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## ***Concept of Basic Human Rights in African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa and Jesus Is Alive Ministries***

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### INTRODUCTION

All human societies have notions about the nature of humanity, the dignity and integrity of every human being and his or her place in society. These conceptions are influenced by the worldview of a community. As Maritian observes, a human person,

Is more than a mere parcel of matter, more than an individual element in nature such as an atom, a blade of grass, a fly or an elephant. Man is an individual who holds himself in hand by intelligence and his will. He exists not merely physically; there is in him a richer and noble existence; he has a spiritual super existence through knowledge and through love. He is thus in some fashion, a whole not merely a part. He is a universe unto himself, a microcosm in which the whole great universe can be emphasized through knowledge; and through love he can give himself freely to beings who are, as it were, other selves to him.<sup>1</sup>

Implicit in this view is that the human person by his/her very nature deserves some liberties, and has a will and a spiritual dimension that is not found in other created beings. This is the basis of his/her deserving to have human rights, the most basic of which is life. Human rights refer to the entitlements to which human beings have just and legal claim to by virtue of their being human. They are the fundamental rights and

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<sup>1</sup> J. Maritian, *The Rights of Man and Natural law* (New York: Gurdian press, 1971),2-3.

freedoms which are “God-given and are, therefore inherent, inviolable and inalienable.”<sup>2</sup>

Most communities including Africa ground this concept of rights for human beings in religion. Just like in Christianity most African communities claim that:

Every human being is a child of God, has moral overtones or relevance grounded as it is in the conviction that there must be something intrinsically valuable in God. Human beings are children of God, by reason of their having been created by God and possessing...a divine element called soul, ought to be held as of intrinsic value as ends in themselves, worthy of respect...<sup>3</sup>

Yet despite these notions of the human person and basic inalienable rights, a critical analysis of the social political and economic situation in Africa reveals a gross violation of human rights. African governments in the post-colonial era have not always protected and promoted the human rights of their citizens and states. The main obstacles of human rights in Africa are said to lie in problems arising from colonial rule and the imperatives of nation building.

Gyeke argues that such explanations are not adequate and do not justify the human rights abuses. The abuses have been systematic and based on official policies.<sup>4</sup> This systematic nature of the violations has raised questions, whether African citizens are aware of what human rights are, whether the notion was really in traditional African society and whether the notion of human rights is a secular one based on western notions. Silk like Gyeke agrees that African society had a culture compatible with human rights but not with the inevitably western norms embedded in the International Bill of Human Rights.<sup>5</sup>

Since colonial times, colonized African nations struggled to attain independence and subsequently to entrench justice in their

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<sup>2</sup> The Ecumenical Trust, *You and Your Rights: A Citizen's handbook* (Nairobi: The Ecumenical Center for Justice and Peace, 1998), 1.

<sup>3</sup> K. Gyekye, *African Cultural Values, an introduction* (Accra: Sankofa publishing company, 1998), 150.

<sup>4</sup> K. Gyekye, *African Cultural Values*, 144.

<sup>5</sup> J. Silk “Traditional culture and the prospects of human rights in Africa”, in *Human Rights in Africa: Cross-cultural perspectives* (Washington DC Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im and Francis M. Deng (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution 1990), 150.

regimes. These were human rights struggles. The struggle for human rights by the civil society and religious organizations (churches included) however, only gained currency in the 1980s. The challenge to advocate for human rights has coalesced around two broad issues: the challenge to democratize,

To reconstruct and reshape the political landscape so as not to repeat the tragedy of yesterday. Second is the engaging fight against poverty at a time when the traditional indications of development record the continued descent of the continent into the cesspools of hunger, crippling debt and debilitating poverty.<sup>6</sup>

The human rights that are struggled for by governments, civil society and religious organizations, are embodied in the International Bill of Human Rights under which are the:

- Universal declaration of Human Rights of, 1948
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of, 1966
- International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, 1966
- International Convention on Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965
- Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 1981.
- Convention Against Torture, and other cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment or punishment, 1984
- Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989
- International refugee Law.
- International humanitarian law.<sup>7</sup>

Added to these are the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981) the Charter of Organization of African Unity (OAU) 1963, and the OAU convention governing the specific aspects of refugees problems in Africa (1969). Individual countries too have their bills of rights enshrined in national constitutions. All states that ratify the conventions are bound by them. Those who accede to a convention bind themselves to do nothing in contravention of the treaty terms. Those who sign the conventions are not bound by them but only acknowledge

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<sup>6</sup> *New People* "Rights for all" (November 1998), 14.

<sup>7</sup> *Year Book*, United Nations Vol. 45 (UN, New York: 1991).

their existence. For this reason, states that sign the conventions are urged to ratify them for effect.

The African Charter was adopted by the Nairobi Conference of the OAU in 1981 and came into force on October 21, 1986, having been ratified by a majority of African states. The Charter attempts to reflect the African concept of human rights and “should take as a pattern the African philosophy of law and meet needs of Africa”.<sup>8</sup> It also recognizes the value of international human rights standards that many African countries had already promised to respect. Just like other international legal instruments and national bills of rights, the OAU Charter, proclaims the rights of individuals. These rights include equality before the law, the inviolability of human beings, the right to liberty and security of persons, freedom of conscience and the right to be free to practice a religion. It also affirms economic, social and cultural rights.

A question arises, do the majority of people in Africa know the existence of these instruments and their entitlement to the mentioned rights? Are they aware when their rights are upheld or violated? Do they protest the violation or just acquiesce to them? What role does organized religion play in the advocacy for these rights in nations and within religious institutions?

Mainline Christianity particularly since 1948 has developed a theology of justice and peace and is very much conscious and involved in human rights advocacy. The Catholic Church for example in setting up the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace in 1967, aimed at

Bringing to the whole of God’s people the full knowledge of the part expected of them at the present time, so as to further the progress of the poorer people, to encourage social justice among nations, to offer to less developed nations the means whereby they can further their own progress.<sup>9</sup>

In Kenya, the bishops set up the Justice and Peace Commission in 1988 with the following objectives,

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<sup>8</sup> *New People*, “Rights for all” 18.

<sup>9</sup> Paul VI, Encyclical Letter, *Populorum Progression* (March 26 1967), 5.

To develop programmes for the education of the people towards a stronger sense of justice within the church, and in the social, economic and political life of the country; to work for the eradication of injustice wherever it is seen to exist, for instance the question of land distribution, violation of human rights, unfair practices in agriculture, education, health, media, tourism and habitat ... And to give advice encouragement and support to all those involved in the promotion of justice and in opposition to justice.<sup>10</sup>

These ideals are echoed in various papal encyclicals since Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum (On the Condition of Labor)* of May 15, 1891. The Protestant churches under the World Council of Churches and national councils of churches have addressed these issues and committed themselves to upholding human dignity, values, virtues and rights. However to what extent have African Initiated Churches (AICs) addressed these issues?

