



**UGANDA CHRISTIAN  
UNIVERSITY**

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa



Tel: +256 (0) 312 350 800

+256 (0) 784 447 144

E-mail: [africapolicy2@gmail.com](mailto:africapolicy2@gmail.com)

Website: [www.ucupolicycentre.org](http://www.ucupolicycentre.org)

# **Bleeding Uganda: on Festo Kivengere's Preaching of the Doctrine of Reconciliation**

***UNCOVERING THE REAL FESTO KIVENGERE***

**The Rev. Canon Alfred Olwa, Ph.D.**

**Bishop, Lango Diocese**

**Church of Uganda**

***and***

**Affiliate Researcher: The Africa Policy Centre**

**Uganda Christian University.**

**2018.**

Festo Kivengere once remarked in a sermon: 'We in Uganda feel that the church is irrelevant if it fails to carry on the message of being ambassadors of reconciliation'.<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly, he had a point when he made that remark thirty-six years ago. Yet even a cursory listening to his many oral sermons and sermon transcripts that I have collected and now available at the Moore Theological College Library,<sup>2</sup> and the few sermons he published in books<sup>3</sup> since suggest his remark could just as easily be repeated in Uganda today and perhaps with even more validity.

Unfortunately, the primary oral media of communication — the audio sermons and addresses — have hidden from the standard historical accounts Kivengere's significant contribution to his doctrine of reconciliation in 'bleeding Uganda'.<sup>4</sup> The absence of the primary media of communication from scholars makes it difficult for them to confidently affirm what a few scholars who have got access to Kivengere's preaching of reconciliation have said. For the few scholars who have accessed Kivengere's sermons,<sup>5</sup> it may be said that a preacher of reconciliation *par excellence* out of Uganda has walked among us; and, engagement with Kivengere very often takes the form of wholehearted embrace of both his audio and transcribed sermons followed by the development of his ideas in new directions.

Furthermore, we suggest that a reappropriation of Kivengere's preaching of reconciliation promises to be the most effective way of breathing a fresh contribution to what has become an old and marginalized impression of the Church of Uganda's resistance to Idi Amin and the military government of the Okellos. It must not be forgotten that others suspected him to want to become 'Uganda's Bishop Makarios?',<sup>6</sup> a preacher of the gospel whose ideas are rooted in Scripture but most definitely highly political! For such people engagement with Kivengere's preaching concerns are highly suspect. Kivengere himself once confided in his longtime friend Donald Richard: 'this is my politics [i.e., the Bible tucked under his arm], the word of God, and I have no other ambition greater than to preach the mighty word'.<sup>7</sup>

Nothing is to be gained by pretending Kivengere is someone he is not or that his preaching represents something it is not. In the first instance, Kivengere, like all of us, was a child of his time. His preaching of reconciliation regularly intersected with the wider context of his world — a world convulsed by extraordinary and horrific events and while in exile he was engaged in a frantic search for sounder theological, intellectual and socio-political moorings which in essence arise out of his doctrine of reconciliation.<sup>8</sup>

It should never be forgotten that his flight into exile took place in the wake of his confronting sermon at the consecration of Bishop Yoram Bamunoba, which challenged the political authorities under Amin of their watch on their moral duties before God. To the government authorities he asks: "How are you using your authority? [...] To crush men's faces into the dust?"<sup>9</sup> Almost within the earshot of this 'famous sermon', the country continued to be washed

---

<sup>1</sup> Kivengere, 'In Christ': 3.

<sup>2</sup> I have collected, catalogued and deposited over 500 oral sermons and transcripts of Kivengere's sermons preached from 1971–1988 at the Moore Theological College. For a catalogue of the sermons see Appendix 5 in Olwa, 'Missionary of Reconciliation': 581–601.

<sup>3</sup> See Kivengere, *Hope for Uganda and the World; Jesus Our Reality; Love Unlimited; Revolutionary Love; The Spirit Is Moving; When God Moves*.

<sup>4</sup> The term 'bleeding Uganda' is our critical appreciation of Kivengere's insightful article, 'Bleeding Africa', in Hannes-Grete Brommeland and Knud Jorgensen (ed.), *Proclaiming Christ to His World*, Oslo: Luther Forlag, 1984, 19–29.

<sup>5</sup> These scholars include, John Senyonyi, 'Bishop Festo Kivengere's Philosophy of Evangelism'; Charlotte Inkelaar-de Mos, *African Evangelistic Enterprise: A History of its Organization*; Peter Rwabyoma, 'Bishop Festo Kivengere'.

<sup>6</sup> Anne Coomes, *Kivengere*, 373.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 373.

<sup>8</sup> Coomes, *Kivengere*, 340.

<sup>9</sup> Kevin Ward, 'The Church of Uganda Amidst Conflict': 86.

in bloodshed.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the controversial title of his moving book, *I Love Idi Amin*, first appeared in bookshops around the world just as Uganda headed almost inexorably into darkness of Amin's rule.<sup>11</sup>

Kivengere's monumental courage in both of these contexts, challenging the militant, dictatorial and murderous authorities of Amin's government and relentless campaign to the democratic countries of the world to put pressure on Amin's rule: 'Countries fortunate to have democratic Governments should speak more forcibly against President Idi Amin's rule of Uganda [...] By speaking up more in international assemblies such as the United Nation, free countries could do a great deal to bring pressure on President Amin to stop "dehumanization" of [his] subjects',<sup>12</sup> arises out of and feeds into his doctrine of reconciliation, hence, his socio-political endeavors. His is a robust, almost aggressive 'socio-political theology', unwilling to cower before the demands of Amin's rule. It is not in the slightest defensive.

In his 1979 significant address to the Australian Nation Press Club, intended to 'educate' the commonwealth government on how the gun has become the law in Uganda, he knew how and when to hold his ground, unfolding the why.<sup>13</sup> And in his sermons — sermons from which he explicitly preached the theme of reconciliation;<sup>14</sup> and, sermons that does not mention the theme of reconciliation but he still preached reconciliation,<sup>15</sup> he unfolds clearly his doctrine of reconciliation.

In Uganda, Archbishop Jannai Luwum, a contemporary of Kivengere, greatly influenced his preaching of reconciliation. Kivengere once described his friend and archbishop Luwum as 'A tremendous reconciler [...] he died as an ambassador of reconciliation'.<sup>16</sup> Careful examination of Luwum's context and preaching of reconciliation by his secretary, and later biographer, Margret Ford, reveals an astonishing number of resonances with Kivengere's preaching of reconciliation. Luwum's protest of Amin's killing of Acholi and Langi in his diocese of northern Uganda, and later his insistence on non-violent protest of Amin's murders, his boldness on many occasions to make personal representation and protest to Amin over the numerous killings of innocent Ugandans, and his determination as a *Mulokole* (a saved person) to maintain a focus on Jesus Christ, all find an echo in Kivengere's preaching of reconciliation.

Of course, each of these was developed in new ways and freshly anchored in more fundamental convictions about reconciliation. Two examples will suffice. *Firstly*, concerning Kivengere's involvement with Uganda's politicians, he publicly told the press in Australia and New Zealand in March 1984:

---

<sup>10</sup> It should be said that since 1971 when Amin ascended to power, there has been increasing bloodshed. However, Amin's murder of Archbishop Janani Luwum and his increased murders gave his government and himself more criticisms than before. E.g., Kyemba, *A State of Blood*; Ford, *Janani: the Martyr*, 49–51; Wood, 'A Murder in Uganda': 216–19; Ward, 'Archbishop Janani Luwum': 199–224; An anonymous article written in Uganda, reviewing the state of economic problems arising from Amin's rule, reviews the massacres of soldiers, citing various murders including that of Chief Justice Benedicto Kiwanuka for his involvement in the politics of Uganda. See Munger and Anon, *Inside Amin's Uganda*, 11–22.

<sup>11</sup> Kivengere, 'Ambassadors For Christ': 13.

<sup>12</sup> See 'Appeal by Bishop: Speak on Uganda'.

<sup>13</sup> Kivengere, *Address to the National Press Club*.

