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Eco-Friendly Light of the World

By Evaristus O Ekwueme, SJ*

On the 20th of November, 2011, in Cotonou, Benin Republic, Pope Benedict XVI presented *Africae Munus*, the Second Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Church in Africa in Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace. The “Second Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Africa” took place in Rome from 4 to 25 October, 2009. Africa Munus or Africa’s Commitment, as it is translated, builds on the first synod for Africa, *Ecclesia in Africa*. In this document, the model of the Church as a “Family of God” (*EA* #14) emphasized the evangelical mission of the African Church in the face of despair and discouragement. The synod fathers dealt with a fundamental question, “What is it and what [the Church] must fully carry out, in order that its message may be relevant and credible?” (*EA* #21). As the synod fathers asked, “In a Continent full of bad news, how is the Christian message ‘Good News’ for our people? In the midst of an all-pervading despair, where lie the hope and optimism which the Gospel brings? Evangelization stands for many of those essential values which our Continent very much lacks: hope, peace, joy, harmony, love and unity” (*EA* #40). The Church cannot accomplish these without first deepening its faith, conversion and renewal in order to face these challenges (*EA* #47) and to build a “kingdom of justice and peace” (*EA* #105). To build a kingdom of justice and peace in truth for all will require reconciliation among individuals, communities and nations and most especially between humanity and the environment, and the Triune God. *Africae Munus* (Africa’s Commitment in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace) continues the dialogue on the question of relevance and credibility of the Good news. The Good News is very clear “You are the salt of the earth … you are the light of the world” (*AM* #6).

Hekima Review, in its forty-first edition in December, 2009, dealt with the Second Synod for Africa while the synod was being conducted. In that edition, Michel Segatagara Kamanzi, in his editorial, pointed out that the second synod for Africa is a “New Pentecost, a New Road to Emmaus” because of its emphasis on much needed justice, reconciliation and peace after the Rwandan Genocide, in 1994. In the past three years, Africa has shown tremendous movement towards reconciliation, justice and peace as it is evident in the successful creation of South Sudan, the prosecution of key perpetrators of crimes against humanity and successful elections and democratic transitions in countries like Nigeria, Zambia, Guinea, Ivory Coast, and most recently Senegal, Malawi and Mali. Africa’s commitment for reconciliation, justice and peace irrespective of the

* Evaristus is a Jesuit Scholastic from Nigeria. He is a student of Hekima College.
order in which they are achieved is the Good News of Jesus Christ for Africa. In an ecologically conscious era, an “eco-friendly light of the world” is what Africa is being called to, not just among individuals, communities, nations, but most importantly between humanity and the environment.

In this issue of Hekima Review, we attempt to take up the challenge of articulating Africa’s commitment in reconciliation, justice and peace through theological reflections on inter-religious dialogue, ecumenism, reconciliation, issues of suffering, socio-political policies, education and ecology. There is no better Good News for a continent so paralyzed by human, structural and ecological crises than for Christians to be “eco-friendly light of the world.” We intend to be in the forefront of the intellectual palaver and to be part of the practical engagement in promoting eco-friendly reconciliation, justice and peace.

Just like in our forty-first edition, in this edition, we are more than privileged to have received two articles from participants of the synod in Rome: Peter Henriot, SJ and Paul Bere, SJ. We are grateful for their contributions to our deliberation. Hence under the theological issues, we have the contribution of Paul Bere entitled “The Significance of the Church’s Mission of Reconciliation in Africa Today.” This is his presentation at the Tangaza College Symposium, 2012. We are honored to share this special presentation with our readers and are thankful to Tangaza School of Theology for their assistance in this regard. This article gives an honest assessment of the significance of the Church’s mission in Africa and anyone who takes the mission of reconciliation seriously is obliged to read this article. The question of reconciliation through inter-religious dialogue is concretized by Norbert Litoing in his article. Without religious freedom interfaith dialogue is not possible. From the point of view of both Islam and Christianity, Litoing explores the very first human institution, family, in the face of interfaith marriage. Prosper Mushy takes on the challenge of doctrinal reconciliation in ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and Anglicans. In the face of further fragmentation of the Anglican communions, what is the possibility of establishing full communion if doctrinal authority is still the dividing factor? All over the continent, there are different government agencies and NGOs all trying to alleviate poverty and suffering that are caused by war, election violence, revolutions, HIV/AIDS, malaria, imprisonment, internal displacement and most especially by corruption. Jean Luc Enyegue tackles this well known reality from a very original and compelling perspective. Suffering is a reality well known on the continent, thus, the mission of Africa Munus is to face these issues with reconciliation, peace and justice and for Enyegue, how Africa understands suffering enlightens the future of God in Africa and that of the church. Africa Munus recognizes the problem of environmental pollutions as part of the challenges facing the continent (AM. #80). There is no one more competent to address this theologically than Margaret Gecaga in her article on the theological insights on ecology and technology for sustainable development and peace-building in Africa. Gecaga explores the theological dimension of the environmental degradation as a critique of the popular Judeo-Christian tradition that validates an anthropocentric view of human relation to creation. Christianity was part of the problem and therefore can be part of the solution through a moral stance for care, justice, and the integrity of God’s creation. This article was presented at the 2012 Hekima Symposium as part of a larger deliberation on ecology and technology in a dialogue debate.
Under scripture, Besem Oben Etchi examines the question of equal dignity without which reconciliation, justice and peace would be impossible. Even in normal everyday greetings, mutual respect and recognition is important. This exegesis on Romans 16:3-16 explores St. Paul’s teaching of equal social identity based on divine grace.

Under spirituality, we have two articles on Africae Munus. In the first article, Chikere Ugwuanyi reads Africae Munus in light of the graces to be asked for in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. The synod opens up debate on Ignatian spirituality in different ways and in spiritual meditations, prayer and daily living. There is no better way to reach the African spiritual dynamics than through the Ignatian contemplations in reconciliation, justice and peace. Similarly, Fr. Mouanga Ildevert Mathurin reads Africae Munus from the point of view of Lectio Divina, the Word of God. In order to live the ‘eco-friendly light of the world’, African Christians have to be nourished by the Word of God. Lectio Divina presents a rare opportunity for Africans to meditate and to savor the Word of God, leading to true conversion which produces reconciliation, justice and peace in individuals and in communities.

Under peace studies, there are three articles that take on the issues of environment, development, technology and peace prompted by Africae Munus. These articles were presented at the 2012 Hekima Symposium. In the first article, Dr. Nathan Gichuki and Dr. Austin U. Denis tackle the challenges and possibilities of developing ecologically conscious technologies in Africa. Is it possible to develop independent ecologically conscious technologies in Africa? What are the challenges and the possibilities? Should Africans just give up and continue to import and use ecologically damaging technologies in the name of development? Similarly, Dr. Caleb Phil Mireri, an expert in environmental development and planning in Kenya, takes a competent look at the environmental policies of Kenya and examines the challenges and possibilities of ecologically conscious technologies. Like most African countries, Kenya has tried to respond to the environmental challenges through enactment of policies, laws, rules and regulations to govern development. This is followed by another article on environment by Evaristus O Ekwueme entitled “Forms of Education and Youth Formation in Ecologically Conscious Technologies and their Role in Development and Peace building processes in Africa.” The future of Africa is in the hands of the youth and their education and formation are key to Africa’s commitment to reconciliation, justice and peace. This article articulates eco-friendly forms of education and formation of youth that would inevitably lead to sustainable development based on ecologically conscious technologies and their role in peace formation in Africa.

Under pastoral reflections, Fr. Pete Henriot, SJ, a participant at the Synod, reflects on some practical questions with respect to priestly formation in the light of Africae Munus. For Fr. Henriot, African priestly formation should be practical, pastoral and should focus on inculturation. Africae Munus calls for reconciliation. There is no better priestly formational tool for reconciliation than that of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Church’s social teaching is also another tool for justice, leading to lasting peace in the continent. The Synod’s call must be answered with practicality and spirituality that are adequate responses to the problems. The next article by Fr. Itua Ogbekhili Egbor, SJ is entitled “Social Sins and Ecological Problems: Should Human Beings Continue to be the Sole Measure of all Things?” Fr. Egbor reflects on the environmental degradation which is engendered by the maxim that “man is the measure of all things.” In this edition of Hekima Review, we have seen other articles on environment, technology,
Editorial

education and development all trying to respond to the question of humanity being "eco-friendly light of the world." Fr. Egbor's article is a continuation of this awareness and dialogue from a pastoral perspective focusing on "ecological sin" and highlights a deep understanding of the Principle and Foundation of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius as a viable solution to the environmental crisis.

All the articles in this edition examine the theme of Africæ Munus in one way or the other, directly or indirectly. Each in its own way highlights the fact that everyone, especially Africans are called to become the “eco-friendly light of the world.” Every individual and his community are called to become a light that is neither detrimental to the environment nor to the future generation. An eco-friendly light is key to development, reconciliation, justice and peace.

On behalf of Hekima Review Editorial Board, I would like to express our gratitude to the immediate past editor Norbert Litoing whose commitment and dedication to academia is a light for us all. We are also grateful to other executive members of the board Raymond C. Tangonyire, SJ, Marcel Uwineza, SJ, Gilbert Fungai Banda, SJ, Etienne Mborong, SJ, Jacob Barasa, AA, Dieudonne Bomalose, SMM and Charlie B. Chilufya, SJ. We remain ever grateful to John Ewu, a student of Peace Studies and International Relations, for his selfless services.

We welcome new members who have taken the place of the past board members. Donald Mwiinga, SJ is the current Assistant-Editor-in-Chief. Makasa Chikwamo, SJ is the new Managing Editor. Abdon Rwandekwe joins the distribution team. And other members are Isidore-Splendour Chukwu, SJ, Corбинian V.J. Kyara, SJ, James Moro, SJ, Christopher Ngolele, SJ and Richard Katembo Lusenge, AA. I would like to welcome in a special way Ms Silvia Maritim, a student of the Institute of Peace Studies and International Relations, as the first non-religious female to serve on the Board of Hekima Review. May we all pray unceasingly and strive daily to live the virtues of reconciliation, justice and peace. May we become eco-friendly light of Africa and the world.

Happy Year of Reconciliation!
**The Significance of the Church’s Mission of Reconciliation in Africa Today**

*Paul Bere, SJ.*

What will be the consequence for the continent if the Church should cease engaging in its mission of reconciliation? Does the Church’s engagement in reconciliation make any difference? The *Africæ Munus* challenges the African Church to be the salt and light of the world in issues of reconciliation, justice and peace. How is the Church faring in this regard? Instead of a direct engagement with politics or complete withdrawal into ivory towers of speculative theology and spirituality, should the Church favor a more collaborative approach to reconciliation? What is the Church as family without wholehearted commitment to *Africæ Munus*?

**Introduction:** Some years ago, at a symposium on the *Lineamenta* of the Second Synod for Africa, I was given the opportunity to reflect on the Second African Synod as such. Looking at the Church in Africa, I was rather skeptical on her capacity to address the pastoral issues at stake on the continent. I then questioned the relevance of another continental synod in Rome, when our local Episcopal conferences seemed unable to sit and devise ways for a proper response to our problems. A few months later, I was called as an expert at the synod on the Word of God and then at the Second Synod for Africa. My involvement provided me with an exceptional opportunity to witness to all the steps of this special journey, called “synod”: the preparation of the event, its celebration in October 2009, and the drafting of the apostolic exhortation *Africæ Munus* (*Africa’s Commitment*) by the Post-Synodal council. I confess that if I could go back to my 2008 paper on the Second Synod for Africa, I would carefully edit it for more qualifications of some of my statements, given what I have seen, what I have heard and what I have read.

This article opens a new possibility for me to revisit the process and answer the question to whether the Church’s mission of reconciliation in Africa has some significance from the perspective of the participant I happened to be. In other words, what would be the consequences for Africa, if the Church gave up its mission of reconcilia-

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* Rev. Dr. Paul Bere is a Jesuit lecturer at the Institute De Theologie De La Compagnie De Jesus, Ivory Coast.
tion? I will not try to be exhaustive. In my narrative, I will first look back at the way we as Church in Africa walked to the synod hall and I will then dwell a bit on a few key voices I heard. Secondly, I will echo the complex areas the synod has pointed out and which requires the attention of the whole Church in Africa.

The Way to the Synod: From Preparation to Celebration

Getting Ready for the Synod

Unlike the First African Synod, which was carefully and enthusiastically prepared by almost all the local churches in Africa, the second looked poorly prepared. Large parts of the Christian communities did not even know that a synod was on the way so they did not pray for it. From the point of view of the steps that led to the synod, the Lineamenta raised some issues and asked a good number of questions. From the scarcity of the answers collected in order to draft the Instrumentum Laboris (the working document), one could not avoid the impression that Africa was not interested in another synod. This state of affairs aroused some perplexities and led us to ask questions like: Is the theme of reconciliation, justice and peace irrelevant? Or, are we as Church in Africa so entangled with the dramatic situations of the continent that we are unable to react?

An African theologian, Stan Ilo, published a comment on the two documents I have just mentioned. I found it interesting as it represents the point of view of a good number of African theologians:

The Lineamenta was meant to stimulate discussion at the grassroots level and generate serious discussions, which should have drawn from quantitative data taken from the concrete social condition of African Catholics. There were some symposia and dialogue sessions among African theologians from 2006-2008 in Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, South Africa and Tanzania, but the WD [Working Document] does not seriously reflect some of the deliberations from these conferences. The working document reflects the concerns of its authors to write a synodal document on the thoughts of the Vatican on issues which she thinks should occupy the African hierarchy and churches. This top-bottom approach is similar to the First African Synod of 1994 whose wonderful propositions are not fully utilized and/or lived adequately in African Catholicism. Indeed, part of the apparent lack of interest in the Second Synod goes back to the same reason that synodal convention, the choice of theme and topics lack grassroots involvement in order to emerge from the heart of the Church and provide frontiers of faith in action.

I would have underscored most of these statements, had I not learned more from within the whole process. I have noticed that in terms of reconciliation, African bishops and theologians need to give the example by learning to work together. Theologians’ involvement remains insufficient, to my judgment. As a Bible student, I am amazed at the fact that the literary genre and the socio-historical contexts of the documents

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3 The survey made by the Holy See should have been carried down to the whole Christian communities so that they be involved right from the start.

are not taken into consideration by commentators. First of all, the conclusions of the symposia organized by theologians oftentimes remained on the shelves of our libraries and hardly reached the right desk. Second, as Stan Chu Ilo rightly said the *Lineamenta* is meant to stimulate discussions and gather the necessary data for the redaction of the working document, which the Synod Fathers use in Aula for their interventions. How are the conclusions of the symposia and studies after the publication of the working document going to enrich the Synod conversation? Third, how many bishops would be ready to read a voluminous document and then digest it in order to make, within the time span of 5 minutes, a fruitful contribution beyond their daily pastoral concerns? If as theologians we were ready to serve efficiently, we would take the right steps and make for our bishops in-depth readings “so that through preparatory study the judgment of the Church may mature, as it were” (*Dei Verbum* n.12). The challenge here is to make sure that the person who decides is helped to do it properly. Therefore, the stake is ecclesiological.

### Celebrating the Synod

The Synod definitely proved to be a genuine experiment in listening. No conversation takes place and makes sense unless there is a listening attitude from the participants. Furthermore, a synod is a moment of discernment, which means listening to the Holy Spirit through one another. And those who have attended many Synods testify that during a Synod, there always comes a turning point that marks a shift. From my own observation and experience, three voices made that shift and may exemplify the correlation between the theme of the Synod and the real life of the Church in Africa.

#### The Voice of Peace Exemplified by Archbishop François-Xavier Maroy Rusengo

The Archbishop of Bukavu, the eastern region of DR Congo, had to leave the Synod because of the violence imposed on his people back home. Here is what he shared:

As we deliberate during these sessions, he said, the pastoral agents in our archdiocese are threatened by the same enemies of peace. One of our archdiocesan parishes was burnt down last Friday 2 October; priests were molested, others were taken hostage by some men in uniform who demanded an important ransom for which we had to pay to save the lives of the priests who were in danger of being murdered. This night, from [October] 5th to 6th, one community of Marist Brothers who work in education was systematically sacked.

Two sad events in less than one week, the thing which obliges me to leave this Synod and return home so that I can be close to my people, who are once again traumatized. By these gestures, it is the Church, the only remaining support for a terrorized, humiliated, exploited, dominated people that they want to reduce to silence. Like my predecessor, Mgr Emmanuel...
KATALIKO who died here in Rome on 4 October 2000, I also say: we must speak because the people are suffering. We must speak to the Heads of the States. It is necessary to speak to the leaders; we have to address Africa a message of reconciliation and peace. Lord, may your will be done.

The weight of his decision to join his people can only be measured against the recent history of the pastoral context which he himself clearly portrayed as he said:

It revives the memory of the work accomplished by my three predecessors as archbishops of Bukavu. All of them died in a time span of 9 years. One was assassinated in the town of Bukavu. The second one, Bishop Emmanuel Kataliko, died here in Rome on 4 October 2000. Both of them fell in the context of persecutions and traumas in which they exercised their pastoral ministry with exemplary prophetic courage.

This voice teaches us that the Church in Africa must have the courage to take a prophetic attitude of solidarity with the oppressed, to speak up on behalf of the poor and the needy, to defend the marginalized and the downtrodden.

The Voice of Justice Exemplified by Sister Felicia Harry

The second voice exemplified the call for “Justice”. Although it did not outline all the areas where justice must be reclaimed, it called the attention of the Church on the fate of women. Sister Felicia Harry shared the following words:

We do not want to remain at the periphery of the main body of the parish; we want to be an integral part of this body. We do not want to take over the responsibility of the parish priest, we just want to be equal partners in the Lord’s vineyard; we want to share in the Church’s responsibility of ensuring reconciliation, peace and justice on our continent. [...] If our Church in Africa hopes for reconciliation, peace and justice on our continent, we must begin from within. How do we facilitate this? A few suggestions here:

- No one group should feel superior to dominate.
- There should be change of mentality with regard to women especially religious women in our Church in Africa.
- There should be conversion of heart by all. And may be an exercise here for our Synod Fathers. Before we go to bed tonight, let everyone of you take two minutes to reflect on the Church without women today.

How do you think the Assembly reacted? They simply applauded with laughter. Such a response may be interpreted as an approval, an agreement that Sr. Harry got it right. Indeed, the issue of women as equal partners in the mission of the Church has not yet been reflected upon in a satisfactory manner. It is a matter of justice. The Message of the Synod responded positively when it said that: “The Synod has a special word for you, Catholic women. You are often the backbone of the local Church” (n.25; my emphasis). Beneath the issue of women lies the problem of the family: education, children, etc.

The Voice of Reconciliation Exemplified by Sister Geneviève Uwamariya

The third voice aroused a lot of emotions. It exemplified the call for “reconciliation” from the experience of Rwanda. Sr. Geneviève Uwamariya’s call brought forth the

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7 Sister Felicia Harry was the Superior General of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Apostles (Ghana).
8 Sister Geneviève Uwamariya is a member of « Sainte-Marie de Namur » (Rwanda).
unthinkable and even the unbearable part of our African History. She said:

On 27 August 1997, at 13.00 hrs, three years after the genocide, a group from the association of our Lady of Divine Mercy brought me to two prisons of the region of Kibuye, my home town. They were coming to prepare the prisoners for the Jubilee 2000. They shared this message: "if you have killed, ask for forgiveness from the surviving victims, in that way, you are helping them to free themselves of the weight of revenge, hatred and anger." "If you are a victim, offer forgiveness to the one who has wronged you and in that way you help him/her to free himself or herself of the weight of his crimes and the evil in him."

This message had an unexpected effect for me and in me... After that, one of the prisoners rose up in tears, fell on his knees begging me in a loud voice: “Mercy”. My body stiffened upon recognising before me a family friend who grew up and shared everything with us.

He confessed having killed my father and gave me details of the deaths of my other family members. A feeling of pity and compassion invaded me: I lifted him up, embraced him and told him in tears: “you are and you will remain my brother.”

I felt a big weight fall off me... I recovered my inner peace and I said thank you to the one who just told me the truth and was still in my arms. To my surprise, I heard him shout: “justice may do its work and condemn me to death, but now I am a free man!”

This last testimony had a deep impact on all the participants, and even beyond. At the conclusion of the Synod, Pope Benedict made an indirect quotation of the Sister’s sharing in his homily:

[The Synod strongly confirmed and manifested this that the Church is the Family of God, in which there can be no divisions based on ethnic, language or cultural groups. Moving witnesses showed us that, even in the darkest moments of human history, the Holy Spirit is at work and transforming the hearts of the victims and the persecutors, that they may know each other as brothers. The reconciled Church is the potent leaven of reconciliation in each country and in the whole African continent].

These life testimonies speak volumes on the significance of the Church’s mission of reconciliation. When we pay attention to the narratives of these voices, what can we see? We can see a bishop who is aware that in some parts of Africa the Church remains the only shield for the little ones, the week and the marginalized. She stands as the Voice of the Voiceless, at her risk and peril. We can see a woman, a religious woman, pleading for more justice within the Church. And finally, we can see the women of the association of our Lady of Divine Mercy who brought an escaped victim to get reconciled with her father’s killer. This confirms what Sister Harry suggested, namely that “no one group should feel superior to dominate”. In our case, a woman religious, Sr. Uwamariya, is led by lay women to the fountain of Divine Mercy.

As we may have noticed, reconciliation begins within and flows from there to outside. The Women Association of Divine Mercy can symbolize the Church whose mission is to bring the Word and let it work. In Sr. Uwamariya’s case, the power of the Word liberated the killer from fear to the point that he cried out: “justice may do its work and condemn me to death, but now I am a free man!” It raises in me a hard question: Can justice lead to reconciliation or shall we say that reconciliation paves the way to justice? As a process, reconciliation should start within oneself although mediated by a genuine encounter with the offended non judgmental other. Then, and only then, can the forensic justice achieve its goal and bring harmony in human society. Here again,

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life experience gave the right words to Sr. Uwamariya to advise the Church to be servant of the Word of God:

Reconciliation is not just something that can be taken to two persons or two groups in conflict, there is need rather to re-establish each one in love and to allow for inner healing so as to obtain mutual freedom. Hence, this is the importance of the Church in our countries, because she has the mission of preaching the Word, the Word that heals, frees and reconciles.

**Reconciliation as the Church’s Mission**

The General Report before the discussions (*Relatio ante-disceptationem*) delivered by Cardinal Peter Turkson brought to the table a Biblical understanding of reconciliation. For him, just as God took the initiative to restore his relation with humanity, likewise people must work to restore communion among themselves. But ultimately, it is God who operates reconciliation among human beings.

In Scripture, *reconciliation* is a divine initiative, a free and a gratuitous move, which God initiates towards humanity; and its purpose is to repair and to restore the communion that covenant establishes, but which sin threatens and breaks up.

The key terms connected to reconciliation therefore are “communion”, “restoration”, “covenant”, “sin”, etc. From the report, one retains the proposal, taken from Scripture, that we humans should get reconciled with one another just as God did with us. But how did God do that? *He took the initiative to restore the broken covenant. He made the first step towards us.* This happened through the Incarnation of the Son of God: Jesus. The Incarnation therefore becomes the metaphor of the perfect form of reconciliation between God and humanity. Christ is thus the covenant made flesh. While God recognizes in Christ the perfection of humanity, we fail to recognize the perfect presence of God to us in Jesus. As a consequence, this failure affects our capacity to see in our fellow humans the divine image, the divine presence. The Synod Fathers felt the urgency and importance of working to restore this very capacity to see God in others.

Though clearly defined, the mission of the Church with regard to reconciliation remains a delicate task. The person who pointed it out was Pope Benedict himself. He made us aware that the theme of the synod, the three terms in particular, sets the Church in a position somewhere between an active engagement in politics and a withdrawn theological speculation while there is a strong call for a historical commitment. This point was taken up by the apostolic exhortation *Africae Munus* in its second part (n. 17), which defines the mission of the Church.

The three week sessions of the Synod can be qualified as an experiment in sharing and listening. They did not bring up answers to pastoral key issues but directives and a deep awareness of the form evangelization in Africa must take today in order to be relevant. That is why we hear the Apostolic Exhortation say:

Evangelization today takes the name of reconciliation, “an indispensable condition for instilling in Africa justice among men and women, and building a fair and lasting peace that respects

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12 Card. Peter Turkson, “Relatio ante disceptationem” (Report before the discussions).
each individual and all peoples; a peace that… is open to the contribution of all people of
good will irrespective of their religious, ethnic, linguistic, cultural and social backgrounds.13

The need for a renewed faith commitment and an in-depth theological reflection surfaced in the discussions of the Synod. This aspect too is echoed by the Exhortation:

While earnestly desiring to help implement the directives of the Synod on such burning is-

sues as reconciliation, justice and peace, I express my trust that “theologians will continue
to probe the depths of the Trinitarian mystery and its meaning for everyday African life”. Since
the vocation of all men and women is one, we must not lose our zest for the reconciliation
of humanity with God through the mystery of our salvation in Christ. Our redemption is the
reason for the confidence and the firmness of our hope, “by virtue of which we can face
our present: the present, even if it is arduous, can be loved and accepted if it leads towards
a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of
the journey14”.