A perception exists among scholars and lay people that AICs are disinterested in political matters, and that they do not have a Social Gospel. The fact that these churches do not adopt the same advocacy strategies like mainline churches does not mean that they are disinterested in temporal matters, issues of social justice and human rights. They may for instance not use the terminology "human rights" but the concept is therefore not lacking. They too are concerned with issues central to human rights and struggles. This study undertook to investigate the concept of basic human rights in two Kenyan AICs. One is an older AIC of the Ethiopian or Nationalist category which emerged in the 1920s and 1930s. This is the African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa (AIPCA). The other one is Jesus Is Alive Ministries (JIAM), a Neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic church started in 1997 by Rt. Rev. Margaret Wanjiru.

The study seeks to decipher the extent to which AIPCA which emerged as a church campaigning for cultural nationalism, economic, religious, cultural, social and political rights for Africans in the 1930s through the 1950s is still articulating the same; if it is aware of current human rights issues and to what extent it is involved. Since JIAM is a

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<sup>10</sup> Pastoral letter of the Bishops of Kenya, *Justice And Peace Commission*, (Nairobi: Paulines 1988), 5.

newer church and of a different mould than AIPCA, the study seeks to find out how aware the church as hierarchy and “people of God” is aware of human rights and how it promotes them within and outside the church. The study begins by describing the methodology used; a brief sketch of the histories of both churches and ends with an analysis of how the churches conceive human rights and their contribution to their achievement in Kenya between 1920s and 2002.

### Research Area and Methodology

The area of focus for this study was Nairobi Province and Kiambu District in Central Province of Kenya. The study as already mentioned focuses on the understanding and practice of basic human rights in AIPCA and JIAM. Data collected was derived both from primary and secondary sources. Fieldwork for this research was carried out between July 2001 and March 2002. Primary data collection methods included in-depth interviews of church leaders and members in both AIPCA and JIAM, and participant observation of worship services. Focus group discussion method was also used. Its usefulness was in the fact that it enabled more free discussion by participants. Non-members of these churches were also interviewed using a structured questionnaire. They acted as a control group and therefore helped to verify or validate the data from bona fide members. In total, forty people were interviewed and over twenty church/worship services attended and observed.

### Historical Background of AIPCA

The AIPCA dates its origin to the politically, socially, economically and culturally turbulent period of Kenya’s history in the 1920s and early 1930s. This turbulence was sparked off by the presence and policies of western missionaries and colonialists. Whereas in many parts of Africa, missionary incursion preceded that of the alien administrators, in Kenya and among the Agikuyu (where the AIPCA is based) the alien or colonial administrators came first. This was in the form of the Imperial British East African Company (IBEAC) which was

operating from the East African coast in the 1870s.<sup>11</sup> By 1890, this company was using the Northern route to reach Uganda and this route passed through the southern parts of Gikuyuland. This company initiated the establishment of the Scottish African Industrial Mission that was later to become Church of Scotland Mission (CSM). It is therefore apparent that collaboration existed between the company and the mission and it was to continue when the company later relinquished its stations at the coast and in the hinterland to the British foreign office. In 1895 Kenya became a British protectorate.

Among the missionary societies who settled in Gikuyuland the CSM was the first to begin their evangelistic work in 1898. They were later followed by the African Inland Mission (AIM), which settled at Kijabe in 1902. Other missionary societies included the Gospel Missionary Society (GMS), the United Methodist Mission (UMM) and the Church Missionary Society which settled in Kiambu, Meru and Kabete in 1899, 1901 and 1902 respectively. These were all Protestant missionaries. Catholic missions also established stations among the Agikuyu in 1902 particularly in Nyeri and Kiambu districts. These were the Consolata Mission and Holy Ghost Fathers, respectively. Our concern however is the Protestant missions, for they are the ones that differed with the founders of AIPCA and other Gikuyu AICs.

Though missionaries preached the same gospel, they differed in their strategies of evangelization, attitude to indigenous people and cultures and in doctrine and practice. Missionary Christianity was characterized by several factors among them intellectualism and nominality. In Protestant missions, evangelistic work was done mainly through imparting literally skills. The establishment of schools was, in the minds of the African, therefore linked to Christianity. Becoming a Christian implied, among other things, severing ties with indigenous religion and culture which was denigrated and regarded as heathen. Christianity in the manner it was planted among Africans contributed to

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<sup>11</sup>The Agikuyu are a Bantu community that occupies the Central Province of Kenya. This province comprises seven districts namely; Kiambu, Murang'a, Thika, Nyeri, Nyandarua Maragua, Kirinyaga. It is the largest ethnic community in Kenya.

the disruption of the Gikuyu spiritual, political, cultural, social and economic spheres of life. This resulted to the creation of a spiritual lethargy and material deprivation, which was bound to lead to a rebellion out of which independent churches were to emerge.

Colonial pressure in Gikuyuland aggravated the volatile situation. As Kamuyu-wa-Kang'ethe notes,

Colonialists and missionaries radically set out to introduce a new religious and social structure in Gikuyu society. This was effected through what has been described as the 'radical replacement and discontinuity of Agikuyu traditional society.'<sup>12</sup>

The development of AIPCA and other Gikuyu independent churches, which Kamuyu refers to as the Karing'a movement was ignited by the missionary policies of demolishing Gikuyu religious and cultural values.<sup>13</sup> These policies were an insult to the dignity of the Gikuyu people. It was also a violation of their rights to self-determination and civil rights like, freedom of movement, freedom of association, free speech, fair trial, marriage according to custom and upholding of cultural values like polygamy, female initiation, participation in divine or sacred rituals, social drinking of traditional brew and the merriment that accompanied all these social functions and activities. Although some missionaries like the CMS, Catholics and United Methodist Missions, were not as radical and puritanical as the CSM, GMS and AIM, they nevertheless supported the draconian policies and radical approaches to evangelization for they were all members of the Alliance of Protestant Missions. This was an association of Protestant missions that was established to facilitate a uniform approach in their evangelistic efforts.

The foundations of Gikuyu society were also shaken through various policies by the colonial administration. Welbourn observes that

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<sup>12</sup> Kamuyu – wa Kang'ethe, "The Role of the Agikuyu Religion and Culture in the Development of the Karing'a Religio-political movement, 1900 – 1950 with Particular Reference to the Gikuyu Concept of God and the Rite of Initiation". (Unpublished *Ph.D. Thesis*, University of Nairobi, 1981), 133.

<sup>13</sup> Karing'a in Gikuyu language means pure or orthodox. The movement was a rallying call for the preservation of Gikuyu moral and social values.

“injustice was rife in Kenya of the 1920s.”<sup>14</sup> The injustice was manifested in forced land alienation, forced labor, taxation, arbitrary arrest, imprisonment for flaunting colonial laws and the enforcement of carrying of identity cards by Africans. The colonial society created by the 1920s subjected Africans to social, political and economic oppression. The colonialists became the ‘masters’ and the Africans became the ‘servants’.

