

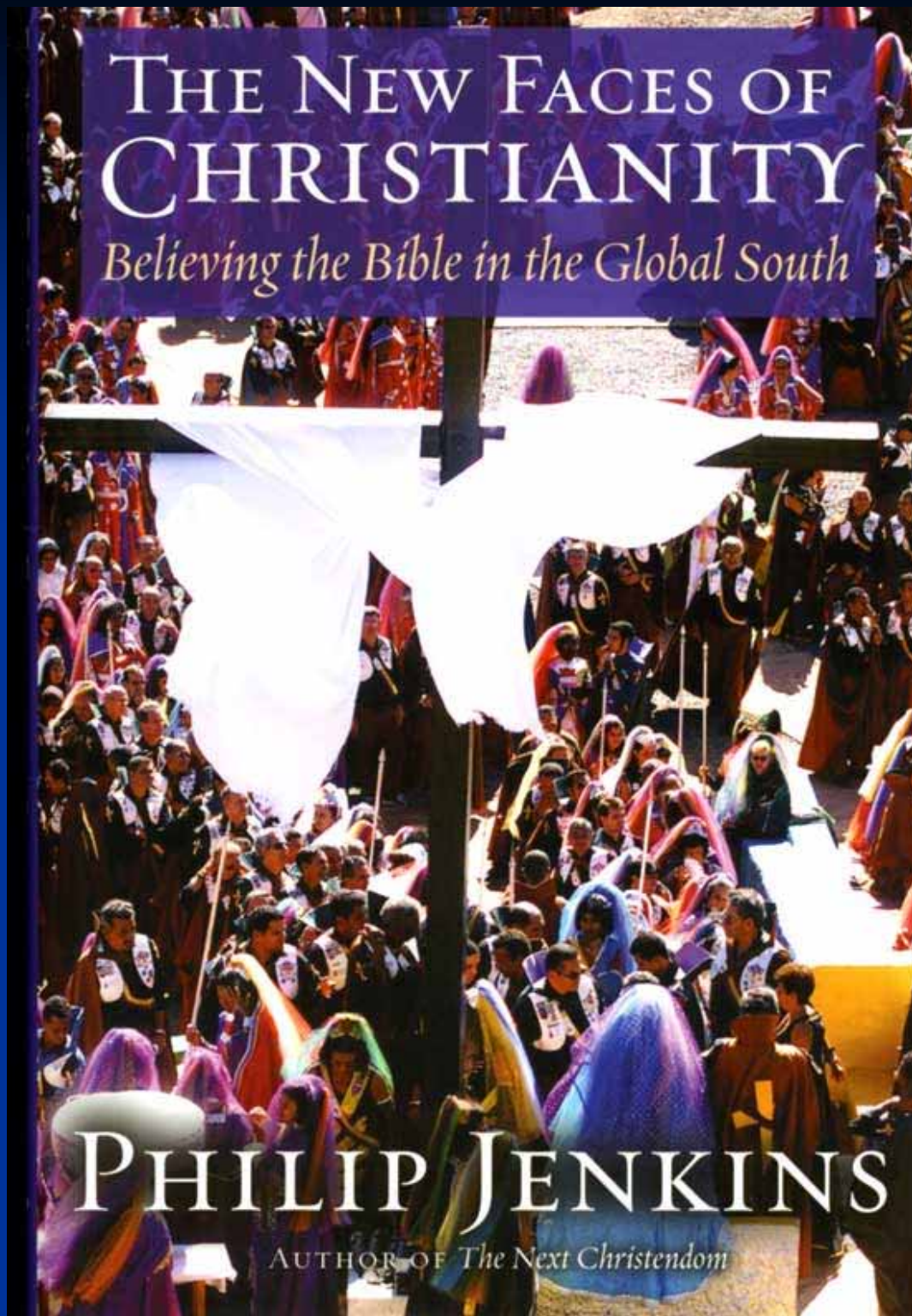
The New Faces of Christianity in the Global South

Good and Evil

Sunday, August 19, 2007
9 to 9:50 am, in the Parlor
Everyone is welcome!

March 13, 2005, Cathedral
Church of the Advent,
Anglican Church of
Nigeria, Abuja, Nigeria

St. John in the Wilderness



Primary Reference

- **The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South**, Philip Jenkins, Oxford University Press, 2006
- Philip Jenkins is Distinguished Professor of History and Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: Receive our supplications and prayers which we offer before you for all members of your holy Church, that in their vocation and ministry they may truly and devoutly serve you; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ..

