

**“The impact of persecution (1950-1974) upon the Igreja Evangelical
Congregacional in Angola - a church-historical study”**

Asaf Cassule Noe Augusto

Mini-Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Arts in Church History
at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University

Supervisor: Dr C. Sauer

Co-supervisor: Dr P.H. Fick

March 2009

George Whitefield College, Muizenberg

ABSTRACT

This study examines the historical development of the congregational church in Angola under the persecution of the Portuguese colonial regime during the late colonial period of 1950-1975. The underlying thesis is that the suffering, injustices and human loss of the congregational church actually fostered her development in various parts of Angola. In order to demonstrate this development of the congregational church in Angola, the study examines the historical disadvantages that the ABCFM and Ovimbundu in central Angola suffered under the Portuguese colonial power.

The research commences with a historical description and analysis of the arrival of the ABCFM in central Angola, with an emphasis on the tensions between Protestant missions and Portuguese colonial authorities/traders in central Angola. The friction was mainly provoked by the fact the ABCFM mission strategy was inclined to focus on education as a way to plant churches. This, the Portuguese colonial powers and traders viewed as a threat to the lucrative business of human carnage and forced labour. In spite of the tension that existed between the colonial powers and the ABCFM missionaries, many Ovimbundu came to embrace the Protestant faith and were willing to pay a heavy price for their convictions.

Another aspect of this study is the Angolan revolution, especially the indirect influence of Protestant missionaries on the revolution. As a result of their indirect role, the Portuguese colonial power arrested various ecclesiastical leaders and expelled Protestant missionaries. This caused a loss of local Protestant leaders as well as missionary support. Yet, in the midst of all the suffering, persecution, injustice and subhuman treatment in prisons and resettlements camps, the church grew in various part of Angola. This development, however, was not devoid of faults. A biblical and critical analysis demonstrates that there were instances when the church compromised her witness.

Key words: Angola, IECA, persecution, colonialism, Portuguese, mission history, church history, missionary education, righteousness and suffering.

OPSOMMING

Die studie bestudeer die historiese ontwikkeling van die “congregational” kerk in Angola tydens die vervolging van die Portugese koloniale mag van 1950-1975. Die onderliggende vooroordeel van die studie is dat ten spyte van die lyding, onregtighede en lidmaat verlies wat die “congregational” kerk moes verdra het, het dit meegebring dat die kerk verprei en ontwikkel in verskeie dele van Angola. Om hierdie ontwikkeling te demonstreer, ondersoek die studie die historiese terugslae wat die ABCFM en Ovimbundu in sentrale Angola gely het onder die Portugese koloniale bewind.

Die ondersoek begin met ‘n historiese beskrywing en uitleging van die koms van die ABCFM in sentraal Angola, met beklemtoning op die spanning tussen Protestante sending en die Portugese koloniale bewind en handelaars van sentraal Angola. Die spanning was hoofsaaklik veroorsaak deur die ABCFM sending se strategie om onderwys as ‘n weg vir kerkplanting te gebruik. Die Portugese koloniale bewind en die handelaars het protestante skoliering as ‘n bedreiging gesien vir die winsgewende besigheid van gedwange arbeid. Ten spyte van die spanning het baie Ovimbundu die Protestante geloof aangeneem, met alles wat dit hulle sou kos.

‘n Ander aspek wat ondersoek word in hierdie studie, is die historiese gebeurtenisse rondom die Angolese revolusie, veral die indirekte invloed wat die Protestante sendelinge gehad het daarop. Die nagevolge van die indirekte betrokkenheid van die Protestante sending sal ook bestudeer word. Die koloniale bewind het gereageer deur verskeie van die kerk leiers in hegtenis te neem en die Protestante sendelinge te deporteer. Dit het gelei tot ‘n gebrek aan Protestante leiers en ondersteuning vir sending. Tog, ten spyte van die lyding, vervolging, onreg en onmenslike behandeling in tronke en hervestigingkampe, het die kerk gegroei in verskeie dele van Angola. Die groei was egter nie sonder probleme nie. ‘n Bybelse en kritiese evaluering van die ontwikkeling van die kerk wys dat die kerk kompromieë aangegaan het ten opsigte van haar getuienis.

Sleutelwoorde: Angola, IECA, Vervolging, Kolonialisme, Portugees, Sending, geskiedenis, Kerk geskiedenis, Sending opvoeding, Regverdigheid, Lyding.

PREFACE

First and foremost I would like to thank and acknowledge the Lord Jesus for His grace in my life, especially during this hard period of study. I want to thank Him for the truth of His word that constantly challenges me to embrace the norms of the kingdom rather than conforming to the norms of this world.

My sincere gratitude goes to my supervisor Dr. C. Sauer for boosting my confidence through his constant encouragement from beginning to the end of this study. I want to thank Dr. Sauer for his pastoral role in the supervision of the studies, and his availability to talk about aspects beyond academics. I would like to thank also my co-supervisor Dr. P.H.Fick for his assistance on the proposal and his willingness to go through the whole material and critically evaluated each chapter.

I am deeply grateful to George Whitefield College, especially the bursary commission for awarding the bursary for the completion of this study. May the Lord meet all your needs according to his riches in glory and supply all the mercy and grace you need as you carry out the task of training people for his service.

I thank my family in Christ especially those whom over the years have contributed directly and indirectly to my life and studies. Thank you for supporting me financially and reading the manuscript of this study. My gratitude goes to Mr. and Mrs. Pienaar, Mr. R. Tapiz, G. Van Der Ham, C. Pienaar, S. Murray, K. Mudie, B. Hidinwa, V. Owour, S. Teka, Rev. M. Scarborough, Rev. B. Koela, D. Mushambi, V. Sindo, D. Ezequiel, and S. Nicholson.

I want to thank S. Kratz for going out of his way to look for information on Angola. I thank the postgraduate fellowship at George Whitefield College for critically evaluating my presentations. Special thanks go to my peer partner D. Wagener for challenging me intellectually and for his constant availability to have a look at the progress of this study.

This work is dedicated to my parents Rev. Jose Augusto and Joaquina Noe Augusto for their encouragement to pursue postgraduate studies in theology. Muito obrigado pelo apoio financeiro,

e pelos muitos sacrificios que vosses fizeram por minha causa durante muitos anos. (Thank you so much for your financial support and the sacrifices you made for my studies over the years). The work is also dedicated to my beloved wife Sonja Christine Augusto for standing by me throughout the writing of this thesis, and for her ability to help me to cope during the difficult times of the studies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1	INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH	1
1.1	Formulating the problem	1
1.1.1	Background	1
1.1.2	Problem statement	3
1.2	Central research question	3
1.3	Aim and objectives	4
1.4	Central theoretical argument	4
1.5	Method of research	5
CHAPTER 2	BACKGROUND OF THE PERSECUTION EXPERIENCED BY THE IECA	6
2.1	Introduction	6
2.2	History of exploitation in central Angola	7
2.3	Early missionary response to exploitation	9
2.3.1	A cautious approach	9
2.3.2	Emboldened by the international community	11
2.4	A shift in the emphasis: Education as the preferred missionary method in central Angola	14
2.5	Colonial opposition to missionary education	16
2.6	Missionary struggle against colonial policies	17
2.7	The fruit of missionary education: The Angolan response	18
2.8	Conclusion	19
CHAPTER 3	INTENSIFICATION OF PERSECUTION WITH THE RISE OF NATIONALISM 1950-1961	21
3.1	Introduction	21
3.2	Angolan nationalism	22
3.3	Angolan insurgency	25
3.4	Reform combined with reprisals on the local church	26
3.5	Implications of nationalism for the IECA	30
3.5.1	Implications of nationalism for the IECA student community	32
3.5.2	Implications of nationalism for the IECA pastors	32
3.6	Implications of nationalism for the missionary enterprise	33
3.7	The extent of the involvement of the ABCFM and the Congregational Mission in Angolan nationalism	34
3.8	Conclusion	34

Table of contents (continued)

CHAPTER 4	PERSECUTION AS A FACTOR IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IECA 1962-1974	36
4.1	Introduction	36
4.2	Imprisonment of the IECA leadership	37
4.3	Development of the church in prison	41
4.4	Development of the church in resettlement camps	43
4.5	Development of the IECA in other government controlled parts of Angola	46
4.6	Development of the IECA in areas controlled by nationalists	47
4.7	Conclusion	48
CHAPTER 5	ASSESSMENT OF THE PERSECUTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE IECA IN BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE	50
5.1	Introduction	50
5.2	Defining righteousness as a cause of persecution (Matthew 5:10-12)	51
5.3	The relationship between persecution and righteousness	54
5.4	The prophets as an example of persecution for righteousness	55
5.5	The ideological pitfalls of pursuing righteousness	58
5.6	Positive development of the church through persecution – a New Testament perspective	59
5.7	Hindrances of persecution for the development of the church	62
5.8	Conclusion	63
CHAPTER 6	GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	64
6.1	Summary	67
6.2	Final conclusion	67
6.3	Recommendations for further studies	68
BIBLIOGRAPHY		69

ABBREVIATIONS

ABCFM	American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Mission
BMS	Baptist Mission Society
FNLA	National Front for the Liberation of Angola
IECA	Igreja Evangelica Congregacional em Angola
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
OCA	Oranizacao Cultural dos Angolanos (cultural organization of Angolan students)
PIDE	Policia Internacional de Defesa de Estado (Portuguese secret police)
UNITA	National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH

1.1 Formulating the problem

1.1.1 Background

My interest stems from a personal experience of a warring Angola during the 1980s. Growing up in Angola as an Evangelical pastor's son I knew fear, social exclusion and religious alienation. Much of the persecution faced by the Evangelical Church during this period of history can be ascribed to the impact of Marxism-Leninism, the political ideology enforced by the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA)¹ after independence (1975).

The hostile attitude enforced by the new independent authorities was itself not a new experience for the Evangelical Church; it had known similar forms of treatment under the hand of the previous colonial authorities. There are, in fact, several important, albeit general and broad studies that have been conducted concerning the experience of the *Igreja Evangelica Congregacional em Angola* (IECA)² during the colonial period of Angolan history. According to Angolan studies, this particular denomination was founded by The American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Mission (ABCFM)³ in conjunction with The Congregational Foreign Missionary Society of British North-America who together worked in the southern, central plateau of Angola (i.e., Benguela, Bie and Huambo) among the Ovimbundu (the main ethnic group of Angola). According to Heywood (1989:51) IECA's membership among the Ovimbundu in central Angola was about 400,000. Thus at the time IECA's sizeable membership represented a threat to the lucrative activities of Portuguese colonialism.

However, the period of escalating persecution in 1950-1974 saw the rapid dispersal of members of the IECA into other parts of Angola, mainly due to the execution of many of her prominent

¹ I refer in the future to the Movement for the Liberation of Angola as "the MPLA".

² I refer in the future to the Evangelical Congregational Church of Angola as "the IECA". The studies that have been conducted concerning the experience of the IECA are those of Soremekun (1965); Henderson (1990); Byam (1997) and Henderson (2000).

³ I refer in the future to The American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Mission as "the ABCFM".

leaders, the expulsion of foreign missionaries and the concentrated hostility against her congregations in the central parts of the country.

Many factors underlie the escalation of persecution against the IECA: so, for instance, a strong emphasis on the education and empowerment of Angolans by the IECA (Tucker 1933:85) presented a threat to the ideologies and purposes of the colonial authorities. The Portuguese traders and settlers believed strongly that Angolans were inferior and therefore incapable of contributing to the development of the country; thus the education of Angolans was frowned upon, to say the least. More than that, it was in the best interest of the Portuguese colonial initiative to utilize Angolans for forced labour (Byam 1997:109). Such a situation could justly be described as exploitive and dehumanizing; nonetheless, it constituted a major cornerstone of the colonial development of Angola (Malaquias 2007:35). The lack of universities in Angola, in the 1950s, forced the IECA to send young Angolans to be equipped in various fields in other parts of the world (Henderson 1990:195-196). One such student who benefited immensely from an IECA scholarship and who subsequently played a vital political role in colonial Angola was Jonas Savimbi (Marcum 1969:112).⁴ Savimbi became a popular political figure and a major character amongst Angolan liberation movements (Bridgland 1987:32).

Examples such as Savimbi illustrate why the colonial authorities in Angola associated the IECA with anti-colonial factions. As a result systematic persecution against the Church and her members ensued. Such a turn of events is not surprising when we consider the volatile relationship between the church and the Portuguese authorities since the church's establishment in 1880. The presence and policies of American and Canadian missionaries in the central part of Angola were often viewed as a serious threat to the interests and future prosperity of Portuguese traders and settlers. Thus, the church was not exempt from harassment by local officials and Portuguese traders who resented the growing presence and influence of the mission schools in the central part of Angola, and consequently the persecution intensified between 1950-1975, when the anti-colonial sentiment in the country escalated (Byam 1997:97). The colonial government counter-reacted by expelling missionaries, arresting members of the church and executing some of the clergy.

⁴ Jonas Savimbi studied at the mission stations of the IECA in Chillesso in 1951 and Dondi in 1954.

1.1.2 Problem Statement

This study seeks to draw out the specific implications of the persecution faced by the IECA under the colonial authorities between 1950-1974 for the development of this church in Angola. This, ultimately, is my interest in the persecutions faced by the IECA in Angola. Thus, I will present the situational character of persecution faced by the IECA during the late colonial period 1950-1974.⁵

I should not, of course, be taken aback by the fact that the IECA faced such harsh antagonism from the realm of a corrupt system. Jesus emphatically announced that all ministry work would be met with opposition and persecution (John 15:20). Paul, likewise, told Timothy that *“in fact everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”* (2 Timothy 3:12). In order to define persecution, I will employ a biblically-informed, theological definition of persecution, which gives a more specific slant to our understanding of the term. According to Tieszen (2008:48), persecution should be understood as “any unjust action of mild to intense levels of hostility directed at Christians of varying levels of commitment resulting in varying levels of harm which may not necessarily prevent or limit these Christians’ ability to practice their faith appropriately”. Tieszen’s definition, with which I unconditionally agree, indicates that Christians are always suffering some sort of persecution as a result of the nature of their convictions. Nevertheless, despite the unavoidable nature of persecution for Christianity in general, the specific manifestations thereof are significant, as our problem statement indicates.

1.2 Central research question

Doubtless the persecution endured by the IECA in the late colonial period 1950-1974 had a decisive impact on the subsequent development of the church in Angola. This study seeks to know how and in what manner, the IECA survived the colonial, state-initiated persecutions between 1950-1974, and to identify the formative influences (positive and/or negative) of this period of suffering for the subsequent development of the church in Angola.

⁵ Henderson (1990:401-402). It is important to note, however, that the persecution of Christians in Angola did not end after 1974, but simply changed shape as the colonial era came to an abrupt end and another regime came into being, similarly hostile towards Christianity albeit for different reasons. To delineate the period of history in Angola

The central research question gives rise to the following set of questions:

1. What was the historical background of the persecution faced by the IECA?
2. How did the rise of nationalism influence the intensification of persecution as regards the IECA?
3. How did the IECA develop under the impact of persecution?
4. What positive and/or negative aspects are associated with the development of the IECA under persecution?

1.3 Aim and objectives

The main aim of this study is to demonstrate that the IECA's experience of suffering under colonial domination, far from impeding its subsequent growth and development, actually contributed, and should still contribute to it.⁶ This will be achieved through the following:

1. Identifying the specifics of the IECA's experience of persecution under the colonial authority, what aspects the persecution entailed, and what motivated the persecutors.
2. Examining nationalism as a factor that triggered the intensification of persecution of the IECA.
3. An analysis of how the IECA's experience of persecution helped to contribute to further growth and development of the IECA, throughout Angola and beyond.
4. Assessment of persecution and development of the IECA in biblical perspective.

1.4 Central theoretical argument

The central theoretical argument of the study is that the persecution of the IECA exerted not only a negative impact but also a positive one on the development of the IECA. Although the

from 1975 onwards is, indeed, a vastly complex study in itself, and as such it falls outside the scope of our present interest.

⁶ The following is implied by my use of the term 'growth and development'; the evangelical spread of the gospel as well as the transformative impact of the gospel in the lives of people. Earlier I made mention of how the persecution faced by the CEC had a definite impact in terms of scattering the church geographically; that is, from being a church confined more or less to the central part of Angola it now gained a broader national character.

expulsion of missionaries and the execution of potentially capable leaders left a vacuum in the IECA mission, nevertheless, it helped the church to develop against all odds.

1.5 Method of research

This church historical study will be undertaken from a reformed-evangelical perspective.

The research will focus on a literary study and a biblical assessment of the experience of persecution:

1. A literature study is in order, since there are studies that have been carried out on the work of ABCFM and the Congregational Foreign Missionary Society of British North-America in central Angola, in general, such as Tucker (1933) and Henderson (1990, 2000). However, these works do not deal sufficiently with the impact of persecution on the period between 1950-1974. In this regard literature on Angola's political and social context during the overall colonial period will be reviewed, as well as dissertations on the work of the ABCFM and the Canadian Congregational Church in Angola, such as Soremekun (1965) and Byam (1997). The literature study will be interdisciplinary but will be heavily dependent on sociological approaches. A critical reflection as well as descriptive analysis and logical arguments will be applied in order to understand persecution in the Angolan context.
2. The study will also accord special attention to an assessment of the experience of the IECA's persecution from a biblical perspective. Applicable passages of the NT will be analyzed where the theme of persecution is presented as a means of developing the missional character of the church. This will be performed in order to gain clarity on how the experience of the IECA may be interpreted in such a perspective. Therefore, a historical grammatical methodology (Thiselton 1992) will be employed, which entails, on the one hand, an exegetical approach involving the use of lexicons, such as that by Nida and Louw (1992), commentaries, as well as ecclesiological texts that deal with persecution.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND OF THE PERSECUTION EXPERIENCED BY THE IECA

2.1 Introduction

Luce (1990:68) states that central Angola was the most densely populated part of Angola in the 19th century. On the one hand this high population density was conducive to human exploitation, originally primarily in the form of slavery and later in the form of forced labour. On the other hand, according to Henderson (1990:23) the large population in this area also provided fertile ground for church planting. This, in spite of the serious opposition that Protestant missionaries, in particular, faced from the Portuguese colonial powers.