Land alienation took various forms. Settlers who by 1902 had been invited by the colonial government either ‘bought’ the land or were accepted as ‘tenants at will’ by the Gikuyu with the assumption that at some point they would leave. Another method was “punitive expeditions”. This was violent eviction of the people and grabbing of their land. The southern part of Gikuyuland was occupied by the IBEAC and later by white settlers through this method. MacPherson describes one such expedition in which thirty villages in Githiga (Kiambu) including their crops and livestock were destroyed and taken in one such expedition led by a Mr. Purkiss, in 1892.<sup>15</sup> In 1894, Francis Hall and Major Smith carried out a similar expedition in Kiambu and Murang’a. They massacred several Agikuyu, burned their village and “brought in 1,100 goats and loads of grain but we did not manage to do much execution as the brutes couldn’t stand it.”<sup>16</sup> In 1904, Col. R. Meinertzhagen led another punitive expedition which left 796 Agikuyu dead and captured 782 cattle and 2150 sheep and goats.<sup>17</sup>

These activities and attitudes reveal that in the perception of the colonialists, Africans were not human beings, they had no rights. It was assumed that they could be displaced since they were incapable of feelings and possibly slightly above animals. These punitive expeditions which spread throughout Gikuyuland virtually overcame the Agikuyu, ridge by ridge. Those displaced were relocated to “Native Reserves.”

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<sup>14</sup> F.B. Welbourn. *East African Rebels: A study of some Independent Churches*, (London: SCM, 1961), 11.

<sup>15</sup> R. MacPherson, *The Presbyterian Church in Kenya* (Nairobi; PCEA, 1970), 16.

<sup>16</sup> C.G. Rosberg and J. Nottingham “*The Myth of the Mau Mau* quoting letters of Francis George Hall, (Nairobi; EAPH 1966), 15.

<sup>17</sup> Rosberg and Nottingham, *The Myth of the Mau Mau*, 15.

These Native Reserves enabled the colonial authorities and missionaries to alienate more land. They also became sources for constant cheap labor for European farmers, administrators, businessmen and missionaries. Here, the living conditions were deplorable and cultivation land for subsistence needs was inadequate. These experiences hardened the resolve of the Agikuyu to resist the abuse of their rights and encroachment of their lands.

As Rosberg and Nottingham however observe,

There was no symbolic moment of surrender to the new authority. While acquiescing to British rule...the resilient Kikuyu seldom behaved with timidity or obsequiousness that might have been displayed by a more conquered people.<sup>18</sup>

After the displacements, the Agikuyu drifted into the forests, coffee plantations, mission stations and into any other place they could find refuge. Many became squatters in lands that were originally theirs earning a pittance as wage laborers in tea and coffee farms. The social structures that emerged whereby African became slaves in their own land was challenged by the African Karing'a movement that was slowly developing. This "domestic slavery" manifested itself in the form of forced labor and taxation.

Forced labor became one of the evils that greatly shook the social foundations of the Agikuyu society. The families, lineages and clans were separated. This made the Agikuyu kinship system unworkable. The role of the man as the head of the household was imperiled for in most cases he worked in towns or plantations, while the family was in the Reserve. The traditional councils of elders were no longer functioning since some of the elders had earlier moved to the plantations. In the Reserves the authority of the newly created colonial leadership of chiefs, headmen, askaris and the Local Native Councils was in operation. They were just as ruthless as the colonialists in implementing forced labor and collecting taxes. Refusal to go to work or do communal work which was introduced to build roads and other

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<sup>18</sup> Rosberg and Nottingham, *The Myth of the Mau Mau*, 16.

infrastructure or to pay taxes was punishable with a fine equivalent to the laborers' gross income for one to three months.<sup>19</sup>

To facilitate the collection of taxes the *Kipande* was introduced, in 1919. This was a metal container in which the registration papers of individuals were carried. All males over 16 years of age were required to get the *Kipande*. Failure to have it resulted in a fine of 3.00 Rupees or a month's imprisonment. Every holder of the *Kipande* was required to pay a Poll Tax plus tax for each dependent living in a separate hut. Failure to pay the Hut Tax sometimes resulted in burning of the hut regardless of what would happen to the family. On top of this, every man was expected to pay taxes for his extra wives. Polygamists were taxed because colonialists argued that a man with extra wives was a rich one and therefore should pay more tax.

This forced polygamous families to live in congested conditions to avoid building more huts. Again it struck at the very core of African social organization and cultural values. In addition to Poll tax and Hut tax, Africans living in the Reserves were required to pay Cess Tax and participate in unpaid labor. It was meant for development of African education, construction of roads, bridges and hospitals in the Reserves. Women and children were forced to do this "voluntary communal work" and African leaders, some missionaries and even the British in Britain protested against this inhumanity. Traditional gender roles were also thus affected by colonial policies. Not only were women's roles multiplied as heads of households, but they also had to farm family plots and do communal work at the same time. Without male assistance in the farms, even food security was threatened.

By 1927 – 1929 relations between the Africans, missionaries and the colonial government were recognized as deplorable. Earlier in 1920 young educated Gikuyu men under Harry Thuku, a former student at Kambui GMS, formed a radical association, the Young Kikuyu Association (YKA) to agitate for representation in the Legislative Council and abolition of forced labor, taxation, *Kipande* system and

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<sup>19</sup> E.N. Wanyoike, *An African Pastor: The Life and Work of Rev. Wanyoike Kamawe 1888 – 1970*, (Nairobi: EAPH, 1974) 27, 46.

alienation of land. The association was banned due to missionary influence. The Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) was formed after this in 1925 and continued Thuku's battles. The Christian Gikuyu, non-Christian Gikuyu and the KCA all joined together in protest against the injustice they suffered. These grievances climaxed in the late 1920s following the ban on circumcision of girls by missionaries with government support. Missionaries opposed circumcision of females on moral and medical grounds. Unlike the policies of land alienation, forced labor, and taxation, which culminated in political protests and the formation of political parties like KCA and YKA, the campaign against female circumcision led to a mass movement actively involving men, women and the youth, thus; too politics was added religion.

According to Kenyatta, circumcision is the *raison d'être* of the whole Gikuyu way of life, religion, morality, social structure and the role of the individual in this structure.<sup>20</sup> The *Irua* (circumcision) was a precondition to other rights, social political, economic and also religious. The individual was thereafter introduced into the core belief values of the Agikuyu. The human rights here are both individual and communal. The *Irua* was also the deciding factor for marriage, procreation and status for the Gikuyu woman. Lack of *irua* was a threat to the propagation of the community. The missionaries and their supporters did not seem to grasp the educational, social and religious value of the *Irua* and accompanying ceremonies. They only saw the "immorality" and "savagery" nature of the "cutting." The Gikuyu also could not envisage an *Irua* without cutting. For the Gikuyu, abolition of the girls' *Irua* was a prerequisite to abolishing male circumcision and thereby the whole superstructure of the Gikuyu society.

Between September 1929 and the early 1930s, mission churches specifically CSM, CMS and AIM, demanded that Christians who did not support female circumcision sign allegiance to the church. Those who supported female circumcisions were asked to leave the church did not

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<sup>20</sup> Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing mount Kenya, The Traditional Life of the Gikuyu*, Secker and Warbug Ltd.:1938, reprinted, Nairobi: Heineman Educational Books, 1978).

want to leave the churches. Many African Christians and teachers in mission schools refused to sign and left the churches. Rosberg and Nottingham report that, in the short run, the dispute cost the CSM 90% of its communicants within the first month, while the AIM at Kijabe lost all but 50 of its 600 adherents.<sup>21</sup> Efforts at stemming the tide of defections were made by affected mission stations but, by 1931, church attendance had substantially recovered. However, neither mission nor government authority could any longer command the respect it once possessed. The missions were increasingly reported as the spiritual edge of the imperialists. The Gikuyu Christians, it is worthy noting, were also members of the KCA, hence their struggle for political rights were conjoined with that of religious and cultural freedom.