A Collect for Guidance, Book of Common Prayer, p. 100



Facing Evil

The Archbishop of Canterbury and Primates of the Anglican Communion in Zanzibar at a monument recalling the slave trade post that existed on the cathedral site (*Anglican Episcopal World*, #125, back cover)

Facing Evil

The Devil

- Overwhelming, Churches in the Global South (Asia, Africa, Latin America) teach that evil is real and has a personal face (= the devil is real)
- Olusegun Obasanjo (president of Nigeria 1999-2007 and a Christian): “Doubting the existence of the devil or Satan is like doubting the existence of sin ... we can hardly deny the existence of demonic or devilish beings.”

Facing Evil

The Devil

- While human sinfulness might explain war, genocide and ethnic cleansing, the forces of evil and the devil are frequently invoked to explain:
 - cosmic disasters (tsunamis, hurricanes ...)
 - personal misfortune and disturbances (loss of a job, sickness, nightmares ...)



Scene from the Archbishop of Canterbury's visit to West Africa in July 2003 (*Anglican Episcopal World*, #111, p. 9)

Pagans Memories

Pagan Memories

Satanic Forces

- The Global South's envisioning of evil as a powerful personified spiritual force reflects a continuing influence of pagan and animist beliefs.
- In Africa: during the 20th century, one-third of the population transferred their belief from native religion or animism to Christianity.
- In Korea and China: one-half of current Christians converted in the past 50 years from folk religions.
- Sorcerers, mediums, spirit healers and other "spiritual professionals" are familiar figures in everyday life in many areas in the Global South.

Pagan Memories

Satanic Forces

- Reports of pagan atrocities, at times well substantiated, give further credibility to the objective existence of Satanic forces.
- President Obasanjo of Nigeria: **“There are devilish people who in today’s Nigeria believe that human sacrifice and human parts in magical stuff, charms and amulets, can provide them with [anything they want] and without regard for human life. They maim and kill to take parts of human bodies.”**

Pagan Memories

Satanic Forces

- Nigerian Christians celebrated the destruction of pagan shrines and their idols by citing Elijah's victory over the prophets of Baal.

Pagan Memories

Language of the Diabolical

- Thus when conservative African and Asia clergy invoke the language of the diabolical in response to the actions of churches in the affluent and more liberal north, they are not merely indulging in overheated rhetoric.
 - When, for example, Archbishop Akinola of the Anglican Church of Nigeria reacted to the proposed ordination of a gay bishop in the Church of England by saying **“This is an attack on the Church of God – a Satanic attack on God’s Church.”** he meant it literally.

Victory Over Evil



Scene from the
Archbishop of
Canterbury's visit to
West Africa in July
2003 (*Anglican
Episcopal World*,
#111, p. 7)

Victory Over Evil

Fighting Evils Spirits and Forces

- The forces of the evil: evil spirits and their human allies: witches, wizards, and sorcerers, are a constant force of fear and anxiety for those in the Global South.
- Pagan and primal religions taught the existence of the spiritual menaces posed by the diabolical, but also describes means to combat the evil forces.
- Christianity proclaims believers need not despair in confronting the vast empire of evil, for Jesus and the forces of good have already triumphed over the forces of evil through the Incarnation and the Resurrection.
 - Jesus' defeat of the forces of evil was not just in this world, but in any conceivable realm of spirits or ancestors

Victory Over Evil

Fighting Evils Spirits and Forces

- A hymn from Transvaal declares:

Jesus Christ is Conqueror

By his resurrection he overcame death itself

By his resurrection he overcame all things

He overcame magic

He overcame amulets and charms

He overcame the darkness of demon possession

He overcame dread

When we are with him

We also conquer

Victory Over Evil

Fighting Evils Spirits and Forces

- A hymn from Ghana declares:

If Satan troubles us

Jesus Christ

You who are the lion of the grasslands

You whose claws are sharp

Will tear out his entrails

And leave them on the ground

For the flies to eat



Anglican
Archbishop
Desmond Tutu
calling for
“Peace, peace,
peace.”
(*Anglican
Episcopal
World*, #113,
p.17)

Loosening the Captives

Loosening the Captives

Fighting Evils Spirits and Forces

- For Christians in the Global South, we are at war with the personified forces of evils, but through the power of Jesus Christ, deliverance from captivity to evil is possible:
 - Ephesians 6:12 (NKJ): **“we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”**
 - Luke 4:18-19 (NKJ): Jesus, quoting from Isaiah 61:1-2 **“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed ...”**

