was already laid down by the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>30</sup>

### **3.3 The heyday of the Christian expansion and colonialist missions**

Roger Bowen, an English scholar, sketches the evolution of the Christian mission and says that in the beginning, the Christian church was active in missionary activity through its individual members. When it turned into a state religion in a later centuries “the Church has lost its sense of mission” and the Christian nations shouldered this mission henceforth.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, before the nineteenth century, two mindsets governed the Church perspective on mission: firstly, it was believed that the Great commission of Christ in Matt. 28:18–20 was only binding to the Apostles. Secondly, the Christian worldview was dominated both by the Calvinian predestination and election of God in his sovereignty and the Enlightenment belief in the salvation of the heathen by their virtues. These mindsets rendered the mission of the Church pointless.<sup>32</sup> The situation, however, changed in the nineteenth century with the explosion of an unparalleled worldwide mission.

#### ***3.3.1 The voluntarism and the creation of Protestant missionary societies***

What sparked the fire of the missionary movement was the reconsideration of the biblical mandate for missions (Mat. 28:18–20) used as a vehicle in the book *An enquiry into the obligations of Christians to use means for the conversion of the heathen* published in 1792 by the English Baptist William Carrey (1761–1834).<sup>33</sup> He claimed that if the Great Commission applied solely to the disciples, then the Church in all its undertakings would walk in a wrong direction. Rather, it is the responsibility of the Church and its organs to spread the Gospel so that Christians show through all means that they long for the coming of the Kingdom of God

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<sup>28</sup> Walls, *The Missionary movement in Christian history*, 79.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 79–80.

<sup>30</sup> Terry, Ebbie Smith and Justice Anderson, *Missiology*, 198.

<sup>31</sup> Bowen, ‘...So I send you’, 76.

<sup>32</sup> Jongeneel, “The Protestant missionary movement up to 1789”, 226.

<sup>33</sup> Robert, *Christian mission*, 45.

and the manifestation of His will on earth as it is in heaven.<sup>34</sup> For Carrey, the arrival of the reign of God is visible through the conversion of heathens and the philanthropic concern expressed in the Social Gospel because they reflect the character of God.<sup>35</sup>

The word of Carrey inspired the Protestant nations, especially Britain and the North America to engage themselves in mission. Beginning with the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792, it similarly caused the creation of missionary societies within Protestantism and Catholicism which were based on voluntarism and composed mainly of ordinary people.<sup>36</sup> To mention some, the London Missionary Society (1795), the Netherlands Missionary Society (1797), the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804), the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (1810), the Danish Missionary Society (1821), Society for the Propagation of Faith (1822), the Berlin Missionary Society (1824), and so forth. These different mission societies became the first pillars of the success of the modern mission<sup>37</sup> because the common goal shared by different denominations led them to work ecumenically in fulfilling their missions as they convened in the Edinburgh conference in 1910.<sup>38</sup> In its early stages, the stress of the missionary paradigm shaped by Enlightenment and Pietism falls on “personal conversion” and “soul-saving”<sup>39</sup>, whereas church planting dominates mission thinking in later times.<sup>40</sup> Sub-Saharan Africa was one of the most important mission fields of the Protestant missionary during the colonial period. Nevertheless, Christian outreach to Africa paralleled the colonial expansion of the West to the continent. This capitalism-oriented venture constitutes the second pillar of the success of the modern mission.

### ***3.3.2 The Industrial Revolution and the new face of Western imperialism and colonialism***

Since Church missions depend on the colonial powers; the decline of the Catholic patrons from the international scene marked also the weakening of the Catholic missions. Accordingly, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which were the pinnacle of new Western imperialism that centered on Britain and France, marked similarly the resurgence of

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<sup>34</sup> William Carrey, *An enquiry into the obligations of Christians to use means for the conversion of the heathen* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press Limited, 1792), 8–9.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>36</sup> Robert, *Christian mission*, 64–65.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Wind, “The Protestant missionary movement from 1789 to 1963”, 237.

<sup>39</sup> James A. Scherer, “Church, Kingdom, and Missio Dei”, in *The Good News of the kingdom: Mission theology for the third millennium*, eds. Charles Van Egen, Dean S. Gilliland and Paul Pierson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 82–88, 82.

<sup>40</sup> Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 213.

the expanded missionary activity under the wings of the Protestant powers.<sup>41</sup> Roy C. Bridges investigates the cause of modern imperialism and notes that it was the product of the economic and technological shifts introduced by the Industrial Revolution in modernity:

The pace and scale of European overseas enterprise greatly increased in the nineteenth century as a result of the economic and technological changes of the Industrial Revolution. The accompanying rise in European population had its effects (...), while there was a constant search for new sources of raw materials, new markets and new investment opportunities. The most direct impact of technological change was in the improvement of communications. Better sailing ships were built (...). On land, thousands of miles of railway track were laid. Telegraphic services were also a significant development.<sup>42</sup>

If paraphrased, modern imperialism results from the transition of Europe from an agrarian to an industrial economy based on machinery and manufacturing. This economic shift drove Western society to consider the rest of the world as both providers of raw materials<sup>43</sup> and new places for cheap markets. Moreover, what was at stake with the industrialized Europe was not so much the superiority of their technologies as the use of them in their encounter with the outside world:

Yet, European expansion cannot be studied only in terms of economic and technology: political, religious, moral and social attitudes towards the outside world (...) profoundly modified the use which Europe made of its material superiority.

When put together, Bridges implies that the Industrial Revolution which began in Britain did not influence only European societies and economies but affected the whole world as the industrial nations competed among themselves and rush into new continental territories<sup>44</sup> with the help of their modern technologies. The success of the modern imperialism then lies in the superiority of the Western technologies. Daniel R. Headrick explains that the conquest of new lands by modern imperialism was much easier compared to the previous one due to technological shifts that permitted them to master seas, build railways, create machine guns and telegraphs.<sup>45</sup> As Britain was the first industrialized nation which was better equipped in the eighteenth century; the British Empire “became the first in history to span the entire globe,

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<sup>41</sup> Terry, Ebbie Smith and Justice Anderson, *Missiology*, 212–213.

<sup>42</sup> Bridges, Paul Dukes, J. D. Hargreaves et al., *Nations and empires*, 154.

<sup>43</sup> Farhadian, *Introducing World Christianity*, 67.

<sup>44</sup> Daniel R. Headrick, *The tentacles of progress: Technology transfer in the age of imperialism, 1850–1940* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1988), 5.

<sup>45</sup> Headrick, *The tentacles of progress*, 5.



while other empires ambitiously measured themselves by its model.”<sup>46</sup> In the heyday of imperialism this privilege ranked the British Empire on the top list of the colonial powers that dominated the overseas trade and commerce ahead of its rivals France, and other Western countries like Germany and Belgium.<sup>47</sup> Protestant missionaries preceded or followed their patron nations in their trades; the African continent was one of their principal targets as the partition of Africa shows. The interaction between missionaries and colonists in this period makes it important to examine the nature of relationships between them.

### **3.4 The interrelationship between missionaries and colonialists**

Although the activities of missionaries and colonialists take divergent directions, the common goal between them makes their paths intersect.

#### ***3.4.1 The missionary movement as a concomitant of mercantile enterprise***

Based on the presentation of Edmond J. Dunn, the connection between colonialism and the outburst of missionary enterprise can be viewed from the accompanist and the matrix perspectives.<sup>48</sup> The accompanist perspective “suggests that it was on the wings of colonialism that the Christian message spread to the ends of the earth. Christian missionaries merely accompanied the explorers, merchants, imperialists”, Dunn maintains.<sup>49</sup> In other words, “it was governments and commercial companies that for the most part controlled and directed this early missionary enterprise.”<sup>50</sup> Bosch in his missiological reflections on the church–state relationships names five traditions that illustrate the attitudes of missionaries toward the state. One of the styles that he evokes, which corresponds to what Dunn describes here, is the Constantinian model because it “presupposes a *close alliance between a particular religious organization and the state.*”<sup>51</sup> What Dunn and Bosch describe symbolizes the Catholic paradigm of mission during the Spanish and Portuguese expansion (1492–1789). Both the

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<sup>46</sup> Jürgen Osterhammel, *The transformation of the world: A global history of the nineteenth century*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), xv.

<sup>47</sup> Headrick, *The tentacles of progress*, 42–45.

<sup>48</sup> Dunn, *Missionary theology*, 10.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>51</sup> David Jacobus Bosch, “God’s reign and the rulers of this world”, in *The Good News of the kingdom: Mission theology for the third millennium*, eds. Charles Van Egen, Dean S. Gilliland and Paul Pierson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 89–95, 89.

Church and the imperial powers cooperated in spreading the Gospel<sup>52</sup> because they believed that “Christendom would promote European civilization overseas.”<sup>53</sup> Missionaries would go to wherever colonists advanced<sup>54</sup> and this makes the colonial conquest and the missionary activity go hand in hand.<sup>55</sup> Civil authorities under the mandate of the Pope saw it as part of their civilizing mission to propagate Christianity, whereas the Roman Catholic missions under the patronage of secular authorities advanced the imperial cause by supporting their political schemes.<sup>56</sup> The emerging Protestant powers adopted this style in their missionary enterprises and immersed themselves in trade and commerce in their global outreach.<sup>57</sup> The success of the modern missionary movement then lies in its dependence on “the model of the colonial–mercantile–imperial or neo–colonial–liberal–capitalist enterprise.”<sup>58</sup> This makes “the modern missionary movement (...) a product of mercantile expansion” according to Orlando Enrique Costas, a Hispanic theologian.<sup>59</sup>

One significant change that typified the Enlightenment was the clear separation between the Church and State which points to pietist style of mission.<sup>60</sup> Committed to the pietist style, modern European expansion at its beginning was primarily a political enterprise. Conversely, the early wave of the missionaries was more fanatical and denounced the colonial policy applied to local peoples.<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately, the symbiotic relationship between Church and State was reaffirmed because of the arrival of other Protestant missionaries who were much accommodating to colonists and became their instruments.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, the nineteenth century was an age of empire–building, nation and nation–states in Europe, characterized by its Eurocentrism. Great changes imposed by the Age of Revolution (1789–1848), the Age of Capital (1848–1875), and the Age of Empire (1875–1914) contributed to the building of Europe while destabilizing politically, economically, and culturally the world in their worldwide expansion.<sup>63</sup> New colonial powers such as Germany, the Netherlands, Russia, the

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<sup>52</sup> Neill, *Christian mission*, 6.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>54</sup> Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 172.

<sup>55</sup> Dunn, *Missionary theology*, 11.