<sup>14</sup> See the Pauline reconciliation passages from which he preached reconciliation, namely, from **2 Corinthians 5:18–20**: Kivengere, 'Ambassador For Christ'; Kivengere, 'In Christ'; Kivengere, 'The Cross Today'; Kivengere, 'Jesus Came as a Missionary of Reconciliation' Four sermons he preached from **Romans 5:1–11**: Kivengere, 'Surprised by Joy'; 'Kivengere, God's Intervening Love'; Kivengere, 'The Love of Christ'; Kivengere, 'Life in Jesus'. Three sermons he preached from **Ephesians 2:14–18**: Kivengere, 'His Flooding Love'; Kivengere, 'Broken Relationships Restored'; Kivengere, 'The Whole Gospel for the Whole Church'. And, three sermons he preached from **Colossians 1:19–22**: Kivengere, 'Christ Put all things Together'; Kivengere, Kivengere, 'The Unshakable Identity of the Church of Jesus Christ'; Kivengere, 'Christ has reconciled the Universe to Himself'.

<sup>15</sup> See Kivengere, 'The Cross and World Evangelization'; Kivengere, 'The Triumph of God's Glory'; Kivengere, 'A New Way of Seeing Jesus'; Kivengere, 'The Pastor's Joy'. Also see Kivengere, 'Revival Begins at the Cross'; Kivengere, 'Remove the Masks'; Kivengere, 'Peace and Victory for the Christian'; Kivengere, 'The Covenant of Love'.

<sup>16</sup> See Kivengere, 'The Reconciling Love of Christ': 6.

I don't see how you can be a Christian and not be involved, though not necessarily by being a politician. From the angle of Christian faith, politics has gone wrong. It is selfish and oppressive. We need to challenge politicians from the standard of their responsibilities. I go to politicians as a minister and a Christian.<sup>17</sup>

This concern arises out of Kivengere's conviction that the love of God brought reconciliation in his Son Jesus Christ.<sup>18</sup> This was the only hope for Uganda and beyond. For Kivengere, if this love brought reconciliation, it brought other concerns too — including a socio-political integrity. He further viewed this love as active and never passive, thus, it sought out the good of the loved ones. Kivengere himself believed that if Uganda was to have lasting peace, it must be grounded on justice. In his view, therefore, logically it follows that if Ugandans loved one another, they will not be satisfied to see the innocent suffering.

*Secondly*, as Uganda looked forward to the elections of 1985, he wrote a circular letter to his clergy in the diocese emphasizing that their ministry is 'reconciliation' and is not to be mixed with party politics. It explains the extent of his thought on reconciliation in Uganda. For him, the New Testament does not provide room for the church to organize itself politically.<sup>19</sup> Political campaigning must not be mixed with church services. He equates mixing the two to mixing good soil with water in a glass. His concern is that even though the soil is good, it is out of context. Moreover, to not mix the two is to respect the place of politics and spiritual ministry. 2 Cor 5:18–19 explicitly states: 'he gave us the ministry of reconciliation'. In Kivengere's critical perspective, there is no campaigning there. But while Kivengere challenged so much the negatives of Amin and Obote's rule, he did not do away with everything. Some of the positives in the governments survived unscathed.

It is also of particular importance that Kivengere's preaching of reconciliation was set in the midst of sustained engagement with the texts of the Bible.<sup>20</sup> Engaging Uganda's socio-political context with Scripture provided him with the reason and the resources to mount a substantial and foundational challenge to the prevailing horrors Ugandans faced under Amin. His long time and close friend, Marcus Loane of Sydney and primate of all Australia later wrote of his perception of Kivengere's preaching ministry in the first decade of the twenty first century: 'of all his countrymen, none saw Uganda's problems better than him; he is second to none'.<sup>21</sup>

Kivengere himself explains what he believes to be the only solution to his engagement with the deep wounds in Uganda with the content of the Biblical message of reconciliation:

A young lady, lovely highly educated person, lost her brother last year [...]. This man was taken from his home. He [...] was tortured to death. I can't put it in words. I met this man's sister, she said to me [...], 'I have never felt like I would kill; now, if you gave me a knife, and you put Amin or one of his men in front of me, I will kill'. Now, tell me, how do you change that lady? Tell me, how you change her from this grip of destruction, which has invaded her personality, her children experience that because they feel what their mother is feeling.

I want to tell you we have a stupendous job in Uganda today, not only giving people food to eat [...] there is an area which these services will never meet. For deep down in the human persons there are wounds, which needs one antidote alone. That antidote is found in 2 Cor. 5:11–20.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Cited in Coomes, *Kivengere*, 430.

<sup>18</sup> Kivengere, 'The Reconciling Love of Christ'.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 431.

<sup>20</sup> His contemporaries were left in no doubt that his theology while undoubtedly affected by his context, was nonetheless not to be explained in terms of politics.

<sup>21</sup> Loane, *Memories*, 104.

<sup>22</sup> Kivengere, 'In Christ': 3-4.

This concern to bring both the content and the method of addressing deep wounds in Uganda in line with the teaching of Scripture is present throughout Kivengere's oral sermons and his few published articles. It explains the extent of his preaching reconciliation in his numerous unpublished sermons.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed this paper does not pretend to be a social history of the impact of Kivengere's preaching of reconciliation. To ascertain how his preaching was received and the impact it made would be a very different inquiry, and, although interesting, well beyond our chosen scope. However, given the nature of preaching, the sermons focused in this paper from time to time act as windows into the worlds of the preacher, Kivengere, and his audiences. The sermons therefore provide some insight into what his audiences were experiencing, such as the terrors of Idi Amin's rule, and what Ugandan Christians wanted their Bishop to understand about their anguish. For example Kivengere himself put it this way:

Many times when we are preaching in universities and schools, some young person, a girl or a boy comes and says, 'Can I be happy again preacher? My father, my mother, my two brothers, my uncle, were all murdered. My world is a lonely world. I am walking alone in a complicated forest of human experience. Preacher can I be happy?'<sup>24</sup>

The sermons also provide insight into what Kivengere himself believe preaching reconciliation can do to heal their deep wounds.

In this connection it is significant that Kivengere preached so often and so widely on reconciliation. His preaching of reconciliation was not limited to Ugandan context. True not much of his preaching has yet been published let alone his Runyangkole-Rukiga audio sermons translated for the English-Speaking audience. However, my recent study of Kivengere's doctrine of reconciliation has brought the extent of his preaching of reconciliation to light.<sup>25</sup> When he founded the African Evangelistic Enterprise, his aim was to preach the message of reconciliation in African cities and universities, the 'home' of future African leaders. In practice and his daily preaching, Kivengere remained attentive to reconciliation in Scripture.

These preliminary observations provide an important context for responsible engagement with Kivengere's doctrine of reconciliation in bleeding Uganda. Indeed, acknowledgement of such a context is perhaps the *first* step in letting Kivengere be himself, free from either adulation or suspicion both of which could either mar discussions of his preaching of reconciliation and his thought on the socio-political context of Uganda under Amin. He must be allowed to define himself, to set the limits of his own theological direction.

Kivengere's conscious participation in guiding and offering spiritual leadership to Ugandan politicians is well known. However, his spiritual leadership to the politicians was of a tall and different order. His leadership was based on his love for his Lord Jesus Christ and upon the reconciliation rooted in Jesus Christ.<sup>26</sup> Kivengere mobilized and rallied the nation for both political and spiritual reconstruction and rehabilitation, and he did this by means of his powerful preaching of reconciliation.

From 23–26 March, 1979 Moshi Unity Conference,<sup>27</sup> consisting of various Ugandan organizations that were in exile, whose representatives met at Moshi in Tanzania to discuss the future of Uganda and select its new leader for the transition government after the fall of Amin, Kivengere himself was in attendance. At the meeting his leadership ability strongly emerged. 'Bishop Festo himself was approached, with offers of high government office', while others even

---

<sup>23</sup> For a list of his catalogue of unpublished sermons, see Appendix 5 in Olwa, 'Missionary of Reconciliation': 581–601.

<sup>24</sup> Kivengere, 'The Reconciling Love of Christ': 2–3.

<sup>25</sup> See author's forthcoming book, *Missionary of Reconciliation*, to be published by LAP.

<sup>26</sup> Loane, *Memories*, 100–05.

<sup>27</sup> As the name suggests, the Moshi Unity Conference brought together twenty-two fighting groups of Ugandans opposed to Idi Amin who were in exile scattered around the globe. For a description of the lack of unity among them, see Pirouet, *Historical Dictionary of Uganda*, 255–56.