Loosening the Captives

Fighting Evils Spirits and Forces

- Biblical texts about “loosening” those who are captives are very popular:
 - The raising of Lazarus: John 11:44 (NKJ): ‘**And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Loose him, and let him go.”**’
 - The story of Jesus’ healing of the crippled women: Luke 13:12 (NKJ): ‘**But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, “Woman, you are *loosed* from your infirmity.”**’

Loosening the Captives

Exorcism

- Belief in demonology and the power of Jesus to “loose” the captives makes the idea of exorcism credible to African and Asian Christians.
- These ideas are mainstream.
 - *For example:* a journal article “Demon Possession and Exorcism” in the respected *African Theological Journal* discussed Mark 1:21-28, in which Jesus casts out the demon in a possessed man.
 - The article concludes: **“Exorcism brings both spiritual and bodily or material blessings to the individual and society. Due to such blessings, the church should see to it that exorcism is done whenever the need arises.”**



Procession during the Archbishop of Canterbury's pastoral visit to the Anglican Church of Burundi (*Anglican Episcopal World*, #116, p. 13)

The Lion & the Adder: Psalm 91

The Lion and the Adder

Psalm 91

- Psalm 91, an assertion of strength against enemies, material and spiritual, has been invoked for protection throughout Christian history. Psalm 91:1-6 (NIV):
 - He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty
 - I will say of the LORD, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”
 - Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.
 - He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
 - You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day,
 - nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday ...

The Lion and the Adder

Psalm 91

- In Jesus' own day, it was interpreted chiefly as invoking protection from Satan, and belonged firmly in the realm of exorcism.
- In Christian Africa and Asia, the psalm is everywhere, and is still used for exorcism and spiritual protection from Satan.
- Many miracles have been attributed to the psalm
- Some carry the written psalm as a kind of amulet



And It Was Night

Anglican nun in Papua
New Guinea (*Anglican
Episcopal World*, #124,
p.34)

And It Was Night

All-Night Vigils

- A firm belief that we are at war with the dark forces of evil and Satan explains in part the common practice of all night vigils and services in Africa.
 - They are a standard service in the Africa's Independent Churches
- The vigils are steeped in the symbolism of light and darkness.
- Jean Marc Ela: **“In black Africa, the world of the Night or of the Invisible is perhaps the privileged place in which we must understand the good news of the descent of Jesus into hell (1 Peter 3:19-20) in order to announce liberation to the African menaced by occult power.”**

And It Was Night

All-Night Vigils

- A centerpiece of Zimbabwean devotional life is the vigil, or *pungwe*, a large rural gathering of prayer, praise and preaching, deliberately held at night to:
 - proclaim the victory of Christ,
 - to challenge the potent forces of darkness.