<sup>56</sup> Orlando Enrique Costas, *Christ outside the gate: Mission beyond Christendom* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982), 59.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 63–64.

<sup>59</sup> Costas, 63–64.

<sup>60</sup> Bosch, “God’s reign and the rulers of this world, 90.

<sup>61</sup> Robert, *Christian mission*, 49.

<sup>62</sup> Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 213.

<sup>63</sup> Osterhammel, *The transformation of the world*, xx, 48, 392.

United States of America, and Belgium besides Britain and France made their ascendancy to the international scene.<sup>64</sup> The Industrial Revolution, Romantic Movement that inspired the French Revolution in the eighteenth century, and the favorable time prior to 1914 all combined to cause the rising of modern nationalism in Europe.<sup>65</sup> Among the European and North American Protestant nations that expanded globally, the British and German Empires used religion for their self-aggrandizement. To English-speaking Protestants, religious undertaking was used to propagate the cultural superiority of the British Empire while the German-speaking Protestant missions influenced by their national romantic movement<sup>66</sup> affirmed their national glory by means of culture.<sup>67</sup> Sending missionaries for Germany was then a practical way to advertise “German national and colonial cultural propaganda”<sup>68</sup> which cleared the way for German imperialism. In such a context, missionaries were perceived as both “a tool of nationalism at home and imperialism abroad.”<sup>69</sup> The birth of modern nationalism among European and North American countries made them lay to the claim that it was their destiny to rule the rest of the world:

One of the consequences of the development of nationalism was the idea of *manifest destiny*, whereby individual nations of Europe and the United States to the extent that, for example, leaders of Germany, Britain and France would lay out the rules of colonization in the “scramble for Africa” during meetings in Berlin in 1884–1885.<sup>70</sup>

Manifest destiny according to this quotation was central in understanding Western expansionism in the nineteenth century since it justified this expansionism because of the West’s superiority. The combination of political and religious programs during the colonial period leads me to consider the second type of relationship between missionaries and

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<sup>64</sup> A. Camps, “The Catholic Missionary Movement from 1492 to 1789”, in *Missiology: An ecumenical introduction: texts and contexts of global Christianity*, eds. A. Camps, L. A. Hoedemaker, M.R. Spinder et al. (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans, 1995), 213–221, 234.

<sup>65</sup> Robert Nisbet, *The present age: Progress and anarchy in modern America* (NY: Liberty Fund, Inc., 1988), 62.

<sup>66</sup> Martin Ballard, *White men’s God: The extraordinary story of missionaries in Africa* (Oxford: Greenwood World, 2008), 12.

<sup>67</sup> Wind, “The Protestant missionary movement from 1789 to 1963”, 240.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Joel Cabrita and David Maxwell, “Introduction: Relocating world Christianity”, in *Relocating world Christianity: Interdisciplinary studies in universal and local expressions of the Christian faith*, eds. Joel Cabrita, David Maxwell, and Emma Wild-Wood (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 1–44, 6.

<sup>70</sup> Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 207.

colonists advanced by Dunn. He views this relationship from a “matrix perspective” which finds in the spirit of Christianity the germ of colonialism.<sup>71</sup>

### ***3.4.2 The divine call of the white man to convert and civilize the barbarians***

The sense of superiority among the European and American nations reflects what Sugirtharajah observes: “European empires (...) were an outgrowth of industrial capitalism and were marked by distinct cultural domination and penetration which have created the myth of the West as the superior ‘other.’”<sup>72</sup> He adds that this is “a myth which is continually evoked in international disputes, and in political, cultural and theological discourses.”<sup>73</sup>

One revolutionary perspective introduced by Evangelicals was the understanding of divine purpose in history as advancing His plan of salvation through the agencies of His elected people. Their history “was regarded as an ordered process” that moved according to divine design.<sup>74</sup> Reflecting on the privileged position of the British Empire at that time, the Protestants missionary societies started believing the empire as chosen by God to bring light to the world. The contribution of the American theology in buttressing this biblical ideology was very important; the North–Americans who also considered them as biblical people interpreted their past experience as an exodus from the tyranny of England. They understood themselves as both the new Israel and Rome whose task was to change the world through establishing the rule of law to the uncivilized and lawless peoples.<sup>75</sup> Subsequently, European nations considered their empires as God–given instruments to fulfill His plan in human history.<sup>76</sup> Thus, “the belief that God was acting through the New Israel [i.e. the Europeans and the North Americans in this context] to regenerate the world and establish universal righteousness persisted into the nineteenth and twentieth century as a worldview.”<sup>77</sup>

Grounded on this ideology, missionaries and colonists interpreted their outreach to the non–Western world as their vocation because they believed that their advanced positions qualified

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<sup>71</sup> Dunn, *Missionary theology*, 10.

<sup>72</sup> R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and empire: Postcolonial explorations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Stanley, *The Bible and the flag*, 68

<sup>75</sup> Richard A. Horsley, “Introduction: the Bible and empires”, in *In the shadow of empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a history of faithful resistance*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 1–7, 1–4.

<sup>76</sup> Stanley, 68–69.

<sup>77</sup> Horsley, “Introduction: the Bible and empires”, 2.

them to be the agents of God in bringing light to the dark continents.<sup>78</sup> As they expressed this in terms such as “carrying the white man’s burdens”, missionaries and colonialists were brought closer to each other by their mission and agreed that it was their responsibility to uplift the barbarians by civilizing and converting them to Christianity.<sup>79</sup> This conviction revived European expansion and threw the imperial powers into the scramble for overseas territory.<sup>80</sup> In many cases, it was missionaries that asked their patrons to appropriate a certain territory before other rival nations came and did it in their place.<sup>81</sup> Dunn explains that “the Christian faith is inextricably bound to Western economic and political systems. The great century of missionary expansion was not only the great century of industrialization, capitalism and colonialism, but the former gave birth and impetus to the latter.”<sup>82</sup> In interpreting the words of Van Leeuwen, he says that “there is a theological explanation for Western civilization and, indeed, an overall theology of history.”<sup>83</sup> Said, however, sees the imperialistic attitude of Western societies from another position and explains that the rise of modern imperialism cannot be severed from the inspiration of the classical European realistic novels in the nineteenth century which nurtured and supported Western imperial spirit as distinguished by its egocentricity. The self-interest behind imperialism was then hidden under colonial philanthropic sentiments, propagation of religion, and the advancement of science to colonized territories.<sup>84</sup>

Though the Enlightenment strove to divorce religion from Western society, missionary activity during colonial history affirms the impossibility of the separation because Western Europe is a child of Christianity.<sup>85</sup> Christian values are embedded in the European civilization just as the former finds its expression in Christianity, i.e. Christianization channels Western values while Westernization transmits Christian ideals.<sup>86</sup> This intertwinement leads Kim to say that “the two activities of converting and civilizing were largely synonymous because

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<sup>78</sup> Dunn, *Missionary theology*, 17.

<sup>79</sup> Walls, *The Cross–Cultural Process in Christian History*, 177.

<sup>80</sup> Roy C. Bridges, Paul Dukes, J. D. Hargreaves et al., eds., *Nations and empires. Documents on the history of Europe and on its relations with the world since 1648* (London: Macmillan Education, 1969), 154.

<sup>81</sup> Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 214.

<sup>82</sup> Dunn, 15.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>84</sup> Said, *Culture and empire*, 12.

<sup>85</sup> Corrie, “Colonialism/Postcolonialism”, 62–63.

<sup>86</sup> Edmond J. Dunn, *Missionary theology: foundations in development* (Washington: University Press of America, 1980), 10.

Pietistic Christian faith had strong implications for moral behavior and way of living.”<sup>87</sup> They continue to say that “missionaries were increasingly co-opted by colonial governments as a cheap way of ‘civilizing’ their populations by providing education and healthcare, and introducing Western standards of hygiene, agricultural methods and other technologies.”<sup>88</sup> This situation pictures missionaries as “handmaids of colonialism who mediated Western values and ideas, as well as formal structures of empire, to local converts.”<sup>89</sup> For the most part, missionary activity had the appearance of being a part of the work of colonization<sup>90</sup> because “whatever the reality, the missionary movement often described itself in ‘colonial’ language (‘the spread of civilization’, ‘advance’, ‘progress’...).”<sup>91</sup> John Corrie avers that “because the spread of world Christianity has largely taken place in the modern era, it has been difficult to disassociate it from colonial history.”<sup>92</sup> This is so because Christianity and Western civilization were just two sides of the same coin in the sense that it was the Church which reared Western Europe after the decline of the Roman Empire and shaped its culture in the course of its history.<sup>93</sup> Hence, ideologies like capitalism, socialism, nationalism, new technological innovations and scientific inventions, found their source in the spirit of Christianity.<sup>94</sup> Concisely, the expansionist attitude of the West and their global outlook, specifically in the African soil of my study has its biblical foundation as the majority of the industrialized nations which raped Africa in modern imperialism were Christians. This makes the Bible a powerful tool in the hands of colonists in building empires in Africa during the colonial period as Sugirtharajah once said that besides trades, the gunboats, and the flag, the Bible was “a defining symbol of European expansion.”<sup>95</sup> For this reason, the success of Western imperialism and colonialism in Africa cannot be ascribed solely to the supremacy of European weapons but also to the imperialistic side of the Bible.

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<sup>87</sup> Kim and Kirsteen Kim, *Christianity as a world religion*, 42.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Cabrita and David Maxwell, “Introduction: Relocating world Christianity”, 6.

<sup>90</sup> Dunn, *Missionary theology*, 11.

<sup>91</sup> Corrie, “Colonialism/Postcolonialism”, 62.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the rise of Western culture* (NY, London: Doubleday, 1991), 26.

<sup>94</sup> Dunn, 16.

<sup>95</sup> Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the third world*, 1.

### 3.5 The Bible used as an imperializing tradition during the empire–building age in Sub–Saharan Africa

In the following part the thrust of my presentation centers on the idea that Western imperialism and missionary activity reached Sub–Saharan Africa as a result of the European commerce, civilization, and Christianity.<sup>96</sup>

#### 3.5.1 *The scramble for Africa analogous to Israelite conquest–settlement in biblical narratives*

Jürgen Osterhammel explains that the nineteenth century was the last stage of European discoveries. When grabbing new territories to build an empire, distant powers did not always achieve their goal using force. They, instead, sent pioneers like merchants, settlers, missionaries, ethnographers, geologists, etc. as their forerunners who gave an account of the visited lands.<sup>97</sup> It was during this last phase of world adventure that the discovery of much of Sub–Saharan Africa took place by one of its outstanding explorers David Livingstone (1813–73), a Scottish Missionary to Southern Africa.<sup>98</sup>

In the history of European imperialism the quest for wealth, power, and glory alongside philanthropic sentiments was manifested in the propagation of Christianity and the civilizing mission was always central to this expansion.<sup>99</sup> In the fifteenth century the first contact between Africa on its western coast and the European countries as represented by Portugal was established through trade. Dube et al. however, clarify that this early presence of the Europeans in Africa does not involve colonization of lands as they focused on slave trade and mineral extraction.<sup>100</sup> After unsuccessful attempts to explore the interior of the continent, the activities of the European powers, i.e. trades and missions were confined to the coasts of Africa which abounded in mineral resources.<sup>101</sup> However, the chronicling of modern

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<sup>96</sup> Klaus Koschorke, Frieder Ludwig and Mariano Delgado, eds., *A history of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America 1450–1990: A documentary sourcebook* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2007), 189.