Against this background in this chapter three historical issues pertaining to central Angola will be investigated:

1. Firstly, the history of exploitation of the local population by the Portuguese.
2. Secondly, successive responses by the missionaries of the ABCFM to this exploitation and to the increasing Portuguese hostility towards missionaries and local churches alike.
3. Thirdly, the fruit of missionary labour in Angola.

2.2 History of exploitation in central Angola

When the missionaries of the ABCFM and the Congregational Foreign Missionary Society of British North-America arrived in central Angola in 1880, they discovered a region ravaged by exploitation, where slavery was still common practice. For centuries a great number of Angolans had been sold to work in the sugar plantations in Brazil. According to Luce (1990:95), this slave trade was not challenged until 1850, when British cruisers began patrolling the Angolan coast, preventing ships from transporting slaves between Angola and Brazil. However, the presence of these cruisers did not completely eliminate slavery within Angolan territory, as it was still practised in different forms (Byam 1997:83).

After the intervention of British cruisers, the colonial authorities in Angola introduced a new system of exploitation, under the pretext of civilization. According to Henderson (1979:120) the Portuguese perceived colonization as a twofold tool for economic development and cultural evolution, and believed that forced labour contributed to both. This practice was underpinned by their view that the local civilisation was inferior, and that Angolans were lazy. However, Henderson (1979:120) argues that these Portuguese assumptions were based on their ignorance of the Angolans' language, and of the traditional Angolan work ethic.⁷ Henderson (1979:121) points out that the economy of the Ovimbundu, the inhabitants of central Angola, encompassed well-defined work roles, and that the argument of the Portuguese which justified forced labour as a way to economic development and cultural evolution was "in stark contrast to the brutal reality experienced by men, women and children who were caught in the system".

Forced labour, far from being an improvement, had an even worse effect on the local population than had been the case with slavery. Bender (1975:356) argues that, at least, in the case of slaves and work animals the owner was obligated to keep his *property* healthy and strong; negligence in this regard resulted in a fine. Under the forced labour system there were no such provisions. Labourers unable to work, for example, were simply replaced by other labourers.

⁷ Bender (1975:369) notes that the Portuguese fervently believed in the superiority of their own civilisation, and never really bothered to learn from Africans. Therefore, they held that it was in the best interest of Africans to totally change every aspect of their lives, including their social, economic and political organization, religion, clothes, food, and cosmology. In their view Angolans would only become human once they had embraced the Portuguese life-style.

As had been the case with slavery, labourers too were recruited mostly from the densely populated central highlands of Angola. Péclard states that the methods used by the Portuguese colonizers in the recruitment of forced labour were particularly harsh (Péclard 1998:176). Recruited workers were sent to the plantations in Sao Tome.⁸ According to Tucker (1933:75), the name “Sao Tome” was synonymous with death for most Angolans because those assigned there never came back alive. The workers were sent to the cocoa plantations for a period of five years of forced labour with no guarantee of returning (Henderson 1979:121). Since life expectancy in the cocoa plantations was very low, there was a steady demand for more recruitment. Most slave traders worked with *Sekulo* (headmen) and *Sobas* (community leaders) in central Angola, who supplied forced labour in exchange for manufactured goods. The most important trade items were rum, clothing, guns and ammunition (Ball 2003:87).

Over a period of time, the Ovimbundu in central Angola became increasingly frustrated and tension increased between them and the Portuguese. In May 1902, the Ovimbundu took up arms against their oppressors in response to the exploitation and injustice taking place. According to Soremekun (1965) what appeared to cause the revolt was the way the Portuguese dealt with the *Sekulo*. He mentions a particular instance where a trader had paid five kegs of rum for five labourers. He demanded that the *Sekulo* deliver quickly. When the *Sekulo* requested more time, he became impatient and threatened to arrest him. It was because of such incidents that the community organised itself to drive the Portuguese out of central Angola (Soremekun 1965:130-133).

Soremekun (1965:130-133) points out that initially the rebellion was divided into two groups. One party wanted to negotiate while the other sought to drive out the Portuguese. Those who wanted to negotiate despatched a delegation with an ox as a symbol of peace in Ovimbundu culture to the Portuguese fort in central Angola. The Portuguese captain received the delegation and invited them into the fort. As soon as the Ovimbundu delegation entered the fort, all of them

⁸ Sao Tome and Principe are two small islands in the Gulf of Guinea near the equator, discovered by the Portuguese mariners in the 15th century. With fertile soil and copious rainfalls, Portuguese enterprisers had no difficulty turning the islands into a rich garden of delight; the “pearls of the Atlantic” as they have been called. Thousands of tons of cocoa, coffee and palm kernels have been shipped from the islands to European markets. But the tropical islands were valueless without labourers, and Sao Tome and Principe had few native inhabitants; hence there arose the need to recruit workers from the nearby mainland of Angola and of Mozambique (Tucker, 1933:74).

were arrested. The group which desired to drive out the Portuguese gained momentum and the Portuguese homes were plundered. As a result many of the settlers were forced to seek refuge in the Portuguese fort. The Angolans laid siege to the Portuguese fort, hoping to starve the Portuguese inside, the missionaries were not molested.⁹ However, the settlers received support from the coast and the rebellion was crushed.

For Soremekun (1965:131), the significant aspect of the revolt was that the Protestant missionaries operating in central Angola were not attacked by the Ovimbundu, indicating that for the Ovimbundu, these missionaries were not synonymous with the Portuguese settlers. This had major repercussions for the future of the missionary work in the area. The fact that such missionaries were not attacked was evidence to the authorities and the settlers that the missionaries were the instigators of the revolt. Thus, after the revolt had been crushed the authorities and traders began to systematically persecute the Protestant missionaries. They argued that the presence of ABCFM in the area was a threat to Portuguese sovereignty, because they were not contributing to the advancement of the Portuguese cause (Byam 1997:98). In this regard it is worth mentioning the case of a particular missionary who was accused of joining the revolt, and as a result was expelled from the area. The accused emphatically stated that the tension between the Ovimbundu and the Portuguese authorities and settlers had nothing to do with the missionary presence among the Ovimbundu; instead, it was a result of the unjust way in which the Portuguese dealt with the Ovimbundu (Soremekun 1965:139).

2.3 Early missionary response to exploitation

2.3.1. A cautious approach

Initially, the missionaries did not wish to get openly involved in the issue of forced labour (Soremekun 1965:140). Fearing Portuguese reprisals, including expulsion, they avoided direct criticism of the ongoing injustice. Instead, they sought to address forced labour through an indirect approach (quiet diplomacy). Byam (1997:100) explains this reluctance to become openly

⁹ According to Soremekun (1965:131) the missionaries helped those Portuguese who were under siege in the fort by secretly giving them food and medicine. However, the missionary effort did not change the perception of the Portuguese who argued that the missionaries were the instigators of the rebellion. Similar incidents happened during the revolution in 1961; the natives attacked the Portuguese in the northern part of Angola but the missionaries were not harmed. Henderson (1990:305) states that the Portuguese authorities accused the missionaries of being the instigators of the revolution. Subsequent to these incidents, the missionaries in the north were expelled.

involved by adducing the fact that for many decades the missionaries were unable to draw support from the international community in the fight against the exploitation of Africans by the Portuguese. This was mainly the case because in the so-called “free world”, minorities were still struggling to have their civil rights recognized and protected (Byam 1997:100).

According to Soremekun (1965:140), the missionaries reserved their complaints about forced labour for their mission boards at home, in America and Canada. The mission board in America gave clear instructions to its missionaries regarding how to address the injustices taking place. The following is a list of six of these instructions as recorded by Byam (1997:101):

1. Accept and obey the laws of the country as they are. Seek amelioration of bad conditions and modification or adaptation of laws to suit the needs of the work or the people by the direct approach, which is open and regular, rather than by any hostility and criticism.
2. Always try to secure the official’s point of view with patience and sympathy.
3. Make it a point to talk things over with officials frequently rather than “try to have as little to do with them as possible”. More misunderstandings are bred by silence than by frankness and good will.
4. Search for and make use of the best qualities in the officials with whom you have to deal. If you seek their worst sides you will surely find them!
5. Do not dwell upon, nurse and exaggerate stories of wrong and injustice. It produces a toxin in the mind which makes one unfit to deal directly with the facts.
6. When it seems necessary to follow out cases of injustice, first ensure that you have all the facts, and then approach the necessary officials directly and fearlessly but without a pugnacious spirit. More good will be accomplished by one wrong righted in this way than hundred complaints, which fail for lack of fact and exactness.

These instructions proved to be helpful for a certain period of time. However, the scenario altered when, according to Grant (1997:168), the international community became aware of the continuing exploitation in Angola, and started to investigate the Portuguese colonies. The investigation focused particularly on forced labour at plantations in Sao Tome and Principe. Those conducting the investigation worked directly with missionaries. Missionaries were

interviewed and their views were published. Two reports resulted from these investigations, one by a journalist and another by a professor.

According to Soremekun (1965:140), the first report was compiled by the English journalist Navinson who also covered the Greco-Turkish and South African wars. Soremekun (1965) points out that Navinson had been commissioned by *Harpers' Magazine* to visit Angola and Sao Tome in order to report on the issue of forced labour. Navinson visited Angola and Sao Tome from 1904-1905 and acquired most of his information from missionaries. He pointed out that the system of forced labour was nothing but modern slavery. Thus, the investigators began to voice openly what the missionaries had felt unable to say. His report created worldwide awareness of the ongoing practice of forced labour in Angola. Navinson also criticized the cowardice of missionaries in keeping quiet in the face of such injustice, for fear of being expelled. Navinson's report affected the missionaries' diplomatic approach, because they did not want to be seen as collaborators with the forced labour system. As a result the missionaries were forced to focus not only on the spiritual salvation of people but also on becoming involved in the emancipation of the Ovimbundu.

2.3.2. Emboldened by the international community

Soremekun (1965:145-146) mentions that in response to Navinson's report, Charles Swan was sent to Angola as a representative of the Protestant mission: his task was to certify the reliability of Navinson's account. He returned with a report signed by English missionaries, and by their Congregational and Methodist American counterparts. In the report, he itemizes four aspects of forced labour:¹⁰

1. Angolans had been bought and sold during the whole of this period (twenty-three years during which Swan had been acquainted with the affairs of the province) and still continued to be bought and sold, though less openly in recent years. After the war in 1902, such purchased natives were required to be placed under regular contract. The natives never understood the legal nature of these contracts nor of the terms of implied agreement.

¹⁰ These four points originally appeared in *The Times* of London, June 22, 1902.

2. Many of these purchased Angolans had been exported and still continued to be exported to the islands of Sao Tome and Principe.
3. There was never a single known case in which an Angolan willingly went or of cases where they came back.
4. The Angolans spoke of Sao Tome with utmost dread. "It is always taken for granted that all natives so exported are henceforth dead to all their relations and connections with the mainland".

Initially, the Portuguese authorities did not respond as aggressively to the missionaries' more direct involvement in the fight against forced labour as the latter had feared. The Portuguese reaction was probably restrained by the fact that the international community was now aware of the injustice in Angola (Soremekun 1965:142). Instead of focusing on the missionaries, the Portuguese authorities tried to prove to the outraged international community that forced labour was not necessarily slavery. However, a second report, written by Professor Ross from a Wisconsin University, had detrimental consequences for the missionaries and the local church alike. According to Ball (1997:41-49), Ross visited Angola and Mozambique in 1924 in order to investigate the system of forced labour. While there, Ross enjoyed the hospitality of the missionaries; some of his research relied on their information and on that from Angolan Protestant pastors, teachers and women. His report was handed out at the Temporary Slavery League of the Nations (Henderson 1990: 288). The findings described the existence of barbaric methods in recruiting and exploiting Angolans for forced labour. Ross spoke about women and children being forced to work without food or pay. There was ultimately no difference between the exploitations of forced labour and slavery, in Ross's opinion.

Tucker, an ABCFM leader in central Angola at the time, disclosed that the Ross report led to severe repercussions for the Portuguese community (Henderson 1990:288). This in turn resulted in serious Portuguese reprisals against the missionaries. The Portuguese were furious about the missionary role in the publication of the information and systematically persecuted and intimidated those associated with Ross. Tucker himself, together with his family and a friend, Figueiredo, a teacher at the ABCFM mission station in central Angola, were intimidated, and shots were even fired at them. Eventually, they were forced to flee the colony. The situation

became so sensitive that night after night, unknown persons would shoot at the homes of missionaries (Soremekun 1965:226). The report not only affected the missionaries; Angolans too paid a high price.

Wilson, a Brethren missionary working in the eastern part of Angola, met a group of Ovimbundu from Central Angola in 1926-1927, who had been recruited to work in the diamond mines. Unlike so many other workers, these Ovimbundu could read and write and carried with them New Testament Bibles in *Umbundu* (the language of the Ovimbundu). According to Wilson (1967:129), these Ovimbundu told him that they had been recruited because of the Ross report. They were of the opinion that the Portuguese authorities intended to deplete the Ovimbundu population in central Angola by scattering them across the country, up to 800 miles away from home. Further, by recruiting the Ovimbundu for forced labour, Portuguese officials tried to create an atmosphere of distrust between the Ovimbundu and the missionaries under whose jurisdiction they had been educated. Wilson showed the labourers, on the basis of the book of Acts, how God often used persecution to develop his church (Wilson 1967:129). Thus, those Ovimbundu associated with Christianity who had been unjustly recruited for forced labour were encouraged to carry their faith wherever they went. Similarly Tucker (1933:80-81) testifies of how the Ovimbundu who had been associated with missionaries carried the gospel message as far as the plantations of Sao Tome. They used the little education they had received from missionary's schools as means to evangelize fellow workers. Naturally the Portuguese officials in the plantations did not want the workers to learn to read and write. They argued that if the workers were educated they would start demanding their rights (Tucker 1933:80-81).

For the missionaries their new, direct involvement in the struggle for the emancipation of Angolans resulted in persecution, intimidation and the disruption of their work.¹¹ Therefore, another and less confrontational approach needed to be found. This new method focused on the education of Angolans rather than on direct confrontation with the authorities.

¹¹ Byam (1997:125) states that officials who would arrest young African males often undermined the work of the missionaries. Accused of committing minor offences, these young men were often forced to work in the 'road gangs' or were even deported to Sao Tome. Thus, the message being communicated was that to associate with missionaries held considerable danger.

2.4 A shift in emphasis: Education as the preferred missionary method in central Angola

From the outset the Protestant method of doing mission work in Angola had included the education of Angolans, at least as far as reading and writing. Over time, education increasingly opened up new dimensions for the many trying to escape forced labour.¹² This was particularly true for those in central Angola, where such an escape was complicated by the fact that there were no nearby borders with neighbouring countries. For them, education presented a vital opportunity to integrate into Portuguese society and to escape forced labour this way. Those who finished their training at mission schools were often qualified to contribute to the economy of the colony, and more importantly, were exempt from forced labour. The clause in the national law that allowed education as a means to avoid forced labour caused many Ovimbundu to seek missionary education at all costs. The aim was to acquire what was popularly known as *assimilado* status, which was equal to Portuguese citizenship.¹³ The acquisition of *assimilado* status, however, involved such an overly complex bureaucratic process that not many succeeded in qualifying for it, despite the fact that they had achieved the required level of education.¹⁴

If education provided a means of escape from forced labour, it certainly was not attained through easy means. Although the Portuguese regime in Angola insisted on the education and assimilation into Portuguese culture of those Angolans who sought exemption from forced labour, it did not provide a proper system through which this could be achieved. Bender

¹² Bender (1975:356) highlights that by 1954, 500 000 Angolans were living outside of the country.

¹³ Bender (1975:369) defines an *assimilado* as a native who enjoyed Portuguese status. In order to obtain such status, a person had to change all aspects of his or her life, socially, economically, politically and religiously. Furthermore, to become an *assimilado*, according to Duffy (1962:165), the applicant had to be above eighteen years of age and prove his ability through fluency in the Portuguese language. He had to demonstrate that he earned a sufficient income for both himself and his family. Such a person had to be of good character and possess those qualities necessary for the exercise of the public and private rights of a Portuguese citizen. To be approved, a candidate also had to submit a birth certificate, a certificate of residence, a certificate of good health, a declaration of loyalty, and two testimonies of his good character. In addition, various fees and petty taxes had to be paid. Furthermore, the wife and children of the *assimilado* could also acquire citizenship if they spoke Portuguese and could demonstrate their good character. Of course, in practice, only few individuals managed to secure the *assimilado* status. Malaquias (2007:31) points out that “mulattos who trace their lineage to families that had accumulated wealth in the early stages of colonial economy, including through slave trade, heavily represented *assimilados*”.

¹⁴ Bender (1975:366) states that, more often than not, local administrators arbitrarily determined the ultimate decision as to whether an individual qualified as an *assimilado*. These were frequently the same individuals who were responsible for providing so-called ‘contract’ labourers. Thus, it was not uncommon for local administrators to deny qualified Africans the *assimilado* status in order to maintain a large repository of potential contract workers.

(1975:367) draws attention to the alarmingly low number of pupils enrolled in the colonial school system:

Less than five percent of all children between the ages of five and fourteen were enrolled in 1950, while 97 percent of all Africans fifteen years and older were classified as illiterate. Two years later, there were only 37 high school graduates in the entire colony, most of whom were whites.

This sad scenario made it possible for the missionaries to step in and facilitate education for Angolans on a hitherto unprecedented scale (Soremekun 1965: 193). As a result, many Angolans who, for whatever reason, were excluded from attending colonial schools often turned to the missionaries for schooling. Thus the missionary schools became instrumental in educating thousands of Angolans as teachers, nurses, clerks, etcetera (Malaquias 2007:32).

The education offered by missionaries was distinctive in the way it was implemented among the Ovimbundu. It consisted not merely of secular education but was integrated into the principle that education facilitated the spreading of God's Word. The motto of the missionary educational enterprise, according to Henderson (1990:193), was: *uma igreja sem escola é com um casal sem filhos* (i.e., a church without a school is like a marriage without children). The end result was that for Angolans, there was no distinction between becoming a Christian and going to school. Henderson (1979:155) emphasizes the fact that the word *escola* (school) in Angola did not primarily denote an academic institution, but rather referred to the church as both an ecclesiastical organization and a Christian community. The Umbundu word *Ndukuasikola*, literally, "I am of the school", meant "I am a Christian"

Despite the fact that the mission schools did not offer a high level of education, many graduates were able to secure occupations in the government or the private sector (Malaquias 2007: 32). The curriculum was, according to Tucker (1933:88), sufficient to pursue ecclesiastical, as well as secular employment. That most graduates from the mission schools opted for the latter caused great concern among the missionaries, for it tended to drain the mission stations of capable people for the ministry (Soremekun 1965:113).