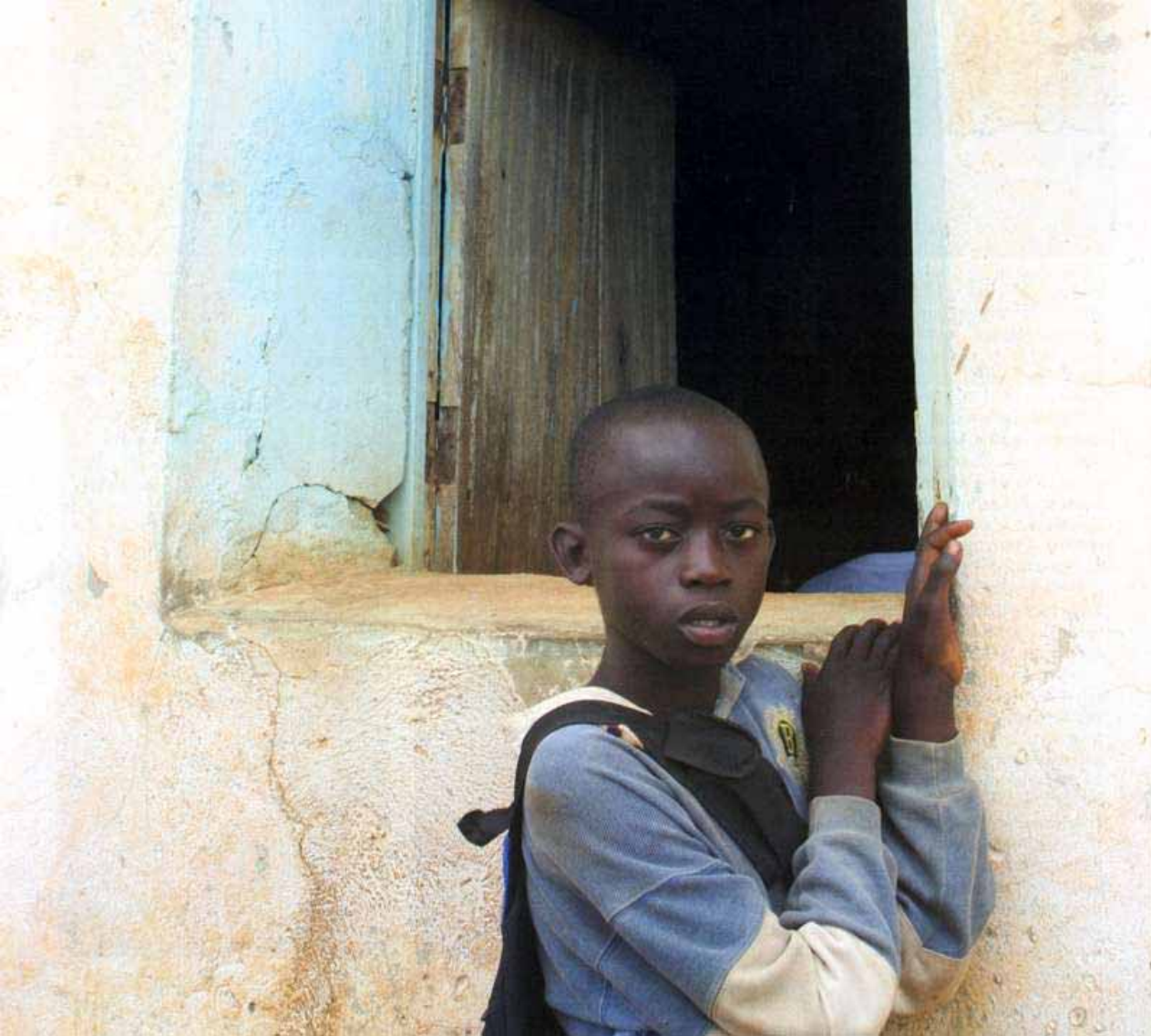


Image from the Archbishop of Canterbury's visit to Angola
(*Anglican Episcopal World*, #125, p. 6)

Witches

Witches

Human Beings Allied With Evil Forces

- A firm belief in spiritual warfare with Satan and evil forces can raise fears of human beings allied to those forces = “witches”
- The belief in witchcraft as a pervasive threat has grown in last few decades in Africa, as people seek explanations for disasters facing the continent, while traditional belief systems have fallen into disarray.
 - Situation analogous to the surge of witchcraft fears between the 1560 and 1640 in Europe as Protestant and Catholic churches struggled to suppress the practice of folk magic

Witches

Human Beings Allied With Evil Forces

- Ugandan Fr. Peter Wasswa Mpagi noted “**Many sicknesses cannot be cured medically ... There is widespread belief in Tanzania and elsewhere of *Wamumiani* who bleed people and sell their blood. In Uganda there are continuous stories about kidnapping, disappearances of children and sacrifices of human victims. In the city, people are worried about how to keep their jobs, and the fear of witchcraft is on the increase.**”

Witches

Human Beings Allied With Evil Forces

- People feel they need techniques to protect themselves against these menaces, and they seek help in traditional practices.
 - As one African Catholic bishop complains, his flock practices “**rosary in the morning and witchcraft in the afternoon**”

Witches

Church's Response

- Abundant biblical resources that have been used to address witchcraft:
 - Banner in an evangelical church in Ghana displayed Exodus 22:8 **“Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live!”**
 - The spiritual warfare section of Ephesians 6
 - Ephesians 6:12 (NKJ): **“we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places ...**

Witches

Church's Response

- Abundant biblical resources that have been used to address witchcraft:
 - Psalms portraying believers under assault from “enemies,” interpreted as being witches or demonic forces:
 - Psalm 35: **Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me ...** (Psalm 35:1 NIV)
 - Psalm 31: **In you, O LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness ...** (Psalm 31:1 NIV)