<sup>97</sup> Osterhammel, *The transformation of the world*, 324.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>99</sup> Gründer, “Colonialism”, 68.

<sup>100</sup> Dube, Andrew M. Mbuvi and Dora R. Mbuwayesango, *Postcolonial perspectives in African biblical interpretations*, 2.

<sup>101</sup> Josiah Tyler, *Livingstone lost and found: Or Africa and its explorers: A complete account of the country and its inhabitants, their customs, manners, &c., of the prominent missionary stations, of the diamond and gold fields, and of explorations made; with a comprehensive biographical sketch of Dr. David Livingstone, his travels, adventures, experiences and disappearance; and a most interesting account of his discovery, in command of Henry M. Stanley* (Hartford, Conn.: Mutual Publishing Company, 1873), 92–98, 109–110.

imperialism begins with Livingstone's exploration to open up the continent for Western commerce, civilization, and Christianity<sup>102</sup> and his appeal to Britain in 1857 to extend its commerce into the interior of Africa:

I beg to direct your attention to Africa: — I know that in a few years I shall be cut off in that country, which is now open; do not let it be shut again! I go back to Africa to try to make an open path for commerce and Christianity; do you carry out the work which I have begun. I LEAVE IT WITH YOU!<sup>103</sup>

Just as the account of Columbus in 1492 changed the destiny of Latin America, the letter of Livingstone shifted the trajectory of the European imperial outreach to the African continent. Inspired by the favorable conditions in the heart of Africa and conditioned by political stability in Europe in post-Napoleonic era, European nations dashed into Africa, annexed territories and competitively grabbed lands.<sup>104</sup> Steven Press, however, clarified that the reality of the scramble for Africa is misunderstood if the conquest of the land comes primarily to one's mind. The real invasion which began in 1890s was preceded by the race of possessing Africa through paper starting in the 1880s. The competition consisted first of all of claiming "treaties, or paper deeds, which nominally sold to Europeans the titles to govern various territories." Forging such documents was part of colonial policy regarding land appropriation in order to mask land stealing.<sup>105</sup> Missionaries that accompanied their patrons in their exploration of Africa operated in the spiritual domain by initiating the evangelization of the inhabitants.<sup>106</sup> This rapid annexation of the African continent at the height of modern imperialism is what historians describe the scramble for Africa.<sup>107</sup> Africa was one of the continents that suffered bitterly from the atrocities of European invasion which was characterized by military aggression and violent seizure of lands that cost lives of many Africans.<sup>108</sup> So as to avoid conflict between the powers, it was necessary to fix rules and procedures for the annexation of the continent during the Berlin Conference.<sup>109</sup> Interestingly,

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<sup>102</sup> Dube, Andrew M. Mbuvi and Dora R. Mbuwayesango, *Postcolonial perspectives in African biblical interpretations*, 2.

<sup>103</sup> David Livingstone, *Dr Livingstone's Cambridge lectures: Together with a prefatory letter by the Rev. Professor Sedgwick*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell and Co., 1860), 168.

<sup>104</sup> Steven Press, *Rogue empires: Contracts and conmen in Europe's scramble for Africa* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017), 4.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 4–5.

<sup>106</sup> Koschorke, Frieder Ludwig and Mariano Delgado, *A history of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America 1450–1990*, 195.

<sup>107</sup> Brooke-Smith, *Documents and debates*, 1.

<sup>108</sup> Dube, Andrew M. Mbuvi and Dora R. Mbuwayesango, 3.

<sup>109</sup> Brooke-Smith, 2.



Christian missionaries were present at this meeting which implied their approval of the political scheme of their patrons:

The end of the nineteenth century was a colonial “climax.” Each Western colonial power was poised to grab and own every available piece of Africa. There was such competition and tension between colonial powers that it necessitated regulation to avoid war. The situation led to the infamous Berlin Conference of 1884–85, which sought a more agreeable way of partitioning the African continent among Western colonial powers. This was the so-called Scramble for Africa. African communities and their lands were, of course, neither consulted nor invited to the Berlin Conference. The participants were Western European powers, traders, and their missionaries.<sup>110</sup>

The collaboration of missionaries with colonists is clearly seen in the incident described by Dube and her associates. It shows the dual role of missionaries vis-à-vis Western modern colonialism. Holter perceives that they were advocates of western expansion because the colonial administration sheltered them.<sup>111</sup> This image led some to say that all missionary activity either in the past or in the nineteenth century is “a prostitution to Western imperialism” because “missionaries represented European domination in the same way that the traders and administrators did.”<sup>112</sup> This reality is evoked by David L. Edwards, an Anglican priest, when he says that the patronage of missionaries as a proper part of imperialism in scrambling for Africa during the conference of Berlin was established and acknowledged by their colonial authorities. Their role was to be responsible for the spread of the Christian civilization.<sup>113</sup> It was the combination of mission and civilization in the nineteenth century that introduced Christianity and the Bible to many places in Sub-Saharan Africa<sup>114</sup> as the northern part had been acquainted with Christianity since ancient times. Coming back to what Dunn says, the world perspective of the Europeans finds its rationale in the spirit of Christianity which was a fusion of the superiority complex of the Greeks and the global outlook of Israel that stemmed from the awareness of its exclusiveness and elect status among nations.<sup>115</sup> The West, in their expansion, drew on the two traditions as “the superiority complex of the Greeks carried with it a sense of responsibility for educating and civilizing the

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<sup>110</sup> Dube, Andrew M. Mbuvi and Dora R. Mbuwayesango, *Postcolonial perspectives in African biblical interpretations*, 3.

<sup>111</sup> Holter, *Contextualized Old Testament Scholarship*, 9.

<sup>112</sup> Dunn, *Missionary theology*, 19.

<sup>113</sup> David L. Edwards, *The futures of Christianity: An analysis of historical, contemporary, and future trends within the worldwide Church* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1987), 179.

<sup>114</sup> Edwards, *The futures of Christianity*, 178–179.

<sup>115</sup> Dunn, 17.

barbarians” while the global outlook of Israel validated the conquest of other nations in the name of the Lord.<sup>116</sup>

I will proceed to demonstrate that the Bible, albeit not the cause of colonial expansion, offers “a milieu, a justification, and an impetus for the expansionist policies of “Christian” states.<sup>117</sup> During classical imperialism, “the Bible was a frequent source of colonial cross-reference, particularly the ideas of a chosen people and the conquest of land. Some have even seen Christianity as an inherently ‘colonizing’ religion.”<sup>118</sup> As Said once said, territory and the desire to have them were central to the rise of Western imperialism which was fueled by the thirst of power and economic greed among Protestant nations. Since it is impossible to conceive any spaces as empty and uninhabited as Said holds,<sup>119</sup> colonialists created a threefold scheming argument to claim their ownership of inhabitants’ lands: their right as conquerors, their right to appropriate lands inhabited by absentee herdsmen or hunter-gatherers, and their right to civilize the savages.<sup>120</sup> I will further develop my discussion of the issue of land by bringing in the insights of Prior and of John Teehan. Prior has engaged in the study of moral problems raised by biblical land traditions among the people of the book and has paid special attention to their attitude towards the outside world. He observes that the Hexateuch with its account of divine favor of one nation over others and the invasion of foreign territories (Deut. 20:13–17; Josh. 1–12) has generated racial discrimination, ethnocentric and xenophobic attitudes which are divinely legitimatised.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, biblical texts dealing with divine promise of already occupied lands to a particular nation followed by wholesale massacres of entire communities, under divine directives in order to settle on it as in Deut. 7:16: “You shall devour all the people that Yahweh your God is giving over to you, showing them no pity”, present moral issues. In fact, they contain the seed of colonialism and give an impression that the whole world is to be conquered as if it were already handed over by God to His faithful.<sup>122</sup> If read from the approach of Teehan in whose thought religion in general and Christianity in particular is inherently exclusivism, conquest-settlement texts in the Hebrew bible show two things. Overall, they illustrate divine support of violence and the colonial attitude of ancient Israel which sacrifices the lives of other people

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<sup>116</sup> Dunn, *Missionary theology*, 17.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>118</sup> Corrie, “Colonialism/Postcolonialism”, 62.

<sup>119</sup> Said, *Culture and empire*, 7, 10.

<sup>120</sup> Osterhammel, *The transformation of the world*, 323, 327.

<sup>121</sup> Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism*, 34.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

considered as godless so as to suppress their religion and establish in the land the monotheistic worship of Israel – a worldwide mission which is tied up to its election. This means according to Teehan that holy warfare in the Hebrew Bible is not a mindless violence but has a religious purpose<sup>123</sup> as Joshua and Judges offer theological justification for the conquest and occupation of foreign lands.<sup>124</sup> Secondly, they reflect the intersection of political and religious spheres under the theocratic regime of the Old Testament where the success of a secular undertaking of Israel is understood as a sign of divine assistance. It is not by coincidence then that such texts and the like were “used in support of colonialism in several regions and periods in which the native people were the counterparts of the Hittites, the Gergashites, and others.”<sup>125</sup> Based on the Hexateuch tradition then, Prior implies that the imperial nations throughout history see nothing in the success of their conquests but the hand of God which gives them victory in their march towards the heathen lands. This theocratic view of the Old Testament, coupled with Luther’s concept of vocation whereby divine calling is experienced in worldly activity, shaped the ethic of the nineteenth century Protestants and preconditioned the rise of modern capitalism according to Max Weber, a German sociologist.<sup>126</sup> Thus, secular activities in Protestant asceticism receive religious significance and the success of their worldly affairs is interpreted as a distinctive mark of divine blessing. This explains why colonialism and Christian missions went hand in hand during the colonial period because imperial nations understood their secular enterprise also as a religious activity and if necessary, coercive means can be used to propagate universal Christianity. Dube and her colleagues when reconsidering the scramble for Africa note that “the modern history of the Western colonization of Africa was a violent process of taking Africa by force. It was indeed a gang rape, so to speak (...). We bear the wounds of the “Scramble for Africa” upon our bodies and lands.”<sup>127</sup> This saying implies that Sub-Saharan people lose much more than they win during colonial missions because they have the Bible in their hands at the cost of their lives, lands, and cultures. A popular saying in Sub-Saharan Africa summarizes what happened during modern Western imperialism: “When the white man came to our country, he had the Bible and we had the land. The white man said to us, ‘let us pray’. After the prayer,

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<sup>123</sup> John Teehan, *In the name of God: The evolutionary origins of religious ethics and violence* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 160–165, 169

<sup>124</sup> Dube, Andrew M. Mbuvi, and Dora R. Mbuwayesango, *Postcolonial Perspectives*, 222.