At the heart of our Christian faith lies the secret of a reconciled community: the
Trinitarian Divine Family where different idioms are offered and received through love
in such a way that the Three are One. So, a community divided by conflicts based on
differences of gender, ethnicity, social status, etc., can be reshaped by a word inspired
by the divine model. The deep desire of the Synod Fathers to lead the Church in Africa
and the peoples of Africa to becoming a reconciled community must face a challenging
question: How do we concretely do that?

The complexity of the task of reconciliation

Our modern societies are principle oriented. And Africa is striving today to live up
to the principle of democracy. But the Church follows a slightly different path. She fol-

lows a person’s words and deeds. She is Christ-oriented for Jesus Christ is the embodi-

ment of her key principles. The way the Church articulates the principle of justice and
reconciliation takes its source from Jesus’ own behavior and teaching. But the divine
model of reconciliation through justice as portrayed by Jesus own life looks like a uto-
pia. Let’s name a few issues: Justice and Reconciliation, Spirituality of Reconciliation,
and Church and Politics.

Justice and Reconciliation

As a matter of fact, one may wonder how the Church is going to implement the
kind of justice defined in the Exhortation, and called “justice of love”:

If the justice of love […] gives itself to the utmost, to taking upon itself the “curse” laid upon
men, that they may receive in exchange the “blessing” which is God’s gift (cf. Gal 3:13-14).
Divine justice indicates to human justice, limited and imperfect as it is, the horizon to which
it must tend if it is to become perfect. Moreover, it makes us aware of our own poverty, our
need for forgiveness and for God’s friendship15.

In a court of law, I can hardly imagine an innocent reclaiming for him/herself the
sentence of a culprit. And at the level of reconciliation, who can make as a rule that the

14 Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus, n.172.
15 Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus, n. 25.
mediator must taken upon him/herself the hatred of our African “Jews and Gentiles”, be they ethnic, religious, or racial. Sister Uwamariya was blessed with the grace of considering the person who killed her father as a brother. Can this be made a rule of law for all? It cannot be. But the Church knows that her “tasks […] in Africa consists in forming upright consciences receptive to the demands of justice, so as to produce men and women willing and able to build this just social order by their responsible conduct.\textsuperscript{16}"

**Spirituality of Reconciliation and Communion**

The real task clearly identified by the Synod Fathers was to form the individual Christian to the *sequela Christi*. The response to this challenge was basically a call to develop a spirituality of reconciliation and communion. What are the means the Church can dispose of to make this formation effective? The sacrament of reconciliation was given as a concrete response\textsuperscript{17}. Our way of celebrating this sacrament though proved insufficient, not from the point of view of God’s grace, but of our enactment of this grace. The reason may be the need for a deeper understanding of the relation between the “I” and the “We” in our African cultures and societies. Our pastoral structures are usually mass oriented through associations, groups meetings, etc. The Church, I believe, must foster a better correlation between the “I” responsible for the “We”, in a context where the “We” tend to override the “I”.

**Church and Politics**

Another challenging field which remains difficult to articulate from a pragmatic point of view remains the relation between Church and Politics. The Synod Fathers quickly became aware that the Church in Africa needs to find her place in the African public space. The faithful and even Church leaders are puzzled by the idea taken for granted that the Church should not get involved in politics. Measured against our recent history where bishops and priests were called upon to help some nations in their political transition, one should qualify the thesis which excludes the Church from political affairs. The Papal Exhortation stated clearly the discomfort the Church needs to dispel, as it says:

> The task we have to set for ourselves is not an easy one, situated as it is somewhere between immediate engagement in politics – which lies outside the Church’s direct competence – and the potential for withdrawal or evasion present in a theological and spiritual speculation which could serve as an escape from concrete historical responsibility.\textsuperscript{18}

This awareness moves us a step forward. But how is the Church going to act legitimately in the public sphere? The quotation I have given above provides the right qualifications we need to devise ways of getting involved in politics. Our notion of Church whole community and therefore are seen as representatives of the Church as institution cannot engage directly in politics. This means there should be an indirect way of doing it. On the other hand, the laity, who by the way was impressively represented at the Synod, is considered as the Church’s presence in worldly affairs where they

\textsuperscript{16} Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Africæ Munus*, n. 22.
\textsuperscript{17} Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Africæ Munus*, nn. 25; 32; 33; 11; 155-158.
\textsuperscript{18} Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Africæ Munus*, n. 17; see n. 22 as well.
must become “salt” and “light”. This division of the work may look simple but in fact it calls for more thinking. The shortcut would be to say that the leaders of the Church must form the conscience of the laity to the mind of the Gospel, by using the Social Teaching of the Church, so that they can commit themselves in the political sphere in coherence with their Christian faith. Reality though decides otherwise. Can we imagine a Christian politician with the mandate of the Church, seen as his/her faith community, to back political options based on faith convictions? Or, can we imagine the bishops’ voice reduced to the internal Christian audience without any interference with the wider society? The implications of these questions are that the laity with a Church mandate would be directly engaged in politics as Church members, and the leaders would simply be in charge of their formation. This may sound logic, but the weight of history is such that the favorite model would rather look like the Parliamentary Liaison Office of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference, the interface between Church and State.

The ecclesiological model here moves from the hierarchical to a communal, a more organic way of proceeding, where the Church acts as a body, the mystical body of Christ. In her mission of reconciliation in Africa, the Church should favor a more collaborative and participative approach to social problems such as reconciliation, justice and peace. The implementation of this vision, which is nothing but the very essence of the Church as Family, requires a wholehearted response to the call for metanoia.

**Conclusion:** From what I have developed thus far, I believe that the Church’s mission of reconciliation in Africa today is a crucial one, since her focus and her interest are nothing but the wholeness of the human person unlike most political structures. On the other hand, the Synod gave to the Fathers the opportunity to experience real communion and to learn from one another how to go about reconciling people.

Looking back at the Synod, my conviction is that all the issues raised at this ecclesial gathering have already got an initial response somewhere somehow on the continent itself. The main challenge the Church in Africa has to face, according to me, is to succeed in sharing the various (positive) experiences made on the continent: structures of dialogue on political issues as in South Africa, financial felicitous initiatives such as Banks and Insurance Companies as in Uganda, Catholic outstanding Universities as in Kenya, etc. We lack channels of effective communication in order to avail the findings of some local churches to others. And the failure to celebrate in 2009, the 40th anniversary of SECAM, symbol of solidarity and communion, just before the Synod is a case in point.

Nevertheless, the Second African Synod opened the doors of the Church to African realities just as the Second Vatican Council did 50 years ago for the entire Church vis-à-vis the world. And therefore, the post-Synodal exhortation *Africae Munus* can fairly be considered as a roadmap for the coming years.

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19 “The Parliamentary Liaison Office of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference is the official vehicle for contact and dialogue between the Catholic Church in South Africa on the one hand, and the country’s Parliament and government on the other. It provides an avenue for the Church - as part of civil society - to contribute to debates on issues of public policy, to exert an influence for the common good in areas of political, economic and social concern, and to help shape legislative and policy developments.” [http://www.cplo.org.za/site/](http://www.cplo.org.za/site/) (February, 19th, 2012).

20 See Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus*, n.32.
Reciprocity in Matters of Religious Freedom, an Imperative for Interreligious Dialogue

Reading from *Africae Munus*

Norbert Litoing, SJ*

**Abstract:** This paper ponders on the issue of religious freedom as a prerequisite for any genuine interfaith dialogue. *Africae Munus*’ take on religious freedom serves as launch pad for the reflection. The question shall be examined from the point of view of Islam, with the question of dhimmitude and from the point of view of Christianity with reference to Canon Law on interfaith marriages.

No man by nature is bound unto any particular church or sect, but everyone joins himself voluntarily to that society in which he believes he has found that profession and worship which is truly acceptable to God. The hope of salvation, as it was the only cause of his entrance into that communion, so it can be the only reason of his stay there.

John Locke, Letter concerning Toleration, 1693.

**Introduction:** Freedom of religion is one of the fundamental human rights. Indeed, “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.” In the post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Africae Munus*, Pope Benedict XVI points to the need for reciprocity in matters of religious freedom in Islamic-Christian dialogue. The pope asks “the whole Church, through patient dialogue with Muslims, to seek juridical and practical recognition of religious freedom, so that every citizen in Africa may enjoy not only the right to choose his religion freely and to engage in worship, but also the right to freedom of conscience [since] Religious freedom is the road to peace.” In this assertion, the pope echoes the *lineamenta* of the second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, and reiterates the teaching of the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* in which pope John Paul II had already expressed the desire that “particular care be taken so that Islamic-Christian dialogue respects on both sides the principle of religious freedom with all that it involves, also including external and public manifestations of faith.” Reciprocity in matters of religious freedom thus stands out as a recurrent issue in Islamic-Christian dialogue the world at large and Africa in particular. Any keen observer must have noticed the closing of churches and rejection of visas for Christian clerics to particular Islamic countries, while on the other hand those same countries are financing the construction of mosques.

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1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 18.

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Reciprocity in Matters of Religious Freedom, an Imperative for Interreligious Dialogue

in countries with a Christian majority and trips by Muslim clerics for training purposes.\textsuperscript{5} This lack of reciprocity in matters of religious freedom renders Islamic-Christian dialogue at best cumbersome and at worst impossible since the minimum condition necessary for dialogue, that is, acknowledging the other as an equal partner, is not fulfilled. Here, we will set out to examine the issue of religious freedom in Islam, with particular focus on \textit{dhimmitude}. We shall then proceed to examine ways in which it is still present in some of the attitudes adopted by Muslims vis-à-vis Christians. We shall then try to do the same in relation to Christianity. The ultimate goal is to show that on either side, there is need for renewed effort to commit to reciprocity in religious freedom even though, as things stand, Muslims seem to have more to do in terms of entering into this attitude.

I. RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: A MUSLIM PERSPECTIVE

Islam and Religious Freedom: Dhimmitude

Does Islam guarantee the freedom of belief? Those who answer in affirmative to this question often back their stance with the following Qur’anic verse: “there is no compulsion in religion” (2:256). Other verses of the Qur’an hinting to religious freedom include the following: “We have truly shown him the way; he may be thankful or unthankful” (76:3). “Clear proofs have indeed come to you from your Lord: so whoever sees, it is for his own good; and whoever is blind, it is to his own harm. And I am not a keeper over you” (6:104). “If they accept Islam, then indeed they follow the right way; and if they turn back, your duty (O Prophet) is only to deliver the message” (3:20).

Historically, as Islam penetrated new areas, people were offered three options: (1) conversion which consisted in becoming a member of the Muslim community with the rights and duties which this entailed; (2) acceptance of Muslim rule which conferred the status of “protected” people (\textit{dhimmi}) and entailed the payment of a poll tax (\textit{jizya}); (3) battle or the sword, which inexorably meant death, if neither of the first two options was accepted.\textsuperscript{6} It would be interesting to dwell on the second option, that of becoming \textit{dhimmi} since some of its vestiges are discernible nowadays in the way Muslims still treat believers of other religious traditions in areas where they are a majority.

The practice of \textit{dhimmitude} dates back to Muhammad’s days. In fact, in 628, Muhammad and his followers launched an attack against the Jews who lived at the oasis of Khaybar, northwest of Medina.\textsuperscript{7} After a siege, the Jews surrendered. Muhammad decided to allow them to continue living at the oasis, on condition that they gave him half of the dates from their orchards.\textsuperscript{8} He reserved himself the right to expropriate them whenever he chose. This attitude became a standard for the treatment of conquered Jews and Christians, known as \textit{dhimmi}. The Qur’an states: “Fight against such of those to whom the Scriptures were given as believe neither in Allah nor the Last Day, who do not forbid what Allah and his apostles have forbidden, and do not embrace the true

\textsuperscript{5} The same could be said about some fundamentalist Christian groupings even though at a lesser scale.


\textsuperscript{7} Bat Ye’or, \textit{The Decline of Eastern Christianity Under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude} (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996), 44.

faith, until they pay tribute (jizya)\(^9\) out of hand and are utterly subdued” (9:29). Forced conversions were the rule of the day for conquered pagans.\(^10\) But Jews and Christians and, to a certain extent, Zoroastrians, were allowed to keep their religion on condition that they accept to endorse the *dhimmi* status. Here is an example of a treaty conferring a *dhimmi* status to the people of Aelia under Omar Ibn al-Khattab, the second Caliph of the Islamic community:

**In the name of Allah ar-Rahman ar-Raheem**

This is what the servant of Allah, Umar, the Amir of the believers has granted to the people of Aelia (Al-Quds) for safety: He has granted them security for themselves, their belongings, their churches and crosses, their sick and healthy and all their co-religionists. Their churches shall not be taken for residence and shall not be demolished, nothing shall be damaged from them or from their surroundings, nor shall their crosses be removed or anything taken from their property. They shall not be harassed because of their religion, and none of them shall be harmed. No Jew will be allowed to live with them in Aelia.

The people of Aelia will have to pay Jizyah (tax) as the dwellers of cities pay. They have to eject from Aelia the Romans and thieves. Those of them who leave shall have safety for themselves and their belongings until they reach a safe destination, anyone from them who wants to stay in Aelia shall be safe provided they pay the Jizyah like the people of Aelia.

If any of the people of Aelia want to leave with the Romans and take their belongings with them they and their churches and crosses shall be safe until they reach a place of safety. Any of the people of the land who were in Aelia before the slaying of its last leader shall have the option of either staying provided they pay the tax like the people of Aelia or if they so wish, they shall be allowed to leave with the Romans or go back to their original homes. No tax shall be collected from them until they are able to pay it.

The promise of Allah, His Messenger, the Khalifah, and the believers is therefore given to abide by the contents of this treaty as long as the people pay their due tax.

Witnessed by: Khalid ibn al-Walid, Amr ibn al-‘As, Abdur Rahman ibn ‘Auf, Mu’awiah ibn Abi Sufyan.

Written in the year 15 AH.  
*Tariikh al-Tabari, v3 609\(^11\)*

Generally speaking, *dhimmi* were inferior subjects, second class citizens. A number of restrictions were imposed on them. They could not, for example, put on clothing with a green colour, the traditional colour of Islam, nor luxurious clothing.\(^12\) They could not stand on a roof for fear that they might see a Muslim woman bathing. *Dhimmi* could not build homes taller than Muslim ones. They couldn’t ring church bells, pray, or carry out any other pious activities where a Muslim might see them. The construction of new synagogues or churches, as well as exterior repairs were banned.\(^13\) They could not ride on saddled horses. Nevertheless, within the community they constituted among themselves, *dhimmi* were allowed to be governed by their own laws.

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\(^9\) The *jizya* was a special tax levied on *dhimmi*.

\(^10\) A pagan could not be granted *dhimmi* status. If he refused to convert to Islam, he was either killed or enslaved.


\(^12\) Charles Oman, *A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen & Co., 1924), 357.

At this point in time, it would be interesting to examine ways in which dhi
mitude survives in the attitude of Muslims vis-à-vis Christians in places where Muslims are a majority. We shall do this using the case of the application of Shari’a Law in some Northern States of Nigeria and the issue of interfaith marriages in Tambacounda (Senegal).

**The Application of Shari’a Law in Some Northern States of Nigeria**

From 1999 onwards, twelve of the thirty-six states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria have adopted the Shari’a Penal Code Law (SPCL). These states are: Zamfara, Jigawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Kaduna, Katsina, Yobe, Niger, Kano, Sokoto, Kebbi, and Borno. All these states are situated in the North of Nigeria and have a predominantly Muslim population even though there are sizeable Christian populations particularly in the major cities. The possibility for a state to have a Shari’a Court of Appeal is provided for in Section 275 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Section 277 of the same constitution specifies the areas over which such courts will have jurisdiction. The adoption of the SPCL by the aforementioned states raised eyebrows outside and within Nigeria. In fact, the SPCL raises questions about basic human rights and human dignity as well as questions pertaining to the separation of state and religion.

Hauwa Ibrahim points out a number of reasons that could account for the adoption and implementation of the SPCL in northern Nigeria. One reason advanced is the fact that the Nigerian federation is becoming more and more decentralized and this takes on the form of cultural self-determination. Another reason is the perception of Shari’a “militancy” as a political bargaining chip. By adopting the SPCL, northern states seek to assert new forms of autonomy in order to challenge the federal government and thus prepare the ground for a renegotiation of the allotment of power and resources at the national level. A third explanation for the rise of Shari’a militancy is the global context. In fact, “one of the repercussions of globalization is its arousal of cultural insecurity and uncertainty about identities worldwide.” This insecurity leads to reactionary fragmentation of ethnic and cultural identities. Last but not least, the adoption of the Shari’a is attributed to the mounting influence of fundamentalist groups. These groups, such as Boko Haram, seek the establishment of an Islamic State in the North of Nigeria.

Professor Auwalu Yadudu, a Harvard trained lawyer and an advocate of the SPCL, bases his argument on Section 38 of the 1999 Constitution which guarantees freedom of religion. He opines that

a Muslim firmly believes that his submission to the Will of Allah is inchoate if he were to choose or be made to follow some part of His, Allah’s, injunctions, the personal law, and abandon others, the penal system. The Shari’a, defined as the Path which embodies the totality of Islamic guidance, seeks to govern every aspect of a believer’s life. Islam, being a complete way of life for the believers, knows not the dichotomy so much flaunted by non-

14 The Arabic word Shari’a refers to a waterway that leads to a main water source. Just as water is a necessary element of life, so is Shari’a indispensable to the well-being of a Muslim. Shari’a thus offers guidance and laws for a complete way of life. The laws that make up Shari’a are derived from four sources: the Qur’an; the Sunna (customs, every day habits and religious practices of Muhammad as recorded by his companions and family); the Hadith (recorded teachings and actions of Muhammad not found in the Qur’an); and the Ijma (“universal agreement” within the Muslim community that defines what the Qur’an and the Sunna mean).

Muslims, especially Christians, that religion is a private affair of the individual. To the best of his belief, therefore, a Muslim conceives of his faith as demanding a total submission to the Shari'a. To a Muslim, freedom of conscience and to profess a religion of his choice alone or in company of others amounts to not much if a pre-condition, which by the way may be perfectly acceptable to followers of other religions, is stipulated for him.16

He further argues that the Nigerian Constitution does not declare Nigeria to be a secular state and that the step taken by governors to implement the Shari'a does not violate Section 10 of the Constitution which prohibits the adoption of a state religion.

However, many Christians contend that instituting Shari'a courts tantamount to the espousal of Islam as a state religion. The Civil Liberties Organization, a prominent nongovernmental organization (NGO), equally shares this view and asserts that Zamfara State promoted Islam as a state religion through its establishment of a Commission for Religious Affairs. Furthermore, albeit the fact that the SPCL technically does not apply to non-Muslims in civil and criminal proceedings, a number of social customs motivated by Shari'a, such as the separation of sexes in public schools, health care, voting, and transportation services, have affected non-Muslim minorities in the North. Some Christians in the predominantly Muslim northern states assert that local government officials use all means available to hamper or slow the erection of new churches and, in some cases, even demolish churches that had existed for as long as a decade.

The Issue of Inter-Faith Marriages in Tambacounda

Just as for all other aspects of societal life, the Qur’an lays down guidelines for marriage. One of the main traits the faithful is invited to look for in a potential spouse is sameness in religious outlook. For the sake of compatibility and the upbringing of future children, it is highly recommended that a Muslim marries another Muslim. Nevertheless it is permissible, in certain circumstances, for a Muslim to marry a non-Muslim but this is always with a prerequisite: the non-Muslim has to convert to Islam or be envisioning doing so in the future. We shall examine two cases to illustrate this fact.

i) Muslim Man and Non-Muslim Woman

As a matter of general principle, a Muslim man is not allowed to marry a non-Muslim woman. The Qur’an is clear: “Do not marry unbelieving women until they believe. A slave woman who believes is better than an unbelieving woman, even though she allures you.... Unbelievers beckon you to the Fire. But Allah beckons by His Grace to the garden of bliss and forgiveness. And He makes His signs clear to mankind, that they may receive admonition” (Qur’an 2:221).

However, Muslim men are allowed to marry a woman belonging to the “People of the Book,” that is, a pious Jewish or Christian woman: “This day are all things good and pure made lawful to you.... Lawful to you in marriage are not only chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book, revealed before your time, when you give them their due dowers, and desire chastity not lewdness. If any


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one rejects faith, fruitless is his work, and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost” (Qur’an 5:5).

It is expected that the children of such a union will be raised in accordance with the Islamic faith and this has to be made clear before the wedding. Usually, it is hoped that the Jew or the Christian party would convert to Islam. More often than not, the invitation to do so is explicitly addressed to the non-Muslim party prior to marriage.

ii) Muslim Woman and Non-Muslim Man

There are no conditions under which a Muslim woman is allowed to wed anyone but a Muslim man. In fact, the same verse cited above (2:221) asserts, “Nor marry your girls to unbelievers until they believe. A man slave who believes is better than an unbeliever...” There is no exception like is the case for men, opening the way to marrying Jews or Christians. This is so because as head of the household, the husband is supposed to provide leadership for the family. There is no way in which a Muslim woman can be expected to follow the leadership of someone who does not share her faith and values.

From these two examples, it stands out clearly that Islam’s take on inter-faith marriage is one which is geared at leading the other party to embrace the Islamic faith. My experience in Tambacounda (Senegal) has been that even in situations where the Muslim husband-to-be asserts that he is going to let his Christian wife-to-be practice her faith and eventually raise their future children according to the Christian faith, it usually turns out to be something completely different. Either under the pressure of the in-laws or a failure of the man himself to keep his word, the woman ends up, some time after the marriage, converting to Islam and children are inevitably brought up in accordance with Islamic faith.

II. RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

The Church’s Theological Stance toward Other Religions prior to Nostra Aetate

A question that is worth asking at this level is to know whether there is an equivalent to dhimmitude in the Church’s approach to non-Christian religions. All proportions kept, this could be identified in the Church’s theological stance toward non-Christian religions prior to the ground-breaking Vatican II declaration, Nostra Aetate. The occasion for the drafting of Nostra Aetate was provided by the mounting need to open a new page in the relations of the Church to Jews and Judaism. As such, in examining the Church’s theological stance prior to Nostra Aetate, we shall be laying particular emphasis on its attitude towards Jews and Judaism.

A statement of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) summarizes well the official position of the Church’s teaching authority prior to Nostra Aetate: “There is one universal Church of believers, outside which there is no salvation at all for any.” This view point will be made more explicit by the Council of Florence (1438-1445):

It [Council] firmly believes, professes, and proclaims those not living within the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews and heretics and schismatics, cannot become participants in eternal life, but will depart ‘into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels’ [Mt 25:41], unless before the end of life the same have been added to the flock … and
that no one, whatever almsgiving he has practised, even if he has shed blood for the name of Christ, can be saved, unless he has remained in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church.17

In reaction to the first Zionist conference held in 1897 in Switzerland, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, a quasi-official Vatican journal purported that:

1827 years have passed since the prediction of Jesus of Nazareth was fulfilled ... that the Jews would be led away to be slaves among all the nations and that they would remain in the dispersion until the end of the world... According to the Sacred Scriptures, the Jewish people must always live dispersed and wandering among the other nations, so that they may render witness to Christ not only by the Scriptures ... but by their very existence.18

A few years after this assertion, the founder of the Zionist movement, Theodor Herzl, was travelling across Europe to garner support for the establishment of a Jewish independent state in the British Mandate of Palestine. He made arrangements for a meeting with the then Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Merry del Val (22 January 1904). The Cardinal's response was summarized by Herzl in his diary in the following words: “in order that we [the Roman Catholic Church] should come out for the Jewish people in the way you desire, they should first have to accept conversion.” After this meeting, he was equally granted an audience with Pius X and the Pope had this reply to his plea: “We are unable to favour this movement. We cannot prevent the Jews going to Jerusalem, but we could never sanction it ... The Jews have not recognized our Lord; therefore we cannot recognize the Jewish people... If you come to Palestine and settle your people there, our churches and priests will be ready to baptize all of you.”19 By asserting this, Pope Pius X was simply reiterating the perception of Jews that was more or less normative in the Christian world at the time. In fact, the Good Friday liturgy still incorporated, among the “Great Intercessions,” a petition that God “remove the veil” of blindness from the hearts of “perfidious Jews” that “they may be rescued from their darkness.”