Together with these grievances, Africans were dissatisfied with the kind of education they received from the missions. Out of the confusion of the 1920s there emerged two groups with a positive purpose:

- The Kikuyu Independent Schools Association (KISA)
- The Kikuyu Karing'a Educational Association (KKEA)

These groups emerged out of disagreement with education policy. They wanted more and better schools. Throughout Gikuyuland, from 1928, there was a determination to have education without any ban on female circumcision. They also wanted to retain and practice missionary Christianity but from their own experience and understanding of it. They could not envisage starting schools without a Christian component. Nevertheless, they wanted to retain aspects of their indigenous religion and culture that they found in the scriptures. KISA was established in 1929 to,

Further the interests of the Gikuyu and its members, to safeguard the homogeneity of such interests relating to their spiritual, economic and education upliftment.<sup>22</sup>

KISA intended to differ with missionary churches in nothing but the right of Christian girls to be circumcised if they so wished. Other

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<sup>21</sup> Rosberg and Nottingham, *The Myth of the Mau Mau*.

<sup>22</sup> F.B. Welbourn *East African Rebels*, 145.

practices like polygamy and drunkenness, which in missionary perception were immoral practices, were dealt with in the KISA by excommunication. KISA started schools, dispensaries, trained hospital dressers and even teachers. They held monthly mothers' meetings with a view to instruct women regarding principles of morality, physiology and hygiene. They also held quarterly teachers' conferences.

#### Formation of AIPCA

By 1937, KISA and KKEA managed to convert themselves into churches namely, African Independent, Pentecostal Church of Africa (AIPCA) and African Orthodox Church (AOC). Their clergy were trained and ordained by Archbishop Daniel, William Alexander, Primate of the Orthodox Church in South Africa.<sup>23</sup> The Independents had to part ways with mainline Protestant Churches, for the latter refused to train and ordain the former's clergy. The AIPCA was formed out of the KISA while the AOC was formed out of the KKEA. Both adopted the Orthodox Church liturgy introduced by Archbishop Alexander. Nevertheless, the AOC was more attuned to Gikuyu traditional practices than the AIPCA.

Once AIPCA had its clergy, it began expanding outside Central Province into such areas as Mombasa, (Coast Province), the Rift Valley, Embu and Meru (Eastern Province). Today the church claims to have 25 dioceses and a following of over 1,000,000 people. It has undergone several schisms over leadership and finances. Its relationship with civil and political authorities has also been turbulent. During the Mau Mau war of independence, members and leaders were involved in the anti-colonial struggle and this led to the closing down of their churches and schools. Up to today, this is a bone of contention, for the church continues to demand that her schools that were taken over by District Education Boards or mission churches be returned to them. It is clear from the foregoing that AIPCA and AOC emerged out of a quest to

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<sup>23</sup> M.W.A. Kamau "Leadership Conflicts in AIPCA: with particular Reference to Gitothua." (Unpublished *M.A. Thesis*, Kenyatta University, 1992).

achieve human rights in terms of civil rights, social, cultural, economic and political rights. Religion and social political concerns were perceived as two sides of the same coin.

#### The Origin of Jesus Is Alive Ministries

Jesus Is Alive Ministries is a Neo-Pentecostal Church founded by Rt. Rev. Margaret Wanjiru in September 1993. She was born in 1961, to the late Samuel Kariuki and Mrs Loice Wanjira Kariuki. Her childhood was characterized by poverty and its attendant hardships. She recalls that her mother worked very hard to make ends meet and put her and other siblings to school because her father was irresponsible. She claims that she was unwittingly initiated into witchcraft at the tender age of ten when, at a time of desperation, a wizard convinced her mother to subject Wanjiru and her elder sister to witchcraft rituals that would guarantee their protection from harm by evil spirits. From then on, they were as she says “covenanted with powers of darkness.” She sees this experience as having sown the seed for her deeper initiation into evil. This experience had an ambivalent impact on her, oscillating between success and failure. At sixteen she got into a dysfunctional relationship that resulted into two children and then dissolved. She returned to her mother’s home who took care of her children while she went back to finish high school. All this time she was a member of the Anglican Church of Kenya in Westlands, Nairobi where she even conducted Sunday school classes.

Eventually she finished school and got a job as a toilet cleaner where she earned a meager salary. She however asserts “I was very ambitious to see my life change for good than the life of poverty that we had gone through while we were young.”<sup>24</sup> Wanjiru was determined to change her circumstances. She enrolled herself in a sales, marketing and management course and was able to rise through the ranks and become a sales girl and later a sales executive in a leading private company. However, the dark forces still stalked her and whatever she was earning

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<sup>24</sup> Oral interview Wanjiru, Nairobi, July 2001.

in employment and extra work in advertising was not enough. She engaged in trade business within Kenya and abroad. This brought her wealth but she got involved in witchcraft in order to outdo her competitors. In her own words: “I went deep into witchcraft and passed to a very high degree called Red witchcraft. Finally Satan gave me a short time to decide if I wanted to sell my soul to him.”<sup>25</sup> Her uncanny flirtation with the satanic world was consistently an obstacle to her success.

While she was indecisive whether to give her soul to the devil, she attended an evangelistic crusade by a Nigerian Evangelist, Emmanuel Eni in March 1990. “He was preaching against Satanism and witchcraft. Every issue he raised in his sermon was just too familiar. It was as if he had been sent to talk to me about the kind of iniquities I was involved in.”<sup>26</sup> Days after the crusade she “gave her life to Jesus Christ.” She recalls,

While in my small office I prayed a prayer of repentance and asked the Lord to forgive a sinner like me who had done worse things in life and from that moment after repenting I purposed in my heart to live for Jesus and for Jesus alone and preach the Gospel.<sup>27</sup>

She strove to live a righteous life and not to be separated from the presence and love of God. In the meantime, she continued in her business that was now on the verge of collapse due to her being involved in part time ministry. God spoke to her to give up all the things she had acquired while in the “devil’s kingdom.” She destroyed all of them and overnight she was penniless. She had to move from Westlands, an upper middle class neighborhood, to the Eastlands part of Nairobi, a high density and low income neighborhood. Losing her worldly possessions “did not shake me, my thirst was to please the Lord and to do his will.” She says of these hardships, “one thing I have made up my mind is that I

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<sup>25</sup> Oral interview Wanjiru, Nairobi, July 2001.

<sup>26</sup> Oral Interview, Wanjiru, Nairobi, July 2001.

<sup>27</sup> Oral interview Wanjiru, Nairobi, July 2001.

do not live in my mistakes but I learn from them. Mistakes do not keep me from marching to my destiny.”<sup>28</sup>

She later got actively involved in missions and evangelism through World Intercessory. She remarks that even though she was “born again,” prayed and fasted, the devil still “held her captive.” Over the years, Wanjiru learned the word of God and was delivered. This explains why deliverance is so crucial to her ministry. She started preaching in the streets of Nairobi and many people got “born again.” Through God’s command, she started Jesus Is Alive Ministries in September 1993 in order to nurture the faith of the new converts. She experienced discouragement and persecution from fellow evangelists both male and female, particularly due to her past lifestyle. She later abandoned the church and started preaching in Britain, America, Uganda and South Africa.