<sup>125</sup> Prior, *The Bible and colonialism*, 34.

<sup>126</sup> Max Weber, *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London, NY: Routledge, 2005), 14–19, 40.

<sup>127</sup> Dube, Andrew M. Mbuvi, and Dora R. Mbuwayesango, 3.

the white man had the land and we had the Bible.”<sup>128</sup> Dube enriches the meaning of this saying by recalling the circumstances out of which it arose:

The story summarizes the sub-Saharan African experience of colonization. It explains how colonization was connected to the coming of the white man, how it was connected to his use of the Bible, and how the black African possession of the Bible is connected to the white man’s taking of African people’s land.<sup>129</sup>

This quotation illustrates the popular understanding of the connection between Western imperialism and evangelism in Sub-Saharan Africa. I need to say one last thing regarding the criticism of Prior relating to the perspective from which the biblical tradition on land in the Old Testament is viewed. He verbalizes that tradition addressing conquests and settlement of Israel in Canaan tells the story from the perspective of Israel and disregards the experiences of the natives. Nevertheless, their case has never been considered in theological reflection of biblical scholars for their arguments center on the Canaanites land as a gift of God to Israel as a token of His promise to their forefathers. This lack of concern for the natives characterizes similarly modern European imperialism fired by religious motives in the African continent.<sup>130</sup> If I combine the reflection of Prior and Teehan with the matrix perspective of Dunn in viewing Western conquest of the African land, European powers just repeated what ancient Israel did to the nations they considered to be infidels because of their feeling of racial and religious superiority that finds its source in their Bible. Seen from this standpoint, the Bible which should function as a liberating tradition for the helpless Africa was used as an oppressing tool during the colonial period.<sup>131</sup> This imperializing concern, however, singularly characterized Western biblical interpretation in Sub-Saharan Africa during the colonial period for “the *Scramble for Africa was the Scramble for Africa through the Bible.*”<sup>132</sup>

### 3.5.2 *Characteristics of the biblical hermeneutics under colonial context*

Essentially, biblical hermeneutics during colonial times in Africa served colonial interests by justifying their colonial enterprise and maintaining the status quo. Thus, the same Bible which commissions the Protestant nations to extend Christianity in foreign territories (Mat. 28:18–

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<sup>128</sup> Musa W. Dube and Jeffrey L. Staley, eds., *John and postcolonialism: Travel, spaces, and power* (New York: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 2002), 51.

<sup>129</sup> Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial feminist interpretation of the Bible* (Saint Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2000), 3.

<sup>130</sup> Prior, *The Bible and colonialism*, 39.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>132</sup> Dube, Andrew M. Mbuvi, and Dora R. Mbuwayesango, *Postcolonial perspectives*, 4.

20) is used also as an authoritative tradition that gives them a mandate to convert, civilize, and colonize different nations.<sup>133</sup> Keeping in mind that conquests and land occupation of the Old Testament has its theological justification<sup>134</sup>, modern imperialism and colonialism in Africa is also related to an Old Testament view of the world.<sup>135</sup> Holter in considering opinions of some scholars sees a similarity between the world outlook of Israel and Western colonial expansion in Africa and explains why the Old Testament is a suitable book for the support of modern imperialism and colonialism in the continent. Firstly, colonists equate themselves with ancient Israel that marched towards the Promised Land to their scramble for Africa to politically and religiously conquer the continent. Secondly, the Old Testament concepts of peoples and nations were used by the colonialists to classify the Africans and organize the world to fit their political scheme. Thirdly, he mentions that by reading the interaction of the King Solomon (1 Kgs. 10) with the supposedly African city of Ophir and his importation of gold and precious stones from there, colonialists in Africa thought they were just walking in the way their predecessors had walked.<sup>136</sup> Sugirtharajah marks some features of colonial hermeneutics and expresses that colonial interpretation is constantly changing because its main objective is to reinforce the perception of colonialism and consider it as a part of natural orders. Besides, colonial hermeneutics emphasizes an unequal view in considering people within the imperial system in order to wield colonial hegemony and demarcate the line between colonists and the colonized. Therefore, the invention of the contrastive pairings such as male/female, white/black, Christian/savage, civilized/barbaric is used to both intensify this demarcation and explain the rights of colonists to dominate because of their superiority.<sup>137</sup> Next to biblical narratives on land conquest, Holter argues that some texts in the Hebrew Scriptures like the Curse of Ham (Gen. 9:20–27) and the blackness of African skin (Jer. 13:23) have been distorted by colonialists to interpret and defend the subjugation of black Africans to slavery and colonialism. Being descendants of Ham, they were divinely accursed and fit to be dominated by their brothers. Holter holds that this denigrating view on the Africans is unbiblical because they, known as Cushites, had a central place in the narrative of the Old Testament and were regarded by biblical authors with a high esteem.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Gerald O. West, *The stolen Bible: From tool of imperialism to African icon* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2016), 15–16.

<sup>134</sup> Dube, *Postcolonial feminist interpretation of the Bible*, 222.

<sup>135</sup> Holter, *Contextualized Old Testament Scholarship*, 15.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 15–6.

<sup>137</sup> Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the third world*, 61–3.

<sup>138</sup> Holter, *Contextualized Old Testament Scholarship*, 4–5, 55.

### 3.5.3 *The transformation of the Sub-Saharan traditional society and the translation of its cultures and inhabitants through scriptural cultural imperialism*

Like Said,<sup>139</sup> Sugirtharajah notices that “Western imperialism has been the most powerful ideological construction” of the time as previous imperial powers did not impose their culture upon the other.<sup>140</sup> Given that my presentation in chapter two<sup>141</sup> has already covered the cultural transformation of the colonized, what is left to do here is to show that in tropical Africa the process of Westernization of the Africans was made through the establishment of Christian universalism, Bible translation, and its dissemination among colonies.

Teehan approaches Christianity and its Bible from its ethical side and scrutinizes the context out of which it emerged. Tracing it back from its origin in the first-century Palestine, which was the climax of Jewish sectarianism, he alleges that Christianity is a religion that grew out of Judaism as both shared the same traditions. Nevertheless, it competed with Judaism together with other local religious groups and sought to be more universal in its scope by abolishing all ethnic boundaries as the passage “[T]here is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female” states Galatians 3.28. As a consequence, a new ethnic which is marked by its allegiance to Christ and His teachings (1 Cor. 12:13) was formed by His Gospel.<sup>142</sup> According to Teehan then, though Christianity strives to establish universalism, it has another side which is exclusivism because of the universal moral standards laid down by Christ (Mat. 5–7). This is considered as being superior by sustaining the community but simultaneously excluding those who do not keep it.<sup>143</sup> In his assessment of Christianity, the author highlights both its merits and demerits which show that everyone can become a Christian through conversion but it is only a Christian that may be saved. Thus, people with other moral values that are found outside of this group are considered by in-group people as inferior, damned, less human or even demonic. To Teehan’s thinking, the central problem of Christianity lies in its universal claim which negates the human conditions of out-group people but calls or coercively compels them to conform to their standards. He, along with scholars that he mentions in his work, perceives that the association of universalism to political power is very perilous because it generates imperialism as well as cultural annihilation of others that live differently. It is not

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<sup>139</sup> cf. §2.5.

<sup>140</sup> Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the third world*, 3–4.

<sup>141</sup> cf. §2.3; 2.5.

<sup>142</sup> Teehan, *In the name of God*, 104–6,

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 168–71.

the pairing with political power to Christianity, however, that gives the latter its aggressive nature; instead it is Christianity itself which is violent and this combination simply provides a means to put this violence into effect.<sup>144</sup>

The insight of Teehan is illuminating in considering the arrival of Christianity, its implantation and the transformation which it affected afterwards in tropical African society during the heyday of European imperialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The universalist/exclusivist worldview of Christianity as Teehan describes it,<sup>145</sup> was used by Western missionaries to deal with the local Africans who were viewed as out-group people. Everything related to them was barbaric in relation to the civilized progress of biblical religion. To transfer them from their society into a new one, conversion, which involves the rejection of their cultures, traditional life, and the adoption of the European manner, was necessary because their culture was a hindrance to the civilization brought by Christianity.<sup>146</sup> To make the newly converted appreciate Christian values, local culture was devalued, falsified, or twisted by missionaries to make it seem worthless. Thus, the Bible was used as “a vehicle for inculcating European manner” as expressed by Sugirtharajah.<sup>147</sup> As an illustration, the transformation of the Ugandan society, the success of its trades and farming was ascribed to its use of the Bible. Likewise, the account of the mad man in the book of Luke (Lk. 8:26–39) had a significant impact among the Botswanan community. After hearing the story of a mad man who used to be naked but put on clothes when he came to his senses, Botswanans started wearing clothes because nakedness was associated to insanity while putting on clothes was a sign of a civilized person.<sup>148</sup> Elias Kifon Bongmba, a Cameroonian–American scholar, says that Western missionaries “made Christianization into Europeanization.”<sup>149</sup> This indicates that Christianity has alienated Sub-Saharan people from their own lands and cultures. In her elaboration of the theme “I, too, am a translated African woman”, Dube argues that nations, as typified by Africa in her explanation, which were formerly subjected to Western domination were children of colonialism as they were translated by Christianity, commerce, and civilization to become something else. The translation which was based on the Western assumption that black African cultures embodied barbarism and all what is negative,

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<sup>144</sup> Teehan, *In the name of God*, 168–171.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>146</sup> Ballard, *White men's God*, 13.