In 1938, Pope Pius XI commissioned the preparation of an encyclical letter entitled *Humani Generis Unitas* (The Unity of the Human Race). It was intended to condemn racism in the wake of Hitler’s rise to power in Germany. This letter was ultimately never promulgated because of the pope’s death. A section of the draft of this letter pertaining to anti-Semitism gives in a nutshell pre-Vatican II Catholic theological stance on Jews and Judaism.20 While it rebuked the circumstances under which millions of [Jewish] persons were being deprived of the most basic rights and privileges of citizens, this section went on to purport that there is an “authentic basis of the social separation of the Jews from the rest of humanity.” This basis for discrimination was not race but religion: “The Saviour ... was rejected by that people, violently repudiated, and condemned as a criminal by the highest tribunals of the Jewish nation.”21 Generally speaking, the main theological positions of the draft about Jews were a restatement of the perennial Christian “teaching of contempt” summarized in a third-century teaching by Origen:

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One of the facts which show that Jesus was some divine and sacred person is just that on his account such great and fearful calamities have now for a long time befallen the Jews...For they committed the most impious crime of all, when they conspired against the Saviour of mankind, in the city where they performed to God the customary rites which were symbols of profound mysteries. Therefore that city where Jesus suffered these indignities had to be utterly destroyed. The Jewish nation had to be overthrown, and God’s invitation to blessedness transferred to others, I mean the Christians, to whom came the teaching about the simple and pure worship of God. And they received new laws which fit in with the order established everywhere.

Jews were thus collectively accused of deicide and the ills that befell them were seen as their just reward.

As things stand, therefore, the official attitude of the Church towards Jews was at best condescending and at worst one of antipathy. To differing degrees, this attitude was very much the same toward other religious traditions. As such, even though there is not to our knowledge evidence of taxes being levied, the attitude adopted toward Jews in particular and adherents of other religions in general will be one of dhimmitude. The build-up to *Nostra Aetate* further illustrates this.

**The Build-up to Nostra Aetate**

In 1960, Pope John XXIII established the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and appointed Augustine Cardinal Bea as its head. Initially meant to help non-Catholic Christians follow the proceedings of the Council, this secretariat was soon entrusted with the task of reaching out to Judaism and other religions. In line with this task, Cardinal Bea arranged for a meeting between the French Jewish history scholar, Jules Isaac, and Pope John XXIII. Isaac, the author of *Has Anti-Semitism Roots in Christianity?* explained to the pope how, in the Middle Ages, Christianity had developed a “teaching of contempt” for Jews. According to him, it is this teaching that led to anti-Semitism and, in the Nazi era, to the Holocaust. This encounter and others led Pope John XXIII to modify the Good Friday prayer concerning Jews, notably by removing the word *perfidus* from the prayer. He greeted a delegation of American Jews with the biblical words, “I am Joseph your brother,” suggesting that reconciliation between Catholics and Jews could be envisioned. Pope John XXIII equally notified officials in the Vatican Curia that the forthcoming Council ought to include a clear condemnation of anti-Semitism. In preparation for this, the secretariat headed by Cardinal Bea drafted a document on Catholic-Jewish relations entitled *De Judaesis* (On the Jews). This document provoked heated discussions about its content and wording. Also, the very existence of the text raised the question of other religious traditions: ‘if a statement about the Jews, why not about Muslims; if Muslims, why not other religions; if other religions why not those who profess no religious faith?’ Decision was finally taken to address Judaism within the larger context of the world’s major religions. This was a compromise and in the terms of Walter Cardinal Kasper, it was “in order to save the furniture from the burning house.” “Despite fierce opposition, intrigue and sometimes outright slander,”

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22 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, IV, 22.


Aetate was promulgated on 28 October 1965, after a final, overwhelmingly favourable vote of 2221 bishops for and 88 against.25

As such, even though there is no equivalent of Shari’a in the Christian realm, the attitude of the Church toward other religions prior to Nostra Aetate was very much like that rampant in dhimmitude. Let’s further explore this change in attitude in relation with interfaith marriages as done above with the same issue in Tambacounda.

The Code of Canon Law on Inter-Faith / Disparity of Cult Marriages

Scriptural Background

There were many Inter-Faith marriages in Israel (cf. Gen 38:2, 41:45, 26:34; Ex 2:21). In Gen 26:34 and 36:2, we are told that Esau married Hittite women. In Num 12:1, we read that Moses married a Cushite woman, and when Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses over this marriage, God supported Moses and struck Miriam with leprosy. In Judges 12:9, a judge, Ibzan of Bethlehem allowed Inter-Faith marriage. In 1 Kings 3:1, Solomon married Pharaoh’s daughter, but there is no judgment passed against this marriage; neither is there any indication in the succeeding verses that the Lord was displeased with Solomon (cf. 1 Kings 3:2-15). In fact, in Dan 2:43, such marriages are viewed as a way of sealing alliances, but at the same time as not long-lasting. Ruth, a Moabite woman (Ruth 1:4) became the wife of Boaz (Ruth 4:30), the ancestor of David and the Messiah (Mt 1:5). Another prominent Israelite woman, Esther was married to the non-Jewish King Ahasuerus (Esther 2:16-18) and became a means for the protection and salvation of her people.

However, running through the Old Testament, there are also prohibitions against Inter-Faith marriages (cf. Gen 24:3; Ex 34:16; Ezra 9:12; 1 Kings 11:2; Deut 7:3-4; Josh 23:12-13). In general, such marriages were regarded as a source of unfaithfulness to the covenant and of sinfulness (1 Kings 11:8-9; Deut 7:3-4; Josh 23:12-13; Mal 2:10-11; Ezra 9: 1-2; 10:2;10:10; Neh 10:28-30; 13:26-27). As such, the prohibitions were linked to concern for community integrity. In 1 Kings 11:1-9, the Israelites are warned not to take foreign wives because they are likely to bring their own gods with them, a thing highly offensive to Yahweh. Israel perceived itself as a “holy people,” a nation set apart. Consequently, interfaith marriages, understood here as marriages outside one’s own clan or tribe, presented a risk to the faith: “For they would turn away your sons from following me [Yahweh] that they may serve other gods” (Dt 7:4). In Edward Schillebeeckx’s understanding, “the basic reason for opposing mixed marriages was, however, the danger which they constituted for the education in faith in Yahweh of Israel’s children.”26 As such, the concern was for later generations.

In both the exilic and post-exilic period, as Israelites began to marry “strangers”, the religious view against such marriages was put forward with mounting emphasis. Ezra and Nehemiah worked purposefully to put an end to such marriages (Ezra 2:59-62; 9:1-10, 44; Neh 7:61-64; 8:23-29). The “holy people” of Israel was on no account to “mix

Reciprocity in Matters of Religious Freedom, an Imperative for Interreligious Dialogue

itself with the peoples of the lands”, “the strangers” (Ezra 9:2). Consequently, Inter-Faith marriages were viewed as infidelity to Yahweh and to the covenant of Israel’s election. This is why Nehemiah, in his zeal, “cleansed them from everything foreign” (Neh 8:30).

Schillebeeckx has this to say about these facts:

All this may well sound rather like what we would call apartheid, but for Israel, and especially for post-exilic Jewish Israel, the “set apart” secular reality of the people could not be separated from the reality of salvation – her election as the one, chosen people of God…… The basic and essential dogmatic meaning of this Old Testament vision is undoubtedly that faithfulness to God takes precedence, even in marriage, should this ever lead to infidelity in religion; and moreover that in a mixed marriage it is a grave matter of conscience for the parents to bring up the children in this religion. How this duty was to be reconciled with the conscience of the other party in a mixed marriage is a problem which was not posed in Israel; it is a problem which has arisen out of modern man’s sensitivity towards the validity of his fellow-men’s convictions.27

In the New Testament, the trend is equally to discourage inter-faith marriage. Despite the fact that Saint Paul tells the Corinthians that the fact of being a non-believer is no reason for a Christian to separate or divorce his/her unbelieving spouse (1 Cor 7:12-15), he clearly rejects marriage with non-Christians for those who are already baptized: “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people’” (2 Corinthians 6:14-16). This scriptural attitude influenced the Church’s law.

The Code of Canon Law

Canon 1060 of the 1917 Code of Canon Law reads:

The Church most severely forbids everywhere marriages between two baptized persons, one of whom is a Catholic and the other a member of a heretical or schismatical sect; and if there is danger of perversion of the Catholic party and of the offspring, such a union is also forbidden by the divine law itself.

As it stands, the 1917 code imposed an impediment on marriage with any non-Catholic, viewing such a state, according to Ladislas Örsy, as a “wound on the law.”28 According to canon 1070 of this code, dispensation is granted only if 1) there is a just and grave cause; 2) the non-Catholic party promises to avoid all danger of perversion to the Catholic party and both promise to bring up all the children as Catholics; 3) there is moral certainty that these cautiones or guarantees will be implemented. These conditions betray the fact that the danger to the Catholic faith of the Catholic spouse as well as that of the children to be born was the main reason for forbidding interfaith marriages. Fernando Tarsi helps us understand the Church’s rigorous stand: “loss of faith was taken to mean directly and simplistically loss of eternal salvation.”29 As such,

27 Edward Schillebeeckx, Marriage: Human Reality and Secular Mystery, 95-96
29 Fernando Mervyn, “The Catholic Church and ‘Mixed Marriages’: A Brief Historical Sketch,” in
the early 20th century was characterized by a defensive attitude toward other Christian denominations as well as non-Christians.

In the 1983 Code of Canon Law, inter-faith marriages fall under the “individual diiriment impediments.” Canon 1086 of this code reads: “A marriage is invalid when one of the two persons was baptized in the Catholic Church or received into it and has not by a formal act defected from it, and the other was not baptized”. In Canon 1125, the Code lists conditions under which this diriment impediment can be dispensed from. The Catholic party is to declare that he or she is prepared to remove dangers of defecting from the faith, and is to make a sincere promise “to do all in his or her power in order that all the children be baptized and brought up in the Catholic Church”. Here again, what the Church’s juridical tradition is ultimately concerned about is the faith of the Catholic party and that of the would-be children. But there are two important changes here compared to canon 1070 of the 1917 code. Firstly, only the Catholic party has to make promises and secondly, the promise is not to absolutely bring up all children as Catholics, but only “to do all that is in one’s power” to bring them up as Catholics. Commenting on canon 1086/1 of the 1983 Code, Ladislas Örsy has this to say:

This impediment is known traditionally as “Disparity of Cult”. If dispensation is granted, canon law handles the resulting marriage as a natural, that is, non-sacramental union, with all the consequences that such a status entails. Since it does not have the “particular firmness” that the sacrament brings, it can be dissolved through the grant of the privilege of faith.

As mentioned above, Vatican II will be a watershed as far as the Church’s attitude toward non-Catholics and non-Christians is concerned. The positive attitude extends to the interpretation of Canon Law on marriage. As such, even though she does not go as far as conferring the sacramental character to marriage with disparity of cult, the Church appears to be more flexible when it comes to applying the law. As such, obtaining a dispensation is not the most arduous thing to do.

**Conclusion:** This consideration of the issue of religious freedom has led us to a realisation that, be it on the part of Christians or Muslims, there is need for a greater commitment to reciprocity in matters of religious freedom even if, in our opinion, Christians, at least Catholics, seem to be well ahead of their Muslim counterparts in this. Without reciprocity in matters of religious freedom, there can be no genuine Islamic-Christian dialogue. In fact, the prerequisite for such a dialogue is the recognition of the right of the religious other to exist and practice their faith. A dialogue without prior mutual acknowledgement of the right of the other to exist and practice his or her faith is a contradiction in terms.

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Bibliography

Unravelling Deadlocks in the Ecumenical Debate: Anglicans and Roman Catholics on the Practice of Doctrinal Authority

Prosper Mushy*

Abstract: The practice of doctrinal authority in the Church is one of the most controverted issues in ecumenical dialogue. Any significant agreement on this matter could give prospects for the doctrinal reconciliation among the churches and consequently the possibility for the establishment of full communion. In this article I explore the Anglican-Roman Catholic ecumenical dialogue with the objective of examining the extent to which consensus has been achieved on the subject of doctrinal authority. The main question examined here is whether the exercise of doctrinal authority still remains a dividing factor between the two churches and what needs to be done to address the challenge.

Introduction: The Catholic Church has, for several decades, been engaged in active ecumenical conversations with other churches and ecclesial communalities. Such conversations, which gained momentum from the Second Vatican Council, have one objective: to restore the divided Christians to that unity which Christ prayed for at the hour of his passion (Jn. 17:21). Ecumenical engagements have, since then, gained considerable achievement both in theory and practice. The numerous ecumenical documents in which results have been registered give a clear indication that the process is moving towards the right direction.

However, there are some deadlocks that need to be addressed if the process is to achieve the desired goal. One of the deadlocks is related to the practice of doctrinal authority in the Church. The key question could be framed as follows: Which organ in the Church owes the authority to define on binding matters of faith and moral? On this question the churches are still discordant. This article explores the various stages of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue with the objective of examining the extent to which this question is addressed and the challenges that still remain to be tackled on the way towards full communion of the two churches.

Setting the Context

It must first be recalled that it was the meeting between the then archbishop Michael Ramsey of Canterbury and Pope Paul VI which took place in Rome, March 1966 that authorized the formation of a joint preparatory commission to organize the process of

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ecumenical dialogue between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church.¹ Later it emerged that some key issues needed to be addressed before the establishment of full communion between the two churches. The issues were underlined in the 1968 Malta Report of the Anglican and the Roman Catholic Church. These include the question of the Petrine primacy, infallibility and Mariology.²

From the very beginning it became clear that these issues relate with a far more complex question of the practice of authority in the Church. For that reason, the Report recommended that “the question of authority, its nature, exercise and implications” be carefully examined as it constitutes one of the areas of doctrinal disagreement.³ As can be observed, these issues set the question of doctrinal authority at the very heart of the quest for Christian unity.

When the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) was formed in 1969 to facilitate the process of dialogue between the two sides, the principal item on its table was the subject of authority. The first phase of dialogue was undertaken by ARCIC-I between 1969 and 1981 during which the Commission issued several statements which were eventually published together as The Final Report.⁴ The second phase, referred to as ARCIC-II, began in 1983 from which the Commission has further issued a number of statements.⁵ This article is limited to examining the statements that focus principally on the exercise of authority in the Church, namely, 1) Authority in the Church I, 2) Authority in the Church II, and 3) The Gift of Authority: Authority in the Church III.

1. Authority in the Church I

The document that appeared first from ARCIC dealing with the exercise of authority in the Church carries the title Authority in the Church I.⁶ This document was issued at Venice, Italy in 1976. In this document ARCIC identifies various “human instruments” that reflect the authority of Christ in the Church.⁷ Accordingly, Christ’s authority is reflected in ‘the individual Christian’ (pars. 2-3), ‘in the Church’ (pars. 4-7), ‘in the communion of the Churches’ (pars. 8-12), ‘in matters of faith’ (pars. 13-18), and finally, ‘in the councils’, and ‘the universal primate’ (pars. 19-23).

It is important to see that the document speaks of “a common mind” or a common consciousness that necessarily arises when there is a “shared commitment” of what is believed. Interestingly such communal mind or communal aspect of the faith is considered as a criterion for “determining how the Gospel should be interpreted and obeyed”

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³ The Malta Report, pars. 20 & 22.
⁵ These include Salvation and the Church (Llandaff, 1986), Church as Communion (Dublin, 1990), Life in Christ, Morals, Communion and the Church (Venice, 1993), The Gift of Authority: Authority in the Church III (Palazzola, 1998), and Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ (Seattle, Washington, 2004).
Nevertheless, according to R. H. MacAdoo, authority is, in this particular document, “seen as a service to the people of God and as an aspect of authentic ecclesiality.” “Authority process”, writes MacAdoo, “is a continuous interaction between the guidance of the Spirit, who leads into all truth, and the human authorities in the Church as these constantly attempt to mediate ultimate Christian authority, the Lordship of Christ, through the Church’s teaching and life, proclamation and witness.”

The question regarding the practice of doctrinal authority is brought out more clearly in the paragraph where ARCIC tries to address the relationship between authoritative conciliar definitions and their reception by the faithful. On this point, the Commission states: “A substantial part in the process of reception is played by the subject matter of the definitions and by the response of the faithful.” (Authority in the Church I, par. 16). The main question here is whether the authoritative conciliar decisions merit the quality of being preserved from error by the mere fact of being defined by authentic magisterium (Roman Catholic position), or on the basis of reception by the whole body of the faithful (Anglican position).

To bring the two positions to a harmony, it was necessary for ARCIC to articulate the meaning of ‘reception’. Accordingly, ‘reception’ means that:

The people of God acknowledge such a decision or statement because they recognize in it the apostolic faith. They accept it because they discern a harmony between what is proposed to them and the sensus fidelium of the whole Church… reception does not create truth nor legitimise the decision: it is the final indication that such a decision has fulfilled the necessary conditions for it to be a true expression of the faith. In this acceptance the whole Church is involved in a continuous process of discernment and response (Authority in the Church: Elucidation, par. 3).

Such clarification was made in the context of the lament raised by Anglicans that they hardly find within the Roman Catholic Church adequate structures through which the opinion of the lay faithful is made accessible onto the pastors and those who exercise the ministry of episcopate. This is especially with regard to the manner in which “the voice of the lay faithful is conveyed to and considered by the pastors of the Roman Catholic Church.” Nevertheless, some of these perspectives were to be developed in the subsequent stages of the dialogue.

2. Authority in the Church II

As can be observed, in the first phase of its dialogue ARCIC was not all successful in addressing the question of authority a situation that prompted a second phase of dialogue on the same subject. The results of ARCIC’s second phase of dialogue on authority are registered in a document entitled Authority in the Church II. In this particular stage of dialogue ARCIC concentrated on the issues which had received critical remarks from the previous document on authority. These include the papal primacy

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8 Ibid.
and infallibility. It was necessary to harmonise between an infallible definition from a primate and the response of the faithful.

In this document, ARCIC tries to show how a definition of faith calls for the participation of all the faithful. It is stated: “The Church in all its members is involved in such a definition, which clarifies and enriches their grasp of the truth. Their active reflection upon the definition in its turn clarifies its significance” (par. 25). One could see here that there is a clear determination by ARCIC to recognise the role played by the faithful before and after a definition of faith is issued. Hitherto, the Commission does not spell out practical ways through which the faithful get involved in an instance of doctrinal definition.\textsuperscript{12}

In the same connection the Commission revisits the question of the relationship between authoritative conciliar decisions and the response of the faithful.\textsuperscript{13} On this point, ARCIC states the following: “Moreover, although it is not through reception by the people of God that a definition first acquires authority, the assent of the faithful is the ultimate indication that the Church’s authoritative decision in a matter of faith has been truly preserved from error by the Holy Spirit” (\textit{Authority in the Church II}, par. 25).

On the one hand, the Commission rejects the view that holds reception as the only basis for authoritative decisions of the Church. On the other hand, the assent of the faithful is affirmed as the indication that a particular teaching is protected from error. B.C. Butler is offers a very significant observation: “In the ontological order, an \textit{ex cathedra} definition is true prior to acceptance,” whereas in the order of recognition “reception is crucial because it, and it alone, can assure us that the conditions for an \textit{ex cathedra} definition have, in the given case, been operative.”\textsuperscript{14}

### 3. The Gift of Authority: Authority in the Church III

In its third phase of dialogue on the question of authority ARCIC, now referred to as ARCIC-II, threw its net over a wide area to capture the various ways in which the exercise of authority in the Church interacts with other subjects in the ecclesiastical domains. The results of this particular phase of dialogue are included in \textit{The Gift of Authority: Authority in the Church III}.\textsuperscript{15} This document clearly offers a more elaborate discussion on the subject of authority than the previous two.

The treatment of the subject comes in connection with key themes such as reception, tradition, Scripture and catholicity. Hence, to get a clear picture of the manner in which the subject of authority is articulated in this document, one has to pay attention to the manner in which these key themes are articulated. Reception is a central theme in this document with several paragraphs (pars. 7-31) devoted to attending to the context in which this process takes place.

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The Gift of Authority not only considers the exercise of authority in the Church from a Trinitarian perspective, but also underscores the ways through which believer’s faith comes to be integral to the faith consciousness of the whole Christian community. In this way, ARCIC succeeds in shedding some light on the way the sensus fidei of the individual believer leads to the sensus fidelium, and hence therefore, the manner in which “the faith of each individual enters into the formation of the mind of the Church.”\footnote{Michael Root, “The Gift of Authority: An Observer’s Report and Analysis,” The Ecumenical Review 52 (2000): 63.}

The reality of revelation in the Church is conceived as a dynamic interplay of the faith of the believer and that of the community as a whole.

Furthermore, The Gift of Authority embraces a comprehensive view of Tradition that allows Scripture to be seen as part of it even though it occupies “a unique and normative place” \footnote{This term refers to a kind of “re-recognition” and “reappropriation” of “some elements of ecclesial communion,” which may have been “forgotten, neglected or abused” owing to the very fact that the Church is also marked with “human finitude and sin.” Cf. The Gift of Authority, par. 25. See, Jean-Marie Tillard, Church of Churches: The Ecclesiology of Communion, trans. R. C. De Peaux (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 124. See also, Jean-Marie Tillard, “Reception-Communion,” One in Christ 28, no. 4 (1992): 310-311.} (par. 19). Indeed, such picture of Tradition gives room for the diversity of traditions seen as a “practical manifestation of catholicity” \footnote{Edward Yarnold and Edward Knapp-Fisher, “The 1976 Venice Agreed Statement on ‘Authority in the Church’, Two Comments,” The Ampleforth Journal 83, no. 1 (1978): 58.} (par. 27). The holistic understanding of Tradition allows the Commission to envisage both the possibility as well as the need for what is described as a “rereception”\footnote{Cf. Michael Root, “The Gift of Authority: An Observer’s Report and Analysis,” The Ecumenical Review 52 (2000): 70.} within the sensus fidelium of “some elements of communion” which may have been “forgotten, neglected, or abused” \footnote{Adelbert Denaux, “Authority in the Church a Challenge for Both Anglicans and Roman Catholics,” Ecumenical Trends 30, no. 4 (2001): 5.} (par. 25). In this regard, Anglicans and Catholics are urged “to give and receive” from each other aspects of tradition that each church has been able to preserve.

Certainly, as Edward Knapp-Fisher’s suggests, the churches should admit to the principle of “ecclesiological contributionism” which involves “the sharing of all particular insights into truth which each Church has been enabled to preserve.”\footnote{Adelbert Denaux, “Authority in the Church a Challenge for Both Anglicans and Roman Catholics,” Ecumenical Trends 30, no. 4 (2001): 5.} However, such is a process, which not only requires humility and readiness to receive, but also the promptness to share the necessary insight of the faith.

A proper understanding of ministry is the key to the right exercise of authority in the Church. The Gift of Authority presents a beautiful picture of the way the sensus fidelium interact with the ministry of episcopate \footnote{Cf. Michael Root, “The Gift of Authority: An Observer’s Report and Analysis,” The Ecumenical Review 52 (2000): 70.} (pars. 29, 30).\footnote{Adelbert Denaux, “Authority in the Church a Challenge for Both Anglicans and Roman Catholics,” Ecumenical Trends 30, no. 4 (2001): 5.} Certainly, those who exercise the ministry of episcopate “must not be separated from the ‘symphony’ of the whole people of God in which they have their part to play” (par. 30). Given the fact that the sensus fidelium of the whole people of God and the ministry of episcopate coexist in a “reciprocal relationship,” one can certainly be assured that the practice of authority in the Church is in the right direction (pars. 30, 36). According to Adelbert Denaux, “the cooperation of the ministry of episcopate and the sensus fidelium of the whole Church, in the reception of the Word of God, is a vital element in discovering God’s truth and God’s will for his Church.”\footnote{Adelbert Denaux, “Authority in the Church a Challenge for Both Anglicans and Roman Catholics,” Ecumenical Trends 30, no. 4 (2001): 5.}

In this document ARCIC situates the practice of authority in the Church within the context of synodality. Synodality, from the Greek word Synbodos, meaning the “com-
Don’t forget suffering for the present and the future of God in Africa

mon way”, describes the form of complementarity that defines the relation between the bishop and the faithful (par. 36). As already observed, such determination comes amidst the concerns raised by Anglicans about the manner in which the opinion of the faithful is accessed to the levels of decision-making in the Church (par. 38). Given these concerns, The Gift of Authority holds the ministry of episcope as crucial for the discernment of the sensus fidelium as well as for the service of communion both in the local church and in the wider communion of churches (pars. 36-37).