'wanted to push him into the presidency but he smilingly refused'.<sup>28</sup> He refused because he was committed to his ministry as a bishop in the Church and he also believed that his job was to bring reconciliation to the government and to build bridges over which the Ugandans can cross.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, in 1979 Kivengere's hour had come: 'For at President Lule's invitation, Festo led the call to all Ugandans for national reconciliation'.<sup>30</sup> His message had become a matter of national political importance.

### Campaign for suffering Ugandans

While in exile (1977–1979), Kivengere rigorously campaigned for the suffering Ugandans — Ugandans in exile and Ugandan farmers who were exploited by Amin's soldiers. When he was a missionary teacher at Alliance Anglican School, Dodoma, Tanzania (1945–1958), Kivengere had established a connection with the American Mennonites. While living in exile in America this connection was re-established and the Mennonites assisted him in his appeal to the Washington Administration to help with the pressing problem of Ugandan refugees and to place an embargo on the U.S. import of Ugandan coffee. His appeal received serious attention.

At the time, a bill that would give thirty million dollars for African assistance was before Congress. Kivengere sought to call Washington's attention to the fifty thousand refugees who had fled the increasingly brutal rule of President Idi Amin.

[The Director of the Mennonite Central Committee, Franz Delton<sup>31</sup>] scheduled seventeen appointments over a two-day period for Kivengere, including meetings with six career Foreign Service officers on East Africa at the State Department, representatives of the State Department Bureau of Human Rights, staffers from the House and Senate subcommittee on Africa and key members of the House of Senate. Representative Donald Pease (D-Ohio) already had introduced a bill with twenty-three sponsors that placed an embargo on the U.S. importation of Ugandan coffee. Pease said he found helpful the information provided by Kivengere's documentation on Amin's atrocities and his armed troops' confiscation of most of the coffee crop for the dictator's treasury.<sup>32</sup>

Thus during his exile, Kivengere took serious action to secure the interest of the international community in what is happening in Uganda.<sup>33</sup> Regarding Amin's soldiers who were taking the bagged coffee from the Ugandan farmers at a meagre amount of its real market value, he argued with the U.S. Senators that coffee exports to the U.S. were providing two-thirds of Uganda's hard currency.<sup>34</sup> Thus, in his view, practically all of the funds from the U.S. importation of Ugandan coffee were being used recklessly by Amin to pursue his genocidal killings, to purchase expensive automobiles, and to import Scotch whisky to motivate his army officers to obey his orders.<sup>35</sup> Kivengere's campaign for a U.S. trade embargo on Ugandan coffee was successful and after just a year of this sanction, Amin's regime fell.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Coomes, *African Harvest*, 367.

<sup>29</sup> Episcopal Church, 'Bishop Kivengere Returns To Uganda'.

<sup>30</sup> Opcit, 368.

<sup>31</sup> Franz Delton has been the directed of the Mennonite Central Committee for twenty-three years (1971–1994). For an appreciation of the Mennonite perspective on Christian Activism, which he has been the director, see Delton, Franz. 'A Biblical Context': 51–56.

<sup>32</sup> Graber, *Wise As Serpents, Innocent As Doves*, 147–48. Cf. Cal Thomas, 'Uganda's New Day': 6.

<sup>33</sup> E.g., Kivengere addressed the Australian National Press Club on what is happening in Uganda with the aim of bringing international awareness and ask countries with a fair democracy to help Uganda's situation. See Kivengere, *National Press Club Address*.

<sup>34</sup> Helpful discussions on U.S. embargo on Uganda Coffee include, Nurnburger, 'The United States': 49–65; Miller, 'When Sanctions Worked': 118–29; Andrews, 'The Legitimacy of the United States': 651–73; U.S. Congress, 'Public Law 95–435': 1051–3.

<sup>35</sup> Kivengere, *Address at the National Press Club of Australia*.

<sup>36</sup> For a discussion of how the United States Trade Embargo prepared the way for the fall of Amin's government, see Nurnburger, 'United States and Amin', 49–65; Miller, 'Sanctions', 118–29.

## **Bitter criticism of politics at the African Union**

Not only was Kivengere actively involved in political action on behalf of suffering Ugandans, but he also expressed bitter disgust with others who did nothing. He strongly criticized the African Unity (AU), formerly the Organization of African Unity (OAU), for sitting back and doing nothing to help the Ugandans oppressed and suffering under Amin.<sup>37</sup> When Idi Amin continued to kill Ugandans at the rate of 150 people a day, Kivengere was irritated with the OAU's decision to meet in Kampala and make Amin its Chairman:

The OAU's silence has encouraged and indirectly contributed to the bloodshed in Africa. I mean, the OAU even went as far as to go to Kampala [for its 1975 summit] and make Amin its chairman. And at the very moment the heads of state were meeting in the conference hall, talking about the lack of human rights in southern Africa, three blocks away, in Amin's torture chambers, my countrymen's heads were being smashed with sledgehammers and their legs were being chopped off with axes.<sup>38</sup>

This condemnation of the OAU shows how deeply Kivengere felt for the suffering Ugandans. His expression of disgust at their decision reveals his deep dislike of their politics of conciliation, and his crisis of confidence about the OAU to hold the meeting in Kampala,<sup>39</sup> as Amin's rule reduced Uganda to a broken, bleeding country. In his view, politicians could not heal the deep wounds of Uganda but the wounded Christ would heal it; the one in whom true reconciliation between God and man and man with each other occur. The consequence of this reconciliation led to transformation and hope for Uganda.

## **Building bridges between Ugandan politicians in exile**

In this period, Kivengere's reconciliatory role figured prominently in the quest for a solution to Ugandan and wider African problems.<sup>40</sup> His commitment to reconciliation even played a major role in bringing about the end of Amin's reign of terror.

Kivengere played a major part in building bridges between rival Ugandan politicians to create a united front to be presented to Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere. Without that unity, Nyerere would never have committed his forces to the first invasion of one African country by another since colonial times.<sup>41</sup>

'Building bridges' towards a solution to the suffering of the African people, especially his nation of Uganda, was a direct outworking of Kivengere's understanding of reconciliation. At the Moshi Unity Conference in Tanzania he had asserted: 'I am committed in my ministry as a bishop in the Church to the job of bringing reconciliation to the government and building bridges over which the Ugandans can cross'.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, Kivengere was wholly committed to this cause.

## **Creating awareness among international community**

Kivengere's preaching and press engagements contributed significantly to the awareness of the international community and helped to prompt their action. For example, in April 1977, just three months into his exile from Amin

---

<sup>37</sup> Kivengere, *Address at the National Press Club*. For discussion of the OAU, see Welch Jr., 'The OAU': 103–17; Sesay, 'OAU and Regime Recognition': 25–41.

<sup>38</sup> As cited by David Lamb, *The Africans*, 106; Ayittey, *Africa Betrayed*, 120. Kivengere, *National Press Club Address*. For a description of the suffering, in particular a systematic smashing of heads of Ugandans in Amin's torture chambers, see Martin, *General Amin*, 226.

<sup>39</sup> For Amin's position as Chairman of the OAU detailing his rocky relations with the Soviet Union over policy toward Angola, his worsening relations with Kenya; and for the official Tanzanian statement on its boycott of the OAU's Kampala summit to the point that Tanzania's attendance would legitimize a criminal regime, see Legum and Clements, *Africa Contemporary*, 66–67. For the politics of conciliation at the OAU, see Okoth, 'The OAU and the Uganda-Tanzania War': 152–62.

<sup>40</sup> For a discussion of the magnitude of the suffering and horror of the Ugandans people presented and discussed at the U.S. Senate, see Nurnburger, 'United States and Amin', 49–65.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas, 'Uganda's New Day', 6.

<sup>42</sup> Episcopal Church, 'Bishop Kivengere Returns'.

(February 1977), he went to the conference room of the U.S. News & World Report to discuss what he saw as Africa's upheaval.<sup>43</sup> Issues he discussed included, 'U.S. military aid to Zaire', where he expressed that 'Any help that America gives an independent African nation resisting outside forces trying to take it over is appreciated', noting that 'Americans worried too much about being labelled imperialists, colonialists, and exploiters' — labels that Russians use to attack America.<sup>44</sup> When America holds back help from African nations resisting foreign powers trying to take over their independence, then Americans 'are playing right into Russia's hands'.<sup>45</sup> This discussion is significant for it highlights his knowledge of the ideologies of America and Russia playing out in Africa and their consequences. Of course, the African country he had particularly in mind was Uganda.

