

Religion in the News

Africa stakes satellite claim

by Norman Hart

NAIROBI, Kenya—A visitor to Kenya says that he asked the Government Minister at that time responsible for broadcasting what he was going to do with the satellite earth station which lies in Kenya's Rift Valley, 30 miles from Nairobi.

The Minister, he said, looked at him in a sad and puzzled way and replied, "That is not for us. It's for them."

Satellite communication became possible when men discovered how to rocket into space satellites from which radio signals could be bounced back to the earth. The fact that this could be done was only demonstrated 14 years ago, but today there are satellites 22,000 miles above the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans by which communications can be "bounced" from any part of the world to any other part.

To send and receive the communications, earth tracking stations are needed on the ground, and Africa already has nine of them, with 13 more to follow in the next two or three years. But possessing an earth tracking station is not an automatic passport to entry into the powerful satellite club.

At present only six nations — the Soviet Union, the U.S.A., France, Japan, China and Great Britain, in that order — have put up satellites.

And while 81 nations, including some 20 African countries, are members of the International Telecommunications Satellite Consortium — INTELSAT — this does not mean that they have an equal say in the use which can be made of this new means of communication.

The Ecumenical Satellite Commission, or ECUSAT, is concerned about the use which nations intend to make of the

satellites. Will they be used by each country which can afford a share in them simply to project a better image of that country — to extend the "war" between the external broadcasting services of the U.S.A., China, Russia, South Africa's head? Will they be used simply to exchange trivia which offend no one — television programs of stage shows and football matches?

Above all, will a way be found of letting the developing countries share the facilities which the satellites offer, even though they cannot afford to spend as much? Already ECUSAT has attended a conference of the International Telecommunications Union in Geneva to try to ensure that the case of the developing countries is heard by the countries who can already make use of satellite communication.

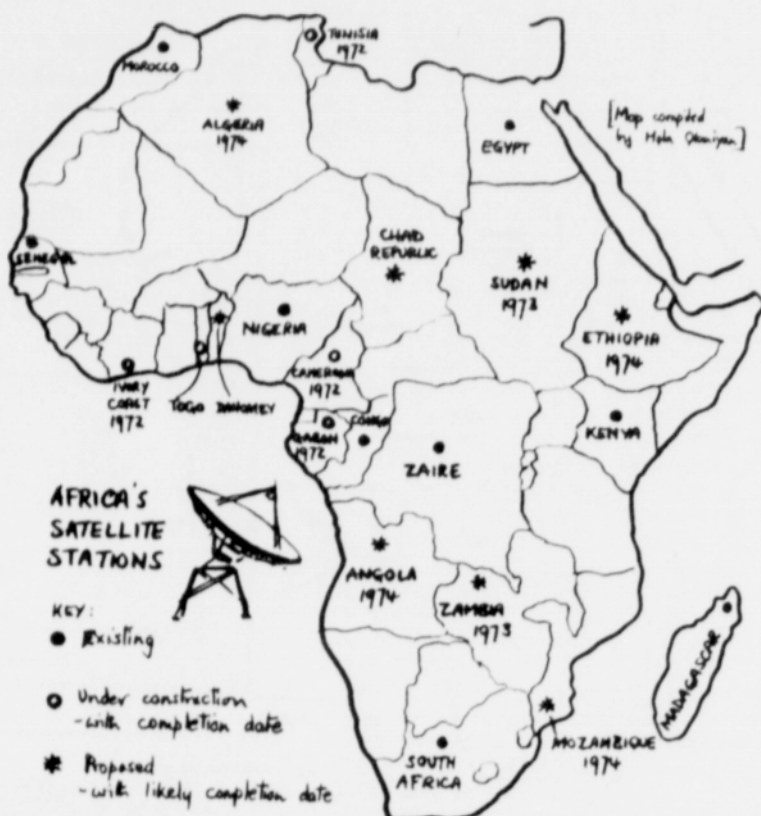
For Africa the uses of satellite communication go far beyond the exchange of television programs which has been their most spectacular use so far. Satellites can be used to forecast the weather — meteorological satellites gave many months' warning of the weather systems which caused the last floods in East Pakistan.

Satellites can be used to survey land for minerals and to determine what kind of crops will grow best. They can be used to track the movements of wild life. They can be used for education — India will have the use of a satellite put up by the United States for a two-year experiment in broadcasting programs to improve agriculture, aid social development and teach family planning.

Mobile receivers and transmitters (mounted on lorries and trailers) for transmitting local news, together with cheap television sets which need no large amount of electricity, could mean that in five years time no African country need be too vast for its people to know quickly what is happening in it and around it; no distant village need feel isolated from its capital or from knowledge.