We have seen that one of the key questions that kept on resurfacing in ARCIC’s dialogue on authority relates with the ratification of binding matters of doctrine. Who or which organ in the Church is invested with the authority to define with authenticity on matters of doctrine and morals?22 Here one gets a clear indications of the tensions reflected in the distinctive ways in which the sensus fidelium is conceived in the two churches. While in the Roman Catholic Church the sensus fidelium is seen as “linking up with the consensus of the past generation of believers and a necessary requisite before a doctrine is defined”, in some Anglican circles the concept is rather conceived as “a force of balance or positive criticism towards hierarchical decisions” and a criterion for doctrinal reception.23 This implies that, Anglicans perceive the Church teaching to be authentic when it is reflected in the sensus fidei of the community of the faithful.

Nonetheless, in considering this question, ARCIC takes significant account of the role played by the whole people of God in the discernment of doctrinal truth. This is what is stated in the document: “The exercise of teaching authority in the Church, especially in situations of challenge, requires the participation, in their distinctive ways, of the whole body of believers, not only those charged with the ministry of memory. In this participation the sensus fidelium is at work” (The Gift of Authority, par. 43). It becomes clear that the active participation of the faithful is at play in the very process of elaborating doctrine. However, questions could still be asked: Where exactly does the Commission situate the active participation of the faithful in authoritative teachings? Is this participation conceived prior to the definition of faith or in the process of its reception? ARCIC responds to these questions as follows:

Since it is the faithfulness of the whole people of God which is at stake, reception of teaching is integral to the process. Doctrinal definitions are received as authoritative in virtue of the divine truth they proclaim as well as because of the specific office of the person or persons who proclaim them within the sensus fidei of the whole people of God. When the people of God respond by faith and say “Amen” to authoritative teaching it is because they recognise that this teaching expresses the apostolic faith and operates within the authority and truth of Christ, the Head of the Church (The Gift of Authority, par. 43).

According to Denaux, the participation of the faithful in doctrinal decisions takes place in two ways: on the one hand, the sensus fidelium plays role “before the decision is taken,” and on the other hand, “after a decision is taken, namely its reception.”24 This is to say that the response of the faithful is integral to the process of formulating a teaching as well as in its reception. In this regard, the observation made by Jean-Marie Tillard seems to be in perspective: “If reception is not what gives credence to the dec-

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22 Cf. Authority in the Church I, par. 19. See also, Authority in the Church II, par. 24.
laration by the hierarchical magisterium, it does however give the certain confirmation that in this declaration truth was found.”

Certainly, the position reflected in this document has some implications on the Church’s process of elaborating the doctrinal truth. Attention to the leadings of the Spirit through the sensus fidelium is a requisite both in the process of formulating a teaching as well as in the reception of the same teaching. Once this condition is fulfilled, one would definitely have taken into perspective the proposal made by Margaret O’Gara of the need to incorporate “room for reception of a teaching” even after it has been defined.

It has generally been observed that while The Gift of Authority gives significant attention to the sensus fidelium as a factor that underlies the whole exercise of authority in the Church, ARCIC was not very successful in showing how it contributes to authoritative teachings. Similarly, ARCIC does not indicate the circumstances from which one could be certain that bishops discern the sensus fidelium. A question therefore arises: What is to be done in cases where a bishop declines from the fundamental obligation of consulting the faithful?

4. Church as Communion

Another document from the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue that sheds some light on the question of doctrinal authority is entitled Church as Communion. Issued at Dublin in 1990, the document describes the manner in which the ‘mystery of communion’ is realised within the Church as a whole. The objective of the document is to provide some basis to the relationship that exists between Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church and the need to recognise “the degree of communion” which is already shared by the two parties (pars. 1 & 2).

One needs to appreciate the fact that the document gives attention to the centrality of the gift of the Holy Spirit in safeguarding and elaborating the truth of the faith, and hence therefore, the responsibility that belongs to the whole people of God of maintaining the Church in the apostolic faith (pars. 27-32). It is rightly acknowledged that the task of maintaining the Church in the apostolic faith is first and foremost assigned to ‘the whole people’ (par. 29). However, there some who are entrusted with the specific task of discernment. Yet those who exercise special task of discernment are also guided by the same Spirit who guides the whole people so that they can also be able to respond to the insights of faith that draw from the community (par. 29).

The strength of the present document is precisely that it attends to the leadings of the Spirit in the community of the faithful. By attending to the workings of the Spirit in the community, it is possible to underline the role played by the whole people in the elaboration of the faith. In other words, the practice of doctrinal authority in the Church must account for the role played by the whole people.

25 Cf. Tillard, Church of Churches, 119.
29 Tanner, “Authority: Gift or Threat?,” 25.
5. Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ

Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ deals specifically with the doctrine about Mary. Issued at Seattle, Washington in 2004, the document reflects ARCIC's determination to test the consensus already achieved on the subject of 'authority' to the complex question of the Marian doctrine. The document should therefore be understood in the context of the three ARCIC documents already considered above. It must be noted that the question of the Marian doctrines came to be discussed by ARCIC in view of the difficulties that Anglicans experience with regard to the doctrine of papal infallibility.

The first ARCIC document on authority states: “Anglicans doubt the appropriateness, or even the possibility, of defining them as essential to the faith of believers” (Authority in the Church I, par. 24). The second ARCIC document on authority reflects a growing convergence over the issue. It is affirmed that, “Anglicans and Roman Catholics can agree in much of the truth” that the “two dogmas are designed to affirm.” (Cf. Authority in the Church II, par. 30). It is clear that the Commission tries to articulate the role and place of Mary within the divine plan of salvation. Indeed, Mary should be honoured in a way that does not underrate or exaggerate her role in the plan of salvation. This implies that Mary's role in salvation history should be considered in a way that is inseparable from the mystery of Christ.

Despite the tensions that are reflected between the two churches regarding the grounds for the definability of the two doctrines, this document represents a growing convergence between the two sides on the doctrine and devotion to Mary. There is much in the document that needs to be desired, especially the common ground for the consideration of the Marian doctrine and devotion. The Commission highlights the context in which the Marian doctrine and devotion find a proper meaning (par. 78). Such context takes a significant account of the common sources of Mariology such as Scripture, theological interpretations and the liturgical tradition.

Such context is also necessary for it depicts the historical circumstances in which the sensus fidei of the people of God took shape at the times the doctrines were defined. Besides, one needs to appreciate the call made by the Commission which urges both Anglicans and Roman Catholics to ensure for a “re-reception” of the two doctrines in accordance with the context underlined in the document as well as the convergence already reflected in other ARCIC documents, notably, The Gift of Authority (par. 63).

6. Growing Together in Unity and Mission

The final document I would like to consider in this paper is entitled Growing Together in Unity and Mission. This document is traced back to the meeting of the bishops

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32 As already note The Malta Report (1968) recommended that the question of the Petrine primacy, infallibility and Mariology to be examined. Since the first two issues were already examined by ARCIC in its dialogue on authority it was now possible to engage on the subject of Mariology. Cf. The Malta Report, par. 20. See, Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ, par. 1.


from the two communions at Mississauga, Canada 2000.\textsuperscript{35} The International Anglican Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM), incorporates a number of practical suggestions on how to translate into action the common faith that is already outlined in the document. Thereafter a call is made to the bishops to ensure that ARCIC's statements are "widely read" within the respective ecclesial communities (par. 105).

Anglicans and Roman Catholics are further asked "to consult one another" before making crucial decisions that touch on the unity of the Church "in matters of faith, order, or moral life" (par. 109). The request comes amidst the difficulties reflected within the Anglican Communion, which include, "the episcopal ordination of a person living in an openly-acknowledged committed same-sex relationship and the authorisation of public Rites of Blessing for same sex unions" (par. 6). Certainly, Roman Catholics regard the developments that have taken shape in the Anglican Communion as a setback to the long journey towards unity which has tirelessly been trodden for more than four decades.

**Awaiting Challenges**

I have attempted to highlight some of the key issues regarding the way the subject of doctrinal authority is considered in the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue. It must first be noted that the two sides concur on one fact that the Holy Spirit leads the Church into the fullness of truth. Thus the sensus fidelium is affirmed within the broader context of the action of the Spirit in the lives of believers. Likewise, the two churches affirm, at least on the theoretical level, that the promise of inerrancy is intended for the church as a whole.

Differences emerge when it comes to the manner in which such gift is concretely realised by the respective churches in relation to the practice of doctrinal authority. Tensions are experienced where Roman Catholics tend to concentrate the promise of inerrancy on the teaching ministry of the bishops and the Pope, whereas Anglicans consider such gift as equally applying to all the faithful. It is important to note that tensions between the two sides have a historical basis.\textsuperscript{36} The sixteenth century Reformation was to a large extent a reaction against excessive centralization of authority in the Church which is traced back to the Gregorian Reform.

However, while centralised authority could serve to protect the church from "spiritual anarchy, untamed subjectivism and schism", it risks downplaying the fluid expression of the charisms as well as the diversity that characterises the expression of the doctrinal truth.\textsuperscript{37} On the other hand, the Reformers insistence on the fluid expression of the Spirit could also risk undermining the task of those who are charged with the specific responsibility of discerning the doctrinal truth.

\textsuperscript{35} This particular meeting was convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey, and the former President of the Pontifical Council of Promoting Christian Unity, Cardinal Edward Cassidy. Its intent was to explore ways of reinforcing the relationship between the two communions. Among the issues agreed on was the formation of a joint episcopal commission which would seek ways of translating the agreement in faith shared by the two communions into “common life and mission.” This is the basis that led to the formation of the International Anglican–Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM) in 2001.

\textsuperscript{36} For elaborate discussion on this subject Cf. Prosper Mushy, Sensus Fidelium as a Locus for Theology: Some Perspectives on the Use of the Concept in Ecumenical Dialogue (Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing 2010).

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 14-16.
In view of this background, ecumenical debate is concerned with situating the role played by the whole people of God, through the *sensus fidelium*, both in the process of formulation as well as the reception of doctrinal teachings. As already observed, this is precisely where differences among the two churches emerge. Thus the issue at hand is not whether to place emphasis on the process of formulation/articulating of a particular teaching (Roman Catholic emphasis), or on its reception by the faithful (Anglican emphasis). Rather, it is how the two aspects can be brought into a balance.

In other words, there should be a balance or between the practice of doctrinal authority by the Pope and bishops and the exercise of the same by the whole body of the faithful. Already, convergence seems to focus on seeing the *sensus fidelium* as the factor that grounds both the discernment and reception of a particular teaching. In any case, a better elaboration on the dynamics that constitute the ecclesial process of reception could be of help in bringing out clearly the role played by the faithful in the practice of doctrinal authority.

Adding to the challenges is the fact that it is not very clear the way in which bishops access the *sensus fidelium.*\(^{38}\) It still remains unclear the manner in which the opinion of the faithful is accessible to the decision-making structures within the Church. On this, ARCIC makes a number of recommendations. In the first place, not only is the consultation of the faithful deemed to be “an aspect of episcopal oversight,” but it is also the obligation of the bishops to discern the *sensus fidelium* in the local church and in the “wider communion of churches” (*The Gift of Authority*, par. 38).\(^{39}\)

Similarly, the respectful churches are urged to redress some of their inner structures of authority to enable the *sensus fidelium* to resonate with the whole exercise of authority in the Church. Anglicans are asked to think about the instruments of oversight that allow decisions to be reached that would bind the whole Church. Thus: “When major new questions arise which, in fidelity to Scripture and Tradition, require a united response, will these structures assist Anglicans to participate in the *sensus fidelium* with all Christians?” (*The Gift of Authority*, par. 56).

On the other hand, Catholics need to ensure “effective participation of the clergy and lay people in emerging synodal bodies,” as well as the adequate implementation of the Second Vatican Council’s principle of collegiality (*The Gift of Authority*, par. 57).\(^{40}\) Equally, in view of the appraisal of the convergence already achieved by ARCIC, IARC-CUM encourages the cooperation of lay and ordained ministries especially in areas of decision-making in the Church.\(^{41}\)

Another major challenge along this debate is the slow reception of the results already achieved. It deserves to be pointed out that the reception of the results of ecumenical dialogue by the authorities of the respective Churches has been a big problem. This is especially with regard to the Roman Catholic Magisterium. I do not wish to point fingers to the authorities but it must be recalled that it took the Vatican 10 years before formulating an official reaction on the first round of ARCIC (Arcic I). The final report of ARCIC appeared in 1981 whereas the reaction by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith was only in 1991.

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\(^{38}\) This problem seems rather complex for it extends to as far the criteria for determining when exactly consensus characterises the whole body of the faithful on a particular truth or doctrine. It could also be seen as an impasse in ecumenical dialogue and does not seem to have foreseeable solutions.

\(^{39}\) Cf. Henn, “A Roman Catholic Commentary on Arcic-li’s the Gift of Authority,” 278.


\(^{41}\) *Growing Together in Unity and Mission*, par. 109.
of Faith (CDF) was published in 1991. This also applies to the official reaction on the BEM document i.e. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (Faith and Order Paper No. 111, the “Lima Text”).

Not only does the paucity of official reactions deserve to be criticised, but also the quality of such reactions. Typical of the two reactions mentioned, the CDF finds weaknesses in these texts because they don’t fully represent Roman Catholic doctrine. This exigency does not seem to do justice to the legitimate variety in theological expression advocated by the Second Vatican Council. Moreover, some of the reactions to The Final Report of ARCIC tended to drag back some of the issues that had gained momentum in the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue. On the other hand, Anglicanism has, over centuries, experienced the challenges that resulted from schisms which have in turn given birth to new denominations. The question to be asked is whether the Anglican representatives in this particular dialogue speak on behalf of all Anglican denominations. In other words, are all Anglican denominations disposed to receiving the results already achieved by ARCIC in ecumenical dialogue?

Nevertheless, to this point I could say that the tensions between Anglicans and Roman Catholics on the practice of doctrinal authority could only be a matter of different points of emphasis. On the one side, Anglicans hold that reception through the sensus fidelium has criteriological significance in relation to the teachings that are proposed by the magisterium. On the other hand, Roman Catholics see the sensus fidelium as criterion that has to be met before a teaching is defined by the magisterium. Thus while one church emphasises the response or consent of the faithful after a teaching is defined, the other sees the same consent of the faithful as a prerequisites for the magisterium to define a teaching.

However, as I have already pointed out, tensions emerge because of different points of emphasis. Such tensions could be resolved by harmonizing the two polarities. In other words, there is a need to harmonise between the role played by the sensus fidelium in the process of formulating a doctrinal teaching and the subsequent process of reception by the faithful. In this case, one would expect that significant consultation be made before and after a teaching is defined as well as allowing some reservation in order to access the response of the faithful to such a teaching.

After all, while the Anglican-Roman Catholic ecumenical dialogue has mainly concentrated on the normative doctrinal formulations of the two churches, the challenge remains on how popular expressions of the faith by the faithful can contribute to the quest for full communion between the two sides. Despite these challenges, it must be noted that The Gift of Authority is a landmark in the Anglican-Roman Catholic ecumenical relations for it offers prospects for the doctrinal consensus between the two churches. It would therefore be significant for Anglicans and Roman Catholics to re-examine the potentials as well as the implications inherent in such document for the current state of ecumenical relations. As may be observed, any consensus on the question of doctrinal authority will just be a step towards a further agreement in faith.


Thus the search for further agreement in faith will depend on the way in which the respective churches dispose themselves to receiving and implementing the exercise of authority as depicted in *The Gift of authority*. As I noted above, it cannot be denied that enormous challenge awaits the two churches to rectify the practices that paint a bad image on the exercise of authority in the Church. Indeed, as William Henn observes, “there can never be reconciliation between divided Christian communities about the topic of authority unless these communities see authority as something positive.”

**Challenges for the Churches in Africa**

This paper would be incomplete without underlining the potentials and implications inherent in ARCIC’s dialogue on the subject of authority for the current situation of the Church in Africa. What lessons can the African Christians learn from what has already been accomplished in the Anglican-Roman Catholic ecumenical debate? To begin with, I will attempt to briefly highlight the state of the current ecumenical context in Africa.

Certainly, Africa is faced with pressing ecumenical needs or challenges. As it can be observed, the current situation of ecumenical relations in Africa is quite in contrast from the general ecumenical initiative reflected in the western world. Several reasons justify this assertion. In the first place, while the current ecumenical relations in the western world reflects some serious attempts aimed at discerning common doctrinal grounds among the churches, as well as the search for practical ways of realising the consensus already achieved in ecumenical dialogue, the situation in Africa is different. It is, on the contrary, characterised by the emergence of multiple fresh ecclesial expressions (sects) popularly known as charismatic churches reminiscent of the sixteenth century religious milieu.

As Asonzeh Ukah puts it, Africa is currently undergoing through a pathetic situation in which ‘religious leaders compete for adherents just as companies would compete for potential customers.’ Moreover, as a result of the current trend of televisualisation of religious practice in the African media, religion becomes a good for consumption, “a product in a religious marketplace where churches compete for consumers.” The new sects in Africa are characterised, not only by their ‘fluid emphasis on the agency of the Holy Spirit’, but also by their firm determination ‘to defy traditional and institutional mediations’ by claiming “direct personal access” to the divine and “the spiritual.”

Besides, the new sects not only lack organised structures in areas of leadership, doctrine, sacraments and ministry, but also are, to a large extent, organised on the

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basis of ethnicity. Unlike the institutional churches, most of the so called new sects in Africa are constituted under ‘a sole charismatic leader who is often the founder, the mentor, and the proprietor.’ All these factors make it complex the initiatives to address the common issues affecting the continent at large such as disunity, ethnicity, poverty, corruption, HIV, the struggle for justice and peace and democracy.

In his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus*, Pope Benedict VI points out some of the challenges posed by such new non-catholic churches to the ecumenical initiatives in Africa (pars. 90-91). In the words of the Pope, the “sects take advantage of an incomplete social infrastructure, the erosion of traditional family solidarity and inadequate catechesis in order to exploit people’s credulity, and they offer a religious veneer to a variety of heterodox, non-Christian beliefs” (*Africae Munus*, par. 91). Given these observations, the state of the current context in Africa raises serious concerns as regards the efficacy of the ecumenical consensus already achieved on the international level. Yet, one must also appreciate the fact that some of the new churches have started making appearance in the ecumenical arena.

On the other hand, the mainstream churches hold an upper hand in spearheading the ecumenical initiatives in Africa. These are largely institutional churches which have registered their presence in Africa for a period of more than a century, notably, the Orthodox (Coptic Orthodox and Tewahedo Orthodox Church of Ethiopia), Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and the Lutheran churches. Structurally, these churches are capable of engaging in dialogue with one another on the basis of the common systematised creeds, organised leadership and other mechanisms already present within their inner structures. On that basis they are also placed on a better position in appropriating the ecumenical consensus already achieved on the global level.

While the faithful in Africa cannot be held responsible for the divisions that ruptured the Church over centuries, they cannot shun from taking active part in the path towards Christian unity. The first step could be the reception of the results already achieved on the global level. On this note, it is unfortunate to observe that the results of the several ecumenical dialogues have not been fully appropriated by a good number of the faithful of the various churches in Africa. This is partly because the pastors of the various churches have not taken keen interest in ensuring the process of reception and dissemination of such results in their respective churches. In this regard, it must not be forgotten that reception is as such an act of communion with the universal church. Christians in Africa are part and parcel of the global community of Christians sharing in the *sensus fidei* of the whole Christian community.

Certainly pastors in Africa cannot go on preaching a divided Christianity given the mayhem already brought about to our communities by the traits of ethnicity, sectarian violence and religious conflicts. Thus *consensus fidelium* is not only indispensable for the smooth preaching of the gospel but could also serve as an epitome for unity of the African society in general. Christian unity could as well exemplify ethnic groups, tribes and nations, to mould themselves along the principles of common convictions, goals and aspirations. Moreover, *consensus fidelium* could enable believers exercise their prophetic role in the society more elegantly and with more conviction. The Swahili have a popular saying: “*umoja ni nguvu, unthenga ni udhaifu,*” that, “unity is strength, while division is tantamount to weakness.” Surely, once Christians are united in faith it becomes possible to speak with one voice in matters affecting the society such as unity, peace and morality.
Conclusion: The manner in which the practice of doctrinal authority in the Church is depicted by ARCIC most especially in *The Gift of Authority* is ideal to the churches in Africa in the struggle to unpack what appears to be accentuated hierarchical model of leadership in some dioceses and parishes by way of decentralising the structures that play part in decision-making process. Such initiatives could enhance the participation of all the faithful in the decisions that affect the Church and society in general. Thus the Church’s decision-making process could be an epitome for the organisations in the civil society in addressing the current pressing needs of democracy in Africa. Already Anglicans and Roman Catholics in Africa have something to draw from: They ought to appropriate the consensus already achieved on the global level regarding the very exercise of authority in the Church.

Bibliography


Abstract: Toute personne qui lira cette réflexion devra être avisée de la principale motivation qui l’a inspirée : la souffrance fait que notre lutte pour la justice et notre mission en faveur de la réconciliation et de la paix aillent dans les profondeurs de la réalité humaine et de Dieu. Non seulement la souffrance est au cœur du questionnement de tout homme, mais aussi et surtout en son cœur se trouve la question de Dieu et la possibilité de lui intenter légitimement un procès lorsque les choses vont mal. Cela nous amène à nous intéresser aux réponses traditionnelles données face à la souffrance, à découvrir l’intimité et la distance de Dieu exprimées par les questionnements des victimes, si bien que chacun de nous, à partir de son contexte personnel et communautaire, pourrait se demander en quoi notre attitude dans la souffrance est-elle une attitude de foi en un Dieu de la vie. Ma conviction est que l’on ne devrait pas se contenter pour cela du fait que les gens prient, et même parfois trop, comme c’est le cas en Afrique aujourd’hui. Nous devons en plus nous rassurer que cette prière a une dimension critique qui n’épargne pas nécessairement Dieu. Car une prière dans la souffrance qui ne questionne pas Dieu et ses méthodes n’est ni conforme à nos religions traditionnelles, ni à la religion chrétienne, et manque d’énergie nécessaire pour la libération. Les Africains, comme les psalmistes, et même Jésus, n’ont jamais tout simplement subi la souffrance. Nous tanguer d’être la « réserve spirituelle » de l’humanité peut finir par devenir un piège pour le présent et le futur de Dieu, et de notre mission comme Église, si nous en sommes aussi la réserve de la misère et de la souffrance.

The main thesis of this reflection is that suffering has never been and shall not become a marginal issue in African Theology. It is the most universal humus of the life of the vast majority of our people. It precedes our mission for reconciliation, peace and justice, and will survive it. Suffering is so important because it puts in play how we understand ourselves as human beings, the future of God, and our mission as Church in Africa. The 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus produced a text in which it is realistically acknowledged that the human world is so evil that at times one finds it hard to believe that God is good or that a good God exists. In that feeling will be determined the way we relate with God and with the world. In fact, the situation of the world described by the General Congregation makes suffering a central issue of theology today for suffering has too much to do with faith in Jesus, with faith in God. It can cause lost of hope and faith in the disciples (Lc 24:13-35). New Atheism, God’s indifference and nihilism have their roots in the mystery of human suffering. In the Quest of the Living God Elizabeth Johnson asks several questions we can make own today, 

1 CG 34, n° 36.
2 And even in African Traditional Religions, suffering poses challenges to the belief in God and can end to a rejection of God. On this topic, see: Eloi Messi Metogo, Dieu peut-il mourir en Afrique? Essai sur l’indifférence religieuse et l’incroyance en Afrique noire (Yaoundé/Paris : Karthala-Ucac, 1997).

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as we are thinking about justice and reconciliation in Africa where suffering is a daily bread for too many people: “why is there so much moral evil and suffering in the world if God is all-powerful and all-good? Could God not stop it? If not, then God must not be all-powerful. Does God not want to stop it? If not, then God must not be all-loving. But if God could stop it and wants to, why does suffering continue?” In this reflection, I want to give a watch on this issue and, concretely, how it is shaping the whole theological debate today. I will develop this in three steps: first, the failure of traditional theodicies; second, the faithful and hopeful dimension of the communicational pattern between God and the victim; and third, the eschatological dimension of that theological experience. How God reveals God’s self and how does he speak through the victims?