After discussing Soviet military aid to African governments, the question of whether Communists are taking over in Africa, lessons on Angola's search for independence in which Russia and Cuba were heavily involved, he carefully exposed the situation in his own country, where the Palestinians, Russians, and Cubans continued to have close dealings with Amin. Kivengere brought to international attention how the COU, for which he was the spokesman, as well as 'for the revival',<sup>46</sup> viewed Amin and his actions: 'We've never regarded our dictator, President Amin, as an enemy of the Church. He's never acted that way. His enemies are political — tribal enemies. He rules through arbitrary killing, using the gun instead of the law, and there is no constitution except what he happens to think in each day'.<sup>47</sup> Although Amin was not deliberately targeting the Church as his enemy, since the majority of Ugandans, particularly the leaders in civil service, happened to be Christians, and since Christians also belonged to tribes and political factions that he happen to think are his enemies, he kills them or orders for their killing — they too fell amongst the dictator's victims.

Kivengere spoke openly about Amin's paranoia and the anxiety this provoked in the country:

Tens of thousands of Ugandans have been killed, but all that these killings do is make him feel more and more threatened. Now he is looking for more enemies where they don't even exist. Amin survives by bribing those who work for him, by giving them guns and power. He has Palestinian bodyguards and Russian and Cubans advisors [...] Everyone watches carefully to spot those who might be anti-Amin. And for anyone accused of being subversive, that is the end.<sup>48</sup>

Others were beginning to add their voices to the warnings sounded by Kivengere about this situation. In February 1977, the World Council of Churches (WCC) issued an urgent response to the murder of Archbishop Janani Luwum. The Executive Committee of the WCC therefore: '*strongly condemns* those responsible for these killings<sup>49</sup> which took place within hours of President Amin's public promise that the accused would be brought to trial before sentencing [...] *urges* an immediate international investigation into the circumstances leading to the deaths of Archbishop Luwum'.<sup>50</sup> Similar condemnations of Amin's inhuman action of murdering Luwum and others came from Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists, and the Vatican who said the story of Luwum's murder reported by the government of Uganda was 'unswallowable'. Billy Graham also issued a statement deploring the 'cold blooded murder'.<sup>51</sup>

The awareness campaign of Ugandans in exile, notably Kivengere, helped to mobilize global support for the situation of Ugandans living in exile and those in Uganda. Later in the sermons he is thankful for their support especially the

---

<sup>43</sup> 'How a Ugandan Bishop Views Africa's Upheaval': 30.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>46</sup> Schmidt, *Glorious Companions*, 311.

<sup>47</sup> Opcit, 30.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>49</sup> Luwum was killed together with two government ministers: Arphaxed Oboth-Ofumbi, Interior Minister and Erinayo Wilson Oryema, Minister of Lands, Housing and Physical Planning.

<sup>50</sup> World Council of Churches Executive Committee, 'The Archbishop Has Gone Home': 196–97.

<sup>51</sup> Matthews, 'Terror and death in Uganda': 50.

participation of the Christian communities through their prayers, material and spiritual support during Amin's rule.<sup>52</sup> After the overthrow of Amin, he will still appeal for prayers and material support to help rebuild Uganda, but he is quick to remind them that the only antidote to Uganda's deep wound is the biblical message of reconciliation. Respect for Kivengere must start here with the lines he himself drew between his own socio-political and spiritual leadership.

A *second* step is an appreciation of Kivengere's theological concerns. As well as asserting that the primary role of the church is to preach the biblical message of reconciliation, in particular the church in Uganda, if it is to remain relevant, he corrected an anomaly in the church that has reduced the preaching of reconciliation to preaching the reconciliation of the soul with God but with no wider social meaning. Kivengere's conviction that 'Only reconciled hearts are God's instruments for healing deep hurts and bridging wide gaps in relationships',<sup>53</sup> often meant that prior theological convictions about reconciliation played a vital role in the shaping of his theological concerns. More often than not he had a well-thought-through reason for his preaching of reconciliation. That reason may not be unassailable, but it will most certainly be carefully considered.

In the search to let Kivengere be Kivengere, a *third* critical step is to gain familiarity with his method of preaching. In most of Kivengere's sermons, he bridges the gap between the preacher and his audience. Frequently he is using deferential expressions that close the gap between him and his audience: expressions like, 'including myself', 'God paid for my sin and yours', 'us', 'you', etc. This stylistic feature bringing preacher and audience together can be seen as a direct outworking of his reconciliation message proclaimed by the sermons' content. His preaching centres on reconciliation in Christ so that the event of Christ then yields an approach to Scripture.

The reconciliation content also determined the style of illustrations chosen. For instance, he illustrated for his audience the need for reconciliation with an illustration of a father and son reconciled by their wife and mother on her deathbed. 'Upon the dying heart of the mother, the father and the son, enemies, were brought back and from the moment the enmity ended [when] the mother died the friendship of the father and the son began again. This illustrates what happened on Calvary's cross'.<sup>54</sup>

As was common in the Revival preaching, these drew upon biographical and autobiographical accounts of individuals being reconciled to each other. Whatever the context, it showed great brokenness, which he viewed as a demonstration of the need for reconciliation, first with God, then with other human beings. He believed preaching the gospel of reconciliation brought about this reconciling work. The only way to bring the reconstruction of a broken society like Uganda was to preach the gospel of God's reconciliation in Christ. This calls for people to be first reconciled with God and then with each other and this is the only way to rebuild the nation.

The necessity of this lengthy introduction to an examination of Kivengere's preaching of reconciliation in bleeding Uganda arises from the simple fact that, given the monumental extent of his preaching output, which unfortunately remained largely inaccessible in his oral sermons until my recent in-depth study of his sermons. Many who have not gained access to Kivengere's oral sermons now transcribed may in such circumstances register a measure of distortion to his preaching. Indeed, when it comes to Kivengere's content and style of preaching, one earlier study of the link between the East African Revival and Australia argued that Kivengere's style of preaching, associated with the East African Revival, was contrasted to the 'linear, closely reasoned and often abstract presentations typical of Western Christianity'.<sup>55</sup> Reed claimed that Kivengere relied upon 'a "felt", experiential response, rather than a thought or logical response'.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Among the most clear sermons where Kivengere expressed gratitude of prayer and material support for Ugandans (after the fall of Amin) includes, Kivengere, 'In Christ'; 'The Reconciling Love of Christ'; 'Jesus Came as a Missionary', among others.

<sup>53</sup> Kivengere, 'The Evangelists Ministry of Reconciliation: We are Christ's Ambassadors': 159.

<sup>54</sup> Kivengere, 'In Christ': 7.

<sup>55</sup> Reed, *Walking in the Light*, 223.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 223.

However, elsewhere my study of Kivengere's preaching has shown that the content of Kivengere's sermon was Christocentric.<sup>57</sup> Because Jesus Christ is the content of his message, he is also the centre of his message. In this way, his message is authoritative and the Bible whose central message is Christ the reconciler defines it. There are sometimes difficulties with the conduits of Kivengere's preaching of reconciliation he attaches himself with the East African Revival style of preaching. For this reason, we made a determined effort to engage directly with Kivengere across a range of his oral sermons besides his reflection on peace and stability in Uganda. Kivengere himself seems to think this was reasonable: 'I do not expect any bishop to speak like me'.<sup>58</sup>

### **Kivengere's leading concerns**

Properly speaking, we suggest that Kivengere does not have a 'political theology', but a biblical interpretation of politics. This observation, on the face of it, would seem somewhat difficult to sustain. Besides the clear campaign of Kivengere for Western democratic governments to put pressure on Idi Amin to alleviate the injustice and persecution of Christians by Amin, Kivengere repeatedly spoke boldly about the oppression of blacks in South Africa by the racist and segregative apartheid government of the whites. Furthermore, aware that his preaching on this subject was a source of concern on the part of some, he sought to clarify what he was saying in successive accounts of his preaching of reconciliation. He spoke in April 1980 at the Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology chapel (formerly Bishop Tucker Theological College), Mukono, of his role: 'I feel my role is reconciliation, and [I] am not ashamed of saying that word reconciliation in any platform and particularly in political platform which becomes increasingly [a]lienating'.<sup>59</sup> However, it is true that what Kivengere had to say about the reconciliation in Scripture, shaped his interpretation of socio-political situation in Uganda and beyond. The reasons for many of his statements on the political concerns in Uganda can be traced to his understanding of the doctrine of reconciliation. Following Kivengere's own lead, then, is important that we trace these reasons, these theological concerns, and the impact they have on his account of the Christian doctrine of reconciliation.