It is also important to note that the missionaries tended to teach their subjects in either the vernacular or English language (Byam 1997:143). Such an approach to education was, of course,

in direct opposition to the agenda of the Portuguese authorities; education for them implied wholesale assimilation into Portuguese culture. The missionaries, however, held fast to their approach and insisted that their methodology not only delivered the best academic results, but also promoted the empowerment of the Angolan (Tucker 1933:93). This then brings us to a discussion of the Portuguese reaction to education as a missionary method.

2.5 Colonial opposition to missionary education

The colonialists followed two main approaches to education. Firstly, they did not encourage the education of the masses but generally sought to use them as a resource for manual labour. Secondly, what education they did provide was geared towards the assimilation of the 'primitive' Angolan culture into the 'superior' Portuguese culture (Duffy 1959:295). There were, therefore, two important reactions to the missionary educational methods.

The first reaction came from traders and planters in central Angola, and the second from the government. According to Tucker (1933:85), the attitude of traders and planters toward mission education was often unsympathetic. They argued that education would spoil the Ovimbundu, and that the only education the Ovimbundu needed was in manual labour. The traders and planters realised only too well that they depended upon, if not outright slavery, then at the very least, on forced labour. It was therefore not uncommon for conflict to arise between the traders and planters on the one hand, and the missionaries on the other.¹⁵ The traders and planters often accused the missionaries of denationalising the colony, especially, in relation to the issue of forced labour.¹⁶ They resented the missionaries drawing young people away from labour in order for the latter to study. For this reason, they used officials to interfere with the educational work of the missionaries and to intimidate those who preferred school to forced labour.

The second reaction stemmed directly from the government officials. Since the missionaries tended to teach in either English or the vernacular, the authorities saw them as a direct threat to Portuguese supremacy. Moreover, the Portuguese authorities argued that if the Ovimbundu were

¹⁵ Soremekun (1965:124) tells of how traders often disrupted missionary work among the Ovimbundu young men by enticing them away from school with alcohol during the day. Needless to say, the missionaries were vehemently opposed to such practices. They understood the implications - the traders wanted the natives to remain ignorant.

¹⁶ This accusation was often supported by the officials (Soremekun 1965:28-129).

to be instructed in English and the vernacular, they would never be able to become *assimilado*. Thus, the authorities were not opposed to missionary education per se, but wanted the education to be in line with their assimilation policies. In order to speed up the *assimilado*, in 1921, the Portuguese High Commissioner to Angola, Norton De Mattos, issued a 'Decree 77' prohibiting the use of the vernacular at any institution. The vernacular would only be tolerated if a parallel text in Portuguese was used simultaneously (Byam 1997:153). Soremekun (1965:184) confirms this: "No book pamphlet could be published except in Portuguese. No books for religion were permitted in any language other than Portuguese. The decree was far reaching. It was as if the mission could not move without feeling the weight of the Portuguese government". This would have far-reaching implications for missionary education.

2.6 Missionary struggle against colonial policies

'Decree 77' negatively affected mission work both in terms of evangelism and finance. In terms of evangelism the methodology of planting churches through education needed to be revised. This decree practically denied the natives any possibility of hearing the gospel in their own language. Moreover, every teacher needed to be registered and had to acquire a valid identity card and teacher's certificate (Soremekun 1965:184). According to Byam (1997:154), certain mission schools were obliged to close down temporarily because of the bureaucracy involved in fulfilling such government requirements.

'Decree 77' also had financial implications. The requirement that a parallel Portuguese text had to be provided with every text in the vernacular drained the finances of educational institutions because of the printing costs involved. Unlike the Catholic Church, that had strong links with colonial Portuguese and often received governmental support for their educational program, the Protestant mission in central Angola depended on donations from their home churches. If the mission wanted to continue using education as a tool for evangelism, more funds needed to be raised. Moreover, the decree slowed down the progress of the existing missionary work, as much time was needed to be spent on planning and financial budgeting. Tucker (1933:96) argued that the Protestant missions were ready to publish more books but they could not do so because of the financial burden of printing in two languages.

Soremekun (1965:186-187) affirms that the mission tried in various ways to have 'Decree 77' amended, but without much success. The High Commissioner allowed the publication of hymns, not only in Portuguese, but also in Umbundu. However, he turned down the request to use the vernacular as a medium for education. As a result the ABCFM considered launching some protest actions through diplomatic circles, not only with regards to teaching in Portuguese, but also with regards to forced labour. Tucker (1933), however, who was himself a missionary in Angola during that time, advised the board against such a move since he believed it would only complicate matters.

Besides 'Decree 77', the Protestant missionaries also had to deal with the fact that the authorities were prejudiced against Protestant work of any kind. Henderson (1990:294) mentions, for example, how the Portuguese authorities favoured the Catholic Church, not only by supporting its missionary efforts and school projects financially, while the Protestant mission had to depend on donations from churches in America and Canada, but also in other ways. Catholic marriage and birth certificates, for example, were automatically recognised by the authorities, but not the Protestant ones. Those whose birth or marriage was registered at Protestant mission schools had to endure the long process of receiving their papers. Oftentimes, they were obliged to walk for between 30 and 60 km to get to the nearest registration office (Henderson 1990:295). These obstacles, however, did not keep the missionaries from persevering in their task, or prevent the Ovimbundu from converting to Protestantism.

2.7 The fruit of missionary education: The Angolan response

The Angolan response to education as a mission method was encouraging. Angolans realized that as people they were not only good for manual work and forced labour as the Portuguese had suggested, but that they could also work in areas previously considered to be too difficult for them (Tucker 1933:85). For this they were willing to pay the cost of being associated with the missionaries. The 'cost' included intimidation, unfair recruitment to forced labour and persecution. At times, the cost even included harassment by family members.¹⁷

The positive response of the Angolans motivated the missions to continue in their enterprise. Through their method of education, nurses, teachers and clerks were trained, and hospitals, schools and churches were built. Matters progressed so well that the Protestant mission began sending young people to study overseas.¹⁸ Many Angolans found that missionary education gave them the dignity they had previously only associated with the Portuguese; it also afforded them the international exposure formerly reserved for the latter. According to Byam (1997:125) several leaders of political movements such as Agostinho Neto (Methodist), Holden Roberto (Baptist) and Jonas Savimbi (IECA), benefited from this exposure.

In a new development, the Ovimbundu began to seek independence from the missionaries, realising that they were competent enough to take care of their own affairs. Henderson (1990:174) indicates that six Ovimbundu teachers for example, left the mission to begin their own schools. These schools were created to help children who could not afford to go to mission or Portuguese schools. They did not depend on the missionaries for financial support, and were purely the result of Angolan initiatives.

2.8 Conclusion

The coming of missionaries to central Angola posed a threat to the economic profits of the slave trade and forced labour gained by the Portuguese. The missionaries often found themselves in conflict with authorities due to their indirect support of the Ovimbundu cause. That support often caused the authorities to think of the presence of missionaries in central Angola as a danger to the Portuguese sovereignty. In order to contain the spreading of ABCFM influence, the Portuguese often persecuted the ABCFM and those associated with the missionary enterprise in central Angola.

The ABCFM did not adhere to several Portuguese policies, especially the policy of making Angolans *assimilados*. As the ABCFM believed that the gospel should be understood in the

¹⁷ Henderson (2000:50) cites the example of Rev. Chipenda who was asked by his father to choose between him and mission education. Rev. Chipenda chose the latter and for years he was separated from his family because of his faith.

¹⁸ According to Henderson (1990:144) in 1947, the Methodist mission sent Agostinho Neto to Portugal to study medicine, upon his return to Angola he became the leader of the Communist-Marxist MPLA, after the independence in 1975, he became the Angolan president and vowed that the church would disappear in 50 years.

Ovimbundu mother tongue, this policy posed a threat to ABCFM work. However, the authorities viewed the ABCFM attitude as denationalising. Therefore missionaries were forced to comply with various impeding decrees such as the 'Decree 77' that prohibited the use of the vernacular at any institution. In spite of the conflict between the ABCFM and the authorities the message of the gospel was well received, and the church was established. This was the case because of the ABCFM emphasis on education. Whilst the ABCFM missionaries viewed education as a means to plant churches, the Ovimbundu viewed it as a means to overcome oppression. The more Angolans became involved in the education programmes, offered by the mission, the more they became aware of the necessity to strive for freedom. As a result, the authorities perceived the mission work as a threat to their structures and put restrictions for the mission work in place. Those policies, however, could not stop the rise of nationalism.

CHAPTER 3

INTENSIFICATION OF PERSECUTION WITH THE RISE OF NATIONALISM 1950-1961

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter demonstrated how, through Protestant mission education, Angolans in the central part of the country gained increasing independence, both from the colonial powers and eventually also from the missionaries themselves. The chapter further showed how the Portuguese opposed the growing Angolan independence at every turn.

This chapter investigates the way in which the rise of nationalism intensified the persecution of the Protestant church in Angola. This will be done by examining:

1. Angolan nationalism and its influence on the local Protestant church.
2. The response of the Portuguese authorities to nationalism, that is by trying to eliminate community and ecclesiastical leaders on the one hand, and by attempting to win the hearts of the Angolans on the other.
3. The extent of missionary involvement in nationalism.

3.2 Angolan nationalism

In the period under examination, 1950 to 1961, the African continent was in turmoil. Africans from various countries began to rise up against colonialism. Their respective emerging intellectual elites, whose members had often studied in the West, began to engage in a serious dialogue to end colonialism.¹⁹ National pride, independence, and the appreciation of African culture captured people's imaginations. Ideologies of freedom and independence began to spread like wildfire throughout Africa, and Angola was no different. According to Malaquias (2007:50) new political forces such as the MPLA²⁰ began to emerge, drawing most of their intellectual support from students abroad. Some of these students came into contact with nationalists, who encouraged them to seek independence as soon as they returned to Angola (Bender 1975:169).

Angolan nationalism was linked to what was happening on the continent of Africa in the 50s and 60s. During this period, colonialism was grinding to a halt, and various colonial powers began to prepare their colonies for independence. They had come to view colonialism as an evil that needed to be exorcised or at least as a status that could no longer be maintained. However, in the Portuguese colonies, this was not the case. Instead of taking the growing nationalist groundswell in their colonies seriously, the Portuguese ignored the signs of brewing revolution. Although they did introduce a series of reforms, these did not address the real problems, such as forced labour, the lack of appreciation of African culture and the lack of education for the masses (Ball 2003:203).

According to Van der Waals (1993:42), a report was written in 1952 by Galvao, a Portuguese who understood the frustration of ordinary Angolans, warning the Portuguese government of a possible uprising if Angolan living conditions were not improved. The Portuguese authorities, though, did not heed the warning. Instead, the report was banned in Angola, and its author arrested and charged with treason (Van der Waals 1993:42). However, the report was leaked internationally, and Portugal was forced to endure criticism at the United Nations. In order to change their bad image in the late 50s, the Portuguese made various unsuccessful attempts at

¹⁹ Hastings (1979:11-12) points out that leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya), Leopold Senghor (Senegal), and Julius Nyerere (Tanzania) who emerged, after completing their studies in western countries, all wanted to end colonialism.

²⁰ The MPLA was founded 1956: it had its roots in the Portuguese socialist party.

reforms to eliminate anti-colonial sentiment among the Angolans. These included the following three major reforms:

Firstly, they made Angola a province of Portugal. However, Finley (2005:24) called this decision unwise, as other colonial powers, both Francophone and Anglophone, were preparing to give up their colonies altogether. In addition, the new provincial status failed to address the colony's fundamental problems such as its lack of education for the masses and the existence of forced labour. Finley (2005:24) argues that the Portuguese reforms were made primarily in order to gain admission to the United Nations and to silence growing international criticism. However, the admission of Portugal to the United Nations did not silence the increasing criticism. According to Ball (2003:203), by the mid 50s, Portugal's allies were regarding colonialism as an embarrassing anachronism. As a result Portugal was put under pressure to work towards granting independence to its colonies. The Portuguese, however, insisted on defending Angola as their province and continued to implement superficial reforms without engaging in dialogue with the nationalists, which would have helped to bring about a peaceful solution to the Angolan crisis, thus avoiding civil war. The more reforms Portugal implemented, the more resentful the nationalists became. They interpreted the half-hearted Portuguese reforms as a sign that exploitation and oppression would never end. Clearly, the Portuguese authorities were more concerned with appeasing the international community, than with listening to the winds of change.

The second Portuguese attempt at solving the Angolan problem was to encourage increased Portuguese immigration. This was done under the pretext that the immigrants would speed up the development of the colony. Van der Waals (1993:41) notes that white settlement grew by 80% from 1950-55 and that "the immigrants were arriving at the rate of 1000 a month" (Van der Waals 1993:41). The government offered subsidies to the new immigrants to encourage their involvement in agriculture. As a result many Angolans were removed from fertile lands to make room for the new developers. However, Van der Waals (1993:41) argues that encouraging more European immigration proved to be a complete failure, because most immigrants were illiterate and unfamiliar with farming on the African soil. This resulted in a massive exodus of the immigrants to urban areas in order to seek work there. This development created increased racial

tension, because some of them were obliged to compete with the natives even for unskilled jobs. Van der Waals (1993:41) comments that, “Whites were favoured because of the colour of their skin in terms of job opportunities, and often earned double or treble the wages paid to black workers. Not surprisingly, this generated anti-white and anti-colonial feeling”. Furthermore, those who had been removed from the land harboured great resentment against the new settlers, and as a result they became soft targets for nationalistic ideas.

The third Portuguese solution to the Angolan crisis involved blaming the rise of nationalism on international Communism, and Protestant American and British missionary interference. According to Rodrigues (2000:188), the Portuguese accused the missionaries of maintaining close contacts with nationalist organizations and of fomenting rebellion. The Secret Portuguese Police(PIDE)²¹, was employed to infiltrate various spheres of life, including the church (Henderson 1990:302). The moves of the church and of missionaries were under constant surveillance.

To some degree, the Portuguese perception of Protestant involvement in spreading anti-colonial sentiments was justifiable. This was because in the 50s, various Angolan organizations began to promote Angolan culture.²² Although these organizations were officially apolitical, they did expose their members’ political ideas.²³ Various members of the Protestant church were leaders and members of those organizations, thereby increasing the suspicions of PIDE.

Furthermore, the leaders of the three main political parties that had contested the colonialists had been educated in Protestant mission schools. The FNLA leader, Holden Roberto, received some of his education at the Baptist Church of the North (Baptist Mission Society) (Van Der Waals 1993:42). The MPLA leader, Agostinho Neto, the son of a Methodist pastor, was partly educated by the Methodist Church and was subsequently sent by the Methodist Mission to study medicine

²¹ I refer in future to the Portuguese Secret Police as “PIDE”.

²² Various organizations were created under the umbrella of promoting Angolan culture. Malaquias (2007:33) states that these organizations became increasingly political, and the presence of some members of the Protestant community was evident in those cultural organizations. Moreover, the people who had the capacity to challenge the colonial authorities had directly or indirectly come in contact with Protestant missions.

²³ Marcum (1969:108) refers to the name of one of the organizations as OCA (*Organizacoo Cultural dos Angolanos*). Two young IECA Protestants led the organization one was Jose Belo Chipenda, the son of the IECA’s hero of faith Rev. Jesse Chipenda.

in Portugal (Bridgland 1987: 37). Lastly, the leader of UNITA, Jonas Savimbi, received some of his education from the ABCFM and the Canadian mission in central Angola, before being sent to Portugal to further his studies with the help of an ABCFM scholarship (Bridgland 1987:34).

It was, among other factors, the involvement of these leaders²⁴ in anti-colonial protests that led the authorities to believe that the Protestant mission was behind the growing anti-colonial sentiments and that therefore, it had to be restrained.

In a sense this tension between the Portuguese authorities and the Protestant mission was a continuation of their ongoing strained relationship ever since the Protestant arrival in 1882.

3.3 Angolan insurgency

Over the years, Portugal had succeeded in suppressing different revolts such as the 1902 Bailundo revolt in central Angola. However, from the 1950s, the colonialists were obliged to deal with additional pressure both from the international community and from a more organized internal opposition. The Angolan intellectual elite, especially those who had benefited from Protestant mission education, began to protest in various ways through cultural groups, student organizations, poems, petitions and peaceful protests (Finley 2005:24). Furthermore, the independence of various countries on the continent, especially that of Congo-Zaire to the north of Angola during 1960, galvanized the nationalist struggle for independence.

The turning of the tide for Portuguese colonialism in the 1950s had been foreseen by Fontes Pereira. In 1882 he had already predicted the end of colonialism if the injustice against the Angolans continued (Wheeler 1969:1). Fontes Pereira was a mulatto journalist who published an article criticising the injustice of the Angolan colonial system, singling out especially slavery and forced labour. He further criticized the lack of Portuguese interest in educating the Angolans and in understanding their plight. One additional significant aspect of Pereira's nationalistic article was that, although he was a Catholic, he saw the coming of the Protestant missionaries from Britain to northern Angola and of the American missionaries to central Angola as the answer to

²⁴ These three political leaders all came from different tribes, Kigongo, Kimbundu and Umbundu, respectively; they also stemmed from different mission stations and churches, i.e., the Baptist, the Methodist and the Congregational, respectively.

end injustices (Wheeler 1961:1). His predictions were fulfilled much later with the Angolan revolution in the 60s.

On the 4th of February 1961, members of the MPLA, made up of the Mbuntu and various Christian movements and organizations from the Luanda area, stormed the Portuguese prisons to demand the release of their political compatriots, Agostinho Neto being one of them (Bridgland 1987:51). However, according to Van der Waals (1993:51), the Portuguese authorities succeeded in bringing the situation under control in a clash, in which 30 demonstrators were killed, and 200 were wounded. None of the political prisoners were released. Nevertheless, the event served as another warning to the Portuguese authorities that the Angolans were determined to fight for freedom at all costs.