Suffering and the failure of traditional theodicies

Considering how the divinity hides itself in suffering

In the *Spiritual Exercises* Saint Ignatius of Loyola links suffering with every fundamental moment of Jesus’ life. In the contemplation of the Incarnation, Ignatius gives us this matter to contemplate: “Here it is how the three Divine Persons gazed on the whole surface or circuit of the world, full of people; and how, seeing that they were all going down into hell, they decide in their eternity that the Second Person should become a human being, in order to save the human race.” In the *third point* of the same contemplation, Ignatius describes this situation on the face of the earth: there are people so diverse in dress and behavior: “some white and others black, some in peace and others at war, some weeping and others laughing, some healthy and others sick, some being born and others dying, and so forth.”

What the Trinity is gazing upon before the Incarnation is “peoples in such a blindness” that “they are dying and going down to hell.” The reaction of the Holy Trinity before that situation is a radical move: “let us work the redemption of the human race.” Furthermore, in the contemplation on the Passion, St Ignatius suggests that we ask for pain, tears, and suffering with Christ suffering. The Exercitant entering the Passion will ask for sorrow, regret, and confusion, because the Lord is going to his Passion “for my sins.” We have to ask for not only sorrow with Christ, but also “a broken spirit with Christ so broken; tears and interior suffering because of the great suffering which Christ endured for me.” We ought to consider “how his divinity hides itself; that is, how he could destroy his enemies but does not, and how he allows his most holy humanity to suffer so cruelly.”

So, in *The Spiritual Exercises*, suffering and evil are present everywhere as a result of human sin and becomes God’s main concern in his plan of salvation. Suffering affects individuals and entire peoples on the face of earth. The effect of the Passion on Jesus

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3. ibid, nº 106.
4. ibid, nº 106.
5. ibid, nº 48.
6. ibid, nº 193.
7. ibid, nº 203.
8. ibid, nº 196.
relatives is “deep grief and fatigue”\(^{11}\), like so many children and women in our world today whose faces have become a symbol of disease, hunger, misery, injustice, religious extremism and terrorism, and natural calamities. The result of too much suffering for human is an open door to atheism. For many people, too much suffering suggests that *God is not great*\(^{12}\) so that some of them announce ‘the end of faith.’\(^{13}\) Suffering raises unbelievable questions\(^{14}\) even by people known as ‘naturally religious’.\(^{15}\)

The paradox here is that Ignatius invites us to desire suffering as Jesus did. He suggests that a certain suffering can be salvific. We can add to this suggestion the communication pattern existing between God and the sufferers. Even in the midst of tragedy, people believe and praise the Lord. God was present in Auschwitz! Saint Ignatius’ treatment of suffering does not ask about the *why* of suffering and evil. He suggests something about *where* God could be in such moments and how we can relate with that historical reality. But the ‘why’ is important in dealing with suffering. The *why* question about suffering is at the center of any human existence: why is there suffering in the world? Believers basically ask themselves how a good God can allow us to suffer, and African theology cannot avoid these questions by mistakenly believing that Africans are so religious that even in the midst of too much suffering, they will not give up to their faith. Failure in addressing these issues would be more damaging in our mission in Africa than any other issue related to our faith, simply because God’s self and the deepest being of the victims are in play.

**Catholic traditional response and the paradoxes of traditional theodicy**

Nowhere in the Fathers do we find any lengthy or systematic theology of suffering. Their attitude is clear-cut: the pains of this world are to be borne in serene anticipation of future joys. Moreover, traditional theology seems unanimous in maintaining that God does not will suffering directly. Rather, having created a world with its own natural laws, a world, where human beings have free will, God allows or permits disaster to happen. In that sense, suffering is related to human freedom and sin. That is what Pope John Paul II suggests in his *Apostolic Letter on the Christian Significance of Human Suffering*\(^{16}\). Pope John Paul II suggests, strangely in my point of view, but in the fidelity of traditional positions, that suffering is salvific. Therefore, we have to think that even when suffering is unjustly inflicted on the innocent, God allows it out of respect for human freedom. No matter what happens, God will bring good out of evil in the end. And here are we once more, back to Peter of Blois’ list of twelve advantages of tribulation!\(^{17}\) That brings us to the traditional theodicies.

We can name at least two kinds of theodicies. First, ‘the best-of-all-possible-worlds’ theodicy of Leibniz, John Hick and R. Swinburne defends God’s goodness and power by arguing that the constitution of the world, as divinely willed, must leave room for the possibility of evil if God’s goodness is truly to be manifest in the world. According

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\(^{11}\) Ibid, n° 208.

\(^{12}\) Christopher Hitchens, *God is not Great* (New York: Twelve, 2007).

\(^{13}\) Sam Harris, *The End of Faith* (New York: Northon, 2004).


\(^{17}\) James Walsh and P. G. Walsh, *Divine Providence and Human Suffering*, 141-162.
to John Thiel, these advocates of God’s goodness remarkably deny innocent suffering and its very existence. Leibniz suggests that we should be suspicious about conceding that innocent suffering is inordinate for the very reason that God allows it. Swinburne and Hick transform innocent suffering into meaningful suffering by claiming that creation includes a built-in protection against extraordinary innocent suffering, namely, death. And so, at the very moment that innocent suffering might prove scandalous, Swinburne finds God’s goodness in its erasure.¹⁸ The ‘best-of-all-possible worlds’ theodicy’ attends to the actual constitution of the world, evil and, in its logical defense of God’s goodness.

Second, in its turn, the ‘best-of-all-possible-Gods’ theodicy revises the classical understanding of God in order to refute any charge of logical inconsistency between God’s goodness and the world’s evil. Thiel thinks that any talk of the ‘best of all possible’ is already a concession to limitation. The best-of-all-possible-worlds’ theodicy’ acknowledges the limitations of the world by conceding that both divine and humane goodness cannot be what they are apart from a world in which evil really exists. The best-of-all-possible-Gods’ theodicy is willing to concede a limitation in the divine nature, and thereby relinquish a traditional understanding of God so that God’s goodness can still possess coherence before the world’s evil.¹⁹ This latter theodicy gives up the traditional conception of divine omnipotence as inconsistent with the finite and temporal character of reality. God, just like human, is a sufferer before the world’s evil. He cannot banish evil from actuality nor prevent its occurrence. Possessing power but lacking omnipotence, God struggles with evil in history, working toward its defeat as every moral person does.²⁰

But, the suffering of the innocent questions the justice of God

According to John Thiel, one could argue that innocent suffering is the evil that measures all evils. To suffer innocently is to suffer unjustly, and unjust suffering is morally scandalous: “it compels its victims and those who witness its effects to contemplate the powerlessness of suffering and the wantonness of evil’s destructive power. Innocent suffering prompts a reaction of outrage at the plight of the sufferer, the ignorance or willfulness of the perpetrator, or the capriciousness of the circumstances from which such suffering results.”²¹ Criticizing Augustine’s approach, Metz affirms that, by understanding salvation exclusively in terms of redemption from sin and guilt, Augustine has lost from view all the suffering and histories of suffering which in our everyday experience simply cannot be traced back to sin or to a history of guilt, and which nonetheless make up the largest part of this world’s suffering that cries out to heaven. In fact, appealing to the Letter to the Romans, Augustine develops the doctrine of original sin, which makes of humanity a masa damnata, and develops the doctrines of predestination, divine election and foreordination.²²

Therefore, we can understand some scholars who have seen in Augustine’s doctrine of the original sin a denial of the possibility of innocent suffering since all humans are

¹⁹ John E. Thiel, God, Evil, and Innocent Suffering, 47.
²¹ John E. Thiel, God, Evil, and Innocent Suffering, 1.
²² Metz, A Passion for God. 60-62.
guilty perpetrators, and so the evil suffered by them in any way is God’s just punishment for their evil actions.\textsuperscript{23} Even worse, in that case, perpetrators and victims are put in the same box: they are both guilty! However, suggests Thiel, the author of Job leaves no doubt that Job suffers innocently, and that the God of the Prologue is a person who fails in moral responsibility to Job, and who in doing so is guilty of inflicting innocent suffering. The author of Job does not envision that human agents exclusively are the cause of Job’s suffering in order then to pose the question of how a faithful God could allow such innocent suffering to occur. Rather, the God of Job appears to be a capricious perpetrator of innocent suffering which, in a world of theistic belief, only God could inflict.\textsuperscript{23} Absolving God in any way leads to denying innocent suffering.

\section*{Faith and hope from the victims’ perspective}

Suffering is neither silent, nor passive. Suffering establishes a constant communication between the sufferer and God who sometimes is too silent. The experience of Jesus’ death and resurrection also shows that God is mysteriously, but actively, working through suffering to reveal God’s self and for the salvation of human beings.

\textbf{Questioning: Why does God allows us to suffer?}\textsuperscript{25}

According to Rahner, this is one of the most fundamental questions of human existence.\textsuperscript{26} After a critical examination of the traditional answers to that question, Rahner considers suffering as ultimately part of the Incomprehensibility of God. Suffering is truly a manifestation of God’s incomprehensibility in his nature and in his freedom. It is the form in which the incomprehensibility of God himself appears. For Rahner, only the acceptance of God as the intractable mystery and the silent acceptance of the inexplicability and unanswerability of suffering are one and the same event. The acceptance of suffering without an answer other than the incomprehensibility of God and his freedom is the concrete form in which we accept God himself and allow him to be God. If there is not directly or indirectly this absolute acceptance of the incomprehensibility of suffering, all that can really happen is the affirmation of our own idea of God and not the affirmation of God himself.\textsuperscript{27} I think that accepting suffering as mystery is a step forward to keep it in our theological investigations since it is intimately related to another Mystery. But we should not quickly turn it to the mystery. Questions matter!

A recurrent question is \textit{Where} is God. The \textit{trial of God}\textsuperscript{28} remains present in any suffering of human beings as a permanent questioning, and in the form of prayers, both lamentations and praise. Ignatius, as we saw, suggests that in extreme suffering like the passion of Christ, divinity can hide itself. During the genocide in Rwanda, a country where people have always believed that God during the day used to visit the world and, by the evening, use to come back to that beautiful country to rest, there is actually a popular belief that during the hundred darkest days of their history,\textsuperscript{29} God

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\textsuperscript{23} John E. Thiel, \textit{God, Evil, and Innocent Suffering}, 8.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 28.
\textsuperscript{25} Karl Rahner, \textit{Theological Investigations} 19 (New York: Crossroad, 1983).
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 194.
\textsuperscript{27} Karl Rahner, \textit{Theological Investigations} 19, 205-207.
\textsuperscript{29} A genocide took place in this country from April 6\textsuperscript{th} to July 4\textsuperscript{th}, 1994.
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just didn’t come back to rest. That literally means: God was absent! In the same situation, Elie Weisel has suggested that God, apparently absent from the execution of a child in Auschwitz, was present in the victim. God was also present in the why or where question itself, and in many dramas played in the concentrations camps as the trial of God. This trial, after finding God guilty of what was happening in the concentration camp, invited the victims in the camp to kneel and praise the same Lord to save them from that horrible situation. The wrong way to deal with suffering will be to avoid the trial, and go straight to worship and adoration. How can we even conceive that kind of thing and remain humans?

Praying: Worship, questioning and lamentations

“We can pray after Auschwitz because there was prayer in Auschwitz”

Metz thinks that what makes Israel indispensable, even for Christianity, what helps us to recognize the finger of God in this people and what distinguished this small, culturally rather insignificant and politically humble desert folk from the glittering high cultures of its time, was a particular sort of defenselessness, of poverty, in a certain sense Israel’s incapacity successfully to distance itself from the contradictions, the terrors and chasms in its life – by, for example, mythicizing or idealizing the context in which it lived. Israel knew no mythical or ideational riches of spirit with which it could rise above its fears, the alienation of exile, and the history of suffering that was always breaking out in its midst. In its innermost essence, it remained mythically and ideally mute. It showed little talent for forgetting and, at the same time, little talent for spontaneous idealistic ways of dealing with disillusionment and disappointment. Even when it imported a store of myths and idealizing concepts and mimicked them, it was still never completely consoled by them. One could almost say, then, that Israel’s election, its capacity for God, showed itself in this particular form of its poverty and incapacity: the inability to let itself be consoled by myths and ideas. This is precisely what I would call Israel’s poverty of spirit, in which it was mindful of itself in the remembrance of God. That poverty of spirit is expressed through cries. Israel’s faith did not so much lead to answers for the suffering it experienced; rather it expressed itself above all as a questioning arising out of suffering, as an incessant turning of its questions back to Yahweh. Poverty of spirit is the foundation of any biblical discourse on God. It is a mystery of suffering unto God, particularly found in Israel’s lamentations.

In the last century’s African literature, many essayists understood that too much suffering gives little space for prose; they found in poetry and praying communication the best language in the midst of suffering. This language of prayer is itself a language of suffering, a language of crisis, a language of affliction and of radical danger, a language of complaint and grievance, a language of crying out and, literally, of the grumbling of

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31 Ibid., 65.
32 Ibid., 65-66.
33 Ibid., 66.
the children of God. In Jewish literature, mystics behind this language are not willing yes-men, neither assertive nor apathetic. The prayer that expresses their ‘yes’ is not a language of exaggerated affirmation, no artificial song of jubilation, that would be isolated from every language of suffering and crisis, and which all too quickly falls suspect to being a desperately feigned naïveté. What occurs in this language is not the repression but rather the acceptance of fear, mourning and pain; it is deeply rooted in the figure of night, in the experience of the soul’s demise. It is less a song of the soul, but more a loud crying out from the depths—and not a vague, undirected wailing, but a focused crying-out-to. Psalm 22, in that sense, is a classic lamentation; it is not a cry of despair but the sorrowful placing of one’s need before God, and it ends on a note of confidence and proclamation. Catherine LaCugna believes that even the true atheist would not be the one who does not believe in God but the one who cannot bring to God his or her suffering, doubt, and anguish, in the expectation that God will respond. Lamentation is thus an essential component of theodicy.

In fact, Job’s case shows us two strategies to deal with the experience of suffering. One strategy is to lament pursuing the question of the origin and causes of suffering: why do I/we suffer? Does God will us to suffer? Is God the author of suffering? Another strategy is to construct theories or theodicies to answer these questions. Most of these conjectures, as we have seen, are calculated to let God off the hook by denying that God is the ultimate source of suffering and evil, even though God creates and sustains the universe as it is. According to Hans Urs von Balthasar, however, “the death, and the dying away into silence, of the Logos so become the centre of what he has to say of himself that we have to understand precisely his non-speaking as his final revelation, his utmost word, and this because in the humility of his obedient self-lowering to the death of the cross he is identical with the exalted Lord.”

Toward future: eschatological dimension of a theological understanding

Discovering the God of salvation

The relationship between suffering and God has to be found ultimately in God’s plan of salvation. The biblical vision of salvation that is implicit in calling God Savior (soter) touches not only sin and guilt, but, above all, deliverance from all the situations of suffering in which men and women find themselves. In the Old Testament, God is revealed through historical actions to which a particular faith responds. And this action of God is an action that liberates victims (Dt 5:6; Ex 20:2; Dt 26:5-9). Yahweh’s cause is quite simply the cause of the defenseless. But, God’s revelation also comes about dialectically and confrontationally in battle with other divinities. In the New Testament, as God is the only one who can forgive sin, he is also the only one who can provide restoration, reparation and communion. In the New Testament, it is manifested in the person and mission of Jesus Christ, in whom God is personally present to bestow for-

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36 Metz, A Passion for God, 66-7.
37 Johann Baptist Metz, A Passion for God, 67.
38 Johann Baptist Metz, A Passion for God, 341.
39 Catherine LaCugna, God with Us, 341.
40 Catherine LaCugna, God with Us, note 45, p.371.
giveness and life upon sinners. “In his preaching, Jesus shifts the emphasis away from ritual observance and restores the “Great Commandments” to their proper centrality.”

Jesus’ resurrection appears as above all a liberating action. It is not anyone who has been raised but a victim, and the reason for raising this victim is to do him justice, to free him from the oppression of violent and unjust death. But God’s action in the resurrection takes place after God’s inaction on the cross, and only in the end will God be God.

In Augustine, the God-question determined by the hunger and thirst for justice, that is, the eschatological question about God’s justice, is replaced by the anthropocentric question about human sin. The theodicy question as the eschatological question is silenced.

Metz and Sobrino, on the contrary, want to move beyond a reductive understanding of Christ’s saving act as redemption from sin and to see it also in the very biblical light of God’s response to human suffering as well. In Ignacio Ellacuría’s words, “the cult does not give meaning to the liberation from Egypt, but rather the liberation gives its specific meaning to the cult, which celebrates and draws the explicit consequences of that historical experience.” The basic point of God’s action for these theologians is reaction. God has observed the misery of his people and has heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. God knows the suffering of his people, and for that reason comes down to deliver them from their oppressors and bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land (Ex 3:7ff.). In Sobrino’s words, God’s revelation is, then, reaction to the suffering some human beings inflict on others, and, when the victim is a whole oppressed people, mercy necessarily becomes justice.

The incomprehensible mystery and the triumph over idols

Rahner, by asking why God allows suffering, affirms, as we saw, that suffering is ultimately a mystery. The incomprehensibility of suffering is part of the incomprehensibility of God. Suffering is the form in which the incomprehensibility of God appears. Metz seems to share that point of view when he recognizes that the mysticism of suffering in Israelite prayers involves a language of passionate questions from the midst of suffering, turned toward God, in which the Israelites affirm a God who is still other and different from the echo of our wishes, however ardent they are. In fact, for Rahner, the average man of today has come clearly to recognize that God is absolutely incommensurable with the world, and that he cannot be included as one item within our calculations. It is no wonder, then, that the death of a more primitive idea of God has come to be interpreted as the death of the true God himself, or that God has come to be thought of as unspeakably remote.

So, suffering helps to destroy the idols and return to a biblical understanding of God. There is a risk that the on-going discourse about the suffering God could be like a secret “aestheticization” of suffering at work, different from a sturdy, solidaristic shar-
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ing of suffering.\textsuperscript{51} For, believing in the true God, says Sobrino, involves at the same time fighting against the idols, the divinities of death that exist in our world. According to Sobrino, we have to maintain the tension between the silent God of the Cross and the active God of the resurrection.\textsuperscript{52} Jesus' resurrection is an example of God's justice triumphing over injustice. It is the triumph of the God of life over the idols of death. In the cross, Jesus is the victim the idols generate by their name; in the resurrection God gives life back to him. When God manifests himself against other divinities, He does it through life, by defending people from death, through justice and against injustice, through setting people free and against slavery. In that case, the resurrection demonstrates God's triumph, but \textit{God being against idols}, in response to \textit{the idols being against God}, in a situation that lasts throughout history.\textsuperscript{53} Sobrino thinks that, although Christianity is not formally a religion of suffering and sorrow, it is however a religion of struggle and conflict, given the theological structure of history, shot as it is with the God of life and idols of death.\textsuperscript{54} In other words, believing in the true God involves at the same time fighting against the idols.\textsuperscript{55}

The resurrection, then, shows a God in conflict with other gods, but who sometimes can keep silence and “hide” himself. The problem today is that putting together ‘mystery’ and ‘incomprehensibility’ sounds like the best confirmation of the criticism of New Atheism against Christian ‘ignorance’. To the modern mind, mystery often implies little more than the unexplored and not-yet understood aspects of our physical universe. It designates only a range of unanswered questions that science will eventually solve. The mystery of revelation, however, is a \textit{mysterium tremendum}.\textsuperscript{56} In focusing on Jesus Christ as the revelation of God, Christianity claims that the ultimate mystery of reality becomes incarnate in the life of a particular human being at a particular time in the history of the world. God, in Haught's words, appears to Christian faith as a self-emptying mystery. The emptiness initially strikes us as a \textit{mysterium tremendum}, that is, an awe-inspiring and even terrifying abyss. So we either shrink back from it in the anxiety that we will be lost if we plunge into it, or else we try to domesticate it by reducing it to the merely problematic.\textsuperscript{57}

\textit{Toward the future: Deus semper maior}

According to Rahner, God is always greater than culture, science, the Church, the Pope, and everything institutional.\textsuperscript{58} The idea of God \textit{semper maior} also implies an eschatological dimension, the futurity of God. That consists “in understanding faith as a journey in history, but taking a specific way, hoping against hope, active and liberating, humble and clear-sighted at the same time. We have to move forward, not only because of the “not-yet” (the condition that makes the way possible) but because the “certainly not” exists and we have to build a future (the requirement to journey

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\textsuperscript{51} Metz, \textit{A Passion for God}, 70.  \\
\textsuperscript{52} John Sobrino, \textit{Christ the Liberator}, 86-7.  \\
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 85.  \\
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 85.  \\
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 86.  \\
\textsuperscript{56} John Haught, \textit{Mystery and Promise: a Theology of Revelation} (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993), 43-44.  \\
\textsuperscript{57} John Haught, \textit{Mystery and Promise}, 58.  \\
\textsuperscript{58} Karl Rahner, “Los jesuitas y el futuro. Con ocasión de una fecha histórica”, in \textit{Anuario de la Compañía de Jesús} (Rome, 1975), 32. Quoted by J. Sobrino, 88.
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Pannenberg’s *consequent futurity* suggests that from Jesus and his preaching of the future Kingdom, we can think of a God ‘with *futurum* as constitution of being [Seinbeschaffenheit]’. In that case, the classical attributes of the divinity—eternity, liberty, omnipotence, love—can be reinterpreted from the future. However, the ultimate truth of this conceptualization of God in the preaching of Jesus will depend on the act by God that unequivocally reveals the God of the future as creative power against death in the resurrection. That implies, in a way, that God is still not.

A *pondered futurity*, by Rahner and Schillebeeckx, suggests that the mystery of God always remains a mystery. However, unlike Pannenberg, Rahner does not concentrate everything in the future and in correlative hope. He claims that transcendence is also made present to us here and now in the form of a call to unconditional love of neighbor. A unilateral conception of God from the future needs the past and the present to purify it. “Without this emphasis on present communion with God and on the past of Jesus, who is ‘reminding’ us of himself though the Spirit, it seems to me [Schillebeeckx] that the new ‘concept of God’ runs the risk of turning itself into a new mythology.”

Moltmann, on the one hand, sees God as a God who has ‘the future as a constituent characteristic’. This is the God of the promise which will be fulfilled in the future and is therefore the God of hope. On the other hand, however, Moltmann makes other claims that emphasize the present. The question of God is posed on the ground of historical experience and in temporal concepts over and above that of his coming. God is a crucified God and therefore is a Trinitarian process that will culminate at the end of history. Metz reaffirms that what is human will always go on being a future and that Christian faith means trusting in the future as the future of the greater mystery of God.

**Conclusion:** African Theology’s focus on reconciliation, justice and peace cannot forget to address the more deeply issue of suffering in which many people abide today. Suffering involves both the pastoral dimension of healing and the theological question of the *who* of God in whom we believe. The theological debate about suffering has focused in the last few years on God’s suffering or just on suffering and the victims’ faces, making difficult the connection between theology and economy. An attempt to connect the two poles helped to develop liberation theologies in poor countries, on the one hand, and, on the other, a growing questioning of God’s impassibility. The failure of traditional theodicies is the result of a merely intellectual treatment of suffering, limited in a philosophical questioning of God that ignores the fact that God in his mystery is also the one who can give a response to that question. In victims dealing with suffering, however, it is not just a blind acceptance of a *fatum*; it is a hopeful and faithful questioning or acceptance of a hard and tragic reality people don’t always choose to live in. The *why* and *where* questions in the victims are, in fact, the trial of a God whom they know as the God of promise and love, the God of life whom they cannot recognize in that situation of death and hopelessness. Their *why* and *where* are their cry toward God, a rejection that all that is happening to them is due to their own fault, a theological recognition that God is the one to blame but the only one who can

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59 John Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator*, 89-90.
63 John Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator*, 91.
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save. This theological experience of suffering shows God fighting the idols that cause death and suffering. It shows how the irreducible God is always shining in darkness (Jn 1:5). God is still present in human suffering in the most solidaristic way, giving his life to provide life, and calling, empowering people to follow his steps by loving and serving one another until the time when God will be all in all (1Cor 15:12-34). Dealing with suffering inevitably will center the theological debate in Africa about what is really going on in people’s ordinary life, and make deeper the inculturation of our faith by radically opting for the poor and their liberation.

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Theological Insights on Ecology and Technology Towards Sustainable Development and Peace in Africa

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Abstract: The recent disruption of the earth’s ecosystems through industrialization, consumption of the planet’s precious finite resources and pollution of the oceans, soil, and the atmosphere raises the distinct possibility of the collapse of the fragile biosphere. It is apparent that any effort to reverse this gloomy situation will have to draw on a wide range of analysis and techniques. The expertise of natural, social and physical scientists, policy makers and theologians must be drawn together in a joint effort to deal with the global crisis. This article focuses on the place of theology in this endeavor. It points out that the causes of environmental degradation are multi-dimensional, that is; technological, economic and socio-political. Some critics have observed that the Judeo-Christian tradition that validates an anthropocentric viewpoint in its understanding of human being as the apex of creation has led to the environmental crisis. Subsequently, the main argument is that since Christianity has contributed to the problem, it is must be part of the solution. The Christian community in general must take a stance for care, justice and the integrity of God’s creation. In conclusion the article provides insights that would lead to the development of a holistic and integrative paradigm that will ensure environmental conservation and sustainability.