### **The centrality of reconciliation**

The single Christian philosophy of Kivengere's entire preaching enterprise, especially in post Amin Uganda is well known:

[I] believe in my heart, this is the only Christian philosophy that can be worked off. Relief, Reconciliation in the centre, and Reconstruction. You can't reconstruct a country without reconciliation. You will simply be waiting for the next round of destruction. For us human beings have a tendency of breaking down what we build. What is lacking is reconciliation at the bottom. As a foundation, this is what is needed in Uganda today.<sup>60</sup>

For Kivengere, the focus of attention must always be reconciliation. The government of Uganda, he saw was faced with deep wounds — wounds 'deeper than any human being can cope with [...] Hearts have been poisoned, lives are bitter. Everybody is all up for revenge hoping that if you can kill the man who killed my dad, I will feel better. This is exactly what we feel'.<sup>61</sup> All Ugandans must look to one antidote as a solution to the problem of deep wounds: reconciliation.

Perhaps no other profound statement of Kivengere more powerfully captures his concern to point all Ugandans in this direction than his claim: 'To all of us who proclaim the good news of God to men and women, God has entrusted

---

<sup>57</sup> Alfred Olwa, 'Missionary of Reconciliation': 1971–1988.

<sup>58</sup> Capoon, 'Exiled Bishop of the Martyred Church': 18–22.

<sup>59</sup> Kivengere, 'World Vision: with Festo Kivengere': 6.

<sup>60</sup> Kivengere, 'In Christ': 3.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 3.

the most precious treasure — “The Ministry of Reconciliation”.<sup>62</sup> Over and against all other relief ministries rendered by Ugandans from western Uganda, especially food items to northern Uganda, especially Karamoja region during the famine of 1981, and relief from NGOs and western governments like America, Britain, Germany, the Netherlands and Australia, Kivengere insists upon the ministry of reconciliation.

Precisely because in the ministry of reconciliation centred in Jesus Christ, comes the powerful message of reconciliation between God and man and man and man. This message brings healing and transformation. In turn the message of reconciliation drives his preaching to the world of Uganda full of deep wounds, which he believes only reconciliation can address. The consequence of this message of reconciliation is peace from God to all who embrace the message of reconciliation centred in Jesus Christ.

Kivengere’s perception of his preaching role in Uganda lead him to say that ‘I want to tell you that we have a stupendous job in Uganda today, not only giving people food to eat, which is utterly essential, not only clothes and blankets to keep their bodies from shivering, and malaria and fever. But there is an area, which these services will never meet. Only reconciliation can address it’. For Kivengere, this is a critical perspective from which to appreciate what Scripture has to offer to a shattered country — a country with minds that have been poisoned because of murder and massacring, a country with a half a million widows and little orphans running around with no father to turn to.<sup>63</sup>

Preaching in October 1981 in a mission to UK he said, ‘you look in the front rows and you see a few hundred widows carrying their little babies. Their father were brutally murdered by a dictator’.<sup>64</sup> To the bewilderment of Ugandans he insisted that ‘it will take eternal love and the power of the Spirit of God to make the wounded people to open their hearts for the refreshing love of Christ’.<sup>65</sup> By coming to Christ, ‘you meet one another, even people you never wanted to hold your hands’. To contemplate the nature of coming back to God through Christ who has extended the friendship of God to humanity actually is where the Gospel makes sense in bleeding Uganda. Thus, Kivengere’s preaching of reconciliation. Precisely, ‘Uganda needs that so does America and so does the world’.<sup>66</sup>

There is, of course, clear biblical warrant of speaking about reconciliation: 2 Corinthian 5:18–20;<sup>67</sup> Romans 5:1–10;<sup>68</sup> Ephesians 2:14–16,<sup>69</sup> Colossians 1:19–23;<sup>70</sup> and, other biblical text which does not explicitly mention reconciliation but Kivengere preached the message of reconciliation. This latter category is not because of preaching reconciliation from the wrong text, however, it is because of the importance he attached to reconciliation — it is close to his heart.

One of the notorious difficulties in coming to grips with Kivengere’s treatment of reconciliation is holding together his statement: ‘Pray that the Church of Uganda may have absolute vision and then upon this the government can build, then upon this reconstruction, then upon this democracy, equality of man, human rights’. And yet Kivengere earlier in

---

<sup>62</sup> Kivengere, ‘The Evangelist’s Ministry of Reconciliation’: 157.

<sup>63</sup> He frequently spoke about the suffering widows and orphans in Uganda, especially in the Church. The list of sermons where he makes reference to widows and orphans include, Kivengere, ‘A New Way of Seeing Jesus’: 2; Kivengere, ‘The Reconciling Love of Christ’: 4; Kivengere, ‘Jesus Came as a Missionary of Reconciliation’: 3; Kivengere, ‘His Flooding Love’: 7; Kivengere, ‘Christ Has Reconciled the Universe to Himself’: 1–2; Kivengere, ‘Costly Breakthrough’: 6; Kivengere, ‘The Master Came Down’: 2; Kivengere, ‘Compassion Harvest’: 3; Kivengere, ‘How a Person can Be Sure’: 2, among others.

<sup>64</sup> Kivengere, ‘The Reconciling Love of Christ’: 4.

<sup>65</sup> Kivengere, ‘In Christ’: 6.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>67</sup> See the sermons he preached from **2 Corinthians 5:18–20**: Kivengere, ‘Ambassador For Christ’; Kivengere, ‘In Christ’; Kivengere, ‘The Cross Today’; Kivengere, ‘Jesus Came as a Missionary of Reconciliation’.

<sup>68</sup> See four sermons he preached from **Romans 5:1–11**: Kivengere, ‘Surprised by Joy’; ‘Kivengere, God’s Intervening Love’; Kivengere, ‘The Love of Christ’; Kivengere, ‘Life in Jesus’.

<sup>69</sup> See three sermons he preached from **Ephesians 2:14–18**: Kivengere, ‘His Flooding Love’; Kivengere, ‘Broken Relationships Restored’; Kivengere, ‘The Whole Gospel for the Whole Church’.

<sup>70</sup> See three sermons he preached from **Colossians 1:19–22**: Kivengere, ‘Christ Put all things Together’; Kivengere, ‘The Unshakable Identity of the Church of Jesus Christ’; Kivengere, ‘Christ has reconciled the Universe to Himself’.

the sermon said that ‘this is the greatest moment in church history in Uganda; this is where the Gospel makes sense; this is where preachers must recover’.<sup>71</sup> So that Ugandans can say ‘Yes, Amen, yes, destruction, yes hostile attitudes, none of these things will ever be able to separate us from the love of God demonstrated in Christ Jesus’.<sup>72</sup>

It is chiefly Kivengere’s desire to pursue the singular focus on the biblical teaching of reconciliation, which causes him to qualify his talk about healing the deep wounds of Ugandans. Kivengere considered this focus to be vital when we come to his advice to his American audience at *LaCanada* church regarding healing wounds of loneliness: ‘Don’t spend all your time in superficialities and leave men and women lonely. Go a little deeper’.<sup>73</sup> On returning to Uganda, Kivengere is committed to preaching the message of reconciliation, which he believe will go deeper in healing loneliness among Ugandans.

Kivengere’s concentration on preaching reconciliation is one of the immensely attractive features of his preaching in post Amin Uganda. Preaching any Christian message by the church to bleeding Uganda that leaves reconciliation at the periphery could hardly lay claim to being genuinely helpful to Ugandans. However, was Kivengere’s preaching of reconciliation really helpful to Uganda? Can his preaching really account for the COU, in particular his socio-political theology? As we have already noted, Kivengere did indeed call upon the COU to preach reconciliation in the helpless situation of Ugandans, yet he could also forgive Amin and was ‘ready to be walked upon as a bridge by Ugandan politicians’.<sup>74</sup> How should we understand Kivengere’s own appeal to Ugandans to be reconciled in their efforts to reconstruct the country?

