AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES -
 developments in ecumenism and theological education

INTRODUCTION

African Independent churches flourish and so does literature on this subject, as appears e.g. from H.W. Turner's *Bibliography of New Religious Movements in Primal Societies*, of which the recently published First Volume deals with *Black Africa Bibliographies and Guides in African Studies*, Boston/London, 1977.

In this contribution our scope will be limited to two aspects which have more recently come to the fore, viz. ecumenical relationships between several independent churches and the Orthodox Churches in Egypt (Coptic) and Ethiopia (I); and the various ways in which independent churches in Zaire and Southern Africa are meeting the ever growing demand of their members for theological education/Bible training (II).

Unfortunately, the literature available at the Department's documentation did not always provide the kind of information, necessary for drawing a complete picture. Nevertheless, it was thought worthwhile to present these two chapters as a first introduction.
I. ECUMENISM: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE ORTHODOX COPTIC AND ETHIOPIAN CHURCH AND INDEPENDENT CHURCHES

"..."Nothing is impossible with God."

But it seems true that the divisions in Christianity brought to Africa by separatist European missionary evangelization will be healed with much less difficulty than those which have been created between the historic churches and Independency." (Prof. James Anquandah, in: Accra 1974, Uniting in Hope. Reports and Documents from the Meeting of the Faith and Order Commission, 23 July - 5 August 1974, Legon. Geneva 1975, p. 134)

Despite this somewhat gloomy remark representatives of both historic and independent churches, at a meeting of the Faith and Order Commission in Accra in 1974, have tried to tackle the problem of church union in a positive way. One of the recommendations was that information on church union in different parts of the world be communicated to all united churches, negotiating committees, and councils in Africa.

Instead of giving a more general overview of ongoing efforts regarding church unions in Africa, this contribution wants to draw attention to a new development in the ecumenical enterprise: the relationship between some independent churches and the Orthodox Coptic and Ethiopian Church. For a better understanding of this trend some information on the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt may be of use. For this purpose we'll draw heavily upon Arthur F. Glasser's article Blessed Be Egypt My People, in Missiology Vol. V, 1977, nr. 4, 403-409. (See also: Maurice M. Assad, The Coptic Church and Social Change in Egypt, in: International Review of Mission, Vol. LXI, no. 242, 1972, 117-129).

1) For those interested in the role of Greek Orthodoxy we mention Nectaire Hadzimichali's article Orthodoxie et Messianisme en Afrique, in Social Compass XXII, 1975, nr. 1, 85-95.