In 1996, God spoke to her and asked her to concentrate on her church and even revealed to her in a vision His plans for the evangelization of Africa. In June 1997, she was ordained a Pastor by Bishop Arthur Kitonga of the Redeemed Gospel Church. Again on October 5, 2002, Bishop Kitonga consecrated her as a Bishop.<sup>29</sup> The church has experienced tremendous growth and is one of the biggest gospel crusades and outreach programs in Africa.

In 1998 after the Nairobi Bomb Blast, she launched a media ministry. According to her

The Lord spoke to me to launch a media ministry that would reach many people who were hurting and so I started a television programme on the national broadcasting service entitled *Healing the Nation* which was alter changed to *The Glory is Here*<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Oral interview Wanjiru, Nairobi, July 2001.

<sup>29</sup> Bishop Margaret Wanjiru is currently a Member of Parliament of Starehe Constituency, Nairobi and an Assistant Minister for Housing. She continues to champion the rights of the underprivileged in her constituency and church.

<sup>30</sup> On 7<sup>th</sup> August 1998, the United States of America Embassy building was bombed by alleged Al Qaeda militants. Over 200 people died and several buildings in the vicinity were destroyed. The bomb blast had serious impact on Wanjiru’s church for some of the dead and injured were members. The church

She also started a Magazine, *Faith Digest* and she contributes extensively in other Neo-Pentecostal magazines like *Victory*, *Revival Springs* and *Miracle*.<sup>31</sup> According to her, she has been able to reach thousands of people who attribute their conversion to her evangelization through the media. Today the church has a sitting capacity of 5000.<sup>32</sup> It conducts several services in a week. The whole month is also marked by various evangelistic activities like monthly conferences, bible study, choir practice, youth, women, men and business fellowships. The church has also established several departments and ministries, for example: Home cells, Youth Aflame, Good Samaritan Project, Prison and Hospital Ministries, evangelism, intercessory, counseling, Sunday school and Television Ministries. All these activities are geared towards shoring up individual and community resources for human empowerment, growth and dignity. It is the concern for peoples' total well being that motivates the church to engage in these ministries. In their own understanding, this is a recognition and promotion of people's human rights.

What is the context in which AIPCA and JIAM operate in contemporary Kenya?

In order to aptly conceptualize how the AIPCA and JIAM understand and respond to issues of human rights, it is pertinent that we provide a brief situation analysis of the current social, political and economic context in contemporary Kenya. This is because the already mentioned mission activities within all churches, whether it is provision of education, health services, material needs, social and spiritual support are provided within a context where society is experiencing deprivation as a result of social, political and economic crises. During the Field research, we observed people experiencing untold suffering, occasioned by poverty, bad governance, crumbling social institutions, insecurity, rising unemployment and destruction of economic bases of communities.

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was then located near the Bomb last site which was also the area of her street evangelism.

<sup>31</sup> She has also written four books on deliverance.

This situation is not restricted to Kenya. A casual glance at the African continent reveals a similar situation of pain and suffering for majority of people. The “scene is one of poverty, violation of human rights, destruction and desperation.”<sup>32</sup> The problems are structural and historical and are accentuated by serious social, political and intellectual crises. The crises has manifested itself among other things in chronic food shortage, debilitating disease, pervasive illiteracy, environmental degradation, mismanagement of resources deteriorating living conditions, shortened life span, corruption, external dependence and crushing foreign debt. Its social manifestations include sharpening social tensions generated by unequal distribution of wealth, rising criminality among the youth and even ethnic – religious conflicts. Politically, Africa is in state of permanent unrest which has turned the continent into a refugee camp within and across boarders.<sup>33</sup>

The recent globalization policies characterized by an integration of economics of the world through trade and financial flows, technology and information exchanges and movement of people has been detrimental to majority of African states. Globalization in Africa has not promoted poverty reduction or increased opportunities for economic growth as was initially envisaged. It has instead enhanced economic disparities and inequalities. The process of globalization has been the driving force behind the imposition of severe economic reforms through the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). Globalization and economic liberalization are policies pursued by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization (WT)) to ostensibly help underdeveloped countries develop their economies. However, SAPs have meant increased prices of basic necessities, service fees for health and education, retrenchment of formal employment force and dismantling of local economic structures in the face of liberalized trade patterns. Poor

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<sup>32</sup> Philomena N. Mwaura “Cries of the Poor: The response of the Church” in *Cries of the poor. Questions and Responses for African Christianity*, Peter Kanyandego ed; (Kampala: Mariunum Press 2002).

<sup>33</sup> Gana T. Aaron “The African Political Crises and the Church in Africa” in *Visions for a Bright Future*, G. Kinoti and Kimuyu eds. (Nairobi: AISREED, 1997),224.

countries have sunk deeper into poverty and people are worse off today than before 1988.

In Kenya, poverty has been rising at a tremendous rate. According to the 2003 Economic Survey 67% of Kenyans live below the poverty line.<sup>34</sup> The poor are found in both rural and urban areas. What does it mean to be poor? The World Development Report 2000/2001 asserts:

To be poor is to be hungry, to lack shelter and clothing, to be sick and not cared for, to be illiterate and not schooled. But for poor people, poverty is more than this. Poor people are particularly vulnerable to adverse events outside their control. They are often treated badly by the institutions of state and society and excluded from voice and power in those institutions.<sup>35</sup>

The poor in Kenya are to be found among the marginalized who are outside the prevailing economic system such as the unemployed, part-employed, beggars abandoned children, destitute old, handicapped and homeless. They are also among those unjustly treated by the social economic system. These are the working poor in the rural and urban areas. For example, industrial and farm workers, small holders and hawkers.

Poverty has been blamed largely on political instability, weak state institutions and ineffective economic policies pursued by governments since the mid 1980s. These policies seem to favor multinationals and foreign investors and have crippled local initiative, innovation and investments. These policies have led to the collapse of agriculture which has been the mainstay of the country's economy. People have become consumers of foreign products rather than producers. This has fostered a culture of lethargy and rural urban migration and the consequent swelling of slums in urban areas. From this situation, in turn, evolves a situation of crime, insecurity, frustration and social anomie. Although Kenya experienced a change of government in December 2003, nothing seems to have changed. Corruption still

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<sup>34</sup> Republic of Kenya, Economic Survey, Nairobi; Government Printer, 2003,8.

<sup>35</sup> World Bank, *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty*, (Washington DC, Oxford University Press 2001), 15.

pervades all institutions. People are now more aware of their ability to topple oppressive institutions and there is increasing unrest and demand on the government of the day to be accountable to the people, transparent and deliver services.