On the 15th of March 1961, a group of Angolans belonging to National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA)²⁵, the second political force in the north, attacked various Portuguese installations. Various factors motivated this revolution, the first of which was, as noted, the independence of Congo-Zaire in 1960. Geographically, the northern part of Angola was close to Congo-Zaire, and the neighbouring people groups shared similar traditional views. The second factor was the increase of white settlements in the fertile land of the north.²⁶ The third factor was the constant interference with the traditional monarchy by the Portuguese authorities (Van der Waals, 1993:48). A significant aspect of the attacks in the north was that the Baptist Church and the Baptist Mission Society (BMS)²⁷ missionaries also became embroiled in the event.²⁸ In response to the attacks, the Portuguese authorities intensified the crackdown on the Protestant church and more restrictions were placed on its members.

3.4 Reforms combined with reprisals on the local church

The Protestant church as a whole was affected by the Portuguese reprisals.²⁹ However, PIDE attacks were especially hard on three big Protestant denominations, namely the Baptists in the

²⁵ I refer in the future to the National Front for the Liberation of Angola as “the FNLA”.

²⁶ Van der Waals (1993:41) notes that the northern soil was fertile for the production of coffee, which was a major source of revenue for the colony. The Ovimbundu had been recruited from central Angola and sent to work in these coffee plantations.

²⁷ I refer in the future to the Baptist Mission Society as “the BMS”

²⁸ According to Henderson (1990:306), the northern area was dominated by the Protestant church.

north, planted by the BMS, the Methodists in Luanda, planted by the United Methodist Church in America, and the IECA planted by the ABCFM in central Angola (Henderson 1990:307). When the attacks erupted, the Portuguese authorities laid the blame on outside forces, specifically on Protestant missionaries and communists.³⁰ However Marcum (1969:147) argues that the Portuguese authorities and settlers failed to see that they were reaping the bitter harvest of their abuse of Angolans' rights. Ironically, in their search for the truth behind the attacks, the Portuguese used communist tactics such as arrests without fair trials, torture, infiltration by secret agents into every sphere of society, blaming foreign intervention, restricting freedom of worship, eliminating any potential political threat, and concentrating power in one place (Van der Waals 1993:38). Furthermore, the missionaries were accused of instigating the revolution, so that their countries of origin, for example, America, Great Britain, and Canada, could benefit from Angola's natural resources once the Portuguese left the colony (Henderson 1990:307).

The Portuguese response to the incidents of the 15th of March 1961 was two-fold, in the form of more reforms on the one hand and further reprisals on the other. The reforms were aimed at winning the hearts of Angolans, as the Portuguese believed that the Angolans would benefit more from Portugal than from the nationalists (Bender 1975:393).

The first act of reform was to reduce the number of people recruited for forced labour. For almost 500 years, the Portuguese economy had depended on human exploitation. According to Bender (1975:393), after the March insurgence in the north in September 1961, forced labour was abolished. This move was clearly a response to the pressure caused by the revolution, because during about five centuries, the Portuguese authorities could have altered their exploitative policies. However, they had been more concerned with quick financial gain, than with listening to their critics.³¹ The second reform act was to abolish the distinction between *assimilados* and *non-assimilados*. As a result everyone was considered Portuguese regardless of their educational background. Thirdly, Portuguese authorities implemented land reforms. Land

²⁹ Simeao (1982:51) points out that PIDE persecuted even the churches that claimed to be apolitical.

³⁰ Marcum (1969:147) indicates that the Portuguese could not entertain the suggestion that the revolution happened because of the injustice of the colonial system. They seized upon two outside forces as the principal scapegoats - communism and Protestantism.

³¹ Several critics of the Portuguese had argued for years that some of the colonial policies needed to be changed if the Portuguese wanted to win the hearts of Angolans; their criticisms often fell on deaf ears.

was no longer allocated haphazardly to the settlers as had been the case earlier (Bender 1975:371).

Combined with the implementation of these reforms, in a move that shocked the world, the Portuguese authorities carried out severe reprisals against the local population.³² They rounded up and executed educated Angolans, especially those of the Protestant tradition. By violently targeting the educated elite that included pastors and teachers, the Portuguese intended to drain church and society of possible future leadership (Byam 1997:264). The reprisal also extended to innocent civilians, some of whom had no idea what nationalism meant. Marcum (1969) states that during the insurgence of the 15th of March 1961, the nationalists killed about 250 Portuguese civilians. Within three months this number increased to 750. The Portuguese authorities reacted by killing 20,000 Angolans (Marcum 1969: 142). Significantly, these reprisals were largely perpetrated on the Protestant churches and missions. This was so because, according to Rodrigues (2000:188), Portuguese officials had noted that the north, where the Angolan attacks had occurred, contained the highest percentage of Protestant inhabitants. Thus, they concluded, it must have been the missionaries who had instigated the revolt. As a result the BMS church in the north suffered immensely. Missionaries were placed under various restrictions; the Angolans, especially pastors, were harassed, imprisoned and executed.³³ Some church members took refuge in Congo-Zaire as the situation became increasingly difficult. It was difficult for the church to operate under such circumstances and eventually the BMS and the local church were forced to close due to the exodus of its members to Congo-Zaire. As a result missionaries in the north of Angola began to relocate their operations to the Congo-Zaire (Henderson 1990:300).³⁴ The BMS mission had been the first Protestant mission to arrive in Angola in 1878; ironically, it was also the first mission to close in the aftermath of the revolution (Henderson 1990:311).

³² Henderson (1990:310) shows that the Portuguese retaliatory attacks were extremely violent and were aimed at destabilizing the church. Villages in the north were completely burned down and those who suffered the most were the educated class. The logic behind the Portuguese attacks was that the educated elites were the brains behind the spread of subversive ideas.

³³ The number of pastors executed in the north is unknown. Neither Marcum (1961) or Henderson (1990) mention any precise number of pastors killed when they deal with Methodist information and they do not provide an exact number of clergy executed in the north.

³⁴ Henderson (1990:311) claims that refugees from the north began leaving the area after the attacks of March 1961. By June, 100 000 refugees had crossed the border, and by the end of the year the number had increased to 160 000. In 1966 the number increased even more - about 400 000 refugees fled the area.

The exodus of refugees from the north into Congo-Zaire and the move of the BMS missionaries in order to help them in their crisis left some of the Angolan stations deserted. These were transformed into Portuguese military bases (Henderson 1990:311). Those Angolans who could not flee were forced to endure the wrath of the Portuguese army. According to Henderson (1990:310-311), Portuguese soldiers were killing Angolans and burning villages in the north to weaken the nationalists who often relied on village peasants for supplies in the guerrilla warfare. Although the shutting down of the BMS and the dispersal of the church constituted a major loss to the church, the Portuguese authorities' wrath did not stop in the north but spread to other Protestant missions and churches.

In the Luanda area, where the Methodist Church was influential, the reprisals were worse, with 130 of 165 African pastors and teachers dying in prison or going missing. The Methodist clinic and church in Luanda were destroyed by a white mob under police escort (Marcum 1969:149). According to Henderson (1990:310), five Methodist missionaries were deported under the pretext of having spread anti-colonial propaganda.³⁵ Henderson further indicates that PIDE arrested Raymond Noah, a Methodist missionary who was accused of encouraging some students to seek political asylum in Nigeria. However, when the students arrived in Nigeria, they were refused asylum and were sent to Portugal where they were arrested (Henderson 1990:310). Under PIDE interrogation, the students confessed that they had been advised to seek asylum by a Methodist missionary. PIDE interrogated the missionary who admitted that he had indeed advised the students to seek political asylum. He was arrested and later deported.³⁶ Another factor that led the authorities to suspect Methodist involvement in the anti-colonial insurgence was that in some areas the nationalists attacked the Catholic Church but Methodist Churches were left untouched (Marcum 1969:149).

³⁵ Rodrigues (2000:192) notes that the missionaries were accused by PIDE, among others, of advocating the separation of Angola from Portugal by violent means, as well as of using the property and equipment of the mission to hold secret and subversive meetings under the guise of religious worship. Furthermore, the missionaries were charged with plotting to change the political constitution of Portugal; to overthrow the government by force and to change its established form, as well as distributing seditious pamphlets using stationery and equipment belonging to the mission authorities.

³⁶ Henderson (1990:301) comments that this was the first case in which a missionary accused of committing a crime admitted guilt.

The reason behind these Angolan attacks on the Catholic Church was that the nationalists associated the Catholic Church with colonialism, even though some Catholic priests were also arrested after the insurgency. However, Henderson (1990:322) claims that the priests who were arrested did not suffer the same treatment, such as execution or torture, as their Protestant counterparts. Instead, they were kept in safe custody at the Catholic monastery. In addition, Henderson (1990:322) indicates that when the insurgency occurred, the Catholic Church in the Southern Huila district released a statement, indicating their full support for the colonial powers:

We believe that the bishops of Angola have manifested very well their patriotism and their dynamic will for the expansion of the Catholic faith among the masses with the accent in civilizing in the constructing sense of Portugalization. But in the Huila district council we have often spoken about pernicious influence which the Protestant mission exercise through individuals who made harmful statements and propaganda. These are foreign agents who exert influence on the native masses. They generate admiration and enthusiasm for certain anti-Portuguese ideologies and movements. They surreptitiously undermine the idea of Portuguese citizenship. They create mentalities in the service of ideas inimical to Portugal. At best they limit themselves to propagating a religious ideology not in conformity with our tradition. They neutralize our efforts for Portugalisation and occupy key positions which make it easy for them to implant ideas contrary to our interest (Henderson 1990:322).

The Catholic statement focused on two factors; firstly it affirmed Catholic loyalty and full support for the colonial government policies, especially 'Portugalisation' which was another word for becoming an *assimilado*. Secondly, they attacked the Protestant missionaries as propagators of nationalism. It is easy to deduce from the statement why the authorities did not persecute the Catholic Church in the same way they did the Protestant Church. It also creates an understanding of why the nationalists associated the Catholic Church with Portuguese colonization, and at times attacked it.

3.5 Implications of nationalism for the IECA

Whilst the north of Angola and Luanda were in terror of PIDE and Portuguese vigilante groups, central Angola appeared calm except for an incident in 1957, in which members of the IECA were arrested for making contact with a student from Ghana. The insurgency in Luanda and in the north did not occur in the same way in central Angola. The Portuguese assumed that the

Ovimbundu were loyal to them³⁷ and that they did not embrace nationalistic ideas. These assumptions were based on the fact that, firstly, geographically, central Angola was removed from the situation where the insurgency had taken place (Bender 1975:425). Secondly, that when the insurgency in the north occurred, the Ovimbundu, who had been recruited through forced labour, were forced by the Portuguese authorities to join and fight against the nationalists (Heywoods 1989:53). However, Marcum (1969:154) claims that, "There is good reason to believe that the myth of a happy, docile Ovimbundu has also owed much its credibility to the silencing impact of the PIDE and the absence of free press or free speech". Furthermore, the claim that the Ovimbundu were loyal to the colonialists was made in order to cause division among the nationalists. The Portuguese understood that if the nationalists formed a united front, it would be very difficult to control the revolution. However, to avoid more insurgences, PIDE intensified their control in central Angola, especially over the IECA activities and over the missionaries. As a result of the insurgence in the north and in Luanda, which was blamed on the BMS and the Methodist mission, the Portuguese authorities argued that the IECA should also be controlled, as they too constituted a danger to the state.

In addition, various internal factors in the IECA led the Portuguese authorities to view the IECA as a potential threat. Firstly, historically, together with the American and Canadian missionaries, the IECA spoke out against the injustice of slavery and the recruitment of forced labour. This led to frequent conflict with the authorities. Secondly, the IECA had a large number of followers in central Angola, which was perceived to be conducive to fomenting an uprising (Henderson 1990:321). Thirdly, in 1958 the IECA had sent some young people to study overseas, among whom was Jonas Savimbi. This group of young people later became politically active.³⁸ Fourthly, in the late 50s the authorities arrested some members of the IECA who were suspected

³⁷ Heywoods (1989:50) argues that the Portuguese displayed short memories, because Ovimbundu nationalism and the people's attraction to nationalism lay deep in the experience of their colonial history from the latter part of the 19th century. The Portuguese not only created an intense sense of loss and hatred among the conquered but the colonial state also prohibited any explicit form of national or cultural pride. However, since the North American Congregational Missionaries were grudgingly allowed to work in the highlands, the Ovimbundu were able to use their adherence to Protestantism as a channel for their aspirations. The outcome was the construction of a substantial network of schools, hospitals, and other institutions, which would eventually become the nucleus of an alternative, Ovimbundu-controlled structure.

³⁸ Bridgland (1987:39) points out that Savimbi could not study in Portugal because he was under the constant surveillance of the PIDE. He claims that Savimbi received a letter from a missionary who was working with the

of spreading anti-colonial sentiments, even though there was no evidence against them (Henderson 1990:303). Fifthly, the Angolan authorities were aware of the fact that the IECA's emphasis on education had created an elite of students that, from time to time, disagreed with colonial policies.

3.5.1. Implications of nationalism for the IECA student community

Angolan nationalism was very intense within the student community, as student organizations became increasingly ecumenical, abandoning their theological differences in order to unite against the colonial system (Marcum 1969:108). In order to restrain these student organizations in central Angola, PIDE began to focus closely on them, especially on those who had been in contact with Protestant missions. According to Marcum (1969:109-110), the Portuguese authorities organized a campaign in central Angola to denounce the nationalists as traitors, as enemies of civilization, and as communists. They mobilised a rally with speeches prepared by Portuguese officials, which were read by Angolans. This was done to demonstrate to the rest of the country that the Ovimbundu were loyal to, and happy with, the Portuguese rule. Further, it was to send the message to the rest of the country that the incidents in the north and in Luanda were not the result of justified dissatisfaction with colonial policies; but rather, that they were caused by a few enthusiastic nationalists. Thus, the meeting aimed at creating division among the Angolans. Marcum (1969:109) points out that the rally was a disappointment to the authorities because just at its onset, it began to rain. "Elated, the Africans hailed this as a sign of God's judgement on what ensued" (Marcum 1969:109). Although the rally did not take place, its significance was evident in the refusal of the IECA students to participate. From Marcum's account, the reason behind the students' refusal was not clear; nevertheless, as punishment, the Portuguese authorities arrested and executed the student leader of one of the IECA mission stations (Marcum 1969:110).

3.5.2. Implications of nationalism for the IECA pastors

Pastors of the IECA who were working in the villages were often the most vulnerable to PIDE attacks, because the nationalists used Maoist ways of fighting which included a strong

IECA who encouraged him not to forget the plight of his own people. The letter was intercepted by the PIDE and it probably fuelled the assumptions that the Protestant missionaries were instigating a revolution.

dependence on the peasants' support and mobilization of villages (Bridgland 1987:68). PIDE did not understand why pastors, who could be involved in other profitable work such as teaching and administration, would waste their time and reside in remote villages. The only conclusion that PIDE came to was that these pastors actually were mobilising villages to support the nationalists. On one occasion, PIDE raided a village that was predominantly controlled by the IECA. Henderson (1990:319) notes that the reason for the raid was not clear, but the leaders of the church were imprisoned and tortured. A missionary who had returned from Angola to America, Carl Dille, comments that once a native was arrested by PIDE, torture and imprisonment were unavoidable. He further described an incident in which the IECA leaders were arrested and beaten until their shoulder blades were exposed.³⁹ The only crime they had committed was associating with missionaries and being of the Protestant faith.

3.6 Implications of nationalism for the missionary enterprise

The persecution and harassment by PIDE were not only limited to Angolan pastors and leaders; the authorities did not hesitate to torture the ordinary Angolans too. The Canadian missionaries and those of the ABCFM also suffered at the hands of the PIDE. In order to contain their perceived nationalist activities, PIDE imposed five regulations on the missionaries. According to the Atlas collection (1968), they consisted of the following:

1. Missionaries were forced to apply for police permission from the government in Luanda a month in advance of any journey beyond 15 miles on either side of Angola's main east-west road.
2. Travel permits were often denied, and if accepted, missionaries were required to register with the police in the towns they visited and report to the authorities when they returned to their station.
3. Bibles and Bible study materials were frequently confiscated by the PIDE even after being censored.
4. Meetings were banned by the PIDE except worship, and even worship and Bible study were prohibited in some areas.

³⁹ Atla (1968:381).

5. Missionaries who travelled on furlough were often denied re-entry.⁴⁰

All these regulations made it almost impossible for missionaries to continue their work; they could not move without feeling the powerful presence of the PIDE. This leads us to the question, “What was the actual extent of missionary involvement in the spread of nationalism?”

3.7 The extent of the involvement of the ABCFM and the Congregational Mission in Angolan nationalism

The charges of Protestant involvement in the rise of nationalism were not based on tangible facts but rather on the realization that some Angolan nationalist leaders had been in contact with Protestant missions. Indeed, according to Péclard (1998:160) the history of Angolan nationalism was in many ways closely linked to the history of the Christian mission. In a country where education had been limited to only a few, missionaries, although not causing nationalism, through their work nevertheless contributed to its rise. For by offering education to the masses, they contributed to their eventual emancipation.

“Missionaries had definitely helped to refine modern African nationalism by offering Africans the tools whereby they could criticise and expose the weakness of colonialism from within. However, the raw product that gave continued strength and direction to African nationalism came from within the African soul in response to almost unrelenting Portuguese abuse. It was into this abused soul that the missionaries ministered, opening up to them new avenues of development” (Byam1997:263).

Byam’s position is also shared by Heywoods (1998:161). She affirms that missionaries offered not only technical know-how to the Ovimbundu, but also the North American version of mission Christianity, with its underlying principles of democracy, self-help and the like. Missionary education made it possible for the Angolans to think beyond what the Portuguese authorities expected. As a result, for some Ovimbundu, these teachings served as grounds for the nationalist struggle against the Portuguese, and mission education and scholarships helped them to achieve their goals. The missionaries’ support of nationalism, therefore, was indirect. However, colonial

⁴⁰ Rodrigues (2000:193) argues that Portuguese authorities implemented the policy of gradually eliminating Protestant mission influence through the refusal of visas. Nevertheless, the strategy proved unfruitful because Protestant Christianity seemed to be too firmly embedded in African culture to be destroyed.

authorities interpreted the indirect support and involvement of the missionaries as direct support. Henderson (1990:321) justifies the indirect missionary support by arguing that the missionaries sometimes were completely unaware of what the nationalists were doing.