<sup>147</sup> Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the third world*, 63–64.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> Elias Kifon Bongmba, “Introduction”, in *The Routledge companion to Christianity in Africa*, ed. Elias Kifon Bongmba (NY, London: Routledge, 2016), 1–19, 4.

created what was called the “imagined communities.” Actually, the African hybrid nature would not make them equal to the Europeans, the original version from which they were copied nor would they be like the initial version of themselves.<sup>150</sup> David Tuesday Adamo, an African biblical scholar, observes the exclusivist side of Christianity and criticizes the attitudes of some missionaries and colonists for having smothered everything related to Africa without considering what is positive in it.<sup>151</sup> By suppressing differences, Christian universalism thus swallowed the tropical African identity, annihilated their cultures and everything that made them what they were simply because they were out-group people. This “extreme negativism” of Western missionaries towards other religions and cultures as Stanley sees it<sup>152</sup> is easy to comprehend if the perspective of Prior is used regarding the imperialistic nature of the Hebrew Bible together with the Christian universalism/exclusivism of Teehan. Based on the Old Testament condemnation of other religions as idolatry<sup>153</sup> and the text of Rom. 1: 18–32, where Paul describes the characteristic of the world separated from its Creator as idolatrous<sup>154</sup>, Christian missionaries saw African religion as idolatry and must be repudiated because it was non-biblical and had no eschatological purpose.<sup>155</sup> Just as Paul revealed the healing power of the Gospel of Christ to the damned world in Rom. 3:21–26, Western missionaries in their soteriological concern offered Christianity and the Bible to converts as an alternative for their religion; they required the converts’ repudiation of their religious texts by burning them.<sup>156</sup> As a whole, these missionaries saw their undertaking in Sub-Saharan Africa as a campaign launched against the idolatry of heathens<sup>157</sup> in order to let the light of the Gospel shine on the darkness.

Assuming that the Bible was the source of a superior civilization, its vernacularization and dissemination during the colonial period proves to be important in Sub-Saharan Africa. One hallmark of the Protestant missionaries which aligns with their principles is their commitment to the promotion of the Christian literature through printing, Bible translation, and

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<sup>150</sup> Musa W. Dube, “Christianity and translation in the colonial context”, in *The Routledge to Christianity in Africa*, ed. Elias Kifon Bongmba, 156–172, 156–161.

<sup>151</sup> David Tuesday Adamo, *Reading and interpreting the Bible in African indigenous Churches* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 2.

<sup>152</sup> Stanley, *The Bible and the flag*, 64.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1998), 91–93.

<sup>155</sup> Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the third world*, 70.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> Stanley, 62–63.



distribution.<sup>158</sup> The British and Foreign Bible Society was formed in 1804 to carry out this task. Its formation solemnly marked the beginning of scriptural imperialism which finds its source in the Society's understanding of its mission. It saw itself as the chosen instrument of God to transmit the Bible first entrusted to the Jews then, and now passed to the Christians represented particularly by the British Empire, through its agency the Bible Society, as it has the religious and political claim to do so owing to its privileged position.<sup>159</sup> However, the fact that Bible translation and its wider circulation intertwined with colonial history and ideology were not accidental but had another purpose which aligned with the colonial project.<sup>160</sup> Such a coincidence gives me another way to view the motive behind this innovative initiative. Actually, the intended purpose for this noble undertaking was not so much to make the Bible accessible to the people in their mother tongues as to serve the interests of colonialists in their cultural conquest – to translate the indigenes into foreign languages, into cultural, “political and economic paradigms.”<sup>161</sup> This made Bible translation central for the colonial project because it was one important tool of modernization which would establish Western culture if people had it in their hands.<sup>162</sup> This explains why the Bible which was reserved for a minority and translated into few languages in precolonial time was now made available for ordinary people in their own languages.<sup>163</sup> Translators resorted to Western concepts and thoughts to impose the meaning of biblical passages because both heathens and their languages must be Christianized before they could convey the Christian message.<sup>164</sup> Even though the translated Bible constituted one source of the growth of Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa, Dube views the translation task as a patriarchal and colonization processes. To back up her position, she takes as an example the colonial translation of the biblical Deity among the “Iraqw” of Tanzania, whose tribal God Loola is conceived as a female while the evil power is described as a male. Nevertheless, when rendering the biblical deity in the Iraqw Bible translation, Loola was made male by translators. Dube judges this missionary-colonial representation of God in a masculine form among Iraqw as inadequate and turns everything upside down. The position of translators in this matter is, however, very clear; they avoided using the local Deity and imported the Swahili male God “Mungu” into the Iraqw Bible translation because of the

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<sup>158</sup> Robert, *Christian mission*, 48–49.

<sup>159</sup> Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the third world*, 56–57.

<sup>160</sup> Dube, “Christianity and translation in the colonial context”, 160.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>162</sup> Smalley, *Translation as mission*, 193–194.

<sup>163</sup> Sugirtharajah, 45–52, 13, 40, 56–58.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

different theology presented by the feminine noun Loola even though it met the Christian qualities and attributes of God as Provider, Protector, and Giver of life. This shows that Bible translation with its male-centered representation of God stripped women off their power and transferred it to the male which entrenched a patriarchal system throughout tropical Africa.<sup>165</sup>

An American linguist, William A. Smalley, however, sees the translation task from another angle and underpins what other scholars fail to notice. Smalley explains that Bible translation has always been the priority of the Church throughout centuries so as to domesticate Christianity. Smalley explains that rendering the Bible accessible to other languages is never easy because of the dissimilarity of cultures, experiences, and worldviews between the worlds of the original and the target audiences.<sup>166</sup> Above all, he clarifies that a Bible translation has an ecumenical purpose which should contribute to the inclusion of a particular nation within the global community of faith and agree with the established doctrine of the Church like One God, one teaching, and one faith (Eph. 4:5). This goal asks translators to set a limit in their translation so as to preserve the basic teachings. In other words, if a translation is a threat to this communion, universality of the Church is to be prioritized over its particularity. This explains why the establishment of a Church in a new vernacular always involves the change of the existing cultures, language, and community.<sup>167</sup>

## Summary

My presentation in this chapter concerns the use of the Bible in the context of the colonial period during the Age of New Imperialism in Africa. Firstly, my study has revealed that the great changes brought by the Age of Revolution, the Age of Capital, and the Age of Empire in Europe impacted on domestic as well as international relations in the later part of the nineteenth century. Those changes helped build up the Western society, nurtured nationalism among European nations, and occasioned the emergence of new colonial powers which entered in competition with Britain and France which were the two masters of the world at that time.<sup>168</sup> Motivated by their desire for self-aggrandizement, social, religious, and humanitarian causes plus Industrial profiteering, the industrialized nations raced to establish their empires in the African continent. Secondly, my research has also demonstrated that Christian missions were intertwined with the colonial enterprise because missionaries

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<sup>165</sup> Dube, "Christianity and translation in the colonial context", 167–168.

<sup>166</sup> Smalley, *Translation as mission*, 1–2; 6–9.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 153–163.

<sup>168</sup> Young, *Postcolonialism*, 31.

accompanied their patrons in their conquest of Sub-Saharan and were preoccupied with spiritual matters. Western missionaries played an important role in establishing the colonial rule in Africa because their biblical interpretation legitimated it. Colonial nations too turned to the Hebrew Bible with its account of the conquest and settlement of the Canaanite lands to justify their undertakings. Finally, the Bible with its Eurocentrism was very critical of the African cultures and did not incorporate any local elements in its vernacularization. The Scramble for Africa through the Bible, the inconsideration of the local cultures, and the suppression of the African identity through the Bible translation caused frustration among many African scholars and made them very critical of the colonial use of the Bible. I will take into account this criticism in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Critical evaluation of the colonial use of the Bible during the empire– building age in Sub–Saharan Africa

#### Introduction

I will in this chapter engage in a critical evaluation of colonialist missions and my criticism will be directed at the colonial biblical hermeneutics through the lens of postcolonial theory. This particular way of reading introduces both a critical view of Western literature written from the perspective of the colonial powers and brings in a view of societies which were in the margins of the empires. As a whole, these societies represent the great losers of history; they voice what has been silenced,<sup>1</sup> and assert their own identity through a postcolonial reading.<sup>2</sup>

Based on my findings, I will focus my discussion on three marks of the colonial use of the Bible which I consider problematic for Christian ethics and morals. They are the use of the Bible as an imperializing text, the missionaries' support of their colonial biblical hermeneutics, and the non–contextualization of their hermeneutics. The first point that I would like to discuss here is the Europeans' justification of their colonial projects through their biblical interpretation during the Age of New Imperialism.

#### 4.1 Reassessing the European myths of superiority and the use of the Bible as an imperializing tradition

In my evaluation of the use the Bible in the context of colonization in Sub–Saharan Africa, I will review my presentation of the mechanisms of Western imperialism and then demonstrate the problems this creates when the Bible is involved. Acknowledging the importance of two interdependent books by Said, *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*,<sup>3</sup> I consider that his detailed analysis of the connection of culture with empire in his own background of belonging to both sides of the imperial divides in his writings, offers a useful interpretation of the phenomenon of Western imperialism and colonialism. Said argues that the whole edifice of

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<sup>1</sup> Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 66.

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Ingleby, *Beyond empire: Postcolonialism and mission in a global context* (Milton Keynes: Authorhouse, 2010), xviii.

<sup>3</sup> Valerie Kennedy, Edward Said: *A critical introduction* (Malden: Polity Press, 2000), “Introduction.”

European imperialism was constructed upon the force of its cultures and ideologies.<sup>4</sup> It implies that ideology is much more powerful than any other arms in the hands of colonial powers. It was because of its strength that they used this weapon to conquer the world, lay down the foundation of their empires and sustain them with this ideology.

During the empire-building age then, inventing and elaborating impressive theories of imperialism became the main concern of the European nations in their desire to project and justify their domination over other racial groups.<sup>5</sup> One of the influential ideologies that impelled classical imperialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was the emergence of Social Darwinism, a social and political theory elaborated and popularized by a philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820–1903).<sup>6</sup> Charles Darwin in his revolutionary theory “the survival of the fittest” argues that the sacrifice of weaker animals for others’ survival was imposed by the natural law among animals when they were threatened with extinction.<sup>7</sup> This theory was applied to human society whereby waging a war to dominate and exterminate the weakest was justified to secure the survival of the strongest and expand their living space.<sup>8</sup> The tangible impact of this theory was that not only the European nations competed among themselves but also took advantage of Africa. With Darwinism’s hierarchic view of races and/or nations, the metropolitan West asserted its racial, cultural, and religious myths of superiority to explain its colonial policies in Sub-Saharan Africa. In what he calls “rhetoric figures” and “stereotypes” about others, Said is already aware of these ideological formations on the part of an imperial nation to justify its dominion and claim its right for conquering and settling a land. The rhetoric of imperialists centers on their polarization of the world in which they see their culture and race as superior in relation to others’ which are stereotyped as primitive and barbaric. It is this superiority of culture that differentiates imperialists from their subjects, “us” from “them”; “they were not like us,” and for that reason deserved to be ruled”<sup>9</sup> and caused all kinds of violence whenever they rebelled:

History showed that when a civilized race tried to govern a savage race, the latter rebelled. The conquest of the savage race was therefore a pre-requisite for the development of

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<sup>4</sup> Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 64–66.