It is in this situation of political instability, legitimacy and moral crises, poverty and insecurity that the AIPCA and JIAM operate in Kenya. This situation is one where human rights are flaunted and human beings are least empowered to take charge of their destiny, make decisions that affect their lives and that of their communities and nations. To what extent are AIPCA and JIAM involved in upholding human rights within the churches, community and challenging abuses where they occur? Scholars of New Religious Movements attribute the emergence of churches like AIPCA and JIAM to conditions of deprivation and oppression. Members who join the movements do so to access spiritual, social and moral support and in the process have their dignity affirmed. These movements have also escalated all over Africa since the 1980s due to the problems already outlined.<sup>36</sup>

#### General Data Presentation and Interpretation

As already indicated forty members of AIPCA and JIAM selected according to their age, gender, position in the church and length of membership were subjected to indepth interviews using an open ended questionnaire. They were required to identify what in their estimation distinguishes a human being from other creatures, conditions necessary to live a dignified and fully human life (good life), using the human rights index identified by the UDHR; obstacles to basic human rights; their understanding of evil, sources of evil; and whether some people are not quite human and how such people should be treated.

An analysis of the responses shows that members are generally unaware of the existence of the international treaties and instruments for the protection of human rights. Though they are also aware that there is

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<sup>36</sup> See Paul Gifford *African Christianity: Its Public Role*, (London, Hurst & Co. 1998); M.L. Daneel, *A Quest for Belonging* (Gweru: Mambo Press 1987).

a national constitution that outlines rights and duties of citizens, a majority have never seen it or undergone Civic Education Programs where this education is provided. At the beginning of year 2002, a committee to review the Kenyan constitution was appointed by Parliament (The Constitution of Kenya Review Commission, CKRC). Throughout 2002, it collected and collated views from individuals, organizations, government officials and constituencies on what kind of a constitution Kenyans want in terms of governance, rights of citizens, their protection, management and distribution of national resources, rights of women, children and marginalized groups, personal laws, the economy etc.

In the course of the research it was found important to link the views of informants on human rights with issues regarding the constitution. It was realized that some churches and members had actually drawn memoranda that they had submitted to the CKRC. Earlier on, we had realized that the questionnaire had to be translated into vernacular and/or Kiswahili languages since some terms do not have an equivalent. The same applies to the Gikuyu language. The term “good life” was accepted to refer to total well being socially economically, politically, spiritually and culturally.

When we asked them to define a human being and explain their understanding of human rights, they gave various answers. They based their views on religion both Christianity and traditional African religion. It is clear that their concept of a human being is informed by religion. Human beings are created creatures, different from animals by virtue of their having a soul and capacity to reason. They are moral agents capable of choosing between right and wrong, and have the capacity to seek the good in life and transform personal circumstances and those of their communities. When asked the meaning of rights, they said that these are values ascribed to human beings by virtue of their being created in God’s image. By virtue of their humanity, all human beings are entitled to privileges, respect, dignity, care and a certain measure of the “good life.”

Among the “conditions important for a good life,” informants agreed that all the items listed which are also the rights cited in the national Bills of Rights, Universal declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Covenant Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984) are important. However, depending on whether the informants were poor, middle class, educated, illiterate, wealthy, living in urban or rural areas, the priorities differed. The most important freedoms were: Right to life, food, shelter, clothing, electricity, water, education, health, equality before the law, security, property ownership (particularly for women married and single); practice of positive cultural values, access to employment, just wage, freedom to set up a business or farm without state harassment and interference, right to an enabling economic environment, good governance at local, municipal and state levels, peaceful co-existence without ethnic strife and freedom from violence, torture and crime. Currently the state does not interfere with the right to marry (unless the case involves minors) religion, movement, rest and leisure. Several people therefore did not regard those as issues warranting concern.

To achieve these rights and freedoms, informants recognized the responsibility of families, churches and the state. The concept of evil and what hinders the attainment of rights, freedoms and the “good life” was influenced by the theology of the churches.

This too influenced their response in promoting the “good life” and the strategies that should be adopted. At this juncture we shall examine the perception of human rights and freedoms in each of the churches under study.

### The AIPCA and Human Rights

It was noted earlier that AIPCA emerged as a result of a felt need for self determination, to reclaim and practice freely the right to preserve Gikuyu traditional cultural values, appropriate Christianity from an

African perspective, provide quality education for their children and challenge injustices of forced labor, taxation, lack of representation in the colonial government, lack of freedom of movement, assembly and development commensurate with the labor Africans were investing in the colonial economy; and the taxes that they were paying. During the freedom struggle, the church leaders were involved in oath taking, organizing political rallies and the church was actually seen as the religious wing of KISA. Both were proscribed in the height of the emergency period (1952-1958), and many church leaders and teachers were detained. We also noted that the church has grown numerically since it was reopened in 1963. Whereas by 1979 it had only four dioceses now it has twenty five. Geographically it has also spread to the Rift Valley, Coast, Nairobi and Eastern provinces. Since then it has also experienced several schism due to controversies over leadership and control of finances, theological issues, discipline and social-economic factors.<sup>37</sup>

Kamau contends that by the time the AIPCA reopened in 1963-1964, it had lost most of her members to mainline churches.<sup>39</sup> Their schools and church properties including land had also been confiscated. Their leaders had been detained, personal properties grabbed; and consequently their children dropped out of school. The post-independent African government did not also reward the ex-freedom fighters. This resulted in tension between the church and state that has persisted even to this day. Church leaderships was also polarized between the conservatives and liberals. The conservatives were the older generation who wanted to retain Gikuyu traditional values such as female circumcision and polygamy as well as the Eastern Orthodox Liturgical rite taught them by Bishop Alexander in the 1930s.

The younger members were liberal and either joined the church after 1963 or were children of the founders. They therefore were not passionate about the issues that led to the initial schism with the missions. This group also wanted to embrace new theological trends and forms of spirituality like being “born again” or the “prosperity gospel.”

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<sup>37</sup> Oral Interview, Pastor John Gichimu, Nairobi August, 2001.

They were more accommodating to the Pentecostal experience than the older members. These sentiments still prevail today though the church is attempting to be liberal in order to retain the youth.

It is clear from this that members of AIPCA were economically deprived and the church can be regarded as a church of the poor. The more enlightened who benefited at independence and would have facilitated the economic development of the church had moved to former mission churches. The church claims to be apolitical although it enjoyed a cordial relationship with Presidents Kenyatta and Moi. Some view this relationship as motivated by opportunism on the part of the leaders and that it has not enabled the church to be self-sufficient. The clientele of the church has generally been poor. The church's middle leadership and members are of the view that human rights are yet to be achieved in the church and nation due to the prevailing poverty. Their first priority at the moment is to recover the schools, land and other properties that they lost during the freedom struggle. This they believe would enable them to generate money that can finance development projects.

At the moment, a majority of members are illiterate, lack adequate housing, health care, food security and education. To them these needs are basic to all other needs. If members can sustain themselves they in turn can support the church and enable it to grow. To them the church is the microcosm of what is happening in the country. Since 67% of Kenyans lived below the poverty line, this is where majority of her members are to be found. Unlike former mission churches, which have links with mother churches abroad and have an informed and relatively wealthy membership, including businessmen and politicians, the AIPCA have to rely on themselves and their meager resources. The members and their leadership are also concerned with good governance and practice of justice and existence of peace. These, too, they feel are basic human rights. It is clear from this that to AIPCA members; poverty and bad governance are at the root of their experiencing a denial of human rights. As we have already noted, poverty in Kenya is pervasive and has also been compounded by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which is said to claim 700 people every day.