3.8 Conclusion

The rise of nationalism in Africa in the 50s and the independence of several countries in Africa influenced nationalism in Angola. Portugal had been in Angola for almost five centuries but it had failed in many ways to provide the necessary means to emancipate the Angolans. However, what the Portuguese authorities failed to offer, namely education, the missionaries managed to offer. The nationalists embraced missionary education and launched their political interests. The Portuguese reacted to the association of the Protestant church with nationalism, viewing it as a sign of treason on the part of the Protestant church. In order to contain growing anti-colonial sentiments, the authorities, through PIDE, arrested and tortured several Angolans. However, the arrests and torture did not in any way prevent the insurgency from taking place. When the insurgency occurred, the authorities did not hesitate to blame it on Protestant missions.

In response to the revolution, the authorities carried out more reforms, one of which was the end of the recruitment of forced labour. However, as a reprisal to the insurgences, the authorities launched several attacks, especially on the Protestant church leadership. Pastors and teachers were arrested and tortured by the notorious PIDE. Missionaries were given several restriction orders and many of the reprisals affected the church because these were aimed at the leaders. The arrests and persecution had a major impact on the development of the IECA. Although in central Angola where the ABCFM operated there was no insurgency in the 60s, the authorities applied similar tactics in Luanda and in the north. The question still remains: "With the execution of its leaders, the dispersal of most of its members to other countries and regions, and with the expulsion of missionaries, how did the IECA develop as a denomination?" This question can be answered if one looks more closely at the development of the IECA even after most of its leaders had been displaced or executed.

CHAPTER 4

PERSECUTION AS A FACTOR IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IECA 1962-1974

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter demonstrated how the Portuguese authorities regarded the discontent of Angolans with the Portuguese colonial power as a result of Protestant missionary instigation. Those who had benefited from Protestant mission education embraced nationalistic ideas. Consequently, the authorities perceived this as the work of the Protestant church and persecuted it. This chapter seeks to look at the atrocities that the church had to endure during the last twelve years of colonial administration. The particular emphasis will fall on the development of the IECA through the experience of persecution and suffering. The last twelve years of the colonial regime were arguably the most difficult years of the existence of the IECA because the war that had been fought in the north in 1961 moved to its territory in central Angola in the mid-sixties. This expansion of war caused various disruptions to the mission of the church, especially in the leadership of the IECA. Among the difficulties was the significant migration of various members to other parts of Angola. Moreover, the creation of a third political party in central Angola by members of the IECA created obstacles to the mission of the church (Henderson 1990:326). The IECA hierarchy became a target of PIDE as many capable leaders were incarcerated and some even died under those circumstances. However, in spite of suffering and obstacles, the IECA continued to develop among the Ovimbundu, and at times among other population groups within the context of suffering.

4.2 Imprisonment of the IECA leadership

The restrictions imposed on the missionaries by the authorities in the mid 60s prompted the ABCFM mission to hand over the leadership of the IECA to Angolans, though Henderson (2000:159) argues that this process had already been started in the late 50s. However, the transferring of the leadership to Angolans in the mid 60s coincided with growing political tension in central Angola. According to Henderson (1990:326), the nationalist groups of MPLA and FNLA started waging war in central Angola against the Portuguese army in the mid 60s. The IECA found herself surrounded by difficulties; on the one hand the pressure of PIDE on the church and her leadership to denounce nationalist activities, while on the other hand the nationalists used the church's gullibility to achieve their revolutionary goals.⁴¹ Furthermore, the IECA's position towards the authorities worsened when a third political party National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola (UNITA)⁴² was founded in 1966, mainly by church members. The creation of UNITA was critical to the IECA's existence because the top leadership of UNITA were members of the IECA, including Jonas Savimbi.⁴³ Besides him, UNITA also used as politicians several students who had been sent by the ABCFM to study overseas, many of whom had previously occupied a position of leadership in the IECA (Henderson 1990:327).⁴⁴ The relationship between the IECA and UNITA would create major delays to the IECA's development during the late colonial period and post-colonialism, as both PIDE and later the MPLA saw them as part of UNITA, and UNITA as being part of the IECA. However, during the colonial period PIDE perceived the formation of UNITA as a confirmation of what they had been saying before that the IECA was indeed a hotbed of nationalism.

⁴¹ According to Henderson (2000:2) a letter was written by church members in central Angola, calling the church to revolt against the colonial power: the assumption of these members was that the students who had been sent to study overseas by ABCFM would have supported the revolution. Henderson (2000) points out that Rev. Jose Belo Chipenda had to intervene, burned the letter and required its authors not to instigate such activities.

⁴² I refer in the future to National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola as "the UNITA"

⁴³ Henderson (1990:327) notes that before the creation of UNITA in 1966, Savimbi wrote a letter to the United Board for World Ministries in New York, thanking them for their financial support; whilst he was a student in Portugal and Switzerland, he also thanked the missionaries for sponsoring the studies of several members of the IECA who had become leaders of his political movement.

⁴⁴ Henderson (1990:327) records a list composed of students who had benefited from ABCFM scholarship and were founders of the IECA. The list included Dr. Jose Lياهوca, Alexandre Magno Marcolino Nyani, and Jeronimo Wanga, who studied in Congo Brazzaville, and Jeronimo Wanga, Ruben Sanjovo and Victor Afonso, who studied in Europe.

From 1966 until the end of colonialism in 1974, PIDE dismantled more and more of the IECA's hierarchy, as it was perceived to be a tool to mobilize church members to rise up against the colonial powers. The arrests in the 60s and 70s were no longer limited to church leaders in the villages but were directed to weaken the development of the IECA, particularly the national hierarchy. Imprisonment, suffering, martyrdom and human rights abuses became the dominant reality for the IECA's hierarchy.⁴⁵

According to Henderson (1990:329), in the late colonial period PIDE became more ruthless in their dealing with nationalist suspects. There was no longer politeness in dealing with political prisoners; even the *assimilados* who were supposed to be treated like Portuguese citizens did not receive special treatment once they were arrested. Henderson (1990:329) contends that once an Angolan was arrested, he was simply forced to confess to a crime that he did not commit. Whoever refused to confess was tortured until he or she confessed. The Portuguese justice system assumed that any Angolan who was in jail was guilty. Even those who were innocent were beaten (Henderson 2000:95).

In such hostile circumstances it was not uncommon to see church leaders and members confessing crimes that they had not committed in order to avoid further torture. Henderson (2000:95), who was a missionary of ABCFM in Angola during the periods of intense persecution,⁴⁶ describes how human rights were abused once a person was accused of being a nationalist in the late 60s and early 70s. According to Henderson (2000:95) most people, taken for questioning by PIDE, had no choice but confess what PIDE wanted to hear. Henderson (2000:95) argues that the confessions were stylised; the official had a set of questions that were put to the prisoner orally. If the answers were not what the official expected or wanted, the official would suggest a different response. If the prisoner stubbornly insisted that he had given

⁴⁵ Henderson (1990:329) pointed out that in the district of Nova Lisbon, two prominent leaders were arrested in 1967; one was a pastor who was in charge of the boarding school while the other was in charge of the church.

⁴⁶ It is important to note that Henderson was not treated in the same manner as the Angolans as there is no indication of him being tortured. In 1966 Henderson was interrogated for a period of three days concerning some of his activities in Angola and during his furlough in 1964-1965 when he visited Angolan refugees in Zambia, Congo-Zaire, and Europe. Since he was white and a foreigner, he was not beaten when he did not utter the response that the officials wanted. However, the interrogators became very frustrated and were only restrained from using violence by their supervisors who were more aware of the political implications of beating an American missionary (Henderson 2000:168).

the correct answer, another official would beat the prisoner until he provided an acceptable answer. Henderson's allegations were confirmed when PIDE interrogated him concerning his missionary activities and gave him various dossiers containing confessions of the IECA's leaders. It was not clear why the authorities did so, since such confessions were meant to be secret. The authorities probably assumed that Henderson would be convinced that some of the IECA leaders were indeed fomenting nationalism. However, while reading the documents, Henderson realised that "the confessions of all these prisoners were almost identical. This was not strange because the prisoners did not write their own confessions. The agents, after short or longer interrogation, wrote what they interpreted the answers to have been, and the prisoner was required to sign it. If he hesitated, it was the occasion of further beatings" (Henderson 2000:167). Therefore, there was no justice in the way the interrogations were conducted; people were forced to confess crimes they did not commit. In other words, being a Protestant and in a position of leadership was good enough reason to be submitted to intensive interrogation and confession.

The wave of intimidations, arrests and interrogations carried out by PIDE in central Angola reached its climax when Rev. Jesse Chipenda, the general secretary of the IECA, was arrested in 1968.⁴⁷ Rev. Chipenda was probably one of the best ecclesiastical leaders and evangelists that the IECA had ever had. He was the first official Angolan missionary to pioneer a ministry among the forced labourers in the district of Benguela and Lobito in 1924.⁴⁸ Moreover, he was responsible for the development of the IECA in those respective towns (Benguela and Lobito)

⁴⁷ There are various assumptions concerning Rev. Chipenda's arrests. One assumption is that he was probably arrested because of his travelling engagements; as a general secretary he had to travel in Angola and abroad in order to present the progress of the church. However, at the time of his arrest in 1968, any Angolan who traveled was suspected of collaborating with nationalists. The second assumption is that he was apprehended because his son was politically involved with nationalists. Both assumptions seem to fit well with incident and the cause of his arrest. Henderson (1990) in his biographical work on Rev. Chipenda does not mention the political motivation that might have influenced the authorities to arrest him. However, in another book he mentioned that Daniel Chipenda was the first Umbundu to join MPLA leadership (Henderson 1990:327). Therefore, one is inclined to believe that Rev. Chipenda's arrest was influenced by the political involvement of his son Daniel Chipenda. In other words, Rev. Chipenda was guilty by association.

⁴⁸ According to Henderson (2000:72), in 1924 the ABCFM had been in Angola for a period of 44 years, but no missionary had been stationed at the coast. The first missionaries had passed through there and several other missionaries had visited Benguela and Lobito, but no church was planted. Henderson (2000) avers that they did not establish the work in coastal towns because they wanted to focus their mission on the Angolans; the coastal towns were often occupied by a big Portuguese contingent. However, Péclard (1998:179) refutes Henderson's suggestion. According to Péclard (1998), the reason why the missionaries had not worked in coastal towns previously was that the ABCFM missionaries considered the coastal towns as a locus of corruption, from whose negative influence new and potential converts had to be protected. Whatever the case might be, it does not justify the late development of the IECA in the urban areas.

and the interior (Henderson 2000:72). Chipenda's approach to ministry consisted of training young catechists who then were sent out to plant churches in other areas. He had realised that the development of the church did not only depend on the clergy and missionaries but on the laity as well. In order to develop the church, the clergy should focus on teaching at the grassroots level. Due to the high prevalence of illiteracy in Angola, Chipenda emphasised the importance of teaching how to read and write in order to preach the Bible. Chipenda's ministerial strategy paid off during the turbulent years of the late colonial period. When most of the IECA's hierarchy was imprisoned and the church was dispersed, catechists became the backbone of the IECA.⁴⁹

According to Henderson (1990:329), Rev. Chipenda was arrested in 1968 at one of the mission stations of the IECA. The officer who arrested him assured that he would be taken to a local police station for questioning. However he was transported to Luanda, which is 600 km away from central Angola. In Luanda, Rev. Chipenda was submitted to the notorious interrogation tactics of PIDE. He was tortured until he became mentally unstable. Henderson (2000:168), who had read his confession from the police dossier, suggested that his confession was a sham. Although the signature was Rev. Chipenda's, the confession might have been provided under duress because what the officials had written was completely out of keeping with Chipenda's actions and with his manner of speaking. Furthermore, Henderson (1990:330), who had worked with him for over twenty years, was convinced that when the confession was made, Rev. Chipenda might have been drugged. Henderson's conviction in this regard was confirmed later when one of the officials told him that Rev. Chipenda had been admitted to a psychiatric hospital. Following his discharge from the psychiatric hospital, he was sent to the prison camp Sao Nicolau.⁵⁰ He spent less than a year there; nevertheless he even exerted much influence on the development of the IECA in Sao Nicolau.

⁴⁹ As Péclard (1998:164) states, catechists have always formed the backbone of the church in Africa. Péclard argues that western missionaries needed to rely on the African catechists to spread the word of God, and in this debate the voice of these many African catechists who greatly contributed to the development of Christianity in Africa had too often been left unheard. Their influence was probably greater than has been acknowledged so far, and their history remains to be written.

⁵⁰ Sao Nicolau was established on the southern coast of Angola 75 miles north of Namibe on the Bentiaba River. This river, like several others, rises in the hills and mountains which form the western ridge of the central Angola highlands. As it flows into the coastal plain, it sinks into the sand. During the rainy season from October to April according to the precipitation on the plateau, the Bentiaba River would have some water on the surface, but the rest of the year the river flowed underground to the Atlantic. For the Portuguese government this location had the

4.3 Development of the church in prison

The Portuguese authorities sent prisoners, especially those they considered as political threats, to Sao Nicolau to be re-educated from so called “subversive ideologies”. Many pastors, teachers and nurses were sentenced and imprisoned there.⁵¹ The total population of Sao Nicolau was about 7,000: most were Protestant (Henderson 2000:171). However, Henderson (2000:171) states the re-education at Sao Nicolau was a farce. In Sao Nicolau prisoners were submitted to sadistic methods such as forced labour (digging holes measuring two cubic meters in the salt rock for ninety days at a time).⁵² The use of forced labour in a prison as re-education was not unique to Portuguese authorities. According to Boyd-Macmillan (2006:68), communist countries such as China also employed such practices. During the early 50s and mid 60s many Christians in China were submitted to re-education by such means. It is not clear if the Portuguese adopted their methods from communist China; however there were some similarities in their methods of re-education.

In spite of the challenges and difficulties that the prisoners faced in Sao Nicolau, the church in the prison was thriving, with those pastors who had been arrested in various PIDE raids forming a united church. The church in the prison became a source of unity, hope, encouragement and healing for those who were suffering; this was possible because the church was part of the suffering community. It is not far fetched to argue that when the church is present with those who are suffering; her message tends to be more readily received.⁵³

Although the authorities allowed the church to operate in Sao Nicolau, it could only operate under various restrictions, such as on the circulation of Bibles and hymn books. Henderson’s

advantage of being a secure spot where it was well nigh impossible to escape. It also had the advantage of being like an oasis in the desert which could produce food for the guards and prisoners (Henderson 2000:169-170).

⁵¹ The exact number of pastors, nurses, and teachers who were incarcerated in Sao Nicolau is not clear. Henderson (2000:171) mentioned a few names such as: Pastor Eurico Sanguete of district of Bailundo, who had helped Rev. Chipenda when two heavy sacks fell on him on the way to Sao Nicolau. Pastor Eurico Henrique Daniel, who worked with students in Huambo, was arrested in 1967 and sent to Sao Nicolau in 1968. Pastor Frederico Mussili had travelled overseas in the 50’s with Rev. Chipenda and was also arrested in Huambo in 1967. As for nurses, there were Joao Cunanga and Frederico Hama from mission hospitals in central Angola.

⁵² Besides the forced labour, Henderson pointed out that at one time DDT was put in the food which caused stomach pains, diarrhoea, and some deaths. At other times a pill was given to each prisoner each morning, and when the prisoners asked what it was, they were told, “This will make you forget your misery” (Henderson 2000:171).

(2000) biographical work on Rev. Chipenda demonstrated how the authorities allowed only minimal opportunity for the church to operate in the prison. This can be seen in the letter written by Rev. Chipenda in December 1968:

Dear Friends,

This letter has the purpose of thanking you for the Christmas presents. We were also happy with the precious greetings. My health is pretty good; just my swollen feet which are not fully recovered, but I am not worried about this. I considered my coming here as a blessing from God. If I had continued always at Dondi; I would never have had the privilege of contacting Christians from all parts of Angola. Here there are Christians from Cabinda in the north to the Cuanhama country in the south, and from the Atlantic Ocean on the west to Dilolo on the frontier in the east. Here God is worshiped by all tribes. Here one can appreciate better the extend of the church in Angola.

Morning prayers are held in the barracks daily at 5.30 a.m. We recite a Bible verse, sing a hymn and finish in prayer. Mondays and Thursdays after supper we have service of worship with preaching. Saturday afternoons we have a prayer service. Sunday morning we have Holy Communion and in the afternoon a big outdoor service of worship.

We held the Week of Prayer January 2-9. During this week many who had left the church were received again into the fellowship. We used the theme of the Prodigal Son. Here neither Bible nor hymn book enters, but God performs miracles even today. It is the will of God that I am here. In spite of my weak health I am immensely joyful through my communion with God. Here I "enlarge the place of my tent" (Isaiah 54:2).

Faith, confidence and hope in God dissolve all bitterness of the present life. Your brother in Christ, Jesse Chipenda (Henderson 2000:172).

There are various striking features in this letter. One of the most remarkable aspects is that the church in the prison was composed of people from different parts of Angola. This was an astonishing achievement, because historically the church was divided along ethnic lines. For instance, the English Baptists were concentrated in the Bakongo northern region, the American Methodists were in the Mbundu areas of Luanda and its hinterland, and the American and Canadian congregational remained in the Ovimbundu central highlands. Even evangelism and church planting was carried out along ethnic lines. For example, when Rev. Chipenda established the IECA in the costal towns Benguela and Lobito, he worked among his own people. In other words, in prison the differences which the Protestant churches obviously had, due to tribal

⁵³ Writing from a different context yet a similar situation of suffering, Dau (2002:59) argues that in Sudan during the time of war the church became a new community of hope capable of absorbing the suffering, and many accepted her

tendencies, were overruled.⁵⁴ There, everyone had realised that the church transcends geographical, denominational and ethnic limitations. The church in the prison accomplished what it was unable to accomplish outside where it was still defined along ethnic distinctions. It comes as no surprise that in spite of suffering and hardship, Rev. Chipenda was thrilled to say, “During my life I worked only among the Ovimbundu, I am glad because God sent me here where I am sharing the Good News with people coming from all parts of Angola” (Henderson 2000:3). Another striking feature of Rev. Chipenda’s letter is that those who had lost hope in Christianity, probably due to the suffering, were restored to the fellowship again. Thus the church in Sao Nicolau had developed because it became a symbol of hope, healing, and reconciliation of various ethnical groups.