Witches

Church's Response

- Armed with weapons of prayer and the knowledge of Jesus' victory over sin and Satan, Christians triumphantly boast of victories against the powers of darkness, particularly with stories of witches and pagan priests who surrendered their powers and convert.
- Some of these conversion stories have become bestsellers:
 - *My Conversion: From a Witch-Doctor to an Evangelist*, by EO Omoobajesu
 - *Delivered from the Power of Darkness*, by Emmanuel Eni



Healing Words

The Anglican Church of South Africa has a custom of blessing children who are not yet confirmed. Here the Archbishop of Canterbury blesses a child in Angola
(*Anglican Episcopal World*, #125, cover)

Healing Words

Healing as Deliverance from Evil

- For many Christians in the Global South, their firm belief in spiritual warfare with Satan and evil forces is linked to health of body and mind.
 - Healing of the body or mind is seen as a form of deliverance, of “loosening” from the forces of evil.
- Healing ministries have been critical to the modern expansion of Christianity.
- Accounts of healing represent a large proportion of literature and testimony among African and Asian Christians.
 - One modern African Catholic describes a common attitude: **“I look at [Jesus] as a healer, and I think many Africans do. The most powerful image of Jesus is Jesus the healer. He can take away our diseases.”**

Healing Words

Healing as Deliverance from Evil

- Passages in scripture can be used to justify a healing ministry:
 - the many examples of Jesus' healing ministry
 - closing verses of Mark 16, in which faithful are promised spiritual powers
 - Luke 10
 - Letter of James, in which the faithful are urged to seek healing through prayer and anointing by the elders of the church
 - The Old Testament accounts of the healings by Elijah and Elisha in the two books of Kings:
 - Healing of Naaman the Syrian
 - The Raising from the dead of the widow's son

Healing Words

Jesus the Superior Healer

- The specific techniques for healing used by Jesus in the Gospels often resemble those in use in Africa and Asia.
- African Christians have been impressed by how versatile a healer Jesus was:
 - **“And when it comes to healing, he uses so many ways. He can touch you, he can put mud or saliva on your eyes, he can command these spirits. He has all manner of ways, by his word he can even heal at a distance ... He can even speak to forces, so is a real miracle-worker.”**
- Many Christians converts in traditional African societies were shocked to learn Jesus healed using methods they thought were unique to their local tradition, such as curing blindness with a mixture of soil and spittle.

Healing Words

Jesus the Superior Healer

- African healers have been impressed with Jesus' combination of traditional methods with dramatic spiritual and psychological insight:
 - In John 5:1-14, the miracle of the invalid healed by the pool, African healers were struck by Jesus' question to the man **“Do you want to be made well?”**
 - Jesus' demand for the sick person's full commitment to the healing process impressed them, showing Jesus' wisdom and superiority as a healer.