Introduction: Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt…more science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecological crisis until we find a new religion…we shall continue to have a worsening ecological crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man¹.

This paper proceeds from the above statement. It is argued that an anthropocentric and aggressive attitude² towards nature derived from the Christian idea of human sovereignty over all creation is responsible for the ecological crisis. The human drama takes central place and nature is seen as merely the stage on which this drama plays itself out. Consequently, a person’s relation with nature tends to fall outside the sphere of moral right and wrong³. This is exactly the outlook that is now being challenged by the environmentalists raising the prospect of a major shift in moral thinking of people from anthropocentric to biocentric or ecocentric inclusiveness. Environmentalists challenge us to enlarge the circle of our moral concern to include the land, air, water, forest and all forms of life that are at the centre of conflicts in many parts of Africa.

In the first section, the paper highlights some dimensions of environmental degradation that lead to ecological crisis in Africa. It points out that there are many factors ranging from technological and economic to social and political that influence the ultimate outcome of environmental change processes in Africa⁴. For instance, technological advancement has led to economic development in some areas. However, use of tech-

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nology without consideration of its impact on society as a result of greed, inordinate, pride and profiteering leads to pollution, industrial emissions, saturation of environment by chemicals and depletion of water resources.

In recent years, debate concerning the practical consequences of the Christian view of the world has been going on and there have been various speculations as to the origins of the exploitative attitude towards nature. It has been argued that the Judeo-Christian tradition has contributed to the depersonalization of nature and a lack of respect for it. Subsequently, the second section provides three reasons why Christians must be involved with environmental matters. First is their belief in God as creator. During worship services, Christians boldly proclaim the fundamental role of God as creator in scriptures, hymnody and prayers.

Second is the Christian responsibility for caring for creation. In Genesis 2, God commissions human beings with duties and obligations to care for, till, keep and be stewards of God’s creation. This clear and direct admonition has been either forgotten or ignored due to humanity’s greed, avarice and selfishness. Global warming and excessive use of fossil fuels are prime examples of how humanity contradicts this basic premise set forth in the Bible.

The final reason is social justice. The fundamental principal of Christianity is that everyone is equal in the sight of God and God’s love is available to everyone irrespective of her/his social standing. The effects of environmental degradation fall most heavily upon the disadvantaged in society for example the poor, women and children. Linking justice for creation with those on the margins of society conceptually and practically is now an emerging task.

Faced with the disturbing and unsustainable reality brought about by the ecological crisis, our reflection and praxis need alternative paradigms that are holistic and integrative. Hence, the final section of the paper provides insights that would lead to an ecological reformation, namely; the recognition of the interconnectedness and sacredness of Creation, a reexamination (re-reading) of scripture, a fresh ethical reflection, the embodiment of liberative commitment to gender justice and finally incorporating insights from indigenous cultures.

**Conceptual Clarifications**

**Theology:** Theology is the way people explore their faith in God and come to a deeper understanding of their faith relationship. In this case, understanding means a systematic reflection on human experience in the context of ecological crisis.

**Ecology:** The term ecology was coined in 1866 by the German biologist Ernst Haeckel (1834 – 1919). It derives from two Greek words *Oikos* which means “house” and *logos* meaning reflection or study. Therefore, ecology means the study of the conditions and relations that make up habitat (house) of each and every person and indeed organisms in nature. According to Haeckel’s definition, ecology is the study of the interdependence and interaction of living organisms (animals and plants) and their environment (inanimate matter). At the outset, therefore, ecology as a science (biology) concerned itself almost exclusively with the study of animal and vegetable species, their environment and interrelationships.
Many of the phenomena that have become evident since the 1960s have demonstrated the close relationship between social and environmental issues. Nuclear radiation, increasing water and air pollution, the reduction of ozone layer and deforestation of the earth stem from a reality that makes inadequate to consider ecology as only a science of nature. To date, ecology encompasses not only nature (natural ecology) but culture and society (human ecology, social ecology and so on). Human ecology is conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny that is by religion. Hence, the need to consider religion (Christianity) in particular in the current ecological debate. Social ecology is the study of human systems in interaction with their environmental systems.

**Ecological Crisis:** This refers to as number of interconnected crisis; air, water and earth pollution, the exhausting of natures’ basic resources, over population leading to hunger and poverty particularly in the South. These phenomena can be understood as components of the crisis in the modern development model that exploits nature but is uninterested in restoring its resources or in promoting justice among human beings.

**Sustainable Development:** A ‘catch word’ used to refer to a form of development in which the needs of the present generations are to be satisfied without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. The concept gained currency as a result of the 1987 Brundtland Report titled “Our Common Future”. The report defined sustainable development as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. In this connection the goal is a more moderate use of natural resources, allowing for conservation and a natural renewal. Sustainable development postulates that there is a relationship between economic development and environmental protection. With this new guiding concept, goes the realization that environmental policy cannot be examined in isolation from economic and social (as well as cultural) developments. For instance, if one accepts the preservation of natural resources as a precondition to the sustainability of a society, then this defines a framework of possible economic and social options. Therefore, sustainability introduces the principle of environmental responsibility for the future survival of our planet. The Brundtland Commission suggested steps such as conserving and enhancing natural resources, encouraging grassroots involvement in development and adopting appropriate technologies.

**Technology:** According to the Longman Contemporary Dictionary, technology involves new machines, equipments and ways of doing things that are based as modern knowledge about science and computers. Both science and technology are driven by the endeavor to know and understand, to change the environment for the better and to use goods of the earth for the benefit of oneself and others. Technology has both a negative and a positive side. Positively, it is the purposive control of the environment, the programmatic extension of our ability to harness the forces of nature for specified ends. But technological enterprise has had a negative impact on the environment. Chemicals in industry and agriculture are polluting the air, water and soil. The cutting down of forests is destroying the natural habitat of thousands of living forms. Mining and other extractive industries are rapidly depleting human, scarce energy and mineral resources. The climate change that we observe as a result of the ‘green house effect’ will increase famine and drought.

Our global economy is outgrowing the capacity of the earth to support it, moving our early 21st civilization ever closer to decline and possible collapse. In our preoccupation with quarterly earnings reports and year-to-year economic growth, we have lost sight of how the human enterprise has become relative to the earth resources. Due to technological advancement, we are consuming renewable resources faster than they can regenerate. Forests are shrinking, grasslands are deteriorating, water tables are falling, fisheries are collapsing and soils are eroding.

The ecological crises noted above are created by modern industrial and technological growth and modern life-style. One paradigm of development, the Western industrial growth model is almost universally accepted. It is a process using enormous capital and exploiting natural resources particularly non-renewable ones. The inevitable consequence of this pattern of development is exploitation of nature and fellow human beings. Reactions about the kind of goods to be produced and type of technology to be used are influenced by demands of a consumerist economy whose controlling logical of growth is greed not need. Much of the profit-oriented growth which destroys the ecological balance is engineered and controlled by multinationals from the United States of America (USA), Europe and Japan. For example, Japanese multinationals indiscriminately destroy forests and other natural resources in the Philippines, Indonesia and other Asian countries. Thus, Japan preserves its own forests and trees because countries in the surrounding region supply what is needed to maintain its life-style.

One of the contemporary signs of the times manifested in today’s human experience is our ecological crises and the widespread sense of moral sensibility to safeguard one and only earth for the benefit of both present and future generations. The belief that the ecological issue is ultimately a moral problem was addressed by the Holy See’s delegate in his speech at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. He explained that:

It must be recognized that juridical, economic and technical measures are not sufficient to solve the problem that hampers sustainable development. Many of these problems are issues of an ethical and moral nature which call for a profound change in modern civilization’s typical patterns of consummation and production particularly in all industrialized countries.

The Holy See’s Delegate made it clear that, in order to achieve this change, “we must encourage and support ecological conversion”

...At stake is not only a physical ecology that is concerned to safeguard the habitat of the various living beings, but also a human ecology which rests primarily on ensuring and safeguarding moral conditions in the actions of the human being in the human environment.

In this connection, this paper suggests an expansion of moral concern beyond the human circle to include the larger biological and ecological communities. The plight of the earth demonstrates that an individualistic materialism cannot be allowed to drive out responsibility and love, and that care for those in need and respect for the rights of future generations. What is needed therefore, is a conversion that would lead to new life styles in order to combat the consumerist culture.

In Africa, there are many factors ranging from technological economic to social and political that lead to environmental changes. Africa’s physical environment, increasing poverty levels and contemporary rapid population growth and climate change are
among the factors that contribute to the ecological crises. Africa’s natural environment is both diverse and harsh. The rains are unpredictable and when they fall, they are destructive, convective thunderstorms. In such a situation, crop failure due to drought is a common phenomenon in the Sahel or Eastern and Southern Africa. The unpredictability of rain has an influence on peoples’ attitudes to cultivation methods, livestock and family sizes. In addition, because of drought, a number of countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa experience considerable water stress and constrains in agricultural productivity. Water scarcity has been a source of conflict in some African countries. For instance, while the causes of conflict in Darfur are many and complex, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) environmental and conflict analysis report found that regional climate variability, water scarcity and the steady loss of fertile land are important underlying factors.

The decrease in the availability of fertile land and water has been compounded by the arrival of people displaced from conflict affected areas in Southern Sudan. Overgrazing and deforestation have reduced the vegetation cover leading to a decrease of top soil volume and quality. The lack of sheltering trees and vegetation has in turn undermined natural defences against shifting sands. In addition, the region has experienced a marked decline in rainfall. With high population density and growing demand for resources, violent competition between agriculturalist, nomads and pastoralists in the region has arisen. With rapidly increasing human and livestock populations, the weaknesses of institutions governing access to land and water have become more apparent and some groups have been particularly disadvantaged.

Desertification and drought do not inevitably lead to conflict. By causing poverty, marginalization and migration, however, they create the conditions that make violence an attractive option for disempowered young men. Marginalized pastoralist groups for example, in Darfur have been recruited as militias to fight proxy wars where they are able to raid cattle. Nomads whose camel herding livelihoods have been affected by drought and desertification have also been easy prey for armed groups in the region. In addition to resolving the long-standing ethnic tensions in Darfur, durable peace will indeed depend on addressing the underlying competition for water and fertile land.

There exists a complex relationship between population growth and environmental degradation. An increase in population in Africa will lead to more continental and global carbon emissions deforestation and less biodiversity. For example, Cameroon with forest resources estimated at 22 million hectares loses 200 hectares annually. Due to deforestation, 40 species of wildlife including black rhinoceros, gorilla and elephant have been threatened. Though a rapid population growth rate is never the sole cause of environmental degradation, where it occurs in the rural areas, land shortage may arise or overgrazing occurs. The poor people usually suffer the worst of the consequences because they are likely to live in ecologically fragile zones. Deforestation results from a need for additional land for ploughing and grazing to feed the growing population.

Nearly half of all Africans live on less than one dollar a day. Poverty is connected with disease, food insecurity and environmental degradation. In the rural areas, environmental resources (land, water, forests) constitute the wealth of the poor as sources of food, building materials and firewood. Any degradation or loss of access to natural resources reduces livelihood potential. Low farm productivity contributes to famine, food shortage and malnutrition. Hence, in the absence of economic sufficiency, poor
people constrained by their need to survive in the present are forced to exploit their natural resources beyond the threshold of sustainability. In the urban centres poverty is common among the population occupying the informal settlements. These settlements are overcrowded and hence lead to the loss of biodiversity through increased garbage disposal, air pollution, poor housing, inadequate drinking water and sanitation facilities. Poverty\textsuperscript{25} thus remains a major hindrance towards sustainability.

Global warming is one of the world's greatest environmental threats of the 21st century. This has resulted from widespread changes in the atmosphere due to the emission of green house gases. The effects of global warming are many and widespread. These include; increase in global temperature, rise in sea levels due to melting icebergs, snow and mountain glaciers especially in the north and south poles, vigorous hydrological cycle which increases rainfall and acute droughts in some parts of the globe particularly in Africa\textsuperscript{26} and disappearance of forest types and species. Climate change is expected to affect the African continent although this may vary from country to country. In the Saharan and Sahel sub-regions, rainfall is predicted to decrease leading not only to drought but also soil degradation and increase in the occurrence of sand storms.

In north East Africa, long dry periods are expected. This will affect water systems such as the Blue Nile thus leading to water shortage and adverse consequences for agriculture and forestry sector throughout the region. Coastal areas may also be affected by rising sea levels and intrusion of salt water into inland water resources and ecosystems. For example, the sea level rise in the Niger Delta\textsuperscript{27} has increased salinity of both surface and underground water due to the intrusion of sea water. This has led to the death of aquatic plants and animals that cannot tolerate high salinity.

According to UNEP, the relation between natural resources, the environment and conflict is multi-dimensional and complex, but three principle patterns can be identified\textsuperscript{28}. First, natural resources contribute to the outbreak of conflict. Attempts to control natural resources or grievances caused by inequitable wealth sharing or environmental degradation can contribute to the outbreak of violence. Countries that depend on the export of a narrow set of primary commodities may also be vulnerable to conflict. Natural resources exploration can lead to climate change and eventually to volatile conflict. Extraction of minerals such as gold and diamond and the drilling of oil may result in environmental crises which contribute to climate change. One of the causes of climate change\textsuperscript{29} and global warming is gas flaring and oil spills. This is a common occurrence in the Niger Delta. The oil spill devastates the environment leading to the loss of mangrove trees which are an important source of both fuel wood for the indigenous people and a habitat for the area's biodiversity. Subsequently, the oil spills have generated conflict between the host community and multinational oil companies.

Second, is financing and sustaining conflict. Once conflict has broken out extractive “high-value” resources may be exploited to finance armed forces or become strategic considerations in gaining territory. In this case, the duration of conflict is extended. Columbite tantalite or coltan has been one of the primary goods linked to conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC\textsuperscript{30}). Coltan is a metallic ore that is essential in the production of electronic devices such as cell phones and laptop computers. The Coltan trade has many traders that include child miners, guerrilla insurgents, European distributors and global electronic corporations. The demand for Coltan has increased conflict in the DRC.
In Sudan, one of the major causes of conflict is land. This centrality stems from the fact that access to land is crucial to human survival in agrarian societies. This has been the case in the Nuba Mountains, South Kordofon state. The region is strategically located between the equatorial southern Sudan and the desert northern Sudan and is the one of the major economic bases for the Sudanese agrarian economy. The Nuba communities have found themselves subjected by various regimes through exclusionary political and economic policies including land policies. For example, under the 1968 Mechanized Farming Corporation Act, mechanized rain-fed farming was expanded into the Nuba Mountains. This process has meant land alienation has been the main practice of the state policy in the religion since the 1970s. The rights and interest of the local communities were ignored. The local communities resisted the encroachment of mechanized farming and often violent conflicts erupted between them and the absentee landlords supported by the Government. Contention also occurs between the sedentary and the nomadic local communities on one hand and the government on the other. This external factor aggravated the complementary relations between the sedentary Nuba and the nomadic Baqq’ara Arabs. Both were pushed to the marginal land by expanding mechanized farms. In the early 1980s some Nuba elites and politicians began to voice their grievances but in vain. That is why when the civil war broke out in the South in 1983, the Nuba peoples were ready for the armed struggle for their cause, that is, the land question.

Finally, is the undermining of peace. The prospects of a peace agreement may be undermined by individuals or splinter groups that could lose access to the revenues generated by resource exploitation if peace were to prevail. Indeed, real or perceived risks of how peace may alter access to and regulation of natural resources in ways that damage some actors’ interests can be a major predicament. At the same time, natural resources can also undermine genuine political reintegration and reconciliation even after peace agreement is in place by providing economic incentives that reinforce political divisions.

In 2002, an army mutiny in Cote d’Ivore resulted in the country’s split between a rebel held north and government held South. Economic agendas on both sides are key to understanding why the conflict has proven difficult to resolve. In 2005, it was discovered that diamonds mined in rebel held Forces Nouvelles areas were being smuggled into Mali and Guinea and then into the international market. The rebels were using diamonds as well as cocoa and cotton to fund their war effort and for personal gain. This constituted a major disincentive to negotiate peace. Subsequently in December 2005 the United Nations Security Council extended the arms embargo against Cote d’Ivoire to include a ban on rough diamond from the country.

Diamonds however were not the only source of revenue that needed to be controlled. With 40 per cent of the world’s cocoa coming from Cote d’Ivoire, the commodity makes up 35 per cent of the country’s export earnings. In 2006, an investigation by the British Non-Governmental Organization Global Witness uncovered evidence that the Forces Nouvelles were generating USD 30 million per year levying taxes on cocoa trade. The Ivorian cocoa sector was also funding military activity by the government and government associated militias. More than USD 58 million in cocoa revenues were used for government’s war efforts. These economic efforts which benefited both parties to the power sharing agreement contributed to a situation in which neither side had an incentive to accelerate reunification.
From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that ecological crises are a reality in Africa and there is an urgent need to address it. As already observed, the attempt of science to control and dominate nature together with the liberalist and neo-liberalist economy and politics can be said to be the most important reasons behind the present day ecological crisis. As Pope John Paul II noted it is a moral problem. Pope John Paul II places his entire concern into a larger perspective linking care for the poor with care for the earth. He cites a variety of abuses and environmental disharmonies that threaten the integrity of creation including such problems as the indiscriminate application of advances in science and technology, the lack of respect for life evident in the patterns of pollution, the dominance of economic interests over the dignity of workers and even entire peoples, genetic manipulation and exploitation of natural resources among others. He emphasized the need for carefully coordinated solutions, based on a morally coherent world vision to the environmental crisis. In this context the role of the human person in protecting and renewing the environment remains central.

The Protestant churches have also been engaged in dealing with the ecological crisis. In 1974, the World Council of Churches (WCC) held a consultation of scientists, theologians and economist in Bucharest. This was in response to the Club of Rome’s Report. It showed how the natural resource depletion, pollution and population growth were placing an intolerable strain on the earth’s resources.

The consultation led to WCC adopting a program on Just, Participatory and Sustainable Societies (JPSS). The Just Participatory and Sustainable Societies framework was expanded in 1983 at the Vancouver Assembly of the WCC with the inauguration of the conciliar process on Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC). In 1990, the WCC convocation on JPIC was held in Seoul Korea. The Seoul JPIC convocation took a significant step forward in the articulation of the ten affirmation that together with the analysis on which they were based, provide a clear elaboration regarding on the one hand, the interrelatedness of economic inequity, militarism, ecological destruction and racial injustice and on the other, the theological, ethical and spiritual basis for affirming and sustaining life in its fullness. Perhaps this was the first time in history of the Churches that such a significant step was taken to express concretely the Churches’ response to the ecological crisis.

The convocation called the Churches to translate their response to God’s covenant into acts of mutual commitment within the covenant community. Four areas were selected for specific “acts of covenaniting”, expressing concrete commitment to work for; a just economic order and for liberation from the bondage of foreign debts, the true security of all nations and people, building a culture that can live in harmony with creation’s integrity and finally the eradication of racism and discrimination on national and international levels among all people.

People from other religious traditions are now advocating this new attitude towards the environment.

In this connection, it would be prudent to engage religion as a positive strategy toward sustainable solution and peaceful co-existence between humanity and nature. Moreover, Christianity has contributed to the destruction of the environment it must be part of the solution.

The Church played its part in the formation of the mentality that led to the present global crises of the biosphere. The Church has not been sufficiently critical, and it has not used its theological resources to support a relational mentality of respect and con-
cern for the creation. As the WCC, Canberra Assembly (1990) also remarked, the more theology has insisted on God’s transcendence and distance from the material world the more the earth has come to be seen as a mere object of human exploitation and as a non-spiritual reality, (Final Declaration 1:13)\(^4\).

The section that follows provides the theoretical framework for the engagement of Christianity for sustainable environment that will also guarantee peaceful co-existence.

**The Involvement of the Church (Christian Community) in the Ecological Reformation\(^4\): A Theoretical Perspective**

Church (Christian Communities) have had their focus on the relationships of justice, peace and integrity of creation\(^4\). They have highlighted the threats that undermine ecological sustainability and social justice, articulating a vision of *Shalom*, a way of living together within the human family and with the totality of creation as one earth community. Grassroots communities are organizing to stop the killing of nature and its creatures campaigns. The “Faith and Earth Keeping Project”\(^5\) of South Africa founded in 1995 is an excellent example. The aim of the project is to help raise consciousness of the environmental crises and support communities and individuals at grassroot level to create their own activities and policies for environmental protection, conservation and sustainable resource use with a view to improve their quality of life. This is done through the promotion of religious engagement in ecological and development issues. Three specific objectives follow from this, research, consciousness raising and mobilization. Research is significant in this paper. Research is done with regard to what has been in the fields of environmental philosophy, theology and ethics in order to understand the role that religious practices have played in environmental degradation. It also investigates the role that religious communities can play in creating a lifestyle compatible with the ecological realities.

In my view, there are three reasons why Christian communities should be engaged in providing solution(s) to the ecological crisis. First, is their belief in God as the Creator. 

“The Earth is the Lords and all that is in it” (Psalms 24:1). In the Bible, the doctrine of creation stresses the transcendence and freedom of God, the complete dependence of the whole creation upon the creator. It emphasizes the reverence for all forms of life especially human beings who are elevated to a supreme position of honour and responsibility and the sovereign power and purpose of God.

The Bible speaks of the relationship between the creator and the creation, a relationship which is essentially that of a covenant. For the belief that heaven and earth or everything (Psalms 8:6 and Isaiah 44:24) is dependent upon Yahweh, the creator is a corollary of Israel’s understanding that her whole life is dependent upon Yahweh, her savior and judge, to whom they are bound in a covenant relationship.

The doctrine of creation then is preeminently an affirmation about the sovereignty of God and the absolute dependence of the creatures. The earth belongs to its maker (Psalm 24: 1 – 2 ; Psalms 89: 12 ; Psalms 95 : 5). The sovereignty\(^6\) of God manifest in the works of creation is the motive for worship and service (Psalms 95 ; Isaiah 40 : 27 – 31). This is well exemplified in the statement of John Paul II:

> Nature shares in God’s goodness and contemplation of its beauty and richness raises over hearts and minds to God\(^7\).
In the New Testament the belief that God has created and is sustaining the world is important. There are certain texts in the New Testament that have explicit and profound connections with Genesis 1 and with the Old Testament wisdom tradition especially Proverb 8:38. The Prologue of John’s Gospel begins the story of the good news of Jesus with the same words as Genesis 1.

“In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made… (John 1:1-3).

In spite of this Christian thought separated God from nature, God was understood to be revealed primarily in historical events rather than in natural life. God’s transcendence was emphasized much more than God’s immanence or living presence in creation. The natural world was seen as a sphere of profanity and darkness. This notion was derived from the dualistic philosophy of the Greeks and Gnostics. This world view is inconsistent with the biblical doctrine of creation. In the book of Genesis, God declares that the whole creation is good. God is the “Lord of all creation”. This divine sovereignty leads to a profoundly holistic world view, in which humans take their place with every other creature in a state of dependence on God.

God creates the world through Jesus who becomes enfleshed in creation. Through the incarnate word, God comes into contact with the world in a personal way while still remaining distinct from it. Through Christ the Kingdom of God has been inaugurated. Whenever God’s action in Christ is effective for human salvation, God is creatively at work. Thus Paul commenting on transformed life of persons of faith, states that God’s redemptive deed is nothing less than a new act of creation. “For it is the God who said (at the dawn of creation, Genesis 1:3) “Let light shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2Corinthians 4:6). In another context Paul declares that the new life of faith has its source in the grace of God who creates by calling into existence the things that do not exist (Romans 4:17).

Christ is God’s preeminent and supreme agent in creation as exemplified in Colossians 1:15-20, that:

He is the image of the invisible God the first born over all creation. For by him all things were created things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible… all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together… For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.