The prison was not the only place where the church was developing in the late 60s. The Portuguese authorities implemented various strategic laws to control the revolutionaries’ influence in central Angola. These laws posed challenges to the existence of the IECA; however, they helped to extend the IECA’s geographical territory.

4.4 Development of the church in resettlement camps

As the war intensified in central Angola, the Portuguese authorities begun to look for other solutions to end the sporadic attacks carried out by the nationalists as they had realised that arresting the IECA’s leadership was not helping to minimize the conflict. From 1967-1970 the Portuguese authorities introduced so called *aldeamentos* (strategic resettlements)⁵⁵ in the rural areas of central Angola. According to Bender (1975:395-396), such resettlements forced villages to live in camps, organized by the military in order to provide defence against insurgents and the infiltrations of nationalists. The camps were surrounded by barbed wire and controlled by the

message.

⁵⁴ According to Péclard (1998:172), Henderson, who had worked in Angola for several years, pointed out that Angolan Protestantism was tribal. Henderson based his analysis on his own experience and observations as well as on several missionary accounts. He contended that the tribal character of Protestantism in Angola rested on three elements. 1. The coincidence of areas covered by the major Protestant missionary societies and the main ethnolinguistic groups. 2. The crucial role of Protestant missionaries in the codification and transcriptions of the languages of these groups. 3. The fact that Protestant missions “inherited” the principal functions and structures of Angolan traditional society.

⁵⁵ These same strategies had been used in the war in the north and in the eastern part of Angola. These were successful in controlling the population but were dismal in terms of human rights abuses, deaths by beating, and executions (Bender 1975:418-419).

army. No one was allowed to leave without military approval, and if one dared to leave without it he could be accused of collaborating with nationalists, while unconventional methods of punishment such as public torture and killing were used (Bender 1975:411).

In addition to the human rights abuses, strategic resettlement camps presented the people with crises in three areas: the economy, public health, and the social fabric. From the economic perspective the secret government documents on counter-subversion (Angola 1974:31) mention six difficulties that the Angolan people were obliged to face at resettlement camps:

1. The allocation of the population, to a new economic organization that was foreign to them;
2. The difficulties in adapting to a new camp and the disruptions of economic income;
3. The lack of funds to boost the economic development of those who had been sent to the camps, thus making life in the camps unproductive.
4. Those who had lost their land could not receive it back;
5. The difficulty or impossibility of keeping cattle in the camps owing to the unavailability of fertile land to feed the animals. This entailed a serious danger vis-à-vis the spreading of contagious diseases, since animals and people were put together in the camps.
6. Acceleration of the land exhaustion process, since it was being used intensively in the camps.

From the health perspective according to the secret government document on counter-subversion (1974:31) the resettlement camps presented three challenges:

1. Worsening of the food situation of the population.
2. A higher frequency of contagious diseases as a result of the extensive pollution of the ground and of drinking water in a restricted space, owing to easier contacts among an increased number of people (tuberculosis, leprosy, many childhood diseases, intestinal parasites, diarrhoea , etc.)
3. An increased risk of epidemics, especially of measles, whooping-cough, jaundice, intestinal troubles; this was the possible cause of an increased mortality rate.

From the social perspective according to this document (1974:32) the resettlement camps presented five challenges:

1. Forced modification of behavioural patterns, touching on many aspects of individuals and collective life;
2. Modification of relationships in the field of social hierarchies, community life, privacy and the regulation of social, economic and other interests;
3. A great chance that a conflict of social nature would break out, as various people groups who had never lived together were forced to cohabit.
4. The decay of the traditional customs, since norms in the camps did not follow the traditional leadership.
5. An increase in migration because of discontent and want and as a consequence thereof, a worsening of the phenomenon of urbanization and a decrease of productivity of the regrouped population, because the most valuable people had fled.

However, from an ecclesiastical point of view, it was the IECA that was affected the most by the resettlement camps. Most of the IECA members in the late 60s and early 70s were located in the rural areas, and owing to the policy, everyone was forced to leave their villages and stay in the resettlement camps. As a result, the IECA's work in the rural areas was disrupted. In other words, strategic resettlements struck the heart of the IECA (Henderson 1990:363). This meant the end of the Christian villages, which had been established by the IECA. The IECA found it difficult to operate under such circumstances because the areas in which they used to work became less and less populated. The situation was only normalised in 1974.

Despite the various challenges presented by the strategic resettlements, the IECA members were nevertheless presented with a unique opportunity to minister to those who had been affected by the trauma of resettlement. Henderson (1990:363) argues that the colonial authorities merged different ethnic groups together as a way to exploit the ethnic tension. However, what the colonial authorities intended for evil, the IECA used as an opportunity to bring hope in the midst of tension.

There is neither a clear indication regarding how many members of the IECA had been forced into resettlement camps, nor is there any indication that the IECA established her work there. However due to the zeal and nature of the Ovimbundu, one can argue that those members of the IECA who were taken into the camps did indeed establish and develop the church there. This assumption is based on the fact that the Ovimbundu as an ethnic group tend to take their religion wherever they go. And in times of crisis and suffering for the Ovimbundu, religion becomes a source of comfort and hope. For example, various Christian Ovimbundu who had been captured to work in the sugar plantation in Sao Tome established churches in spite of Portuguese intimidation (Wilson 1967:225-226). In addition, the considerable membership of 400,000 that the IECA reported in the 70s, particularly in the rural areas, might have helped to establish churches in resettlement camps (Heywoods 1989:51).

4.5 Development of the IECA in other government controlled parts of Angola

As people began to be resettled, many in central Angola saw this as an opportunity to migrate. From 1968-1970 many Ovimbundu left central Angola in search of a better economic life. Migration to other parts of the country, especially Luanda, became very popular. According to Bender (1975:429), approximately 60,000 Ovimbundu left central Angola annually from 1968-1970.⁵⁶ The groups also included members of the IECA who preferred to live on the periphery of Luanda. Consequently they avoided the hardships of strategic resettlements and the war between nationalists and the Portuguese army. Many of those who migrated to Luanda joined the Methodist church. However as the number of migrants increased, so did the number of the IECA members, and some battled to fit in the Methodist church. They felt that an Ovimbundu speaking church should be launched.

However, the launching of the IECA in Luanda proved to be controversial. Heywood (1989:51) argues that the IECA in Luanda was founded due to the ethnic tension between the Ovimbundu of the IECA and the Mbundu of the Methodist church. Apparently, members of the IECA felt ostracized among the Mbundu dominated church. Moreover, with the increasing number of migrants from central Angola, the IECA saw a need to establish her own church. Although the possibility of ethnic tension suggested by Heywood (1989) should not be dismissed, it runs

⁵⁶ Many only returned to central Angola after the collapse of colonialism in 1974 (Heywoods 1989:55).

counter to the ecumenical understanding of the church held by the IECA. The IECA believed that the church was one, regardless of doctrine or ethnic group (Henderson 1990:473). Therefore, any member of the IECA could join any denomination. Moreover, Henderson (1990:430) pointed out that before the members of the IECA began to migrate to Luanda, the IECA had already sent Rev. Eduardo Nataniel Nunda as a pastor to the Ovimbundu Methodist church in Luanda. The splitting of the IECA's members from the Methodist church might have been caused by the wave of political euphoria which had taken place in the late 70s. The church became intertwined with nationalism as a result. The Methodist church supported the MPLA while the IECA supported UNITA. In spite of the complications, the IECA was able to develop in Luanda; however it failed to attract any other people group besides the Christian Ovimbundu.

4.6 Development of the IECA in areas controlled by nationalists

During the 70s, the Portuguese empire began to show signs of collapsing. However, it continued to rigorously pursue those who were suspected of instigating subversive ideologies. This has to be perceived in hindsight as fighting a war that could not be won.⁵⁷ The internal crises of Portugal reached their pinnacle on the 25th of April 1974 when a small contingent of the Portuguese military led a bloodless coup in Lisbon. This action precipitated the end of colonialism in the following year. Before the coup took place, several members of the IECA who were suffering and hiding had clandestinely moved into the areas controlled by UNITA in the 70s.⁵⁸ These members hoped that elections would be held with the end of colonialism. They believed that if these were to take place, UNITA would be victorious and the IECA would be able to freely worship and implement their social projects which had been banned under colonialism.⁵⁹ UNITA took advantage of the IECA's sympathy and implemented freedom of

⁵⁷ Bridgland (1987:104) notes the war was crippling Portugal's economy. Portugal was running a 400-million-dollar-a-year trade deficit, experiencing Europe's highest rate of inflation at 23 per cent, and had lost so many people abroad that its population had been reduced from more than 10 million at the beginning of the 1960s to only 8.6 million. Paris became the second-largest Portuguese city in the world, with more than 600,000 immigrants.

⁵⁸ Heywoods (1989:56) pointed out that in 1966 UNITA had about 500 followers but this number increased tremendously by 1974 when UNITA had more than 20,000 members. Most were from central Angola and some were members of the IECA.

⁵⁹ The church drafted a document making several demands of the transitional government. These demands included: the reopening of schools that had been banned under colonialism, the funding of schools in the same way the government had funded the Catholic schools, and reimbursement for the properties destroyed by PIDE raids (Henderson 1990:389). Moreover, after the collapse of colonialism many members of the IECA who had left returned to central Angola with the expectation that what they had lost through colonialism would be restored.

worship in the areas which it controlled.⁶⁰ Therefore, many pastors and members of the IECA, who had experienced oppression under colonialism, joined UNITA.⁶¹ Heywoods (1989:44) pointed out that UNITA headquarters and villages resembled the Protestant mission villages, complete with schools, hospitals and churches.

However, the development of the IECA in areas controlled by nationalists was marked by various obstacles. The first was the nomadic nature of the nationalist movement. Whenever the Portuguese army attacked UNITA, the members of the IECA who were with UNITA were obliged to flee and find a new settlement. Thus, instead of developing and establishing herself, the IECA was scurrying from bush to bush. The second obstacle was the fact that the alliance between the IECA and UNITA was not supported by everyone in the IECA. This caused the church to be divided in two. Although the church was united in theory, in practice it appeared to be and operated as two churches. There existed, separately, the IECA in the bush and the IECA in the urban areas. This division among the members of the IECA can best be understood in the light of the failed deal of the government of national unity in 1975 among the three nationalist groups. In 1975, Angola was supposed to hold elections. That dream never materialised. Instead, the MPLA seized power through civil war and most of the IECA's leadership were forced to flee to the bush with UNITA, fearing the MPLA's retaliation.⁶²

4.7 Conclusion

The situational persecution which the IECA encountered under the colonial authorities helped the church to develop. From a leadership perspective, the situation encouraged the ABCFM to speed up the process of handing over the leadership to Angolans. Thus, it encouraged the church

Henderson (1990:390) pointed out that when Savimbi visited the IECA headquarters, he promised that the new government would support the IECA's educational programmes.

⁶⁰ After the political parties failed to sign a peace deal, the MPLA communist party came to power in 1975, and it continued the reign of terror on the church. Several members and leaders of IECA migrated to UNITA controlled areas Pécled as in 1977 (Henderson 1990: 431).

⁶¹ The relationship between the IECA and UNITA had tremendous effects on the development of the Protestant church under the communist MPLA party. Apart from the Methodist church, most churches, including the Catholic Church, came to be regarded as subversive under MPLA rule.

⁶² Henderson (1990:431) lists several names of the national leaders who had joined UNITA after the failure of the government of national unity: Rev. Ricardo Uliengue Epalanga, general secretary of the IECA after the death of Rev. Chipenda; general treasurer Artur Cinco Reis; director of the theological seminary Rev. Eliseu Buta; teacher and director of the IECA's college Eduardo Oseas Baptista Chingufo; director of the IECA's publishing house Rev. Abias Muecalia; director of farming development, Dario Catata; and the IECA nurse Teixeira Chipaco.

to be independent from the missions, even though this process occurred at a time when those had been accorded leadership were automatically arrested and sent to the notorious prison of Sao Nicolau. In spite of the challenges faced there, the IECA became an example of what Christianity in Angola should be like, especially in the context of political and ethnic tension during the late 60s and 70s. The church in the prison attracted people from all over Angola regardless of political inclination or ethnic background. As a result, the IECA became a symbol of hope in the context of suffering. The prison was not the only place where the church grew. It also flourished in the strategic resettlements. Even though the strategic resettlement programme disrupted the work of the church in the villages, it encouraged many to migrate to other parts of Angola, especially Luanda and the areas controlled by UNITA. Therefore the church developed in those areas.

However, the growth of the church in Luanda and other areas controlled by UNITA was tainted by obstacles, such as ethnic divisions of congregants from the Methodist church in Luanda. The main division was between those who had been persuaded by UNITA's political agenda and those who did not necessarily embrace UNITA's political goals. The church became politically and geographically divided as a result. The assessment of the IECA's development in the light of the biblical witness will be pursued in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

ASSESSMENT OF THE PERSECUTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE IECA IN BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed how the church grew under the persecution of the hostile regime of Portuguese colonial power. This chapter seeks to assess the development of the IECA in the light of the biblical witness. This will be achieved by looking at the Bible as a yardstick for the persecution of the ABCFM and the IECA. Systematic studies and exegesis of different passages of the Bible in both Testaments will be used, while the positive and negative aspects of the persecution of the IECA will be contrasted in the light of biblical and theological reflection. The studies will focus on two paradigms:

1. A paradigm of persecution and righteousness will be studied with reference to the prophets, and their passion for justice. General and biblical examples will be employed in order to help to establish links with persecution of the IECA.
2. A paradigm of persecution and church growth from Acts and Paul's letters will be applied. This will also be done to establish links with the IECA.

5.2 Defining righteousness as a cause of persecution (Matthew 5:10-12)

Looking at Matthew 5:10-12 exegetically, it is important to keep in mind that the Sermon on the Mount is probably the best-known part of the teaching of Jesus, though perhaps it is the least understood, and certainly it is the least obeyed (Stott 1988:15). There are about thirty-six different interpretations of it (Blomberg 1992:94). Owing to the complexities and difficulties of interpretation with the Sermon on the Mount the present perusal of some important exegetical works by Stott (2003) and other commentators will be limited to the aspects that are relevant to the topic of persecution, and righteousness. And Matthew 5:10-12 is one of the passages where the topic of persecution and righteousness seems to be most evident.

The context of Matthew 5 is set against the backdrop of Matthew 4:23: “*Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing, every disease and sickness among the people*”. By doing these mighty acts, he demonstrates that a new order has arrived. Hence, what follows in this Chapter is Jesus’ presentation of the characteristics and the norms of the kingdom of God. These norms are in contrast with those of the world; whilst the world considers blessed those who are rich, strong, powerful, and influential, the norms of the kingdom assert the blessing of the poor, the meek, peacemakers and the persecuted. Padilla (1985:23) rightly describes the norms of the kingdom, saying, “the kingdom is not of this world, not in the sense that it has nothing to do with the world but in the sense that it does not adapt itself to human politics”. Putting it plainly, the kingdom is subversive and whoever wants to be part of it will face opposition: where there is injustice, the kingdom brings justice, where there is hunger, the kingdom feeds.

In Matthew 5:10 Jesus said, “*blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*”. Verse 10 and 11 are the last verses in the series of beatitudes. They concern persecution for righteousness and persecution for Jesus. The most significant feature to understand the passage is the word *righteousness*. Matthew attributes blessings in 5:6 to those who are thirsty and are hungry for righteousness. However the question that should be asked is: what kind of righteousness is Jesus referring to? According to Stott (2003:45) the word “righteousness” in the Bible takes on at least three aspects: legal, moral, and social. The legal aspect of righteousness has to do with one’s right relationship with God. This kind of

righteousness is best understood in Paul's epistles.⁶³ Here, righteousness can refer to the righteousness of Christ in which God transfers the believer's sin to Jesus Christ (Carson 1994:24). However this seems not to be the kind of righteousness that Jesus is advocating in the Sermon on the Mount. According to Stott (2003:45), Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount is addressing those who are already believers, and are familiar with the Torah⁶⁴. Moreover this kind of righteousness does not lead to persecution because it is vertical righteousness.

The second understanding of righteousness has to do with moral righteousness, which is a characteristic that individuals demonstrate before men (Stott 2003:45). This kind of righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount is contrasted with pharisaic righteousness, when Jesus declares in Matthew 5:20, *"For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven"*. Carson (1994:31) seems to allude to this sort of righteousness particularly when he gives an example of how people can be persecuted in the West, for their moral standing, in the issues that are considered uncharacteristic for a Christian yet are acceptable by society in general. Although this kind of righteousness leads to persecution, it is unlikely that Jesus is referring to it. Furthermore, such a righteousness tends to lead to privatization of faith or self-centred righteousness (Matthew 6:1-18), which Jesus does not accept (Matthew 5:13-16).

The third aspect of righteousness that Jesus seems to be pointing out is social righteousness, which is concerned with those who are treated unjustly. Stott (2003:45) rightly warns against the tendency to reduce the word righteousness to only a right relationship with God and a moral righteousness of character and conduct. According to Stott (2003) the word righteousness includes aspects such as seeking man and woman's liberation from oppression, together with promotion of their civil rights, justice in the law courts, integrity in business dealings and honour in home and family affairs. When the church as a whole applies this kind of righteousness persecution is bound to happen, because this righteousness confronts the values and the norms of this world. To highlight Stott's (2003) understanding of righteousness, it can best be understood in light of biblical semantics. According to Stassen and Gushee (2003:42) the Greek word

⁶³ Romans 9:30-10:4.

dikaioisyne,⁶⁵ and its root, *dike*, connoted social justice. Stassen and Gushee (2003) argue that when the word righteousness is used, Jesus is alluding to Isaiah 61 where God is seen as the one who will bring justice (vv, 3, 10, 11). The word used in the Hebrew in Isaiah is *tsedaqah*: it means delivering justice, a justice that rescues and releases the oppressed; this is the kind of justice that restores the powerless and the outcast to their rightful place in the covenant community (Stassen and Gushee 2003:42). Stassen and Gushee (2003) argue further that in the Old Testament, righteousness “means preserving the peace and wholeness of the community, and is sometimes parallel with shalom, peace and, more often, justice. Its meaning is very close to social justice that delivers from alienation and oppression into the community of shalom (Isaiah 32:16-17)” (Stassen and Gushee 2003:42).