Another factor that has led to poverty in AIPCA and other AICs lies in lack of manpower development. Since a majority of the members are among the poor, they lack capacity to acquire educational and other skills necessary for upward mobility and social-economic empowerment as well as awareness of their rights. In both rural and urban areas, these issues were well articulated by the members. They were aware of the injustices they suffer and how it has affected their well-being, their pursuit of the “good life” for themselves and their children. The church has also been handicapped by an inability to provide theological education for her clergy as well as invest in erection of church buildings, schools and clinics.

At the moment, they own and sponsor some primary and secondary schools and a few clinics. Their work in Christian ministry is mainly spiritual and directed towards spiritual formation, counseling the youth, feeding programs for the needy and helping each one according to their needs. They are also involved in collaboration with the government in HIV/AIDS intervention through programs of prevention and advocacy, treatment and care, and mitigation of social economic impact. Programs are already in place targeting youth and women who are the groups most vulnerable to the disease. They have even formed an organization entitled *The National AIPCA Health and Welfare Organization (NAHWO)* to promote healthcare and consequently the “good life” for members.<sup>38</sup> Through support from civil society organizations, members of AIPCA have also undergone civic education. Nevertheless, their struggles against crippling poverty are reflected in the words of Archdeacon Peter Ng’ang’a when he says:

How can you preach to a hungry, poor, people? We need members to be at ease, to have a good life so that they do not feel oppressed. Now we deal with desolate, hopeless people. They cannot even support the pastor or even put up a church building. We need the country to have a performing economy. We need money to pay the pastor, build the church and train our clergy. At the moment majority of the clergy are not trained and those who are have sponsored themselves.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Oral Interview, Pastor John Gichimu, Nairobi August.

<sup>39</sup>Oral Interview Archdeacon Peter Ng’ang’a, Nairobi, January 2002.

On the question of evil and its causes, AIPCA members generally ascribe it to human greed and selfishness, lack of the gospel values of love, justice and peace and mutual caring. They are hesitant to name witchcraft as a source of evil. This can be explained by the fact that the Agikuyu belief in witchcraft has diminished over time. Those who still do so, are usually influenced by the worldviews of communities that still believe in or practice witchcraft. This is particularly so in urban and peri-urban areas where people from different ethnic communities live together and influence each other's beliefs and practices. Thus the magical worldview that may be latent usually resurfaces when people encounter others with differing worldviews. The presence of Western Kenya AICs and Neo-Pentecostal churches that seem to reinforce the belief that the world is an arena of the struggles between God, His angels on the one hand; and Satan and his demons on the other, manifested in witchcraft and sorcery; has thus been brought to the fore in the minds of most Kenyans whether they overtly admit it or not.

All the same, AIPCA reiterated that evil is caused by hatred, jealousy, envy and predisposition to being influenced by Satan. To most AIPCA members, particularly the older ones, people have a choice to choose between good or evil. To them too, evil people and their actions can only be overcome through evangelization, correct teaching, upholding moral values and virtues both in traditional cultures and in Christianity. The evil should be won over by love, counseling and forgiveness and not ostracism or death.

We can conclude this section by saying that AIPCA members are aware of what a human being is and what their rights are. Poverty is the greatest handicap and there is a belief that if it is overcome all other rights like education, economic empowerment, good health and peaceful co-existence could also be achieved. Rights to them are God given and inalienable but the state ought to safeguard them and provide others that are required for the attainment of a "good life." Just as in the 1930s, the AIPCA today is concerned with uplifting the lot of their members but they are limited by lack of resources and access to decision-making echelons of society. Their leadership has joined with others particularly

through the Evangelical and Indigenous churches' organizations to add their voice to the issues going on in the political front for example the constitution review and calling for good governance. However, unlike the mainline churches, the evangelical and Indigenous Churches have persistently supported the political establishment particularly during Moi's era. This has been viewed by some Kenyans as a strategy to win political favors. AICs like AIPCA perceive themselves in a vulnerable situation compared to mainline churches. Unlike mainline churches that do not have to be registered, AICs and Newer Evangelical/Pentecostal Churches are registered under the Society's Act and have to categorically state in their constitutions that they are apolitical.

#### JIAM and Human Rights

As already mentioned, JIAM is a modern Neo-Pentecostal Church. It attracts a variety of adherents ranging from the poor, to the middle class, the wealthy and politicians. Like other Charismatic churches all over Africa, it subscribes to a faith gospel focused on this worldly blessing and a deliverance theology. It displays the following characteristics: attraction of upwardly mobile youth; a lay oriented leadership; ecclesiastical office based on a person's charismatic gifting; innovative use of modern media technologies; particular concern for church growth; mostly urban centered congregations; women and youth leaderships; use of English and Kiswahili as mode of communication; a relaxed and fashion conscious dress code for members; an ardent desire to appear successful and reflecting a modern outlook; and portraying an international image.<sup>40</sup>

These characteristics of JIAM definitely indicate that it has a different history, character and clientele compared to AIPCA. One would therefore expect their ideas of concept of personal and human rights to be very different. The church too has a different experience of

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<sup>40</sup> Asamoah – Gyadu K. "Renewal with Christianity" A Historical and Theological Study of some current developments within Ghanaian Pentecostalism,". (*Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis*, University of Birmingham, 2001), 144. These observations are also characteristic of JIAM.

poverty, vision for the church and even type of ministry. The church is success oriented, constantly affirms its members and teaches them how to prosper and be delivered from evil forces that according to them are responsible for poverty, illness misfortune, social, economic and political problems. They have a spiritualized worldview that is derived both from the Bible and the traditional African worldview. Kalu observes that the major contribution of the Neo-Pentecostal Churches “is how they address the continued reality of the forces expressed in African cultural forms.”<sup>41</sup>

Pentecostals like JIAM take the African map of the universe seriously acknowledging that culture is liberating and enslaving, as well as capable of being subverted. This culture is however subjected to the authority and judgment of Jesus Christ. African primal understanding of the world is built on a live universe where power is central. The world is conceived of as full of powerful forces in competition, which are sometimes manipulated by humans for good or for evil. This is a concept understandable to NPCs. It is therefore not surprising that many of our JIAM and other Pentecostal members are conceived evil from this perspective. Asked who they consider as evil, people most said “witches, wizards, sorcerers, devil worshippers, demon possessed and all those rapists and murderers who do so under the influence of demons or witches.”<sup>42</sup>

JIAM like other Pentecostal churches perceives dictatorial and corrupt rulers as being possessed. To them witchcraft and sorcery is real. The enemy is “ranged in military formation as principalities and powers, rulers of darkness and wickedness in high places.”<sup>43</sup> Asked about what constitute human rights, members recognized all the rights identified in the questionnaire and some added “fear of God.” Though the church has no policy on provision of civic education, it does not object to its members accessing it. It has also made its stand known on the draft constitution. Bishop Wanjiru led a delegation of the Evangelical

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<sup>41</sup> Kalu Ogbu, “Pentecostal and Charismatic Reshaping of the African Religious Landscape in the 1990s, in *Mission Studies*, (XX-1, 39, 2003), 86.