Jesus is also the mediator of redemption (v20). The whole cosmos finds reconciliation and peace in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ then, God has restored the human pattern intended at creation which was disrupted by human rebellion. Several points emerge from the foregoing discussion that, first Jesus is the same as God the creator who gives eternal life to be believers (John 20:30-31). Second the image of God is restored in him making the believers a new creation (cf 2 Corinthians 5:17). Third, the world is created by God and is subjected to the control of Jesus, (Hebrews 2: 5-9). Finally this is God’s world which is good. God sends His son Jesus Christ into the world (Cosmos) because God loves it so much (John 3:16). Christ reconciles all things and brings the promise of creation healing, wholeness and liberation. Thus, Christian response to the ecological crisis should be guided by the need to maintain the harmony between human beings and the natural world based on the principle of inter-dependence.
Second, is the concept of creative stewardship in Genesis (1:28) stewardship involves accountability. The doctrine of *Imago Dei* assigns to humankind a special place in God’s creation. It brings out special dignity, rights and duties of human kind. “We are answerable to God for the way we manage this world during our time here and now.” It also suggests an active and creative role in respect of the earth for which we have been given responsibility. Christians have to accomplish this responsibility and abandon the exploitative attitude in order to build a sustainable world where there is equality and sufficiency. The Bible can provide the normative insights for that purpose; it is a basis for an environmental ethic.

Our African heritage should also help us develop an environmental ethic for peace and sustainable livelihood. In African religion, human kind is not master of the universe but only the centre, the friend, the beneficiary and the user. Human kind is an integral part of nature. For this reason, human beings have to live in harmony with the universe obeying the laws of nature, moral and mystical order. Humanity must go back to its cosmic and social roots in order to re-establish its symbiotic relationship with the rest of nature. This will lead to a creative, mutually challenging and enriching dialogue – a social contract with the earth.

Third, is the concept of social justice. There is an emerging awareness that care for economic and social justice cannot be separated from the environment. Ecological crisis should be seen as a justice issue. Jurgen Moltman has noted that:

We shall not be able to achieve social justice without justice for the natural environment; we shall not be able to achieve justice for nature without social justice.

In reference to the environment injustice is demonstrated in several ways. First, there is a connection between economic exploitation and environmental degradation. For instance deforestation has resulted to atmospheric changes that lead to drought and famine in poor countries of the South. The poor people are driven out of their habitat to create room for the expansion of large scale agricultural farms. In the 1980s as lands and forests were devoted to export production in Africa, rural people were pushed into occupying marginal ecosystems. This resulted into environmental degradation. Second, human relationship with nature today is not that of equal partners but of domination and exploitation. Domination is the principle cause of the ecological crisis. Third, the uneven distribution, control and use of natural resources are serious justice issues. For example, the countries of the north are consuming an excessive amount of the goods of the earth. This calls not only for a profound change in their typical consumer lifestyle but also legal guarantees concerning the responsible management of the earth’s resources. Finally the rapid depletion of non-renewable natural resources raises the question of our responsibility to future generations. The question therefore is how to use natural resources in a way that sustains life and does not destroy it.

The effects of environmental degradation fall most heavily on the disadvantaged in society, the poor, women and children. In rural areas for example, the scarcity of clean water and firewood which has serious human and economic consequences is an environmental problem at its very roots. Environmental damage increases poverty leading to a vicious cycle in which people are damaging the very fabric on which they depend upon. Women and children often bear the brunt of coping with these environmental problems. As soil deteriorates, women have to work longer hours to provide food from barren soil. Children suffer most from diseases like diarrhea owing to lack
of clean water and inadequate sanitation. In deforested rural communities, girls and women expend increasing energy and time to collect firewood.

Contemporary, feminist theologians have identified the cause of women’s pain and struggle with the conceptual framework of patriarchy (a hierarchical system of domination in which men with power rule over all other beings in the cosmos). This system of domination – submission\(^55\) has promoted war, injustice and ecological disaster. The churches accepted and reinforced common assumptions about the domination of men over women and the rights of human beings over nature. Men and technology are associated with the first term in each of the following polarities of reason/emotion, mind/body, objectivity/subjectivity and control/nurture. Women and nature were associated with the second term in each case.

Eco-justice feminists/Eco-feminists\(^56\) have responded effectively with the critique that the oppression of women and the oppression of nature are rooted in a common set of hierarchical, dualistic and patriarchal assumptions. Biblical religion tends to be patriarchal and hierarchal. Masculine attributes are commonly given to God while women are ascribed roles such as wife-mother. This question of gender in God is linked to the wider theme of Christian attitudes toward nature. Through the concept of cosmic dualism, nature has been approached exclusively as if it were an external power to be transformed by humankind for use leading to exploitation. Similarly, women have been symbolically identified with nature and are to be tamed and exploited. Rosemary Ruether\(^57\) points out that in such a situation women and nature are often raped both literally and symbolically by those guided by this concept of “cosmic dualism”.

The eco-feminists postulate that in order to deal with the ecological crisis, we must transform relationships of domination and exploitation into relationships of mutual support. This transformation will not occur without a parallel change in our image of God, our image of the relationship between God and creation in all its dimension\(^58\). They suggest that there is a need for a new holistic view of God as both father and Mother\(^59\). This will help us shun any ideological understanding of human-earth relations which refuse to take into account interdependence of all living and non-living beings and things. The discovery of feminine attributes in God such as tenderness, and loving care should increase our sensitivity to God’s presence in the world, that the product of divine creation is love. Conclusively, we must reformulate our concept of God no longer to be seen as an imposing power that commands relationships of domination\(^60\) but as a power of mutual support, the source of true life and mutuality.

**Way Forward**

From the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that a radically new global political and economic order, informed by Christian ethics and Christian perspectives on creation and by values from indigenous cultures (African in this case) both of which promote sustainability and justice for all creation is urgently needed. We must think of a whole new creative way of understanding life and doing theology through the following steps that are not exhaustive.

First, is a recognition of interconnectedness and sacredness of God’s gift in creation (The animate and inmate) and the natural biophysical limits. For this to happen there is a need to deepen our knowledge of biophysical sciences and eco-feminism.
This will help develop a new ecological model that is not anthropocentric, hierarchical and patriarchal. This will foster respect for inter-relatedness spiritual kinship with other kind, commitment to ecological sustainability and advocacy for environmental justice.

Second, we need to re-examine scripture in the context of the deepening eco-justice crisis. As already noted there have been various speculations as to the origins of the exploitative attitude towards nature. It has been argued that an anthropocentric and aggressive attitude towards nature is derived from the idea of human sovereignty over all other creatures. This has produced a blind science and technology and an insane economic culture. The Bible offers hidden treasure to ecologically alert readers who appreciate contemporary science and bring to bear insights gained from archaeological research and sociological and literally methods of interpretation. The Genesis stories will have to be understood in a new and wider context. The interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis has led to an ever-increasing emphasis on the doctrine of stewardship (Genesis 1:27-28). This teaching strengthens the sense of human dominance and exploitation of the earth. A rereading of this will demonstrate that human beings inhabit the earth and must care for it by establishing compatible and sustaining forms of interaction with it. St. Paul in 1Corinthians 12 provides a basis for establishing an integral community, emphasizing interconnectedness and mutual interdependence of all creation.

Third, under conditions of ecological crisis which are largely the result of human negligence, narrow self-interest and greed, the focus should be on integral relatedness, earthly virtues, institutional change for social justice and the good of all creation. As already noted, humanity’s actions have contributed to the massive depletion of non-renewable natural resources and animal species worldwide. This calls for a re-evaluation and reflection of our actions in order to address the ecological crisis. This has to do with the ethos or morality of our actions. Environmental ethics judges and orients human attitudes and directs actions to ensure ecological integrity. People must be educated to cherish fundamental human values of compassion, truth, honesty and respect for life. These should be extended to all of God’s creation. Even technology must be subordinated to the comprehensive good of all creation. This is well spelt out by Pope John Paul II that:

...respect for life, and above all for the dignity of the human person is the ultimate guiding norm for a sound economic, industrial or scientific progress.

As Dieter Hessel observes common global and ethical standards have to be observed. He notes that the Earth Charter articulates “an inspirational vision, basic values and guiding principles for a sustainable way of living. The general principles for the charter as provided by Dieter Hessel include: respect for life in all its diversity, care for the community of life with understanding, compassion and love, build democratic societies that are just participatory, sustainable and peaceful and secure Earth’s bounty and beauty for present and future generations. These principles should play an indispensable role in guiding human behavior and in protecting the created world while ensuring sustainable development.

To overcome the ecological crisis, culture, religion and politics must embody liberal commitment to gender justice. Gender justice means incorporating some insights of ecological feminism, Rosemary Radford has shown the interconnection between domination of women and that of nature. Eco-feminist observe that women must appreciate that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis.
within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. Therefore, they must unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement in order to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socio-economic relations and the underlying values of contemporary global society. This means transforming the world view which underlies domination and replacing it with an alternative value system. For instance, they have emphasized the interdependence of all forms of life and the value of non-human creation for itself. Women are acting assertively for the well being of the people and places where they live, they have taken the responsibility of managing limited resources in an equitable, sustainable way while demanding gender justice in economic life and social institutions including the church.

Finally, it is important to draw insights from our traditional African Religion and Culture. If we are going to help others cope with the environmental crisis, which has come about largely as a result of the impact of westernization, we need to take their local cultures and moral systems seriously. Edward Antonio provides two reasons for this. First to deal with disruptive consequences of westernization and second to see if we ourselves cannot learn from these cultures' ways of saving our planet. Modern political institutions have often ignored local cultures on the basis that these are an obstacle to development. The trouble is that the economic practices associated with modernization and development are motivated by a neo-liberalist ideology that promotes competition-based market, unlimited profit and consumerism. The neo-liberalist emphasis on individualism operates against the symbiotic relations between human beings and the created order and leads to ecological degradation. However African societies have unencumbered access to pristine reservoir of ecological values that can protect us from disaster.

African communities view God as the creator and sustainer of the universe. For instance the Agikuyu of Central Kenya refer to God as *Ngai* (Divider of the Universe) and when there is thunder they think that God is cracking His joints. Many communities believe that rocks, mountains and groves are sacred because they are inhabited by spirits/spiritual forces. In several African groups there were strict taboos and totemic beliefs that helped in the preservation of rare wild species of animals like elephants and hippos. Such beliefs were common among the Ngoni,, Hehe and Nyakyusa of Tanzania. However, as Jude Ongonga observes, these beliefs were changed by the challenges of the intellectual revolution of the 17th and 18th centuries along with the European Renaissance. The religious beliefs were challenged and God ceased to be at the centre of creation. Subsequently, Africans began to engage in despotic practices that destroyed the natural environment.

The African ecological world view and spirituality ensured the proper management and sustainability of their environment. In this connection, we need to re-assess our attitudes and selfish lifestyles and promote respect and spiritual values and African traditions that protect the whole of creation. Our African heritage should help us develop an environmental ethic for peace and sustainable development.

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5. Ecological Reformation has been adopted from Dieter Hessels article (2001). “The Church Ecologically Reformed” in Hessel Dieter and Rasmussen Larry (Eds). Earth Habitat: Eco Justice and Church’s Response. Fortress Press, Minneapolis. Ecological Reformation implies the transformation of Christianity in the context of imperiled earth community (ecological crisis) so that the church can re-orient its liturgy, theology ethics and mission.


18. Ibid.


32. Ibid p 370.
34. Ibid
35. Ibid
43. This term was adopted from Hessel Dieter (2010) “The Church Ecologically Reformed” in Hessel Dieter and Rasmussen Larry (eds.) *Earth Habitat: Eco-Justice and the Church’s Response*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis.
and Grazen Walter (1996). “And God Saw that it was Good” Catholic Theology and the Environment, United States Catholic Conference, New York p.34


50. Ibid.


68. Shaji George Kochuthara (2010). “Rediscovering: Christian Eco-Theological Ethics” in Hekima Review Journal of Hekima College No.43 December 2010 has outlined how the Christian tradition has contributed to Ecological Crisis. P47


What Is There In a Bunch of Greetings?:
An Essay on Romans 16:3-16 (NRSV)

Besem Oben Etchi*

Abstract: An African season of reconciliation for justice and peace will bear great fruit only as solidly as it is built on the rock of the mutual recognition of another as a person of equal dignity as oneself; whether the one be male, female or intersex; child, adolescent or adult; slave-born, free-born or mixed; of same, different or multi tribes. Such mutual recognition takes root from the impartiality of Divine grace that should create the same social identity for all those in Christ. Can the African Church embody this tenet faced with tribal/societal class, gender and age stratifications, hierarchies, discriminations? Can cultural norms offer wisdom for this process? Can we find Christian and cultural precedence to draw on? This paper exegetes Romans 16:3-16 picturing how St Paul employs a cultural norm to actualise his teaching of an equal social identity created by the impartiality of divine grace, for all in Christ.

Romans 16:3-16 (NRSV)

1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, 2 so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well. 3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus, 4 and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. 5 Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert in Asia for Christ. 6 Greet Mary, who has worked very hard among you. 7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. 8 Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. 9 Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. 10 Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. 11 Greet my relative Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. 12 Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. 13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; and greet his mother—a mother to me also. 14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers and sisters who are with them. 15 Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. 16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

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Introduction: The apostle Paul can be called the most prominent pastor in Christian history evidenced by the fact that writings associated with him occupy half of the New Testament: 13 letters and half of the book of Acts. In his legacy as minister to the gentiles in the Greco-Roman era, he preached the gospel in a milieu that legalised a tradition of a hierarchy of humanity. By law some humans were classified as non-persons and anyone tinkering with the demarcation was in contempt of the law. Paul strongly believed and taught the impartiality of divine grace (Rom 2:11) which creates an equal social identity to every human being under faith in Christ. With practical wisdom, he uses a Roman gesture to effect his Christian teaching. Actions speak louder than words, the popular adage goes.

This paper sees in Romans 16:3-16 a model the African church can adapt in finding ways to evangelise African societies in the practice of accepting “the other” as a person of equal dignity as oneself, deserving of every right accorded a person before the law. Discrepancies caused by cultural ways can be solved using tools from that same culture. This paper proceeds in four movements1: by experiencing the historical and literary content of the text we discover a context similar to that of the African church; next, a summary presentation of the Roman concept of Greeting alongside a textual and social criticism of the text will offer a deeper understanding of the usefulness of this gesture of greeting; the third part judges Paul’s deployment of this gesture for undesirable effects and finally, since the African church is committed to inculturation and reconstruction, the paper mentions an example of an African descent community that realises a gospel teaching by modifying cultural ways of behaviour; this ends the paper in some recommendations for proceeding to work out an African season of reconciliation.

A Context Similar to African Societal Ways of Living

The text Romans 16:3-16 appears in the concluding formula of Paul's letter to the Romans in between Paul’s commendation of the deacon Phoebe and admonitions to keep away from those who cause disunity in the community. The letter to the Romans is one of Paul’s undisputed letters that mostly serves to introduce him and his gospel to a mixed community of Jews and Gentiles in Rome, which he did not found, in order to prepare the way for his subsequent visit. It obeys the typical structure of letters in antiquity with a clearly marked introductory greeting and thanks, the body of the letter and the conclusion that ends in a doxology.

The Structure of the Letter to the Romans

1. Greeting - 1:1-7
2. Thanksgiving - 1:8-10

1 Bernard Lonergan’s Transcendental method serves here as a hermeneutical theory for the discussion. It supplies the basic anthropological component within which the spiritual or theological component of hermeneutics is worked out. In four movements: 1) be attentive – experiencing the text, 2) be intelligent – understanding the text 3) be reasonable- judging the viability and value of what is understood and 4) be responsible- coming up with concrete actions, it allows the move from knowledge to interpretation to specific action. Cf. V. George Shillington, “Direction: Biblical Interpretation: The State of the Discipline,” 1995 http://www.directionjournal.org/article/7865 (accessed December 15, 2010). He briefly discusses representative theories that mark current practice in the science and art of biblical hermeneutics.

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   a) 1-11 “doctrinal”
   b) 12-15 Paraenesis
4. Conclusion Formulas 15:14-16:23 and Doxology 16:25-27

Among the themes Paul addresses are: oneness in Christ, the need for salvation, justification and new life in Christ. Scholars disagree on whether Romans 16:3-16 is actually part of the letter. Those who believe Paul was making initial contact with the community see this text as a latter addition from another letter, perhaps one to the Ephesians and argue that this unprecedented list of extensive and precise greetings indicate a prior familiarity with the community thus cannot belong to the Letter to the Romans. Scholars who see the text as part of the letter, argue that ending the letter at Rom 15:33 is abrupt and unPauline, that this text rather contributes to establishing the structure of a letter in antiquity. At least while disagreeing to which letter the text belongs, they both agree that it is authentically Pauline and this is our point of departure.

This text has become widely used in recent times to point to the leadership roles of early Christian women and to claim such as a right today for women in the Church. Biblical scholar Eldon Jay Epp in his book, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle*, does a textual criticism on Romans 16:7 and argues that there was a female apostle, Junia, who was considered outstanding among the apostles. This claim has been very beneficial to proponents for the ordination of women in the Catholic Church and the equal access of women to positions of leadership in the Church. As well, Arthur Frederick Ide in his book *Woman as Priest, Bishop and Laity* refutes the theological arguments against the ordination of women basing on a theological stance gleaned from Rom16. What else is there in this bunch of greetings?

The text is at first sight a bunch of greetings addressed with love to a church community, to be extended to various persons both male and female; of Jewish and gentile background; relations and acquaintances; and both slave and free. Not only does Paul ask to greet some 24 people by their names, but he as well, acclaims the connections he has with some of them and then extends greetings from the other Churches in Christ to the recipients. This same type of diversity and warmth is common to African societies.

The social setting of those to be greeted in this pericope (Rom 16:5, 10, 11, 14-15) places them as household churches, with family structures within a society in which Roman hegemony had established a hierarchical structure, as household codes, in order of “reason” as: men, women, children then slaves; as well as privileged individual status: freeborn, freed slave then slave by birth or law; which was to be strictly followed. Anyone or group that challenged this structure was seen as tampering with the Roman’s right to rule the world and thus would be open to charges of treason. As well Jews thought themselves superior to Gentiles based on their possession of the knowledge of the “true God”. Reflecting on family, tribal and civil structures all over Africa as well as in Church communities, one can easily identify similar trends.

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3 Byrne, *Romans*, 446.
The greetings in this pericope, as expounded by Robert Jewett⁵, undoubtedly appear in a random order and are in the form of the second person greeting, where the author asks the recipient to greet someone else; though it then shifts to the third person greeting in 16b where the greeting is extended to the recipient by someone other than the author and it uses the third person indicative “they greet....” The second person plural imperative “you greet!” occurs 15 times in the periscope. To say “greet” differs from “I send greetings to...” in that it commissions the hearer to personally extend Paul’s greetings to the people and communities mentioned.

The Roman Practice of Greeting

Jewett explains that the Greek term for “greet” meant “to embrace” that is “to wrap one’s arms around another,” and signified in the Roman realm to grant another the privilege in society of being recognised as associated with you; by greeting a person or receiving a greeting, you accorded them a quantum of your honour and society granted them the same favour and honour that you were granted. Thus greeting another could forge a series of close friendly bonds that create societal recognition as well. With the honour-and-shame environment of Paul’s time we can conclude that the text thus functions as a tool that borrows from cultural ways to put those addressed and those greeted on an equal footing, each one with the other. Now, the greeted can be categorised in three groups as: close personal friends, relatives and co-workers; leaders of house churches; and members of the house churches. Hence we may ask, what is the diversity of gender, race, position in the church, affiliation to Paul, socio-economic and political status and what possible power dynamics exist that Paul is working with and re-ordering? Who were these people who were to be greeted? Let us take a look at a representative population of those greeted vis-à-vis the aforementioned categories to get a succinct picture of the changes that would occur in the Christian community when the greetings are carried out. Could a simple cultural practice as greeting, create an atmosphere of mutual respect and recognition?

- Gender Dynamics: Paul extends greetings to 24 people by name, 10 women and 14 men and to 5 house churches. There is a slight discrepancy in the numbers owing to translation variants at Rom 16:7 that wrestle with whether to translate the Greek word for the companion of Andronicus as Junia, female (for example NRSV translation) or as Junias or Juniam, male (for example RSV and New Jerusalem Bible translations). Here, the history of Bible translation has witnessed gender mutation from male to female like in the case of the RSV to NRSV. Epp argues for the use of Junia with reason that it was a common female name of the time⁶ and attributing the latter unprecedented male names, to an erroneous translation stemming from a 12th century widespread theological belief that a woman was never and could not ever be an apostle. Epp observes that some translations which maintained the female name continued the verse as “well known to the apostles” while those that maintained a male name left the continuation as “prominent (or outstanding, or of note) among the apostles.” Thus the text presents Andronicus and Junia who are

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well known apostles and servants of Christ before Paul. Through the use of men greeting women and women greeting men, Paul would create recognition and strong bonds of mutuality across gender for those in Christ.

- **Racial Dynamics:** A representation of the racial diversity is gleaned from the mention of Latin names, Jewish names and Greek names. The names Paul uses acknowledge the distinct cultural identities of those to be greeted. Though the longstanding tradition of Western commentaries and translations has been to “Latinize” the names and thus we lose out on cultural sensitivity, in the recent years classical scholars have tended to let them be, showing up the original cultural origins and identity. It is worthy to mention that the ethnicity of the name did not always coincide with the ethnicity of the person. For example Rufus (verse 13) is a Latin name equivalent of Reuben that Judeans often adopted and Paul’s “his mother and mine” seems to suggest an ethnic relationship. Paul asks that he be greeted because he is “eminently” in the Lord. Urbanus is a Latin name and Philologus is a Greek name. This exchange of greeting cements recognition and strong bonds of mutuality across racial diversity.

- **Slave and Free:** Those who belong to the household of Aristoboulus (verse 10) were most probably domestic slaves and one observes that Paul does not ask to greet Aristoboulus, signifying that perhaps he was not a Christian. Aristoboulus is widely accepted as coinciding with a prominent deceased member of the Herodian dynasty; grandson of Herod the great and brother to Agrippa I. Such slaves were referred to by their master’s names when their masters died, regardless of who owned them later.

From Prisca and Aquila, Paul requests greeting Epenaetus (Verse 3b, or Epainetos) whom Jewett argues is a freeman most probably associated with the house church of Prisca and Aquila and may have moved with them from Ephesus. He is greeted as the “first fruit” which in Jewish tradition is so desirable that it should be sacrificed to Yahweh. Thus Paul’s ending of “for Christ” indicates to whom the choice offering was brought and this can be seen as a point of Christology. As both free and slave greet each other in Christ, recognition and strong bonds of mutuality are created across social status.

- **Leaders And Members:** Paul asks to greet Prisca and Aquila (verses 3–4) whose seniority in belief he acknowledges, praising their own missionary work and their leadership, as he asks that the recipients of the letter greet the church that meets in their house; Prisca and Aquila had also hosted house churches in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:19). They are thus widely acknowledged as spiritual leaders. This greeting creates recognition and strong bonds of mutuality in Christ between leaders and

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members of churches without blurring their different vocational roles. We may say that for Paul, diversity or seniority of vocation does not give grounds for establishing a hierarchy of believers.

- **Those Near And Far:** In verses 7, 11 and 13, Paul makes allusion to a shared kinship with those greeted. The Greek word used for “kinship” though it could be “relatives” mostly means “fellow Jews”. Paul asks to greet close personal friends as well as distant, less known individuals; for example “the brethren who are with them” (verse 14). Thus the greeting nullifies any privileges or ethnic advantages that anyone would want to claim from knowing Paul personally. This greeting helps to ban oppressive cliques in the church community that form because of affinities to church leaders. It creates recognition and strong bonds of mutuality in Christ, between those near and those far off in relationship to Paul.

- **The Rich and The Poor:** Markus Miller posits that Paul asks to greet diverse leaders and congregations, as in verse 15b, so that the free rich members of the house churches will provide the economic and logistic support necessary for the realisation of his plans.\(^{14}\) Paul thus creates an affinity in Christ that allows for the rich to care for the poor and needy. Being in Christ creates equal respect for rich as well as for poor.

**Creating an Undifferentiated Society?**

Judging from the above exposition, the bunch of greetings of Rom 16:3-16 would create human equality in Christ that upsets the power dynamics that should normally exist in the community given its Roman context;\(^{15}\) nevertheless the greetings retain the distinctiveness of those involved and do not create uniformity. In our African society that thrives on carefully divided social roles, this is an important distinction to note.