5.3 The relationship between persecution and righteousness

If Stott’s (2003) understanding of righteousness and Stassen and Gushee’s (2003) definition of righteousness are correct, it is not far-fetched to argue that the persecution that the ABCFM and the IECA suffered under Portuguese colonial powers was owing to righteousness. In other words, in the context of slavery and forced labour, the ABCFM and the IECA demonstrated righteousness by building schools, and sending young men and women to schools and universities, when those privileges were only reserved for a chosen few. They demonstrated righteousness by healing the sick and building hospitals in remote areas of central Angola. However, these activities were labelled as subversive because they did not support the *status quo* of the oppressive laws of Portuguese colonialism. As a consequence of standing up for righteousness the ABCFM and the IECA were persecuted. Interestingly enough, whenever Christians make a stand for righteousness, either as an individual or as a group, they are bound to be persecuted. This variety of persecution tends to intensify when Christian beliefs are in conflict

⁶⁴ Jesus in Matthew 5:21-48 used the expression “you have heard that it is said”; then he contrasted it with the saying “but I tell you”, which seems to indicate that those who were listening to him knew God’s Torah.

⁶⁵ According to Bosch (1991:71) translating *dikaioisyne* into English poses a problem because in English it can refer to justification (God’s merciful act of declaring us just, thus changing our status and pronouncing us acceptable to him), or to righteousness (a preeminently religious or spiritual concept: an attribute of God or spiritual quality that we receive from God), or to justice (people’s right conduct in relation to their fellow human beings, seeking for them that to which they have a right). Bosch (1991) considers that most English translations reveal a bias in interpreting *dikaioisyne* as justice. However the difficulty of translating the word justice into English is not problematic at all if compared to Portuguese where the words justice and righteousness have the same meaning. For example, when Jesus pronounces a blessing for those who are persecuted for righteousness (Matthew 5:12) in the Portuguese translation the word is justice.

with the ideology of the regime.⁶⁶ There are two helpful modern examples that demonstrate the relationship between righteousness and persecution, the first from Germany and the second from Uganda.

According to Stott (2003:53) few men and women of this century have understood better the inevitability of persecution than Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was a German Christian leader who opposed the Nazi regime. Stott (2003) argues that Bonhoeffer “seems never to have wavered in his Christian antagonism to the Nazi regime, although it meant for him imprisonment, the threat of torture, danger to his own family and finally death” (in Stassen and Gushee 2003:127). Bonhoeffer understood the relationship of righteousness and persecution by confronting the injustices of the Nazi regime. The Kenyan theologian Jesse Mugambi makes an interesting comparison between the lives of Rev. Chipenda and Bonhoeffer in the introduction of his book on the life of the former. Whether Mugambi’s comparison is accurate or not, the fact remains that both Bonhoeffer and Rev. Chipenda died under the yoke of an oppressive regime (Henderson 2000: vii). They both understood that righteousness and persecution walk hand in hand.

The second example stems from Uganda. During the brutal regime of Idi Amin, the Anglican Archbishop, Janani Luwum, opposed the regime and its brutality. He was outspoken against the lunatic killings (Niringiye 1997:121). According to Niringiye (1997), Idi Amin did not know how to deal with Archbishop Luwum, in order to present a genuine case against the Archbishop, Amin had to accuse him of treason and execute him. Biblical witness demonstrates that the prophets were also persecuted because of righteousness. Therefore it comes as no surprise that Jesus speaks of the prophets in the context of righteousness and persecution (Matthew 5:12).

5.4 The prophets as an example of persecution for righteousness

According to Matthew 5:12 Jesus proclaims, “*Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you*”. Stott (2003:52) argues that the rejoicing has to do with a response to persecution. “We are not to

⁶⁶ Christian biblical faith should always lead to persecution because it will always challenge any kind of ideology that stands against Christian principles of love and justice.

retaliate like an unbeliever, nor to sulk like a child, nor lick our wounds in self-pity like a dog, nor just to grin and bear it like a Stoic, still less to pretend we enjoyed it like a masochist". Instead the command is to "rejoice" because of being persecuted for loyalty to Jesus in Matthew 5:11: "*Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil because of me*". In the book of Acts the disciples rejoiced after they had been beaten and threatened by the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:41). In other words the followers of Jesus should adopt a different perspective in the midst of persecution, because one day each would share in the coming glory of his Master (1 Peter 4:13).

Nevertheless, the interpretation of Matthew 5:12 should not be limited to the eschatological aspect, when the faithful will be rewarded in heaven for their perseverance.⁶⁷ Although the passage is alluding to the idea that one day God will reward those who had suffered persecution for the sake of Jesus, nevertheless the passage also alludes to the prophets. According to Stassen and Gushee (2003:46) Matthew 5:1-12 should be interpreted in the context of the prophets with their emphasis on God's reign and God's call for justice and the suffering they endure for calling Israel to covenant fidelity in their own day. The question that should be asked is, why would Jesus refer to the prophets in the context of persecution?

There are various facets that can be investigated when studying the prophets of the Old Testament. Often the temptation is to study the prophets from a pietistic perspective, such as looking at their role as intercessors (1 Samuel 12:23; 1 Kings 13:6), their role as moral guide to sinful Israel (2 Kings 17:13), and their role as those who could predict the future. Although studying the prophets from a pietistic perspective is not a wrong exercise, nevertheless, it tends to obscure their other activities. Moreover, understanding the prophets from a pietistic

⁶⁷ My own traditional interpretation of this passage, tended to focus on the future aspect which is the reward in heaven, neglecting the responsibility of the Christian in this world. Bosch (1980:32) illustrates my traditional interpretation in the following metaphor: "the church is a tiny lifeboat on a tempestuous sea, busy picking up survivors. The survivors are hauled into the uncomfortable lifeboat where they cling together for fear that waves might toss them out of the boat. There they huddle, enduring discomfort, cold damp, or the scorching rays of the sun. There is little they can do but sail round and round, looking for more survivors. And their full attention is riveted on the distant horizon. For one day nobody knows exactly when, although all kinds of calculation are frequently made, a luxury liner will appear and take them to a safe harbour. They live only for that day. The life boat is their 'Church', but in reality it serves primarily to protect them against drowning and sharks and to sustain them in view of that glorious future. There is little positive or dynamic relationship between the lifeboat and sea. The sea, the environment, is hostile, evil, and a permanent threat."

perspective leads to support for the *status quo* (Clements 1988:98). It leads to what Motyer (1974:129) called religion in a box: a religion that is so privatized that it has nothing to say about the daily affairs of society and the world in general: a religion that is dualistic (Wright 2008:213); it is only concerned about the afterlife. This kind of religion leads to what Bonhoeffer (1959:35) calls “cheap grace”, a grace that is at ease with the standards of the world; but the religion of the prophets was different.

One of the striking features of the prophets’ activities was their concern for the oppressed. In other words, the prophets’ faith was not only limited to the confines of the temple. Instead, it affected the whole of life. They fearlessly spoke out against the social injustice, exploitation, and oppression that from time to time was widespread in Israel. Their message was considered as subversive; it did not conform to the patterns of their context⁶⁸. Whenever Israel failed to demonstrate righteousness, the prophets would harshly rebuke the nation. As a consequence of their witness, the prophets were hated and suffered persecution. A prophet who did not suffer persecution was probably a false prophet who exercised prophetic activity for financial gain: “... *Her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortune for money*” (Micah 5:11). However a true prophet was different: he saw the world from God’s perspective, and when injustice was rampant in Israel, a true prophet would confront it.

Probably there is no other prophet in the Old Testament that exposes so emphatically the lack of righteousness in Israel than Amos. Amos prophesied at a time when Israel was enjoying economic prosperity (3:15; 4-1): looking at the surface of the nation, everything seems to be perfect, but the prophet’s diagnosis of the prosperity of Israel demonstrates a different story. Underneath the economic prosperity lies a corrupt system, which was offensive to God’s character. People were bought and sold for profit’s sake: “...*They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justices to the oppressed. Father and Son use the same girl and profane my holy name*” (Amos 2:6-7). In the midst of oppression, Israel was active, practising its religious

⁶⁸ Zachariah was persecuted because he predicted that the nation of Israel would not prosper when the king expected him to say otherwise (2 Chronicles 24:20): as a consequence of his counter-cultural prophecy the king ordered his execution (2 Chronicles 24:21), “*but they had plotted against him, and by the order of the king they stoned him to death in the courtyard of the Lord’s temple*”.

duties, but these religious activities were detached from the realities of the nation's injustices. Therefore God responds by saying: *"I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies"* (Amos 5:21). God was saying to Israel that their religion was worthless if they are neglecting to love righteousness, and show love for the oppressed. In such a context Amos as God's spokesman is called to challenge the nation of Israel by confronting the existing injustices. Amos called required to challenge the corrupted leaders and the corrupted generation to repent from their practices of injustice and follow the ways of God. Therefore he proclaims: *"Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the Lord God will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph"* (Amos 5:15). If they continue to ignore Amos' call to repent and embrace righteousness, judgement will follow: *"... I will stir up a nation against you, O house of Israel that will oppress you..."* (Amos 6:14). In spite of Amos' persistence, in calling the people to a new relationship with God, where righteousness is evident to all, his prophetic message is rejected, because Israel finds it subversive. It challenges the status quo, and the established religious leaders in connection with the king cannot stand it. They find it dangerous to national and economic security. As a result Amos was persecuted, and he was urged to take his message somewhere else (Amos 7:10-17).⁶⁹

The call to be a prophet was not an easy one; it meant embracing values that were different to ordinary values. It was not a call to be a politician, or to form a political party, but a call to suffering and persecution for righteousness. It was not a call to be a populist but to embrace the unconventional values which defy the populist who says *"vos do povo vos de Deus"* (The voice of the people is the voice of God). This meant isolation for the sake of righteousness.⁷⁰ Therefore, when Jesus pronounced blessings on those who are persecuted for righteousness he pointed to the prophets (Matthew 5:10-12). By doing so, Jesus is demonstrating that following

⁶⁹ There are striking similarities in the way Clements (1988:140-143) interprets Amos (7:10-17) with the way the Roman Catholics perceived the activities of the Protestant church, especially a letter issued in Huila district concerning Protestant activities in Angola. According to Clements (1988) Amaziah was a priest of Bethel who was representative of establishment thinking. He received his salary from the royal court, in other words his ministry was supported by the government. He writes a letter to the king denouncing the activities of Amos, "Amaziah is shrewd enough to realize that the government take political subversion much more seriously than they do with religious fanaticism. So he portrays Amos as the author of seditious plot to overthrow the government" (Clements 1988:140-143).

Him truly means turning the world upside down, by being hungry and thirsty for righteousness like the prophets (Matthew 5:8). It means “not to be concerned with our own desires and interests but with the practice of justice in respect of those who are the victims of circumstances and society, that this is what God’s reign is all about” (Bosch 1991:71). Jesus demonstrated righteousness by feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, visiting the sick, welcoming the outcast, setting free those who had been oppressed by demonic forces. By doing so Jesus was demonstrating that he was a prophet⁷¹ *par excellence* and that these were the values of his kingdom. These activities, of feeding, healing, setting free the oppressed were exercised by the ABCFM and the IECA. Thus, these may be classified as positive results of persecution in the light of the biblical witness. However, in spite of these positive features, especially their outstanding stance as regards righteousness, there were also a few unbiblical aspects in their actions.

5.5 The ideological pitfalls of pursuing righteousness

The danger of being active in bringing righteousness within the context of oppression and persecution is the tendency of the church to respond by embracing a political ideology, instead of embracing kingdom values. Sadly, whenever the church embraces such an ideology, either left or right, her witness fades away. Therefore, when the church fails to rise above a political ideology it becomes the tool of a party or an oppressive regime. The church should always arise above politics, and be able to be as neutral as possible, in order to discern and to avoid being used as a political tool, just as the prophets did. The church should not pledge alliance to a party or state, but rather to the kingdom and the king. Jesus transcended political positions while he was on earth; before he came the Jews strongly expected that a political king would deliver them from oppression: “*Salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.... To rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear*” (Luke 1:71-74). Instead, Jesus demonstrated that his mission was different from what the Jews expected. It transcended the political alternative to end oppression; if Jesus’ mission had been political he

⁷⁰ Stassen and Gushee (2003:127) quote Karl Barth who reflected on Bonhoeffer, pointing out, “from 1933 on Bonhoeffer was the first, indeed almost the only one, who focused so centrally and energetically on defending Jews against Hitler’s injustices.”

⁷¹ Although Jesus is explicitly called a prophet infrequently, and when he is, it is by those who have little understanding of his person and mission (Matthew 21:11, 26; Mark 6:12), nevertheless many predictions of the Old Testament were fulfilled in Christ (Matthew 2:23; 4:14; 26:56; John 12:38) (Grudem 2000:707).

would have joined the Zealots (Padilla 1985:23). But instead he chose a life of service, suffering and love, a life that was constantly in contrast with the values of this world.

Reflecting the persecution endured by the IECA, under a brutal regime of Portuguese colonial power, the ABCFM and the IECA had no doubt confronted the evils and the oppression by displaying righteousness in various spheres of life. However, in the process of standing for righteousness the IECA became more political in its stance, especially in 1974. The IECA's relationship with UNITA grew so strong that one could not differentiate between UNITA's agenda and the IECA's. This kind of relationship had a consequential impact on the church, especially as various reports of human rights abuses started to emerge in the areas controlled by UNITA (Heywoods 1998:166).⁷² Paradoxically, the IECA that spoke out against the injustices of colonialism to the point of suffering immensely had failed to respond with the same vigour when human rights abuses were rampant in the areas controlled by UNITA. Under UNITA the church lost its prophetic voice, it lost its thirst and hunger for righteousness; it lost its reputation of being persecuted for righteousness. This probably comprised the most negative aspect of the IECA's persecution: her complacency in transcending political affiliation.⁷³ The question that should be asked is, what does the Bible have to say concerning development under persecution? What are the positive and negative aspects of the IECA's persecution in the light of the Bible?

5.6 Positive development of the church through persecution – a New Testament perspective

According to Schirmmacher (2001:24) the New Testament church developed its theology in the context of persecution and oppression, he seems to make his statement in reference to the period prior to the regime of Constantine, especially to the early fathers. The same can be said of the growth of the church in the book of Acts which took place in the context of persecution. Jesus predicted that following him would require being persecuted “...*if they persecuted me, they will persecute you also...*” (John 15:20). This prediction is fulfilled partly in Acts, as the disciples faced opposition whenever they preached. However, the opposition helped the church to grow (Acts 4:4). Furthermore, the development of the church was inclusive: it was not only limited to the Jews, the covenant people of God. Before Jesus' ascension, he had commissioned the

⁷² According to Heywoods (1998:166) in the areas controlled by UNITA burning of witches was a common practice.

apostles to build the new community that would be found everywhere and would involve everyone: "... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).⁷⁴ The act of receiving the power of the Spirit was to be a witness of Jesus' death and resurrection (Bock 2007:64). The disciples were to go everywhere and proclaim the fact that they had seen the resurrected Jesus, and that he was indeed the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. According to Bock (2007) this kind of witness⁷⁵ was not based on subjectivity or experience but on facts (Acts 1:22). One should enquire: how should this task of being a witness to everywhere be accomplished?

Reading the book of Acts and the epistles, it is clear that in God's providence the task of taking the good news everywhere would involve persecution: "... On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria... Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went" (Acts 8:1-4).⁷⁶ As Bruce (1988:164) points out, those who had been dispersed travelled all over, taking with them their faith beyond Palestine (Acts 11:19-26). It seems as if the development of the church in Acts depended on persecution: as the apostles were persecuted the church thrived. To make this clear, as the apostles were transferred from prison to prison and migrated from place to place, Christianity paradoxically flourished. It comes as no surprise that while in prison Paul wrote, "Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to

⁷³ Historically Christianity used to be considered the enemy of the state but as soon as it became the religion of the Rome Empire it lost its power to be counter cultural (Clements 1998:144).

⁷⁴ According to Bruce (1988: 36) the idea of being a witness is taken from the Old Testament prophets, who called the people of Israel to be witness of God's message into the world (Isaiah 43:10; 44:8); the task which Israel had failed to do was taken on by Jesus and shared by him with his disciples. Bruce (1988) argues that the relation between God's call to Israel "you are my witnesses" and Jesus' commission "you will be my witnesses" can be best understood in light of Paul's intention in quoting Isaiah 49:6 in Acts 13:47. In Acts 13:47 those who witness to the gospel are spoken of as the light of the Gentiles, who bear God's salvation to the ends of the world.

⁷⁵ According to Schirrmacher(2001:69-74) the Greek word "witness" means "martyr" however "the New Testament does not use the term to mean 'a martyr', but ... its meaning is so closely connected with the testimony of faith, that we can already discover the early stage in the development of the later usage".

⁷⁶ There is much debate concerning the persecution of the believers because the passage seems to suggest that the Hellenist Christians were persecuted while the Hebrew Christians remained in Jerusalem. Various theories have been advanced, with some proposing that the differentiation between Hellenist and Hebrew is hyperbolic, while others suggest that because Stephen was Hellenist his death as a martyr may have caused his community to be scattered through persecution. Bock (2007:319) suggests that it is not clear that only Hellenists were persecuted. It could well be that the Hebrew Christians felt a greater loyalty to Jerusalem. However Bruce (1988:233) considers that the persecution of Stephen was exclusive to the Hellenist Jews; the Christian Jews only experienced persecution later in Acts 12.

advance the gospel" (Philippians 1:12).⁷⁷ Paul saw being in prison as an opportunity that God used to mature the church.⁷⁸ A similarity is evident in the IECA's case. Those members, who were taken to prison or, resettlements camps, and those who had fled the persecution and the hardship, took the good news with them. Hence the church thrived by depending on ordinary members and leaders to carry out mission in the midst of persecution.