<sup>42</sup> Oral interview. Informant requested anonymity.

<sup>43</sup> Kalu Ogbu V. *Power, Poverty and Prayer, The Challenges of Poverty and Pluralism in African Christianity; 1960-1996*. (Frankfurt: Peterlang 2000), 118.

Churches of Kenya to the CKRC offices to deliver their views on it. Their views stressed the importance of heterosexual marriages; protection of the life of the unborn and objected to the privileging of Islamic religion through establishment of government financed Kadhi Courts to deal with Muslim personal law. To them, all religions are not equal: Christianity is supreme. They also advocated for amending the draft constitution to say that “Kenya is founded on the supremacy of God.”<sup>44</sup> In their words,

The constitution is the bedrock on which our society is built. For this reason it should NEVER BE used as a tool for political and sectoral expediency.<sup>45</sup>

Members were encouraged as individuals and church to participate in the Constitutional Review process through giving their views to the CKRC.<sup>46</sup> They were also encouraged in December 2002 to vote at the General Elections and support good governance. This way, the church was perceived as performing its prophetic role by speaking out against injustice in homilies. JIAM views their contribution to transformation and justice in society through a conversion experience that results in renewal, redefinition of a person, and acquisition of an identity that is spirit filled. The individual apparently confronts the past and sets off on a pilgrimage under the guiding light of the Holy Spirit. This rebirth or renewal offers a release from the forces that dominated a person’s past life. Consequently, the Holy Spirit flows in a person with the power to reestablish the proper relationship and control of God. This is redemption. A community that has experienced redemption is aware of the dignity of the human person, cannot but practice and safeguard human rights and in turn governs properly. With the knowledge of God, a nation is “upheld by righteousness.” As Kalu further observes “the

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<sup>44</sup> Margaret Wanjiru “The Draft Constitution: The Church Speaks,” in *Faith Digest* (2002), 11-12.

<sup>45</sup> Margaret Wanjiru “The Draft Constitution: The Church Speaks,” in *Faith Digest* (2002), 11-12.

<sup>46</sup> The Kenyan constitution review process continued upto 2005 when the draft constitution was subjected to a referendum and defeated in 2005. The matter was taken up again in 2008 and the second draft constitution was overwhelmingly endorsed in a national referendum on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2010. It was subsequently promulgated on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2010.

core of the new experience is that it redefines personality and reinvents identity as the 'born again' person develops a new vision, life goals and ethics which constitutes rapture from a sinful past." It engenders a theology of life, fulfillment and the desire to succeed as an individual and a nation.

JIAM's theology emphasizes spiritual, social, and political transformation through awareness of the Holy Spirit operating through believers baptized by the Holy Spirit. Like other Neo-Pentecostal preachers, Wanjiru has been accused of failing to address the structural causes of evil like corruption, globalization and bad governance, which have been responsible for Africa's problems. The focus on the spiritual basis of evil and suffering leaves the structural cause not addressed. Nevertheless, JIAM does recognize and is aware of the problems in the lives of the communities and their causes despite the focus on their spiritual nature. Their response to the forces is the rebuilding of the individual's power to be truly human, a call to social activism.

In the midst of poverty and abuse of human rights, Christianity is regarded by JIAM members as having the potential to offer hope and empower people to take control of their lives. The message of prosperity advocated by JIAM has been empowering and a tool of hope. Prosperity goes beyond material wealth and covers matters such as spiritual renewal of relationship with God in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit; health, reversal of economic and political oppression, social wellbeing of individuals and communities. Prosperity leads to repentance and renewal of a relationship which had been broken by sin. It is also a sign that healing has occurred. The process involves both repentance and claiming God's promises in the Bible.

JIAM like other NPCs encourages the individual to fight back, to refuse to accept defeat; avoid failure, negativity or pessimism. People are also taught in seminars about management techniques, right attitudes, and values regarding work. They hence foster a positive work ethic and discourage laziness, dependency, and exploitation of others. As part of its ministries, JIAM feeds the hungry in the streets of Nairobi supports education of destitute children and has a Good Samaritan Project that

gives food and clothing to the poor including refugees and Internally Displaced People. It also has powerful prayer intercessory and counseling programs. Its media ministry through Television print media evangelism has also given hope to the hopeless and led to conversion experiences. This has been its way of affirming human dignity and contributing to the transformation of the world. Its concept of human rights is grounded in biblical principles of justice, peace, lover equality and unity of human kind.

### CONCLUSION

The research has shown that members of the two churches differ in their understanding of the concept of human rights. They are generally unaware of international and national treaties and information on human rights. However their understanding is informed by religion specifically traditional African understanding of the human person and society and the biblical basis of human beings being “created in God’s image” and hence deserving dignity, honor respect and equality. They are also aware that the state has an obligation to protect individuals and ensure their access to basic rights ad needs like food, shelter, water, security, education, a clean environment and participation in decisions on matters affecting them in church and society. Hence though they may not be aware of international treaties and conventions aforementioned, nevertheless, they are aware that human beings need these rights for their survival and well-being. The erroneously held view by some scholars that Africans “are community or group oriented rather than individualistic, and hence the rights of their individual are not relevant to them,”<sup>47</sup> has been challenged by the findings of this research.

Indigenous African communities upheld individual rights and contemporary African society has evidenced a philosophy of human rights individual and communal. This is evident in their appropriation

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<sup>47</sup> See, Rhoda E. Howard “Group versus Individual Identity in the African debate on Human Rights,” in *Human Rights in Africa: Cross Cultural Perspectives* (Abdulla Ahmed An – Na’imand Francis M. Deng eds. (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1990), 139.

and ratification of international treaties and conventions on human rights whether they implement them, or not. African Nations do not have a positive record of upholding human rights and the grossest abuse is evident in the pervasiveness of poverty which is rooted in bad governance, corruption and ethnic conflicts. Even the very effort to modernize and promote economic growth have also generated numerous negative side effects among them community disruption, cultural misery and degradation especially of the less fortunate. It has also intensified psychological and social conflict. This is the context in which AIPCA and JIAM respond to the spiritual and social needs of the people. To them upholding of human rights implies raising people's dignity by addressing the aforesaid dehumanizing conditions. The churches may not advocate for human rights by calling press conferences and organizing lobby groups but they are nevertheless involved in promoting human rights through providing to the needy and operating like welfare organizations. Though the AIPCA is not as vocal on human rights as it was before independence in 1963, it is still promoting the welfare of their members and individual are involved in activism for civil rights. JIAM too is aware of human rights and combines spirituality and social activism.

Indigenous African communities upheld individual rights and contemporary African society has evidenced a philosophy of human rights individual and communal. This is evident in their appropriation and ratification of international treaties and conventions on human rights whether they implement them, or not. African Nations do not have a positive record of upholding human rights and the grossest abuse is evident in the pervasiveness of poverty which is rooted in bad governance, corruption and ethnic conflicts. Even the very effort to modernize and promote economic growth have also generated numerous negative side effects among them community disruption, cultural misery and degradation especially of the less fortunate. It has also intensified psychological and social conflict. This is the context in which AIPCA and JIAM respond to the spiritual and social needs of the people. To them upholding of human rights implies raising people's dignity by

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