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**THE RELIGIOUS ELEMENT IN MAU MAU***by*

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THE Mau Mau leaders were very fully aware that the Kikuyu are by nature an intensely religious people, who could not do without a religion of some sort—people who needed the mental comfort of a “belief”. They knew too that among their own people there were hundreds of thousands who had lost all faith in the religion of their ancestors but who had never accepted Christianity except in a nominal way. The failure of so many to accept Christianity in a deep and real sense arose from the fact that the Christian mission churches had not been content to teach only the simple teaching of Christ but had added to them much that was not in the New Testament, but which was the doctrine of the particular mission or Christian sect to which they belonged. Nevertheless, these tens of thousands of nominal Christians were people who were well acquainted with the outward forms of Christian worship and who had attended church services, so the pattern was a useful one to use. This was more particularly so since this was also the pattern used by the separatist African churches which existed in the tribe, churches which were linked with the Independent Schools movement.

And so the outward patterns of Christianity, hymn-singing, formal prayers, sermons, and the recitation of a creed, were adopted as the foundations of the Mau Mau religion, which was to draw the Kikuyu to the political cause of the K.C.A.

First one and then another and yet another so-called hymn-book was written, published and distributed. These contained hymns set to the tunes which were already well known to the vast majority of those whom the Mau Mau were trying to win over—the tunes of the Ancient and Modern Hymn-book, to which, earlier, the Christian missionaries had set words expressing as nearly as possible the sentiments of the original Christian words.

But the new words set to these tunes were very different ; some were laments over the land “stolen” from the Kikuyu by the wicked white man, some were in praise of the famous Kikuyu prophets of old, who long before the present century had foretold the coming of the people with white skins who would bring with them a snake that would wind through the country, with which the railway has always been identified. According to the hymns, these prophets had also foretold that the strangers would in due course be driven out. Now was the time to fulfil the prophecy.

Other hymns extolled both past and present Kikuyu leaders as servants of God and poured scorn upon those who sided with the Europeans or helped them in any way, frankly speaking of them as “Judases” who would be destroyed. Still other hymns, set to the most stirring of the well-known tunes such as “Soldiers of Christ arise” and “Onward Christian soldiers”, were altered until they were nothing more than a direct incitement to actual physical and not spiritual, warfare ; in a few of these hymns, especially in the later books, there were verses that openly spoke of “burning the traitors with petrol” and of driving out the white man.

These hymns were sung as part of solemn acts of worship at which the congregation also recited the new creed and participated in solemn acts of prayer to Almighty God, and listened to sermons often based on texts from the Bible but designed to work up hatred against foreigners and those who supported them.