Another positive result of persecution in the New Testament was the fact that the church became less institutionalized. Bosch (1991:120) argues, however, that there is no indication of or reference to the church being united into one structure in Acts. According to Bosch the church was divided into smaller or larger groups. The term *ekklesia* refers to the individual church rather than the universal church. For Bosch only in Acts (9:31) did the term *ekklesia* convey a broader additional meaning. Bosch further avers that although the church seemed unstructured she was linked to the apostolic teaching: each time a new church was founded the apostles had to officially validate it. Without apostolic approval the church was as good as a sect. Although Bosch makes a remarkable observation regarding how the church in Acts was not institutionalized, nevertheless he fails to see that persecution assisted this process. Under the constant threat of persecution the church did not have the notion of a mother church that makes decisions from abroad. Sometimes the apostles interfered in cases of doctrinal or moral issues (Acts 15:13-21), and at times Timothy would be called on to solve ecclesiastical issues or encourage the church (1 Thessalonians 3:6-13); however, this kind of relationship was not unilateral but bilateral: the churches were dependent on each other (1 Corinthians 12). Thus, persecution helped the church in the New Testament to become more independent of a particular structure yet dependent on apostolic teaching (Ephesians 2:20). This, was probably so because of the constant persecution. Similarly the persecution suffered by the IECA had positively speeded up the autonomy of the church. By the time the missionaries had been evicted, the church managed to stand alone and face the colonial powers. The persecution also helped the church to become independent of the missionaries from America and Canada. Theologically the church

⁷⁷ Rev. Chipenda's letter might have been echoing Paul's words, especially when he expresses thanks for the fact that in prison he had been able to enjoy worship with people from all over Angola.

⁷⁸ Christians should not in any way seek or glorify persecution as the way to advance God's kingdom. Nonetheless Schirrmacher (2001:59) mentions several biblical incidents both in the New and Old Testament (1 Kings 19:1-18) where the people had to flee due to hostility. According to Schirrmacher (2001) even Jesus had to flee persecution (Matthew 4:12).

remained linked to the ABCFM, yet the ABCFM did not possess the authority to decide how it should be run.⁷⁹

5.7 Hindrances of persecution for the development of the church

One of the negative aspects of persecution in the New Testament was probably the lack of time for inculcating proper discipleship. The apostles could not spend enough time in instructing the churches that had been planted (Acts 17:1-8). As soon as they proclaimed their message, they were persecuted. This led to Christian immaturity, sinful behaviour and a lack of understanding of Christian faith and ethics. To counter this deficit the apostles were often forced to write letters to those churches to rebuke, encourage, and help them to hold to the doctrinal truth. The book of 1 Corinthians for example offers a good example of how the church in Corinth had failed morally to understand the Christian faith by continuing to live in immoral ways similar to those of their context. The book of Galatians also furnishes an example of how the church had misunderstood the good news of Jesus by diluting it with Judaism. If the apostles had had enough time to disciple those churches, probably some of those problems would have been dealt with earlier.

Thinking back to the context of the IECA's persecution, despite some positive results a few negative aspects emerged. One was the loss of several capable leaders, either by execution or by migration. This hindered the IECA from effectively responding to the challenges that the later colonial period presented. Thus, the growth that occurred was sporadic and shallow owing to a lack of proper discipleship. Most probably some of the negative results could have been avoided if mature leaders had been available. Having affirmed this however, it is difficult to accurately and comprehensively pass judgement on the negative aspects of the development of the IECA because such an analysis would comprise a study on its own.

⁷⁹ From my own observations, probably the IECA is one of the few evangelical churches in Angola that did manage to survive the late colonial and later the MPLA persecutions without foreign help. During the MPLA regime any attempt to assist the IECA from America would probably have been perceived as helping UNITA. Thus the missionaries might have made matters worse.

5.8 Conclusion

The biblical witness demonstrates that whenever the people of God stand for righteousness, they are bound to suffer persecution. That occurs neither because the people of God have formed a political party nor because they have a secretive agenda to topple the government. However, it takes place because of the counter cultural nature of the values of the kingdom. Whenever these values are applied, especially a comprehensive understanding of righteousness, persecution is unavoidable. The biblical witness points to the phenomenon of righteousness and persecution with reference to the testimony of the prophets, who in the midst of oppression in Israel constantly challenged the people of God to turn away from their sin of oppression and embrace righteousness. However, such a stand for righteousness was a recipe for persecution. Similarly, the ABCFM and the IECA operated in the context of oppression by the Portuguese colonial power, and were persecuted for embracing righteousness. Nevertheless, in the process of doing so, especially in the late colonial period, the IECA failed to be counter cultural. Instead she allowed herself to become a tool of UNITA's political ambitions. This study is limited in exploring such a trend; nevertheless it should be mentioned that such an alliance led to repercussions since reports of oppression in UNITA controlled areas were announced.

The New Testament Church developed in the context of persecution: when the apostles were persecuted they took the good news with them. Hence the church spread to other parts of the world. The positive result was that the church became less institutionalized. This created a sense of independence; it embraced the apostolic teaching yet chose its own leadership. Similarly the persecution of the IECA helped to foster a more independent church that was able to think and apply biblical teaching within a context of persecution. However such independence was not without errors, as many capable leaders who would probably have helped to discern wise decisions were not available. Thus, although the church flourished, its development at times was shallow. Nevertheless, the church managed to survive in spite of lack of maturity. This criticism however is not at any way intended to label brave and men and women who possessed the courage to continue their labour in spite of persecution. It is offered so that positive and negative lessons can be learned from some of the unbiblical mistakes committed during the IECA's persecution.

CHAPTER 6

GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary

The central research question of this study was the persecution endured by the IECA in the late colonial period in 1950-1994. This persecution exerted a decisive influence on the subsequent development of the church in Angola. This study has been seeking to discover how, and in what manner, the IECA survived the colonial, state-initiated persecution between 1950-1974, and to identify the formative influences (positive and/ or negative) of this period of suffering for the subsequent development of the church in Angola.

In order to answer the central research question, chapter two of this study explored the historical disadvantage that the ABCFM had encountered in Angola. In 1882, when the ABCFM arrived in central Angola, they found a land that had been devastated with exploitation ranging from slavery to forced labour. In such a context of exploitation it was not uncommon to see the Ovimbundu revolting against the colonial powers. Whenever a revolt happened, the Portuguese colonial powers blamed the missionaries. The ABCFM missionaries were also accused of siding with the Ovimbundu. These accusations were made because the Portuguese colonial powers did not want any Protestant missionary activity in central Angola. The unwelcoming attitude demonstrated by Portuguese colonial powers was partly due to the fact that they viewed the ABCFM enterprise in central Angola as a threat to their lucrative business of human carnage, e.g. slavery and forced labour.

Although the ABCFM did not want to deal with existing exploitation, they were drawn into the conflict, mostly due to pressure from the international community. An important aspect of the ABCFM was their emphasis on education, which challenged Portuguese colonialism.

Not surprisingly, the ABCFM educational programme was not well received by the Portuguese colonial power. Ovimbundu who converted to Protestant Christianity through the educational programme were persecuted. The persecution included intimidation techniques against the work

of the ABCFM, as well as recruiting men and women to forced labour and transferring them to plantations as far as S.Tome and Principe. Moreover, the Portuguese colonial authorities obstructed the missionary educational programme by enforcing laws that abolished the use of the vernacular. According to the Portuguese colonial power, teaching in the vernacular was a direct confrontation to the policy of *assimilado*. The policy of *assimilado* encouraged the Ovimbundu to deny their identity and embrace a Portuguese way of life. This 'Portugalisation' could only be achieved through education, but the authorities themselves did not provide any education. Most Ovimbundu and Angolans in general found themselves in a 'catch 22' situation, and the ABCFM filled the educational gap left by the colonial authorities.

The underlying Portuguese colonial assumption was that education of the Ovimbundu was useless, since the Ovimbundu and Angolans were only good for manual work in the plantations. In spite of the obstacles that Portuguese colonial power had imposed, the ABCFM used education as a means to plant the IECA. The Ovimbundu willingly embraced the Protestant faith. This was because the Ovimbundu, as well as many other Angolans who had benefited from the Protestant missionary enterprise, viewed the Protestant missionary educational programme as a way for emancipation. It comes as no surprise that the most vocal voices against Portuguese colonialism in Angola came from those who had been in contact with Protestant mission education.

In the chapter three this study sought to examine the rise of nationalism, especially its revolutionary aggressiveness. One can say the historical tension between the Portuguese colonial power and the ABCFM, among other missionary organizations in Angola, reached its boiling point in the 50s and 60s. During those years, a number of students who had graduated from Protestant schools began to protest quietly against colonial abuses, focusing mainly on the issue of forced labour and the lack of educational opportunities for the masses. The protests were partly influenced by the rise of nationalism in Africa and the independence of certain African countries in the late 50s and early 60s. In the 50s and 60s, various colonial powers started to free their colonies in Africa. The Portuguese responded to this development through a series of reforms. As helpful as the reforms were to some degree, they failed to address the problems in

Angola. The reforms included the adoption of Angola as a province of Portugal, encouragement of more Portuguese immigration, and blaming the rise of nationalism on Protestant missionaries.

The reforms set forth by the colonial Portuguese did not appease the nationalists, and they resorted to violence. On the 4th of February 1961, a group of dissatisfied Angolans tried unsuccessfully to free political leaders from the prison of Luanda. The Portuguese colonial authorities managed to bring the situation under control by arresting the culprits of the revolution. As a reprisal, PIDE investigations found that Angolan Methodists were partly involved in instigating the revolution. As a consequence, the authorities expelled some of the Methodist missionaries from Angola and many members of the Methodist church were arrested.

On the 15th of March 1961, something similar happened in the north of Angola. Due to the large number of BMS followers in the north, the Portuguese colonial authorities accused the BMS to have instigated the revolution and ordered their churches and mission stations to be closed down in the north. Many northern Angolans escaped to Congo-Zaire, where, subsequently, the BMS started operating. The Portuguese acted in this way because it seemed evident that there were Protestants among the nationalist leadership.

The forth chapter sought to look at how PIDE dismantled the leadership of the protestant church. The action of PIDE was motivated by the revolution in Luanda and northern Angola. Although in central Angola, the political situation was relatively calm, PIDE to monitor the activities of the IECA. PIDE concluded that the IECA was subversive, particularly its schools. The tension reached its climax with a campaign of terror carried out by PIDE in central Angola. It included neutralizing the leadership of the IECA, expelling missionaries, and cancelling the IECA's school programme. Upon arrest, members of the IECA were submitted to subhuman treatment, which ranged from beating, forced confessions, imprisonment without a trial, constant intimidation, to forcing people into resettlement camps without proper living conditions.

Although these measures were intended to weaken the influence of the IECA in central Angola, they actually helped to strengthen the church. Whenever a group or a leader of the IECA was sent to prison or a resettlement camp, they took the gospel with them. The IECA persevered and

carried out its mission without resources from the ABCFM. Furthermore, the persecution enabled the church to be theologically and ecclesiastically independent from the ABCFM, the reason being that most of the ABCFM missionaries were expelled from Angola. This development, however, was not without pitfalls. At times, the IECA lacked proper theological reflection and Christian maturity in dealing the strong political tendencies that the IECA embraced as colonialism began to wane.

Chapter five of this study sought to present a perusal of some important exegetical works by various commentators. The study found that from a Biblical perspective, some of the activities of the ABCFM and IECA were indeed subversive to the Portuguese colonial powers, because the nature of God's kingdom is always subversive to the *status quo*. In the face of oppression, the ABCFM and IECA dared to go beyond prayer and personal piety by standing up for righteousness. In spite of (or because of) the persecution and suffering, the IECA expanded geographically. As the IECA members moved from place to place due to the colonial hostility, they took the faith along. This matches what happened in the New Testament. There, too, the gospel spread from place to place because Christians had to flee; and theology developed under persecution.

6.2 Final conclusion

The history of tension between Portuguese colonial powers and the IECA did not in any way impede the growth of the IECA in Angola. The IECA managed to carry out its mission in Angola, in spite of the various obstacles. The various obstacles that the IECA faced enabled the church to develop and become self-sufficient, self-supported and self-propagated.

There are two major contributions that this study has made:

1. The study followed the development of the IECA in prisons, resettlements camps, areas controlled by nationalists, and in the government. It critically evaluated the positive and negative aspects of the persecution.
2. The study evaluated the development of the IECA in light of the Bible, drawing positive and negative parallels.

6.3 Recommendations for further studies

The research conducted above, though fruitful, was limited, and therefore it raises various questions, some of which should be addressed more fully. A separate study should be conducted researching the era of the MPLA persecution in 1975-1991, dealing with the following questions:

1. How did the IECA and other churches develop under MPLA persecution?
2. How did the IECA develop in the areas controlled by UNITA in the post-colonial period, since the church was divided in two, the IECA in the bush and the IECA in the towns?
3. How did the Angolan church stand for righteousness under MPLA persecution?
4. How might the development of the church in Angola be evaluated biblically in the post-colonial era?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ANGOLA. 1974. *Secret Government Documents on the Counter-Subversion*. New York: Idoc-North America.

ATLA. 1968. Angolan Agony Mounts. *American Theological Library Association* (381) March 27.

BALL, J. 2003. "The Colossal Lie": The Sociedade Agricola do Cassequel and Portuguese Colonial Labor Policy in Angola, 1899-1977. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of California.

BENDER, G. 1975. *The Myth and Reality of the Portuguese Rule in Angola: A study case of Racial Domination*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of California.

BLOMBERG, C. 1992. *The New American Commentary*. Nashville: Broadman Press.

BOCK, D. 2007. *Acts*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

BONHOEFFER, D. 1959. *The Cost of Discipleship*. London: Robert Cunningham and Sons.

BOSCH, D. 1980. *Witness to the World*. London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott.

BOSCH, D. 1991. *Transforming Mission*. New York: Orbis Books.

BOYD-MACMILLAN, R. 2006. *Faith that Endures*. Ellet Grange: Sovereign World.

BRIDGLAND, F. 1987. *Jonas Savimbi: A Key to Africa*. New York: Paragon.

BRUCE, F. 1988. *The Book of Acts*. Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans.

BYAM, P. 1997. *New Wine in a Very Old Bottle: Canadian Protestant Missionaries as Facilitators of Development in Central Angola 1886-1961*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, School of Graduate Studies of the University of Ottawa, Canada.

CARSON, D. *The Sermon on the Mount*. Carlisle: Paternoster Press.

CLEMENTS, R. 1988. *Where Love and Justice Meet*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press.

DAU, I. 2002. *Suffering and God*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa.

DUFFY, J. 1959. *Portuguese Africa*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

DUFFY, J. 1961. Portuguese Africa (Angola and Mozambique): Some Crucial Problems and the Role of Education and their Resolution. *Journal of Negro Education*, 30(3): 294-30, Summer.

FINLEY, M. 2005. *The Contribution of Historiography of Angolan Literature to the Development of a National Consciousness: 1930-1960*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of California.

GRANT, K. 1997. "A Civilised Savagery": British Humanitarian Politics and European Imperialism in Africa, 1884-1926. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of California.

HASTINGS, A. 1979. *A History of African Christianity 1950-1975*. Bath: The Pitman Press.

HENDERSON, L. 1979. *Angola: Five Centuries of Conflict*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

HENDERSON, L. 1990. *A Igreja em Angola*. Lisboa: Alem-Mar.

HENDERSON, L. 2000. *Development and the Church in Angola*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers.

- HEYWOODS, L. 1989. UNITA and Ethnic Nationalism in Angola. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. 27(1):49-66, March.
- HEYWOODS, L. 1998. Towards an Understanding of Modern Political Ideology in Africa: The Case of the Ovimbundu of Angola. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. 36(1):139-167, March.
- LUCE, F. 1990. A History of Labour in Angola. Unpublished LLM Thesis, University of Toronto.
- MALAQUIAS, A. 2007. Rebels and Robbers: Violence in Post-Colonial Angola. Uppsala, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitute.
- MOTYER, A. 1974. The Message of Amos. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press.
- NIDA, E. & JOHANNES, P. 1992. Lexical Semantics of the Greek New Testament. Atlanta, GA: Scholar Press.
- NIRINGIYE, D. 1997. The Church in the World: A Historical-Ecclesiological Study of the Church of Uganda with Particular Reference to Post-Independence Uganda. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Edinburgh.
- MARCUM, J. 1969. The Angolan Revolution. Vol. I: The Anatomy of Explosion (1950-1962). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- PADILLA, R. 1985. Mission Between the Times. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans.
- PÉCLARD, D. 1998. Religion and Politics in Angola: The Colonial State and Emergence of Angolan Nationalism 1940-1961. *Journal of Religions in Africa*, 28(2): 160-186, May.

- RODRIGUES, L. 2000. To the "Top of the Mountain" and "Down to the Valley". The United States and Portugal During the Kennedy Presidency. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- SCHIRRMACHER, T. 2001. The Persecution of Christians Concerns Us All. Bonn: VKW.
- SIMEAO, E. 1982. Igreja Evangelica do Sudoeste de Angola. Kalukembe-Angola: Yelula Tanga.
- SOREMEKUN, F. 1965. A History of the American Board of Missions in Angola 1880-1940. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.
- STASSEN, G. & GUSHEE, D. 2003. Kingdom Ethics. Downers Grove: IVP Academic.
- STOTT, J. 2003. The Message of the Sermon on the Mount. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press.
- TIESZEN, C. 2008. Re-examining Persecution. Constructing a Theological Framework for Understanding Persecution . Kempton Park, South Africa: AcdSA.
- THISELTON, A. 1992. New Horizons in Hermeneutics. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.
- TUCKER, J. 1933. The Land of the Blacksmith Prince. London: World Dominion Press.
- VAN DER WAALS, W. 1993. Portugal's War in Angola 1961-1975. Rivonia: Ashanti Publishing.
- WAYNE, G. 2000. New Dictionary of Biblical Theology. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press.
- WHEELER, D. 1969. "Angola is whose House?" Early Stirring of Angolan Nationalism and Protest. *Journal of African Studies*, 2(1):1-22.
- WILSON, E. 1967. Angola Beloved. New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers.

WRIGHT, T. 2008. Surprised by Hope. New York: HarperCollins.