The way Kivengere’s message is preached to church leaders and to Ugandans suggest his messages was more than simply his sermons to Ugandans or his thoughts of how he would behave when faced with bleeding Uganda. They are in fact the message from God that settles the issue at hand. Similarly while Kivengere calls upon Ugandans to be reconciled and to be ambassadors for Christ this involved him not only explaining the message of reconciliation but embodying it and reconciling his audience during his preaching. At issue here is, in the final analysis, the practical point of reconciliation.

### **Practical points for peace and reconciliation**

Kivengere was clearly sensitive in his sermons not to forget giving practical points of peace and reconciliation. Four illustrations will suffice: three from sermons he preached and one from a proposal on peace and reconciliation he delivered at the COU House of Bishops. *Firstly*, from a sermon said ‘reconciliation centred in the cross is the hope of my beloved [...] Africa with all its “conflicting problems”’.<sup>75</sup> Set free by the cross ‘one day I was compelled to go and embrace a missionary, and in person say “I am sorry I hated you, but now you are my brother, the cross has set me free. I want to be your brother”’. Although he does not use the word reconciliation, here Kivengere illustrates how reconciliation has changed his attitude towards self, others, and life.

In the sermon, when he stresses the work of the cross as the drawing power in evangelism, it is because the cross requires them to take their responsibility seriously — not merely speaking empty words deprived of action. ‘Aren’t there people here you would like to shake hands with? People you have resented, feared, or suspected?’. Kivengere is not merely preaching the message of reconciliation; he is reconciling them with God and with each other.

*Secondly*, in a sermon he gave the theme ‘Reconciliation’,<sup>76</sup> Kivengere states: ‘reconciliation is not just a question of putting your thoughts right’ [...] ‘It comes out of a heart liberated by the love of God’.<sup>77</sup> He rejected the idea that

---

<sup>71</sup> Kivengere, ‘In Christ’: 7.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p.7.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, p.7.

<sup>74</sup> Kivengere, *Nation Press Club Address*.

<sup>75</sup> Kivengere, ‘The Cross’: 15.

<sup>76</sup> Kivengere, ‘Reconciliation’.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 5–6.

reconciliation can be part of the formal administrative side of Church life: 'You cannot pass a minute about reconciliation in a [Church] committee'. The brethren loving him the way they did, on asking for forgiveness from a man he hated in his village, who forgave him and carried him on his shoulders as an expression of forgiveness and love, the brethren set him free. 'And the next day I was on the road, village-to-village being reconciled', without knowing what to expect, trembling at moments; yet, he went because 'it is not a question of expertise. It is just love, love compelling'.

*Thirdly*, in a sermon on reconciliation that he preached in Israel in the days he was working behind the scenes towards peace in the Middle East, he gave his testimony of hating whites in Uganda before his conversion to Jesus in 1945. On conversion to Jesus, he realized that he had become a reconciler. He then said, 'God is now speaking through us. We are speaking on behalf of Christ, telling the world of Israel, Uganda, South Africa, [and] America'.<sup>78</sup> He wonders how else you can heal or bring back people who have suffered so much from the murder of their loved ones, listing: 'brothers, sister, mothers, fathers as it is the case in Uganda'. They are 'harbouring deep seated bitterness such that at times tears cannot roll from their eyes; they just dry up'. He illustrates the horrors of Uganda with a story of how in 1973, in Kabale stadium, three men were killed by a firing squad at the order of President Amin. But before they were shot in public, 'as a Christian brother and a minister', he went and preached reconciliation to them. Kivengere then tells his audience to preach reconciliation in Israel, Uganda, and South Africa: 'this is the message of God'. 'It is the message that God has given his children, "you are on the team of God's ambassadors of God's reconciliation"'.

From another sermon to international evangelists at Amsterdam he said, 'First, go and be reconciled [...] then come and offer your gift (Matthew 5:23, 24)'. Kivengere used a practical illustration from his own preaching ministry in Uganda to demonstrate how he first had to 'go and be reconciled' with a Muslim, Governor Bashir of western Uganda.<sup>79</sup> He recalls that a few years ago under the regime of terror his country, Uganda, he entered into a situation of strained relations with the Governor of western Uganda, his region. The cause was of little significance; but Kivengere's reaction to Governor Bashir's unjust action is crucial. 'I reacted with a certain amount of righteous anger, which in itself was not wrong. He reacted to my reaction publicly with a vehement resentment! I learned of his violent reaction and became justifiably more angry'.

Kivengere recalled that he did not realize that he was getting into a tangle. But soon the Holy Spirit began His work of disentangling him. The Holy Spirit reminded him that 'If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled [...] then come and offer your gift' (Matthew 5:23, 24). 'I responded like the theologian in Luke 10:29 by asking, "And who is my brother?" Certainly, Lord, you can't mean that Muslim Governor? The Spirit reaffirmed to my conscience by saying, "Yes, I mean Governor Bashir — the Muslim!"'. Kivengere was left with only one option — to go. He went to Governor Bashir, his Governor, with a certain amount of trepidation inside but he found him open to talk. He shared his part in their tangled relations, repented of his over-reaction to the Governor's action, without justifying the reason for his reaction. 'The rest I left to the Lord; and as usual He did a good job of it, for the Governor and I ended as friends'.

Consequently, Governor Bashir offered to come 90 miles and open the spiritual renewal convention (Kabale Convention). Kivengere concludes the story: 'Death ended in resurrection through reconciliation and peace between us'. Here, he lifts their eyes from the ruin in which the conflict between himself and Governor Bashir was set to end. This would have been a situation of death; especially because of the fact of the indiscriminate military powers that Amin had given his soldiers like Bashir to deal with any situation the way they saw fit! This leads us to the *fourth* example from his political understanding of 'a government of national reconciliation'.

---

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>79</sup> Kivengere, 'Ambassadors For Christ': 160.

## **'A government of national reconciliation'<sup>80</sup>**

The pre-eminent concern of Kivengere in his proposal for discussion at the COU House of Bishops on 23 August 1985 in regard to gaining political stability was his proposal for a government of national reconciliation. He insisted that in a government of national reconciliation peace and stability would come to Uganda. However, there seems to have been a false understanding of peace. Kivengere himself seem to think this understanding was problematic: 'I am sure this is based on false understanding of "reconciliation", as if "reconciliation" means peace at any price, which is not true. Peace must have a solid foundation if it is not going to turn into chaos'.<sup>81</sup> This critical perspective of peace is inextricable from any Christian talk about a government of national reconciliation.

There is a variety in the way in which Kivengere would describe what he meant by a government of national reconciliation. For instance, in the proposal, he suggests that the fighting forces that overthrew Obote II government should lay down their arms, enter discussions to bring peace and not war. 'Alternatively', he suggests that the fighting forces form a Military Commission with a specific assignment — 'only be responsible for the reconstruction of the Uganda Armed Force into a National Army; be a protective power behind another ruling Council chosen by them from across the nation, led by a Uganda acceptable to most Ugandans'.

The leader of the ruling Council in Kivengere's view is to be mandated to form 'a cabinet and "a government of national reconciliation" that would rule for five years'. Kivengere considered his suggestion to be vital when we come to consider stability and peace in Uganda. On gaining peace and stability within the five years, 'a political concept would later emerge'. Kivengere himself seem to believe that this was reasonable: 'It would have the duty of calling a constituency Assembly after two years in power, to draw the Constitution for Uganda. This, to me, would produce a hopeful political feature for our country and dilute our problems of tribalism'.

However, two particular ways of speaking about a government of national reconciliation and its implications for peace and stability in Uganda recur throughout Kivengere's proposal. The *first* of these is his insistence that 'the national army would be recruited under the national reconciliation government in co-operation with the military council'. Kivengere is keen to stress that in the last twenty years mistakes were made that costed the nation tens of thousands of innocent lives and this must be taken into consideration. He is specific about the cause of the mistake: 'These mistakes were caused by politicians' manipulations of the armed forces in order to keep politicians in power, which brought about the unfortunate reversal of "power the state"'.