<sup>5</sup> Stanley, *The Bible and the flag*, 34

<sup>6</sup> Mike Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American thought, 1860–1945: Nature as mode and nature as threat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 82.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Darwin, *The origin of species: By means of natural selection* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 70.

<sup>8</sup> Hawkins, 4–6, 36–38, 82, 184–204.

<sup>9</sup> Said, xii.

civilization, even though this undoubtedly involved bloodshed and injustice against the primitive race.<sup>10</sup>

As far as the establishment of empires in Sub-Saharan Africa is concerned, it reveals the real force of the European fabricated ideologies which were much more powerful than their military weapons. Basically, other European nations which shared the conviction with the British Empire thought they were so privileged and superior that “the gift of colonization” was granted to them also.<sup>11</sup>

It is within this rhetorical framework that the biblical tradition becomes important in the hands of white man during the colonial history in Sub-Saharan Africa. The colonialists needed this, in their ideological implementation, as a canonical tradition that justifies their imperialization of the continent. Actually, some biblical elements, such as conquests and settlements narratives, and being a chosen nation suit their imperial ideologies. This “imperial idea of being a chosen nation” gave birth to “British Israelism”<sup>12</sup> which was later adopted by other colonial powers. In parallel with theory of social Darwinism, it was through the Bible that the colonialists legitimized their conquest, settlement and extermination of native inhabitants in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is on this particular use of the Bible as an imperializing and oppressing weapon that my criticism centers because when it was exploited and distorted to support colonization, it caused devastating effects in Sub-Saharan Africa. I am not discussing here the imperial policies of the West to conquer Africa and I have shown that imperialism and colonialism have always been part of human history during which one stronger nation imposed its hegemony while others faded away. Rather, my focus is a disapproval of the rationalization of such domination and the cruelty that accompany it through the Bible. When evaluated against the painful experience lived out by the Africans after the arrival of the West and Christianity in their lands, the claim that the white man came because of their responsibility to uplift the savages and benefit their subjects within their imperial systems is untenable. Instead, the reality in Africa during the colonial period exposes the real face of Western imperialism characterized by its thirst of power and economic interests. The inconsistency between what the imperialists said and what they actually did in Africa makes me reject their claim and turn to Said when he says that religion, civilization, philanthropic concerns are nothing but a mask used by imperial nations to cover their

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<sup>10</sup> Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 205.

<sup>11</sup> Walls, *The cross-cultural process in Christian history*, 187–188.

<sup>12</sup> Said, 186.

expansionist policies.<sup>13</sup> This makes what Ingleby says, in his review of imperialism contrasted to the Kingdom of God, that earthly empires were built on lies and destruction: “In every age the false Empire also claims to be a healer, but this is a blasphemous lie. In fact, the Empire is characterized by disease.”<sup>14</sup>

I will discuss the views of Dunn, Prior, Holter, and Teeran on some controversies raised by the Christian Scriptures in light of this context. While viewing the Bible from different angles, they all point to the Bible as the source of inspiration of the European nations in their imperial attitude towards other nations, due to the concepts of a chosen nation and the conquest–settlement accounts. Given that the majority, if not all the colonial powers that established their vast empires in Africa, were Christian nations and that the destruction of the native inhabitants was directly related to their use of the Bible, it can be argued that the sufferings of the Sub-Saharan Africans came from the people of God. And if it was from the people of God, then it must be at least consented by their God. The devastating attitude of the Europeans vis-à-vis the Africans, their conquest, and appropriation of the already settled territories in Sub-Saharan Africa replicate the global outlook of Israel towards other nations and accordingly validates the observation made by the aforementioned scholars. In his critical view on the land conquests in the Old Testament, Prior sets forth what he thinks disturbing in the Bible:

The occupation of another people's land invariably involves systematic pillage and killing. What distinguishes the biblical accounts of this activity (...) is that it is presented as having not only divine approval, but as being mandated by the divinity. In the book of Joshua, in particular, the Israelites killed in conformity with the directives of God. This presentation of God as requiring the destruction of others poses problems for anyone who presumes that the conduct of an ethical God will not fall lower than decent, secular behavior.<sup>15</sup>

With this remark of Prior one is confronted with one of the most controversial sides of the Bible, in which God asked the mass extermination of other peoples. Even though the position of Prior in his disfavor of Israel and the Zionist enterprise influences much of his writings such as *The Bible and Colonialism: A moral critique*,<sup>16</sup> his reading of the narrative from the

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<sup>13</sup> Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 12.

<sup>14</sup> Ingleby, *Beyond empire*, 28.

<sup>15</sup> Prior, *The Bible and colonialism*, 34.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Prior, *Zionism and the state of Israel: A moral inquiry* (London, NY: Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), x–xi.

perspective of those often neglected by the author of the Hexateuch<sup>17</sup> makes me to think that there are also parts of the Bible that biblical scholars need to accept are problematic. This controversial side of the sacred text makes Prior and Teehan conclude, in their analysis of the role of the Bible of violence done in the name of God, that it is this sacred tradition which constitutes the central problem. Prior shows in his study that there is a recurrent use of the biblical paradigm of the Israelite conquest–settlement in occupying Palestine, in the occupation of Latin America; and South Africa by colonialists. It is on this basis that he considers the apology of biblical scholars who feel sorry for the use of the Bible as an instrument in the imperial context and he advances that it is not the biblical text but the misuse of it which should be blamed. In response, Prior argues that to say so is not to take seriously the ethical dimensions of the biblical narrative on land tradition but is eschewing the real issue. He challenges them by maintaining that it is not the “perverse predispositions of the biblical interpreter”<sup>18</sup> that generate violence but the violent nature of the Bible.<sup>19</sup> Teehan, with his impressive research on the evolutionary origins on religious ethics and violence in his book *In the Name of God*, argues that religion, though referred to as a potential source of good morality, also has a “violent belief systems”<sup>20</sup> and cannot be absolved of bloodshed done in its name:

Religion is often presented as a force for good in the world, and yet it is too often implicated in some of the greatest of the greatest evils of which humans are capable. A popular, and understandable, strategy for reconciling these facts is to exonerate religion by distancing it from the violence done in its name, to shift the focus to the individuals who abuse religion by twisting its good teachings to their own corrupt ends. I argue that this move is unwarranted.<sup>21</sup>

This remark of Teehan on the violent nature of a religion, or a particular religion, strengthens the point that Prior has made because the two scholars disagree with the view that the use of the Bible not the Bible itself which is violent. To support his claim, Teehan narrows down his study by approaching Judeo–Christian religious texts from his evolutionary perspective. When focusing on Hebrew texts that narrate the divine command of the total destruction of entire communities, Teehan questions the disturbing moral character of God presented in the Hebrew Scriptures and realizes that the Old Testament contradicts itself by showing the

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<sup>17</sup> Prior, *The Bible and colonialism*, 43.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 45–46.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>20</sup> Teehan, *In the name of God*, 147.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.



merciful and at the same time the violent God.<sup>22</sup> When explaining everything from the same perspective, he says that both Judaism and Christianity are violent towards outer groups because of their exclusivism and their struggle for existence vis-à-vis other religions which represent a threat to them. Their religious texts then serve to reinforce a moral cohesion of the in-group and demarcate them from the out-group towards which the use of violence is justified. Yet, Teehan notices that in every reference to brutality done to the out-group people, the role of God is very central because His picture of a violent and vengeful God runs throughout the Judeo-Christian traditions.<sup>23</sup> His challenging statement on the dual nature of the Gospel summarizes the spirit of Judaism and Christianity so far as his core argument throughout his book is concerned:

There is something very powerful at work here, something very different from the gospel of love, of which Christians are so rightly proud. There is also a gospel of hate and enmity embedded in the moral tradition of Christianity; and with an evolutionary perspective we can see that both of these gospels have their roots in the same ground – the in – group/out – group mentality that infuses our moral instincts.<sup>24</sup>

Like Prior, Teehan in this statement is also aware of the sufferings of other peoples by the hands of religious people because of their religious texts which generate hatred, violence, and prejudices.<sup>25</sup> This is another way to express the word of Prior when he says that “the first six books of the Hebrew Bible reflect some ethnocentric, racist and xenophobic sentiments that appear to receive the highest possible legitimacy in the form of divine approval.”<sup>26</sup> In my discussion, the perspective of Prior and Teehan, when blended together gives a good ground in understanding the attitude of the Christian nations that colonized Africa because it explains that their acts are driven by their religious texts.

The seriousness of the issue raised by these scholars regarding the Bible and its involvement in oppression of people requires me to evaluate their opinions. The consideration of the argument of Teehan on the exclusivist side of religion, namely Christianity, however, will be postponed until I come to the last section of my discussion. While I agree with Dunn and Prior in some way that the Bible contains the seed of colonialism, I have to go to the middle ground in my position for there is also so much to disagree with in their claims. Firstly, I can

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<sup>22</sup> Teehan, *In the name of God*, 149–151

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 123–129; 155–173.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 142–143.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>26</sup> Prior, *The Bible and colonialism*, 34.

draw from the European interpretation of the Scriptures during classical imperialism that the real problem is not so much the Bible as its readers due to their exploitation of the intrinsically violent nature that the Bible also has. Arguing from this view, I claim that the way the Bible was introduced and used in Sub-Saharan Africa, not the Bible itself, was at stake during the colonizing enterprise. Secondly, if Prior and Teehan acknowledge in their study that both love and violence are presented in Judeo-Christian traditions, it can be discussed then that a Bible-based religion is capable of generating both good morality and violence; disregarding the one side of it is to sharpen the other side. The interesting question is then, if Christian values dictated by its sacred text were embedded in Western societies and civilization, why did the European nations which colonized Sub-Saharan Africa use only the violent side of the Bible in their involvement with the Africans during the colonial period but did not show love, sympathy, and peace which were also central in their Bible? The appropriate answer of this question is because this side of the Bible did not match their colonizing enterprise. Consequently, I challenge the opinion of Prior in viewing Western colonialism and imperialism by putting his statement in its reverse. It was not the violent nature of the Bible, albeit I admit its oppressive character, which caused the oppression of the Sub-Saharan people during colonial time; rather, it was the perverse predispositions of the biblical interpreters. If I come out of the religious context of my discussion and focus on the Darwinian theory on the survival of the fittest, it was not originally intended to be in support of imperial and colonial ideologies. Instead, the theory under discussion was modernized, moved from nature to human society with its violence, and elaborated<sup>27</sup> to shape the social and political world view of nineteenth century people. Thus, Darwin was not accountable in his theory for the rise of classical imperialism in the late nineteenth and twentieth century, despite its considerable role in influencing and propelling it. Nonetheless, there was something in his theory that could be used by the imperialists in their ideological application plan. In the same way, there were some violent parts of the Bible which, according to the focal point of my discussion, were useful in the hands of the colonialists. After all, it is Prior himself who supports this argument in his own statement: "Several traditions within the Bible lend themselves to oppressive interpretations and applications precisely because of their inherently oppressive nature."<sup>28</sup> As far as I am concerned, "several traditions within the Bible" as Prior mentions do not mean the Bible as a whole but part of it, which consequently rejects the stereotyped view of the Bible as an oppressing weapon only. Like any other tool,

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<sup>27</sup> Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American thought*, 61–62, 82.