Healing Words

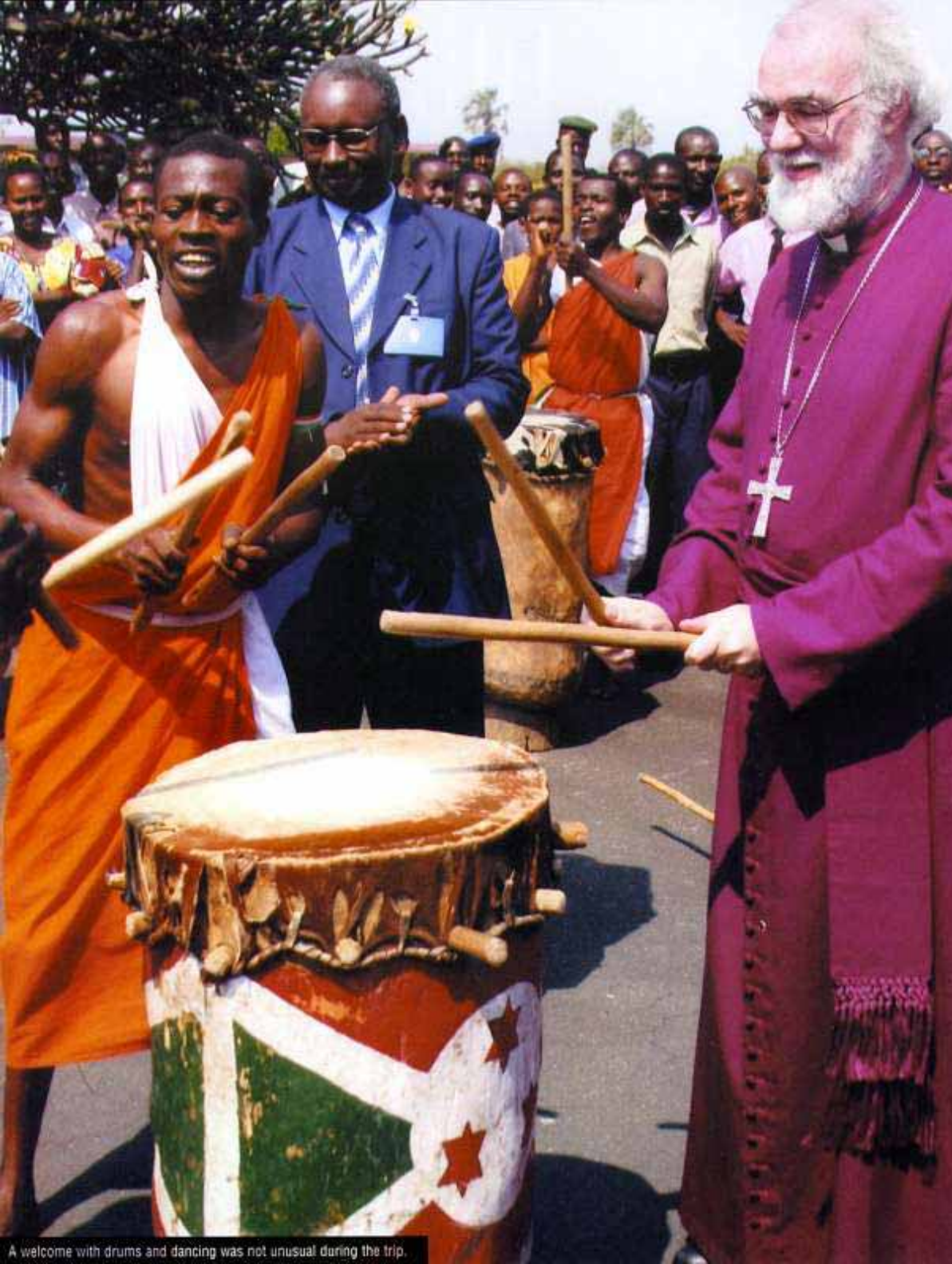
Jesus the Superior Healer

- The sense of Jesus' superiority as a healer has been used by the Churches to try to combat pagan and traditional healing practices.
- The Churches have also used healing texts to denounce pagan spiritual professionals who charge exorbitantly for their services: Elisha cured Naaman the Syrian for nothing.

Healing Words

Healing and Mainstream Churches

- Not all African churches offer exorcism and spiritual healing routinely.
- But all mainstream Christian churches teach that the sufferer's belief system must be treated with complete respect, and spiritual intervention offered as a last resort.
- Traditional methods are sometimes tolerated. A Catholic commentary to the *African Bible* notes **“As long as a witch doctor is not harming but trying to empower, the Christian faith can integrate the message of healing in its message. Christ himself was a healer; all the Christian sacraments can be seen from the point of view of healing.”**



Ancestral Forces

The Archbishop of Canterbury during his pastoral visit to the Anglican Church of Burundi (*Anglican Episcopal World*, #116, p. 6)

Ancestral Forces

Curses That Span Generations

- The churches of the Global South exist in societies where the idea of ancestral curses and guilt that spans generations is common.
- About one-quarter of the world's population follow religious systems in which one's present condition is the result of one's conduct in another life.
 - The poorest and most oppressed then have only themselves to blame.

Ancestral Forces

Curses That Span Generations

- In India for example, the greatest appeal of both Christianity and Islam is to the members of the lowest social castes, for both religions provide a means for them to cast off their weight of ancestral guilt and sin.
 - In India, the “untouchable” class, the Dalits, number two hundred million.
- In Africa also, there are resolute native beliefs in ancestral forces, sins and ritual transgressions that are carried down through generations.

Ancestral Forces

Curses That Span Generations

- Jesus' victory over all forces of evil offers a solution even for those whose ancestral curses or taboos seem overwhelming.
- Jesus' message in the Bible on responsibility for evil can still startle converts in the Global South:
 - When Jesus' disciples, when seeing a man born blind, asked whose fault it was, was it his sin or that of his parents? Jesus answered: **“Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.”** (John 9:1-3 NIV)

Next Week

Persecution and Vindication

The New Testament portrayal of persecution as a likely if not inevitable consequence of Christian Faith is a contemporary reality for Christians of the Global South

March 13, 2005, Cathedral
Church of the Advent,
Anglican Church of
Nigeria, Abuja, Nigeria