In his critical observation of the past mistake of the politicians, Kivengere confessed: 'the "power of the state" had not protected "Justice in the state"'. He is emphatic that 'power has not been the servant of justice but its master, and until we reverse that, Uganda will still remain unstable and politically violent'. Here Kivengere is quite clearly and explicitly addressing the military and political leaders. To suggest that 'the problem of those who are already in positions of authority climbing down in order to achieve a peaceful solution is real, but it would be a terrible mistake to hold onto politics which has firm political foundation'. But as he said earlier, now he warns again, 'Uganda will go back to square one' if the political and military leaders hold to positions out of insecurity because they will want to create their own power bases.

When it comes to the response from the COU, while he has proposed that a government of national reconciliation be formed by the fighting forces, Kivengere takes a humble place:

Here I would like to take my place with my brethren of the COU in acknowledging that as a church we did not use the opportunity to help those who were in authority. We must sincerely confess to the Lord our failure to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth, and then move forward into a new direction with determination.

---

<sup>80</sup> Kivengere, 'Proposal': 1.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 1.

Viewed from another angle, this is what constitutes 'what we think can help Uganda to find a clear political direction out of which citizens will leave in peace'. This is in large measure why Kivengere is bold to speak out to those in authority. To speak like this is to risk treating Kivengere as a voice of an alternative political party to government. Yet he insists that 'the church must speak out to those in authority. We must refute opportunism, both religious and political'. The unfortunate development about opportunism he claimed: 'many times opportunism has been mistaken for pastoral non-involvement in politics or religious display'. He clarified the misconception. For him, on the one hand, 'when religious leaders speak "peace, peace when there is no peace", that is not diplomacy. It is opportunism'. On the other hand, 'when [biblical] prophets speak to the authorities about justice, greed and corruption that was diplomacy. All these must be spoken with compassion and love'.

Kivengere's reading of the political situation in Uganda leading to a climax of leadership crisis in 1985 was a clear word on peace. He was emphatic on the need for a clear word from the church to those in government to help bring about the lacking pace and stability in the nation. He suggests that the statement from the church should be put in the press, shared with Christian churches around the world for prayers. At points Kivengere appear to risk his strategy to bring peace in the nation. However, his concern that the authorities should know the mind of the church about peace, justice and stability, various political parties and factions, is a concern that ought to be addressed.

While Kivengere would agree that the church must make political statements, however, he warns that 'the tendency to think that religious people should be left out of political movements is false. If any group should be present it should be non-political religious leaders'. Precisely, his context here is forming a government of national unity. Kivengere is certainly right to say that 'religious leaders can also be very political'. His next sentence is more difficult to sustain in the light of his view that 'those who are highly politicized in their views should be discouraged from rupturing such peace movements'. The very nature of his proposal suggests he himself is highly political.

### **Learning from Kivengere without transforming into him**

When it comes to the doctrine of reconciliation, Kivengere has so many good things to say. His concerns are reasonable, even when some disagree with the style of his preaching of reconciliation, a style associated with the East African Revival or with his interpretation of what Scripture has to say of the politics in Uganda, under Idi Amin and successive governments. The centrality of reconciliation and the nature of Christian reconciliation — all of these are emphases evangelical theologians have themselves endorsed repeatedly. In addition, his practical commitment to political liberation and spiritual reconstruction and rehabilitation of Uganda, which was his core strategy, demonstrated by his preaching the message of reconciliation especially in post-Amin Uganda, showed that for Kivengere without reconciliation from God, the reconstruction of Uganda was simply waiting for a second round of violence. From his thought, reconciliation with God is the way towards political reconstruction. Without reconciliation, Uganda cannot be reconstructed and so Uganda needs the healing love of Jesus as the only solution to the poison of Amin's rule. And, by his sermons and his serious embodiment of the message of reconciliation and challenge to the Seminary students at Mukono in April 1980 to penetrate Uganda with the message of reconciliation, reminds us that the person with whom we are engaging is not an enemy but a fellow disciple of Jesus Christ.

However, at each point there are crucial lessons to learn from Kivengere's account. It would seem that elements of his critics, namely, some western missionaries who associated his style of preaching with the East African Revival as being emotional and lacking in content, and some politicians, namely, American Senators that he wanted to become 'the Bishop Makarios' of Uganda, his clear focus and preaching of reconciliation have survived their criticism. His commitment to the ministry of reconciliation, a treasure entrusted to us from God, brought deep healing to Uganda and persuaded President Nyerere to commit his army to liberate Uganda from Amin's rule. His appeal for support to democratic western governments, most notable the US Senators to put economic sanction on the importation of Uganda Coffee, and the press address at the National Press Club of Australia and America, is at points highly

tendentious. Most important of all, in the final analysis his account of the doctrine of reconciliation brought healing, hope, and transformation to Uganda.

Kivengere's preaching of reconciliation should be listened to in his audio sermons and read extensively from his sermon transcripts. There is much to learn and appreciate in what he has to say. We need not feel compelled to hunt out every moment when he was quick to take a stand against Amin in order to dismiss him on the political statements that he made. And also, we must not defend him from every criticism. Certainly we do not need to replicate his 'socio-political theology' or to transpose it into an idiom for this decade when we celebrate 50 years of Uganda's political independence from her colonial master: Britain.

Kivengere's 'socio-political theology' displayed through his ministry of preaching reconciliation in Uganda and beyond is, I suggest, of an entirely different order. Through honest and careful attentiveness to Kivengere's interpretation of socio-political concerns captured in his oral sermons, and the concerns that shaped them, we can be stimulated — perhaps even provoked — to present a more robust political interpretation by the Church in Uganda that does not leave the gates open to some of the opportunistic politicians, dictators, and bad governance. We need to address his other concerns, while at the same time stating clearly that the Bible we have in our hands is without qualification the word of the living God that is utterly reliable, true and normative for all our preaching about God, 'in season and out of season' (1 Timothy 2:4).

We can and must give Kivengere due credit for his interpretation and praxis of that which he preached at important social and historical moments in the life of our nation and beyond. We must recover his biblical interpretation that guides politics, which is buried in his oral messages. Moreover, we should thank God for the way his servant, Kivengere, sought to honour his Lord and live under the authority and hope from his word for Uganda, which he preached and used to mobilize and rally the nation for national reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

## Bibliography

- Kivengere, Festo. *Hope for Uganda and the World: The Secret of Rehabilitation*. Edited by Dorothy Smoker. Nairobi: African Evangelistic Enterprise, 1980.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Hope for Uganda and the World: The Secret of Rehabilitation*. Rev. ed. Pasadena: African Enterprise, 1981.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *I Love Idi Amin: The Story of Triumph Under Fire in the Midst of Suffering and Persecution in Uganda*. Edited by Dorothy Smoker. Old Tapan, N.J.: Revell, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Jesus Our Reality*. Kampala, Uganda: Uganda Church Press, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Love Unlimited*. Edited by Dorothy Smoker. Glendale, Ca.: G/L Regal, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Revolutionary Love*. Edited by Dorothy Smoker. Fort Washington, PA.: Christian Literature Crusade, 1983.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Spirit Is Moving*. Rev. ed. Pasadena, Ca.: African Enterprise, 1979 [1976].
- \_\_\_\_\_. *When God Moves*. Rev. ed. Pasadena: African Enterprise, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *When God Moves in Revival*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977 [1973].
- \_\_\_\_\_. *When God Moves You Move Too*. Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Bleeding Africa'. Pages 19-29 in *Proclaiming Christ to His World*. Edited by Hanne-Grete Brommeland and Knud Jørgensen. Oslo: Luther Forlag, 1984.
- Kivengere, Festo. 'Proposal For Discussion at the House of Bishops Regarding Peace Talks for Uganda Government After the Coup D'état'. Unpublished Proposal, August 1985. Archives of the Church of Uganda, Uganda Christian University. AO:19850823.
- Kivengere, Festo. *Address to the National Press Club*. Audio Recording from National Library of Australia. Canberra, 1978. ORAL TRC 607.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Spiritual Life of a Pastor*. Videocassette. Sydney: Christian Film Service, 1987. Moore College Library.
- Kivengere, Festo. 'A New Way of Seeing Jesus'. Sermon Transcript. Preached at Holy Trinity Church, Cambridge, October 12, 1982. AO: 19821012, [#1].
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Ambassadors For Christ in a Miserable World'. Sermon Transcript, October 16, 1977. AO:19771016.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Broken Relationships Restored'. Sermon Transcript. USA, March 1977. AO: 1977[0314?].
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Christ Has Reconciled the Universe to Himself'. Sermon Transcript. Garden Grove, California., 1979. AO: 1979[est. after May], [#2].
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Christ Puts All Things Together'. Sermon Transcript, 1972. AO:1972[----]\*1.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'God's Intervening Love'. Sermon Transcript. Preached at Presbyterian Church, Aurora, Illinois, July 29, 1975. AO: 19750729, [#1].
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'His Flooding Love'. Sermon Transcript, July 29, 1975. AO: 19750729, [#2].
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'In Christ'. Sermon Transcript, April 29, 1979. AO: 19790429, [#2].
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Jesus Came as a Missionary of Reconciliation'. Sermon Transcript, February 21, 1982. AO: 19820221.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Life in Jesus'. Sermon Transcript. Sydney, Australia, 1978. AO: 1978 [02--?].
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Peace and Victory for the Christian'. Pages 37-50 in *When God Moves in Revival*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977 [1973].
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Reconciliation'. Sermon Transcript, April 1982. AO: 198204[--], [#1].
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Remove the Masks'. Pages 23-36 in *When God Moves in Revival*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977 [1973].

- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Revival Begins at the Cross'. Pages 11-21 in *When God Moves in Revival*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977 [1973].
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Surprised by Joy'. Sermon Transcript, September 1971. AO:197109[--].
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'The Covenant of Love'. Pages 51-60 in *When God Moves in Revival*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977 [1973].
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'The Cross And World Evangelization'. Sermon Transcript. Given at International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne., July 25, 1974. AO:19740725.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'The Cross Today and Divine Outreach'. Sermon Transcript, April 4, 1980. AO: 19800404.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'The Evangelist's Ministry of Reconciliation: We Are Christ's Ambassadors'. Pages 157-161 in *The Work of an Evangelist: International Congress for Itinerant Evangelists*. Edited by J. D. Douglas. Minneapolis, Minn.: World Wide Publications, 1984. AO:19830715.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'The Love of Christ'. Sermon Transcript, July 1977. AO: 197707[--].
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'The Pastor's Joy'. Sermon Transcript. Preached at Mount Hermon, California, January 20, 1977. AO: 19770120.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'The Reconciling Love of Christ'. Sermon Transcript, October 1981. AO: 198110[--], [#1].
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'The Triumph of God's Glory'. Sermon Transcript. Urbana, December 31, 1976. AO: 19761231.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'The Unshakable Identity of the Church of Jesus Christ'. Sermon Transcript, October 29, 1977. AO: 19771029, [#1].
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'The Whole Gospel For The Whole World'. Sermon Transcript. Preached at Wheaton Bible Church, Illinois, May 1978. AO:197805[--], [#2].
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Bishop Festo: On Events in Uganda', February 1977. AO: 197702[--].
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Compassion Harvest'. Sermon Transcript, October 7, 1980. AO: 19801007.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Costly Breakthrough'. Sermon Transcript. Preached at First United Methodist Church, Carrollton, TX, January 12, 1980. AO:19800112.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Festo Kivengere's Return'. Sermon Transcript, n.d. AO: [-----]\*1.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Festo Relates His Escape Story'. Sermon Transcript, March 1977. AO:197703[--].
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'From Uganda With Love'. Sermon Transcript. Preached at Kendall, UK, October 1981. AO:198110[--]\*1.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'How a Person Can Be Sure of His Right Relationship With God'. Sermon Transcript, October 26, 1980. AO: 19801026.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'The Cross of Christ'. Sermon Transcript. Preached at Eugene, Oregon, April 19, 1979. AO: 19790419\*2.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'The Master Came Down'. Sermon Transcript. Preached at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Newport Beach, CA, October 5, 1980. AO:19801005\*1.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'World Vision: with Festo Kivengere'. Sermon Transcript, May 10, 1979. AO:19790510.
- 'Appeal by Bishop: Speak on Uganda'. *Sydney Morning Herald*, February 6, 1978.

Church Scene. 'Appeal for Ugandan Refugees Launched'. *Church Scene*, February 9, 1978.

Episcopal Church. 'African Evangelist Dies in Nairobi'. Press Release, Episcopal News Service, May 26, 1988. Cited 30 Jan 2012. Online: [http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/ENS/ENSpress\\_release.pl?pr\\_number=88115](http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/ENS/ENSpress_release.pl?pr_number=88115).

\_\_\_\_\_. 'Bishop Kivengere Describes Persecuted Ugandan Church'. Press Release, Episcopal News Service, March 11, 1977. Cited 15 Mar 2012. Online: [http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/ENS/ENSpress\\_release.pl?pr\\_number=77093](http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/ENS/ENSpress_release.pl?pr_number=77093).

- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Bishop Kivengere Returns To Uganda'. Press Release, Episcopal News Service, May 3, 1979. Cited 22 Nov 2011. Online: [http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/ENS/ENSpress\\_release.pl?pr\\_number=79146](http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/ENS/ENSpress_release.pl?pr_number=79146).
- 'Exiled Bishop Returns to Uganda'. *Southern Cross*, July 1979.
- 'Help for Uganda Refugees'. *Courier Mail*. Brisbane, February 6, 1978.
- 'News Makers: Exiled Bishop here to beat freedom drum'. *The Australian*, February 6, 1978.
- Ekudu-Adoku, John. 'The Extent and Implications of His Spiritual and Social Ministry'. Unpublished Paper, delivered at the Bishop Festo Kivengere Memorial Lecture. Kampala, Uganda, 1994.
- Rutayisire, Antoine. 'Forgiveness and Reconciliation'. Unpublished Paper, delivered at the Bishop Festo Kivengere Memorial Lecture. Kampala, Uganda, 2001.
- Senyimba, Michael. 'Festo Kivengere: The Man (Who Never Retreated from Challenges) and His Legacy'. Unpublished Paper, delivered at the Bishop Festo Kivengere Memorial Lecture. Kampala, Uganda, May 5, 1991.
- Capon, John. 'Exiled Bishop of the Martyred Church'. *Crusade* (May 1977): 18–22.
- Cassidy, Michael. 'Festo Has Died But He Still Speaks'. *African Enterprise*/August (1988): 7–9.
- Coomes, Anne. *Festo Kivengere: A Biography*. Eastbourne: Monarch, 1990.
- 'How a Ugandan Bishop Views Africa's Upheaval'. *U.S. News and World Report* 82 (April 4, 1977): 30.
- Pirouet, M. Louise. *Historical Dictionary of Uganda*.
- Quinn, Frederick. 'Kivengere, Festo'. *African Saints: Saints, Martyrs, and Holy People from the Continent of Africa*. New York: Crossroads Publishing, 2002. Cited 15 Mar 2012. Online: [http://www.dacb.org/stories/uganda/kivengere\\_festo.html](http://www.dacb.org/stories/uganda/kivengere_festo.html).
- Russell, Jay. 'A Ministry of Reconciliation: Festo Kivengere: 1920–1988'. Pages 304–07 in *Ambassadors for Christ*. Edited by John D Woodbridge. Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1994.
- Wood, William P. 'The Bishop and Idi Amin'. *America* 136/2 (January 15, 1977): 26–28.
- Thomas, Cal. 'Uganda's New Day gets Big Boost from Christian Leaders'. *Journal Champion* 1/25 (April 20, 1979): 1–8.
- Delton, Franz. 'A Biblical Context for Political Advocacy'. Pages 51–56 in *Christian Political Activism at the Crossroads*. Edited by William R. Stevenson. University Press of America, 1994.
- Miller, Keith Graber. *Wise As Serpents, Innocent As Doves: American Mennonites Engage Washington*. 1st ed. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996.
- Rwabyoma, Peter B. 'Bishop Festo Kivengere: An Analysis of His Communication Skills and How He Applied Them in the Mission of the Church in Uganda'. MA Thesis, Cardiff: University of Wales, 2007.
- Senyonyi, John M. M. 'Bishop Festo Kivengere's Philosophy of Evangelism'. M.A. Thesis, Deerfield, Ill.: Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1992.