The question which Christians see particularly clearly is whether men have the wisdom to use these possibilities, to live in this naked world which could be created.

"We want to see the new technical opportunities in satellite communication used for the development of mankind, and not for exploitation," says ECUSAT.



Soul Purpose

By Chuck Singleton

A writer named LeClerc surveyed the world around him and finally surmised, "Mystery is the footprint of the divine." His statement was not a newly revealed truth. Somehow men had never put it in words, but that truth has always been there.

Yet we act as if God is the dummy when there's something about Him we don't understand. "What do you mean Trinity, how you gonna get three beings into one?" "Virgin birth, how's a virgin gonna have a baby?" "Noah's ark? How you gonna flood the whole earth? Even God can't do that."

It's amazing how some of the supposed most brilliant minds become like babies when it comes to the things

of God.

I remember the PhD, who decided that if he said students were wits, he'd be telling a half-truth. He couldn't figure out how any imbecile could believe that God was the originator of life when it was perfectly clear that man came from a one-celled animal who was the original life . . . Of course, he never told me where the one celled animal came from??? I was the fool 'cause he taught in school. Maybe that's why a PhD don't guarantee no J.O.B. — almost anyone can get one.

Many men feel that once they are doctors in some field, they've got the whole world in their hands, not realizing it's only a particle of dust.

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Blacks influence Council of Churches

By Wilbur Colon

Just about every meeting with two or more blacks has a black caucus — an American tradition. The General Assembly of the Council was no exception, but the composition and style of the black group, in this religious setting, was different. Moreover, this caucus was more effective than most.

Meeting at least once a day, and often twice, the black caucus hosted some of the leading names in the black church and the Civil Rights movement. Bishop Stephen Spottswood, president of the NAACP, Dorothy Height, national president of the National Association of Negro Women, Bishop B. Julian Smith, of Memphis, Tenn., the Rev. Andrew White of Nashville, Bishop F.D. Jordan of Hollywood, Cal., and Bishop E.P. Murchison of Birmingham, were among those active in the caucus.

Hulbert James, Director of the Crusade Against Hunger for the National Council of Churches, worked as chief strategist for the caucus. Under his leadership, the caucus was able to: one, have a new commission on Justice, Liberation and Human Fulfillment which will be at the vanguard of the Council's social and political thrust, and, sec-

ondly, to establish, with budget, an ongoing task force to monitor the progress of the Council with regard to minority group affairs.

The black caucus, along with the Africa caucus, presented a comprehensive document on southern Africa. The resolutions in the report passed the Assembly overwhelmingly. It called upon the United States Government to halt purchases of chrome from Rhodesia, to cancel South African sugar quotas, to terminate loans to Portugal (which has colonies in southern Africa), and to refuse tax credits to corporations doing business in South Africa occupied Namibia.

The Rev. Dr. Edler Hawkins, chairman of the black task force, said at the end of the Assembly: "Blacks have won major victories at this meeting for our race and mankind. What we must do now is follow through with the effective cooperative actions that we have witnessed here. If black church leaders could work together year round like they worked together at this meeting, the liberation of black people will surely soon be a reality, and the fullness of the Lord's kingdom will surely be on earth."

Shake off thy Great Heaviness

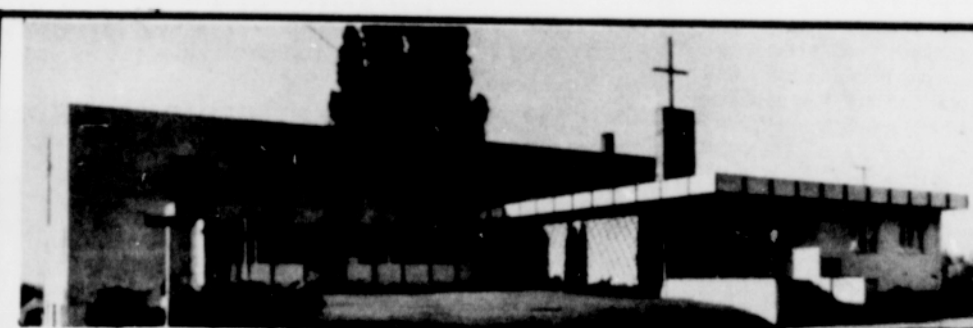
"Hear, O ye my beloved, saith the Lord: behold the days of trouble are at hand, but I will deliver you from the same. Be not afraid, neither doubt; for God is your guide, and guide of THEM WHO KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS AND PRECEPTS, said the Lord God: let not your sins weigh you down, and let not your iniquities lift themselves up. "And therefore shake off thy great heaviness, and put away the multitude of sorrows, that the Mighty may be merciful into thee again, and the Highest shall give thee rest and ease from thy labor." II Esdras 16 ff.

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