<sup>28</sup> Prior, *The Bible and colonialism*, 46.

the Bible can be used for different purposes depending on the one who takes hold of it. One cannot blame a sharp blade because it hurts even though it is a potential tool for life and death. However, the one to blame is the one who takes it and causes the hurt with it. Through this deductive reasoning, it is therefore the misuse of the Bible and not the Bible itself which determines its character. It is inferred from the colonial mark of hermeneutics that this particular way of reading and interpreting the Bible reflected the symbiotic relationship between the civic and ecclesiastical powers which characterized the overall political, religious, cultural, economic, and social context of transatlantic Protestantism in the modern era. In sum, colonial powers, because of their ideological enforcement, developed what Prior described as a “theology of oppression”<sup>29</sup> i.e. the articulation of the biblical tradition to validate oppression. So far, I have discussed the interpretation of the Bible from the perspective of the colonial powers. Now, I will include Christian missionaries in these biblical hermeneutics by viewing their position vis-à-vis the colonialists’ application of theology to their empires.

#### **4.2 Evaluation of the colonial biblical hermeneutics**

Essentially, my discussion above shows that colonial powers rationalized their imperial expansion in Sub-Saharan Africa through biblical tradition. The direct consequences of the rationalization of the oppression through the Bible were the dispossession, humiliation, and mass extermination of Africans. While witnessing the sufferings of the Africans because of the colonialists’ misuse of the Bible, one question that is worth asking based on the moral responsibility of Christian missionaries is why they remained silent and showed indifference to the destruction of other people’s life

It is easy to find an answer to this question if one keeps in mind what Dunn says in his accompanist perspective, i.e. “it was on the wings of colonialism that the Christian message spread to the ends of the earth. Christian missionaries merely accompanied the explorers, merchants, imperialists.”<sup>30</sup> The implication of this link in mission practice was that their activities were interdependent and that they supported each other. The view of Dunn entails that missionaries in some way were partners of the colonialists and collaborated with them first, in establishing their empires and then, in fulfilling the civilizing mission which was also

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<sup>29</sup> Prior, *Zionism and the state of Israel: A moral inquiry*, x.

<sup>30</sup> Dunn, *Missionary theology*, 10.

a colonizing mission as Ingleby puts it.<sup>31</sup> The correlation between the colonialists and the missionaries was confirmed by their presence during the Berlin Conference in 1884–1885 where the main agenda was about the partition of Africa among the European nations.<sup>32</sup> However, to say that all missionaries compromised with the colonists during the empire–building age is inappropriate because there were also those, like the early missionaries in the nineteenth century<sup>33</sup> or NMS in Madagascar,<sup>34</sup> who disagreed with the colonial policy. Furthermore, the countries in Scandinavia and North America, albeit involved in the expansion, did not come to Africa with a colonial mindset. Yet, they cannot claim their innocence because their presence in the continent in the context of imperialism and colonialism linked to their nationalism and the manifest destiny, made them implicated in it, especially in the case of America which equalled Britain in missionary effort.<sup>35</sup> The expansion of their missionary activities in Africa made their undertakings morally equal to imperialism<sup>36</sup> because to Christianize and civilize could be used interchangeably at that time. As the optimistic view of the Enlightenment advanced that the superior religion and civilization came from the white man,<sup>37</sup> reaching this end proved necessary for the enlightened Europe even if it involved using force because it was easy to deal with the Africans once they were caught within the imperial systems.<sup>38</sup>

Therefore, if I give a simple answer to the question I raised, drawn on this context, that the majority of missionaries were not critical of the colonial policies because they were children of their age. Since they sided with the colonialists, their biblical hermeneutics was in favor of the oppressors and contributed to the establishment of the empires in Sub-Saharan Africa. The complicity of the Christian missionaries with the colonialists as many African scholars have voiced, made it hard to free the missionaries from their moral responsibility for the colonization of Sub-Saharan Africa. I can argue that their indifference to the helpless people, above all their identification with the colonialists, can be considered as one of the greatest mistakes of Western Christians in history. Firstly, as Dube et al. openly criticize, missionaries gave a wrong presentation of Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa. Secondly, they showed the

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<sup>31</sup> Ingleby, *Beyond empire*, xix.

<sup>32</sup> Dube, Andrew M. Mbuvi and Dora R. Mbuwayesango, 3.

<sup>33</sup> Robert, *Christian mission*, 49.

<sup>34</sup> Ellen Veia Rosnes, *The Norwegian mission's literacy work in colonial and independent Madagascar* (NY: Routledge, 2019), 4.

<sup>35</sup> Walls, *The Cross-cultural process in Christian history*, 187.

<sup>36</sup> Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in context*, 214.

<sup>37</sup> Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, 177.

<sup>38</sup> Ingleby, *Beyond empire*, xix.

Christian God as apathetic towards injustice and the appropriation of the Africans' lands.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, biblical exegesis has always been anti-imperialist because delivering people from social, political, economic, and cultural oppression is one of the recurrent themes of the Bible. That is to say that the God of the Bible resists empire, stands against injustice, and stands on the side of those who are helpless.<sup>40</sup> Had the missionaries resisted the colonial projection, the situation could have been different.

If judged from the standpoint of the Bible, the characteristics of the missionaries' biblical interpretation during the empire-building age was both unbiblical and destructive because it was in the name of the Liberator God that they came to exploit, grab lands, and massacre people. Given that colonization of Sub-Saharan Africa is related to the invasion of the white man and their use of the Bible, it is no wonder that the Sub-Saharan people in the quoted popular saying understood what happened during the colonial period to be an exchange of lands for the Bible between the colonizers and the local population.<sup>41</sup> It is reasonable in light of this sad experience to understand why the colonial biblical hermeneutics have received much criticism on the part of scholars such as Adamo, Dube, and Bongmba who come from Sub-Saharan Africa, a community which was previously a great arena of Western colonialism. My discussion up until till now has focused on the imperial policies of the West with regards to the people and their lands. Now, I will study the impact of these plans on culture, language, and religion of the Africans which all combined to shape their identity as peoples and nations. My special concern will be on the assessment of missionary activities and their approach to the local people in their evangelization.

### **4.3 Evaluating the encounter of Christianity with the African culture, language, and religion**

Apart from the loss of lands, political, and economic sovereignty, another significant aspect that marked the arrival of the Europeans in Sub-Saharan Africa was the religious, cultural, and social transformation imposed by the assimilationist colonial policy applied by the colonialists in their role as agents of civilization. The main concern of this strategy was to wipe out the cultures of their colonies and implement theirs onto them through the process of Westernization as part of their civilizing mission. It was indeed the imposition of culture onto

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<sup>39</sup> Dube, Andrew M. Mbuvi and Dora R. Mbuwayesango, *Postcolonial perspectives in African biblical interpretations* 221–233.

<sup>40</sup> Ingleby, *Beyond empire*, 17, 29.

<sup>41</sup> Dube, *Postcolonial feminist interpretation of the Bible*, 3.

other societies that differentiated Western imperialism from other forms of expansionism in history according to Sugirtharajah.<sup>42</sup> It becomes clearer in the affirmation of Gründer: “This process of “Europeanizing the earth” forced indigenous societies to undergo profound social and cultural changes; some of these changes are still going on, and the long-term effects of others are still being felt.”<sup>43</sup> This makes Terry Eagleton et. al. say that “at its most powerful, colonialism is a process of radical dispossession. A colonized people is without a specific history and even (...) without a specific language.”<sup>44</sup> Since Christianization was part of the European cultural conquest program, the activities of the missionaries contributed to the assertion of Western culture among the inhabitants of Sub-Saharan Africa.

This background serves to explain why missionaries were very critical of the local culture, language, and religion when they came into contact with the Sub-Saharan people during the early phase of the implantation of Christianity. The Eurocentric view of the missionaries made it hard for them to accept what was African because this was considered inferior and embodied heathenism. Conversion of the people and their culture, or more properly, Westernization of them was imperative in Protestant missions otherwise it was impossible to communicate the Christian message. This non-contextualization of the Gospel when encountering other cultural and ethnic identities will constitute the next issue that I wrestle with here. The negative view on the African culture reflects the European sense of superiority apropos their culture and religion but contradicts with the incarnational nature of divine revelation in human history. This attitude has something to do similarly with the emphasis on the universality of Christianity which naturally excludes other religions, according to Teehan. Biblically speaking, however, the word of God is always contextual. One sees God throughout the Bible involved in human history and incorporating the experiences of every nation to communicate with them.<sup>45</sup> This approach based on the incarnation of Jesus Christ as the Word of God (Jn. 1:14), who was born a Jew and bound Himself to a particular nation. In other words, the incarnation rendered God contextual (Mat. 1:22–23).<sup>46</sup> The implication of this is that God always talks to people in their own world because their understanding of His

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<sup>42</sup> Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the third world*, 3–4.

<sup>43</sup> Gründer, “Colonialism”, 68.

<sup>44</sup> Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, and Edward W. Said, *Nationalism, colonialism, and literature* (Minnesota: Field Day Theater Company, 2001), 10.

<sup>45</sup> Ross Langmead, *The Word made flesh: Towards an incarnational missiology* (Dallas: The University Press of America, 2004), 20–21.

<sup>46</sup> Costas, *Christ outside the gate*, 3–6.

word is conditioned by their culture.<sup>47</sup> Walls advances two contradictory but complementary concepts, namely “the indigenizing and the pilgrimage principles” to establish the place of a culture in the transmission of the Gospel.<sup>48</sup> According to him “God accepts us as we are”: In Christ God accepts us together with our group relations; with that cultural conditioning that makes us feel at home in one part of human society and less at home in another.”<sup>49</sup> Walls adds that “no group of Christians has therefore any right to impose in the name of Christ upon another group of Christians a set of assumptions about life determined by another time and place.”<sup>50</sup> If I bring this perspective of Walls and Costas to view the missionary approach among the Sub-Saharan people, it means that the Gospel was not domesticated in Africa because it did not incorporate local elements. Besides, the Europeans and Africans lived in two different worlds, and thus, with two different cultural understandings. In his “indigenizing principle”, Walls goes further in his explanation and says:

The fact then, that “if any man is in Christ he is a new creation” does not mean that he starts or continues his life in a vacuum, or that his mind is a blank table. It has been formed by his own culture and history, and since God has accepted him as he is, his Christian mind will continue to be influenced by what was in it before. And this is as true for groups as for persons. All churches are culture churches—including our own.<sup>51</sup>

This observation of Walls calls the Church to reflect on the importance of the particularity of Christianity over its universality in order to understand the central place of an individual community in the transmission of the Gospel. Walls highlights at the same time that the domestication of Christianity should not contradict its universal scope but should help enrich its diversity.<sup>52</sup> When I contemplate the criticisms of Dube, Adamo, and Bongmba on the missionary-colonial translation of the biblical deity in vernacular languages, I see in their arguments that they do not seem to have problems with the translation. What they criticize, however, was the translator’s intention to safeguard only the integrity of the source text while displacing the target cultures. Instead of using dynamic equivalence translation whereby the meaning of the translated text should be as close as its meaning to the original audiences by using adaptation,<sup>53</sup> they judge as evil the African culture and transfer Western cultural

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<sup>47</sup> *The Missionary movement in Christian history*, 7.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 7–9.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 8–9.

<sup>53</sup> Smalley, *Translation as mission*, 111.

experience to the African society. Translators should always remember that a language carries a culture, which finds its expression in the language; thus, one cannot discard the one without damaging the other.<sup>54</sup> Even if I disagree with some of their points, like presenting God as a female, and also understand the position of missionaries in their concern to preserve the Christian orthodoxy, I realize that what was at stake in the colonial period was the absence of dialogue between Christianity and the local cultures. In sum, it shows the failure of Western missionaries to restate the essence of the Christian faith in the African context.

## **Summary**

The focal point of this chapter has been to critically evaluate the colonial mark of biblical hermeneutics during classical imperialism. During the empire-building age, land grabbing was important for the colonialists. In order to make the local inhabitants accept Western domination and act passively, theorization of this domination took place through the exploitation of some parts of the Bible, viz. the uniqueness of Israel and the conquest of Canaan. Quintessentially, theories of imperialism were about the superiority of the West on the matter of culture, race, and religion in relation to the non-Western world. It was on the basis of their superiority, their responsibility towards the less civilized societies, and their understanding of themselves as the new Israel that the Europeans exercised their influence over others. Nevertheless, it is the association of the Bible with such a secular program and the compromise of a majority of missionaries with the colonialists that I have criticized throughout my discussion, because it turned the Bible into an oppressive tool and presented Christianity as a religion which was morally devoid. My discussion has also raised the problem posed by the non-contextualization of the Gospel in Sub-Saharan Africa which resulted in the imposition of foreign experiences upon the local inhabitants and the extinction of their cultures. I have criticized the non-adaptation of Christianity to the African milieu because God reaches people in their own world and makes His word contextual.

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<sup>54</sup> Dube, "Christianity and translation in the colonial context", 161–168.



## **General Conclusion**

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a golden century for the Christian church, represented by Europe and North America in terms of mission. Western Christianity, in effect, witnessed its worldwide expansion through the agency of interdenominational Protestant missionary organizations. Different phenomena occasioned the outburst of the Christian mission in this period. First of all, there was the occurrence of consecutive religious revival movements that arose on both sides of Atlantic Protestantism. The impact of these movements on the mission of the Church was significant because it created new enthusiasm for mission towards the non-Christian world. In addition, it inspired the creation of voluntary missionary societies within different denominations which ultimately created an ecumenical view in launching these missions. Thirdly, there was the radical change introduced by the Enlightenment. Unlike the early Catholic missions, the Protestant paradigm of missions was shaped by an intellectual revolution known as the Enlightenment under whose embrace Western societies changed radically its view of God, itself, and the world. The optimistic view of the Enlightenment promised a better world for humanity because of its belief in moral improvement. The perspective of the Enlightenment affected the Protestant' understanding of the Kingdom of God as the manifestation of His will on earth where evil gradually vanished from the human society. Everyone has their share of responsibility in anticipating the dawning of this Kingdom through the mass conversion of the heathens based on these philanthropic sentiments. Both in practice and thinking, the modern missionary movement was a child of the Enlightenment and the religious revivals that occurred in Western Europe in modern times. Sub-Saharan Africa was one of the centers of the interest of the Protestant missionaries in their undertakings.

The revitalization of the missionary movement in the modern era, however, cannot be isolated from the history of Western Europe, which was the homeland of missions at that time. The nineteenth century was a period which was marked by the centrality of Europe and its culture in world history; the profound transformations effected by the Age of the Industrial Revolution, the Age of Capital, and the Age of Empire molded the European societies in the wake of the Enlightenment. Domestically, these changes encouraged nationalism among the European nations and incited them to assert their supremacy over others; new powers such as Belgium and Germany made their appearance on the scene and competed with Britain and France, which were the two masters of the world at that time. As a result, the major transformations that took place in Western societies overwhelmed politically, economically,

religiously, and culturally the rest of the world, including Sub-Saharan African communities. Dictated by their industrial profiteering and their desire to extend their territorial and economic influence, the industrialized nations which were chiefly Christian nations, applied an expansionist policy towards the non-Western world. From then on, European monarchism stretched its realm of dominion from its homeland to overseas territories where the European monarchs projected their influence. Western Europe expanded globally, conquered new territories and established their vast empires in foreign countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa which was one of the victims of Western imperialism and colonialism. In the imperial expansion of the West in Africa, spreading Christianity was central to their policy. Besides the creation of the different missionary societies which was the pillar of the success of the Protestant missions in Sub-Saharan Africa at that time, the position of Europe as a dominant power in the late nineteenth and twentieth century constituted the second pillar of the extension of Christianity universally. Consequently, because of the symbiotic relationship between the Church and the state that characterized the religious, political, social, and cultural environment at that time, missionaries went together with the colonialists in their colonial conquests and converted the annexed territories to Christianity.

In light of this background, the great century of Christian mission in Sub-Saharan Africa was similarly a century of Western imperialism because the Protestant missionary activities were intertwined with the colonizing enterprise of the West. One troubling issue that lay at the center of this interrelationship was the controversial role of the Bible vis-à-vis the European colonizing enterprise in the African continent. Actually, the imperial nations that came to Africa exploited the biblical narratives about the conquest-settlement of the Canaanite land, the uniqueness of Israel as a chosen nation, and the theocratic view of the Hebrew Scriptures to justify the foundation of their empires. The majority of the Christian missionaries that came with the colonialists in their mercantile enterprise did not see this colonial use of the Bible as a problem because they showed flexibility to the colonial policy of the West by supporting it in their biblical interpretation. The compromise of the missionaries with the establishment of colonial rule and the identification of the Bible with the oppressors presented Christianity and its religious text as a colonizing religion among the people of Sub-Saharan Africa during the colonial period. Moreover, Christianity was relatively new in Sub-Saharan Africa. Yet, the ethics of those who brought it to Africa during the colonial period made the religion of the white man problematic to the Africans and raised a moral issue because the God that was introduced to them came together with the colonialists to steal their lands, destroy their lives,

and kill many innocent people. Additionally, the Christian Bible in its Eurocentric view overwhelmed the Sub-Saharan African community, wiped out its culture, language, and identity because these were considered incompatible with the civilization introduced by Christianity. Overall, the success of the colonization of Sub-Saharan Africa through the colonial use of their Bible revealed the disingenuity of the civilized and industrialized European nations in their ideological formations of their superiority that incorporated some elements of the Bible. These were used during their colonial conquest as powerful weapons to destabilize politically, economically, religiously, and culturally the inferior societies. When I reviewed the history of Western imperialism and colonialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Sub-Saharan Africa, and investigated closely the role of the Bible in this enterprise through the lens of postcolonial theory, I come to the conclusion that one strong motivation for the propagation of Christianity and the circulation of the Bible during the empire-building age was to advance the European empires overseas and secure the domestic welfare of their home population. The outcome of my research on the role and function of the Bible within the framework of Western imperialism and colonialism during classical imperialism in Sub-Saharan Africa shows that religion was used a tool of the state to reach a political end. This special feature helps understand why maximizing the spread of Christianity and the dissemination of the Christian Bible among the population became central to the colonialists that came to hegemonize Africa.

## **Outlook**

I personally suggest the inclusion of a course related to my thesis topic in theological study programs in Madagascar. First of all, it helps students see to the heart of the problems of evangelization in my country. In their enthusiasm to enlarge the Kingdom of God, few Christian churches seem to realize that they are often too imperialistic and dismissive in their approaches when reaching out to the other people who are outside of their circle. This imperialistic side of Christianity renders the mission of the Church much more difficult and should be reconsidered because some ethnic groups exist in my country keep rejecting Christianity just because of the way it is presented or the way they are approached about it. Secondly, learning from the past helps the younger generation of Africans to rediscover themselves. Actually, the history of Africans is a history of loss of everything that made them what they are and which was eradicated during the colonial period. Until now, a majority of

the African countries who were victims of colonization, remain strangers in their own lands. The way they think, live, speak, and see themselves confirms this because they neither appreciate what they are nor the taste of their countries. Because of this, everything that is from outside is considered better and superior to what is local. This attitude is a legacy of the cultural biblical imperialism and the colonial enterprise which considers African things as inferior compared to Western ones. I have been in Norway for a couple of years and I have observed how much the Norwegian people feel proud of their country, their culture and their own languages. As a Malagasy student, I confidently affirm that African people will keep on propagating what is wrong with their continent until they realize that they are a product of Western imperialism and colonialism in the past that they must assert their own identity. During one of my oral examinations at VID Specialized University, one of my examiners asked one very important question related to the European imperialism in Africa. He said: "Do you blame the white man for their imperialism?" Now that you know the truth, what does it change for you; how relevant is this course for you?" To these questions I responded simply: "Well, I cannot blame the past for it will change nothing, but thanks to this course I have rediscovered myself and I understand one of the reasons why we are far behind other countries in terms of development. We never appreciate ourselves but dream of becoming someone else." This course brought me down to earth and cast a new light on how I see my country, my language and my cultures, which have always been there but I never liked for I have been kept captive by the past.

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