This text functions well to make practical Paul’s gospel as discussed in the earlier chapters of the letter to the Romans. *The text corresponds to Romans 12 as applying a renewal of mind and manner different from what society proposes*, shown here in the disrupting of the Roman hierarchy of status as well as the theme of blanket oneness in Christ. It resonates with Romans 13 that highlights the welcome of the Gentiles to share equally in salvation with the Jews, a theme also expounded in Romans 11. It shares the same values with Romans 6 of a new identity because of being in Christ that transcends Jewish laws (Rom 2-4, 7) such as the place of women in public and interracial mixing. It strongly states that though one in Christ we each are unique with diverse gifts (Romans 12:4-8). In Summary, this bunch of greetings serves well to create a strong sense of Paul’s gospel concerning the impartial grace of the Trinity given in Christ\(^ {16}\) and yet diverse roles given to each that in no way legitimate domination of another nor subjugation of self. This judgement perhaps requires us to side with those who argue that the text finds its place in the letter to the Romans. However, it also could be an expantiation of Gal 3:28 and a culmination of Eph 1-5, in fact, it can even be argued for Eph 6 as

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\(^{15}\) The household codes in Rome implied a hierarchy in which the freeborn aristocratic man was at the top, other men first then women and slaves at the bottom especially female slaves. As well Jews thought themselves superior to Gentiles based on their possession of the knowledge of the “true God”

\(^{16}\) Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* 953.
well, for the greetings asked in verses 10 and 11 seem to acknowledge inescapability from being a nominal slave.

**An Example in the Story of a Community of African Descent.**

The history of the African American community in the USA adds testimony that existing cultural ways can serve the Church to bring about mutual recognition, justice and establish equal human dignity. Riggins R. Earl, Jr. in his book *Dark Salutations: Ritual, God, and Greetings in the African American Community*, argues that salutatory greetings in the African American community is religious language that illuminates the prophetic/priestly dialectical nature of the religious and moral consciousness of African Americans. It kept alive the hope and promise of being for and with each other in the struggles for social recognition even in the Church community. The themes of “sister” and “brother” are beyond mere greeting to embody liberation. Liberation found its grounds in the slave experience of brutality and dishonourable salutations by slave masters and mistresses, in which either their names where never used or they were called dehumanising names like “nigger.” Liberation found its offshoot in their conversion to Christianity where the Bible became the normative source of truth with testimonies and beliefs of the Trinity calling each one by name. Earl mentions as well that the “white” Christians who protested against slavery, nevertheless refused to recognise the equal humanity of the freed “black” slaves hence feeling betrayed by these Christians, “blacks” began to create other greeting words with which to join the Trinity in dignifying their humanity like “brotherman”, “blackman” and “soulbrother” for men and “soul sister”, “girlfriend” and “sisterfriend” for women.

The African Church can find in our own milieu the tools to dawn an African season of reconciliation built on mutually recognising each other as persons through inclusive language and action if we so decide and dignify the humanity of every being. If we each take it as a mandate to search our African traditions for practices through which our ancestors effected alliances of mutual respect and recognition and inculturate same into family, church and societal relationships, the practice of human equality will fast become the norm. Though the Romans 16:3-16 text does not feature in the Sunday lectionary (It is on Saturday of the Thirty-First Week in Ordinary Time, Year A) and thus its richness, gotten from hearing and preaching, is somewhat lost to the worshipping community; we may set it as a principal text for conferences, retreats and discussions in this season of reconciliation to widely sifter in the Christian injunction of equal human dignity for all.

**Conclusion:** Exploring the extent to which Paul’s tactical deployment of greeting succeeded is beyond the scope of this paper, notwithstanding the methods of a revered Father of the Church and champion of evangelising non-Jews are worth emulating. Romans 16:3-16 makes real the mutual equal recognition that Paul expects when he prachas about being in Christ. Paul constructs this tradition: “in Christ there is neither male nor female, Jew nor gentile, slave nor free.” (Galatians 3:28) On the

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18 Riggins R. Earl, Jr., *Dark Salutations: Ritual, God, and Greetings in the African American Community* 157, 172.
What Is There In a Bunch of Greetings?:

website of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, notes\(^{19}\) assert that the greetings establish relationship and create unity, transcending previous national, ethnic, religious and racial barriers; we may as well include the gender and economic dimensions. The African Church has proven its ability to stand as a sign of contradiction in the face of tribal and societal traditions, with its testimony of setting aside ancestral deities for the Trinity; setting aside strongly held traditions of marriage and procreation as compulsory for all, to embrace a celibate priesthood and celibate female and male religious congregations. There is no doubt that a season of reconciliation will quickly give birth to a season of celebration of justice, peace, and a deeper appreciation and growth of our oneness as believers in Christ.

Bibliography


\(^{19}\) United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2011) http://www.usccb.org/bible/scripture.cfm?bk=Romans&ch=16&v=53016003
A Reading of *Africae Munus* in the Light of ‘Graces Asked for’ in *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*.

Chikere Ugwuanyi, SJ*

Abstract: An important part of ecclesial life is to think about how a document of the Church is received. The importance of Church teachings depends a lot on how it becomes a sensusfidelium, that is, how a teaching is incarnated in the individual believer with the community of the faithful. With the publication of *Africae Munus*, it bebootes on all to explore ways of assimilating its teachings. In one sense, this article makes a suggestion on how Ignatian Spirituality could be a viable framework through which the Holy Spirit could help African Christians respond to the call of their bishops to build an African Church that understands its mission as that of reconciliation, justice and peace. Given the vastness of Ignatian Spirituality, the article argues for and uses the theme of “graces asked for” in *The Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius of Loyola as a conduit for reading *Africae Munus*. In another sense, this article is a reception of the Second Synod of Africa by someone who tries to live the Ignatian Spirituality.

Introduction: After the publication of *Africae Munus* (henceforth AM) on November 19, 2011 in Ouidah, Benin Republic, there were myriads of comments on it. Beginning with the official presentation of the document by Archbishop Nikola Eterovic, the Secretary General of the Synod, one could notice a diversity of opinions ranging from sarcasm to admiration. Given the range of the comments, one wonders the lenses through which the document was read is being read, and the disposition of the commentators. What differences would a document like AM make when one reads it with the eyes of St. Ignatius? That is, how would Ignatius and his followers have read and understand AM? What is the significance of AM to those whose life is guided by the insights and worldview of Ignatian Spirituality? To what extent would Africans who follow the path of St. Ignatius be impacted by the spirit and letters of AM?

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A reading of AM in the light of Ignatian Spirituality would begin by (1) presenting the themes of The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola (Henceforth SpEx) as articulated through the grace prayed for in each week\(^2\) of the SpEx. It shall be argued that the graces prayed for in SpEx are one of the ways to capture the disposition of someone who follows Ignatian Spirituality. (2) After establishing the basic disposition through an analysis of the graces in SpEx, the article shall turn to a summary of AM in those lights. What will come out from this summary is that what Ignatians\(^3\) may emphasize may be slightly different from what other commentators may notices in AM. It shall be argued that there is a basic coherence between the ideals of SpEx and the theology of reconciliation and justice that underpins AM. (3) The fruits of the reflections between AM and SpEx would be used to propose some pathways through which African Ignatians could “receive” AM.

The Purpose of The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola as Made Evident Through the Graces Prayed for in Each Week

Grace in Christian theology and in the life of St. Ignatius

Roger Haight, in his book, The Experience and Language of Grace, notes that “The word ‘grace’ is one of the most common in the Christian vocabulary. At the same time, it is probably the most slippery word to define.”\(^4\) He ingeniously avoided a definition, but provided different lenses through which his reader can feel what grace is all about in Christian life and history. First, he notes that grace “indicates the presupposition of all Christian spirituality.”\(^5\) In this sense, grace refers to God’s total, gratuitous and undeserved gift of love. Second, Haight observed the polyvalent articulation of grace which “applies at once to the whole Christian economy and to any single mystery within that economy. It can be used to designate that by which God heals, forgives us, elevates us; it is at once the Holy Spirit and the New Creation of the Holy Spirit, grace is Christ himself and Christ working within the Christian.”\(^6\) This means that the whole of Christian mystery and discipleship could be summed up by the word ‘grace.’ Third, Haight ties grace to experience. For him, the ‘experienced grace’ is one of the ropes that tie the whole Christian history of grace from the New Testament writers, through Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Council of Trent, Karl Rahner and our time. “If grace is not experienced in any way,” says Haight, “the word grace will simply have no meaning.”\(^7\) Fourth and lastly, he believes that the way to experience grace in contemporary time is to experience it as liberation. For our time, grace is liberation.

Haight’s choice of liberation as the language of grace for our time is because “the liberationist interpretation of Christianity presents Christian salvation in such a way that it is seen as intrinsically and fundamentally, although not exclusively, related to and having bearing upon life in this world in all of its forms and activities.”\(^8\) Grace and ex-

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\(^2\) Annotation 4 describes ‘week’ thus: “Though four weeks, to correspond to this division, are spent in the Exercises, it is not to be understood that each Week has, of necessity, seven or eight days.”

\(^3\) This term refers to those who follow Ignatian Spirituality as their part to holiness.


\(^5\) Roger Haight, The Experience and Language of Grace, 6.

\(^6\) Roger Haight, The Experience and Language of Grace, 7.

\(^7\) Roger Haight, The Experience and Language of Grace 9.

\(^8\) Roger Haight, The Experience and Language of Grace, 163.
perience is then tied theologically in God because “God’s action cannot be distinguished from the dynamisms of human nature and personality itself.” Thus, Haight draws our attention to the difficulty one encounters when one attempts to define grace and, yet must inescapably talk about grace when discussing intelligibly about Christianity. Also, Haight’s insights show something foundational and fundamental about grace in Christian life. Grace is Christian discipleship in God’s love. Finally, I want to insert St. Ignatius Loyola in Haight’s list of historians of grace because Ignatius comes chronologically between Luther and Council of Trent.

Inserting Ignatius in the chronicle of great influences in the way Christians understand grace is a methodological move. We shall engage with texts of SpEx to demonstrate that the experience of grace is actually at the heart of Christian discipleship and that it could be a viable spiritual path to holiness in the light of AM. From Ignatius’ own spiritual journey, to the spiritual resources he left behind, one sees testimonies of the centrality of lived experience of grace. For instance, in his spiritual diary, St. Ignatius notes that on the fourth day of his votive Mass to the Holy Trinity, “I experienced much help from grace that was warm and in part bright. There was much devotion, even though on my part I sometimes found it easy to fall into distraction. However, the assistance of the grace did not cease.” Grace guides St. Ignatius through his search for knowledge and experience of God.

The import of grace in this diary entry is important because of his struggles about starting the votive Masses, continuing it after the experiences of the previous days and what happened to him afterwards. Prior to this entry, Ignatius wanted to say the votive Mass to the Holy Trinity because he could not understand much about this mystery of Trinity from his studies. After the first votive Mass, Ignatius writes that “I had no insights but was drawn rather to confidence of soul which did not terminate in any one Divine Person.” In other words, the experience of grace made him to think in Trinitarian fashion about God. It is this Trinitarian disposition that made Ignatius to assert: “Then when I thought of praying to the Father, with similar deep feeling I perceive Jesus exercising the same role. Deeply within myself it seemed that in the presence of the Father and the Holy Trinity Jesus was doing it all.” It is as a student of grace that St. Ignatius writes SpEx and marks off different weeks therein with graces to be prayed for.

**Grace in the ‘Weeks’ of SpEx**

One of the ways to capture the importance that Ignatius gives to grace in SpEx, is to look at the Papal decree that approved the text. In the decree of approval of the SpEx, Pope Paul III attested that the SpEx was “drawn from Holy Writ and from experience in the spiritual life, and has reduced them to an order which is excellently adapted to move piously the souls of the faithful, and that they are very useful and wholesome for the spiritual consolation and profit of the same.” That is to say, Ignatius carefully

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11 Louis Dupré and James A. Wiseman, OSB, eds., *Light from Light*, 297.
12 Louis Dupré and James A. Wiseman, OSB, eds., *Light from Light*, 298.
13 Louis Dupré and James A. Wiseman, OSB, eds., *Light from Light*, 303.
14 David Fleming, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, A Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Resources, 1978), xxiii. Hence forth, citations will be abbreviated as *SpEx* followed by the number of the exercise. All citations are Mullan’s literal translations unless otherwise stated.
manicured his spiritual experiences with the help of the Scripture to trace a spiritual path for other people to follow. In doing this, Ignatius asserts that “the structure of these exercises has the purpose of leading a person to a true spiritual freedom. We attain this goal by gradually bringing an order of values into our lives so that we may make no choice or decision because we have been influenced by some disordered attachment or love.”\(^{15}\) In other words SpEx was intended by St. Ignatius as an aid to liberation. Liberation from internal tyranny – by ordering one’s life and liberation from external by detaching oneself from created things. In order to “move pious souls of the faithful” towards these goals, Ignatius proposes that the exercitant (the person making the SpEx) asks for graces at the begging of each week of the SpEx and for each group of prayers within the week.

There are four major graces to be asked for in SpEx, each leading to the others. In the First Week, the exercitant asks for the grace “of God our Lord that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to the service and praise of His Divine Majesty.”\(^{16}\) Why ask for such grace? It is because the exercitant is going to experience “shame and confusion at myself, seeing how many have been damned for only one mortal sin, and how many times I deserved to be condemned forever for my so many sins.”\(^{17}\) Since the exercitant has experienced God’s love through forgiveness of sins, the grace of the First Week is the grace of gratitude which comes as a response to the Principle and Foundation\(^{18}\) and the experience of forgiveness. To experience forgiveness means to release ourselves from the tenacious hold of those who have offended us. In fact, forgiveness is vital to an appreciation of lived freedom in the past, to freely live in the present and hope for freedom in the future. As long as one keeps in one’s consciousness bad feelings of what one has done or suffered, one would continue to expend a lot of energy on those issues of the past. Each unresolved feeling is like a bat tugging at the consciousness, demanding attention.

At a deeper level, forgiveness (whether it is “giving forgiveness” – that is forgiving others, and “receiving forgiveness” – that is, having a sense of being forgiven by another person) is the acceptance of ourselves, exactly the way we are – pardoned sinners. Such acceptance is a foundational Christian attitude which enables the Christian to enter into uncompromising relationship with him/herself, with others and with God. Thus, once we are aware of God’s goodness, in himself and his works, we become aware that forgiveness is necessary. In this sense forgiveness is not something one does, it happens through grace. Through the SpEx, Ignatius hopes that the exercitant will notice the powerlessness of being in sin, desire to forgive and fan the flame of this desire through meditations. But why is the grace of forgiveness first among the graces in the SpEx?

As we noted above, Pope Paul III points out that the SpEx is rooted in the Scriptures. From the Hebrew Scriptures we read in prophet Isaiah (59: 1-2) that what separates humans from God is not God’s deafness, or sluggishness, “your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you.” Just as sin hides God’s face from the faithful, it also breaks the relationship between the faithful and the

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15 The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, #21
16 The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, #46
17 The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, #48
18 The general consideration of God’s goodness and the purpose of human beings on earth. It is on the presupposition that the exercitant accepts the tenets of Principle and Foundation that the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius (SpEx) can continue.
rest of the community. “He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends” (Prov. 17:9). It is on account of sin, the need for forgiveness, and the everlasting love of God that the Paschal Mystery makes sense; “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God” (1Pt 3: 18). Or in as Paul puts it in his letter to the Ephesians (1:7): “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.” The immediate result of forgiveness is happiness. When one is forgiven, there is sense of joy which comes from God. As the psalmist (Ps 32:1-2) graciously puts it, “Blessed [happy] is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed [happy] is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him.” When the exercitant feels this graced-happiness, he/she is ready to say the colloquy that accompanies the First Week:

Imagining Christ our Lord present and placed on the Cross, let me make a Colloquy, how from Creator He is come to making Himself man, and from life eternal is come to temporal death, and so to die for my sins. Likewise, looking at myself, what I have done for Christ, what I am doing for Christ, what I ought to do for Christ. And so, seeing Him such, and so nailed on the Cross, to go over that which will present itself. The Colloquy is made, properly speaking, as one friend speaks to another, or as a servant to his master; now asking some grace, now blaming oneself for some misdeed, now communicating one’s affairs, and asking advice in them.19

The graced colloquy of the First Week cues in the grace of the Second Week. In this week, the exercitant asks for the grace from “our Lord that I may not be deaf to His call, but ready and diligent to fulfill His most Holy Will.”20 The gift of hearing, the gift of preparedness to follow Christ and the gift of diligence in discipleship are the core elements of this grace. For Ignatius, the disposition to follow Christ comes from the grace of being forgiven, but the fact of getting ready to follow Christ requires that the exercitant “bring up the narrative of the thing which I have to contemplate.”21 In other words, the exercitant would “ask for interior knowledge of the Lord, Who for me has become man, that I may more love and follow Him.”22 In preparation to receive this grace and as a way of receiving it, St. Ignatius introduces a detailed meditation on what is generally called the “public ministry”23 of Jesus.

One may ask: What did Jesus do during his public ministry? A bird’s eye view of the gospels shows that Jesus initiated the proclamation of the Kingdom of God during the public ministry (Mk 1: 14-20). To accompany this proclamation and as a sign of it, He healed the sick (Lk 17: 20-25), ministered to the marginalized of the society (Jn 4: 3-42) and spent time doing some teaching (Mt 5-7). In His predications, love of God as the highest religious duty was emphasized. Love of neighbour, expressed in charity, will be one of the clear proofs that one is indeed fulfilling the religious devoir (Lk 10:27). Ignatius has a different way of presenting the public ministry. He intercalated the ministry with notes and consideration of joining Jesus in this ministry. Thus, as the exercitant gets “interior knowledge” about Jesus, he/she is invited to consider ways in

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19 The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, #53.
20 The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, #91.
21 The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, #102.
22 The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, #104.
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which he/she could become a disciple of Jesus. Ignatius also discloses the type of person Jesus wants to be in His Company and the qualities needed. The intended result of the grace of the Second Week is that the exercitant will eventually “choose what is more to the glory of His Divine Majesty and the salvation of my soul.” As Ignatius succinctly sums up the Second Week, “let each one think that he will benefit himself in all spiritual things in proportion as he goes out of his self-love, will and interest.”

The devolution of self-love, will and interest is most eminent in the Passion of Christ which is the subject of the Third Week, and in the light of which the third grace is ask.

The grace of the Third Week is the grace for “grief, feeling and confusion because for my sins the Lord is going to the Passion.” In other words, the exercitant asks for “grief with Christ in grief, anguish with Christ in anguish, tears and interior pain at such great pain which Christ suffered for me.” In the meditations that lead to this grace, Ignatius once again requests that the exercitant immerses him/herself into the narrative of what is happening. In the Passion Narrative, there is the deployment of human faculties to see, smell, touch and hear what is happening to Jesus. “The second, (preparatory prayer) is] a composition, seeing the place. It will be here to consider the road from Bethany to Jerusalem, whether broad, whether narrow, whether level, etc.; likewise the place of the Supper, whether large, whether small, whether of one kind or whether of another.”

The physical involvement of the exercitant in process of experience the grace of the Third week is so great that Ignatius suggest that the person wakes up at night to do some exercises. “The second day (of the Third Week) at midnight, the Contemplation will be from the Garden to the house of Annas inclusive, and in the morning from the house of Annas to the house of Cataphas inclusive.”

One can imagine that the physical discomfort of waking up in the middle of the night is enough indication of the willingness of the exercitant to grief, suffer, anguish and shed tears with Christ.

At another level, empathy in suffering is such a deep way of being human. Nieves Pascual in Feeling in Others: Essays on Empathy and Suffering in Modern American Culture argued that empathy could be a lens through which humanity can understand the complexity of the contagious difference of pain. When humans feel with one another, each person contributes a small part in ameliorating the pains that affects the world. It is through the lens of empathy that one can intelligibly discuss things like philanthropy, abolitionist movement and uplifting of disfavored people whereby those not directly affected would join in the various struggles of liberation. In light of Pascual’s description of empathy, one would understand Henry Nouwen portrayal of friendship:

When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. The friend who can be

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24 This is the purpose of “Election,” #169-189.
25 This is the purpose of “Three Pairs of Persons” #149-159.
26 This is the purpose of “Three Manners of humility,” #165-168.
27 The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, #179.
28 The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, #189.
29 The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, #193.
30 The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, #192.
31 The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, #208.
33 Nieves Pascual and Antonio Ballesteros Gonzalez, Feeling in Others, 5.
silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares.\textsuperscript{34}

In the grace of the Third Week which seeks to be with Christ-suffering, to empathize with Him and to be His friend, exercitant is invited to do \textit{agere contra} in everything beginning from food, to drink and to sleep, in such a manner that one does not give any concession to “inordinate appetite and temptation of the enemy.”\textsuperscript{35} When one has really suffered with Christ, one will be most disposed to ask for and to receive the grace of the Fourth Week.

The grace of the Fourth Week is a grace to “rejoice and be glad intensely at so great glory and joy of Christ our Lord.”\textsuperscript{36} The joy would come from the experiences of the exercitant has prayed about “the office of consoling which Christ our Lord bears, and to compare how friends are accustomed to console friends.”\textsuperscript{37} Just like Nouwen’s insights on true friendship, love and joy is shared not by many words and gestures, but by simply being present to one another. To encourage this presence Ignatius, in the same pattern of Second and Third Week, requires that exercitant pay attention to the “narrative” of resurrection. In the narrative, Ignatius makes two observations which come from his own spiritual experience. First, he thinks that “the Divinity, which seemed to hide Itself in the Passion, now appears and shows Itself so marvelously in the most holy Resurrection by Its true and most holy effects.”\textsuperscript{38} Second, Ignatius wants to exercitant to “bring to memory and think of things that move to spiritual pleasure, gladness and joy, as of heavenly glory.”\textsuperscript{39} The re-epiphany of the Divine and heavenly bound joys is a means of sharing “the great joy and gladness of Christ our Lord.”\textsuperscript{40} Thus, when the exercitant rejoices he/she rejoices with Christ who is also happy for being raised by the Father (Acts 2: 32, 3:10; Rom 6:4, 8:11; 2Tim 2:8).

On account of the joy of Christ and with Christ, the culminating grace of SpEx is found in the “Contemplation to Gain Love”\textsuperscript{41} Here the grace is for “interior knowledge of so great good received, in order that being entirely grateful, I may be able in all to love and serve His Divine Majesty.”\textsuperscript{42} In the experiences of sin, of being forgiven, of being called to discipleship, of suffering and death and of resurrection, the exercitant is brought to surrender oneself and one’s gifts to God who has been so loving and kind all along. Nothing is more apt of this self-surrender than the very prayer Ignatius composed expressing his disposition. I quote it in full:

\begin{quote}
Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my intellect, and all my will -- all that I have and possess. Thou gavest it to me: to Thee, Lord, I return it! All is Thine, dispose of it according to all Thy will. Give me Thy love and grace, for this is enough for me.\textsuperscript{43}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{34} A saying attributed to Henri J Nouwen, Quoted in Bob Riter, \textit{The Elephant in the Room: Practical Advice When the Diagnosis Is Cancer} (Google E-book: iUniverse, Aug 31, 2011), 49.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius}, #217.
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius}, #221.
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius}, #224.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius}, #219.
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius}, #229.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius}, #229.
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius}, #230.
\textsuperscript{42} \textit{The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius}, #233.
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius}, #334.
Ignatius suggests that the exercitant repeat this prayer three times. The first one as love-response, the second for the gift of creation and the third for God's continued work on earth. I believe AM is one of such God's continued work on earth. Ignatius’s ideas of grace may help us to appreciate the document more.

**AM in the light of graces of SpEx**

There is enough information on the dual purpose of Synods, and we have insights into the workings of the Synod from the testimonies of those who participated. Since the Synod has come and gone, we are now in the phase of called “reception”. Trying to summarize AM in the light of SpEx is one way of receiving the Synod. In the light of the graces of the SpEx, one can ask: what are the highlights of AM?

Let us begin by noticing how AM structurally differs from SpEx because in Church documents and in the logic of the SpEx, the order of words and arguments are revelatory of weight accorded to an issue. Ignatius has four-week structural dynamic, while AM is a two-part work with an introduction and a conclusion. The subdivisions in AM are organized around what is to be done (Part 1 ch 1), how to fix it (Part 1, ch 2), those to carry it out (Part 2, ch 1) where to carry it (Part 2, ch 2) out and a personal reflection of the Pope (Part 2, ch 3). Ignatius followed the dynamics of where the exercitant moves the gaze from inwards (to the self) in the First Week to outwards towards Christ in the rest of the weeks.

Indeed, the transition from the First to the Second Week of the Exercises is a change in perspective: the retreatant [exercitant] experiences how his entire life has been embraced with mercy and forgiveness, ceases to concentrate on himself, and starts to “gaze upon Christ our Lord, the eternal King, and all the world assembled before him.”

At the end of the retreat, with the reception of all the graces, the exercitant would notice that the First Week was actually about God who is made manifest in the beauty of the world, but which the exercitant could not recognize at the time.

The ability to change the perspective is grace. It is from the reality of changed perspective that the first point of AM makes sense in the light of the first grace of SpEx. We

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44 See, the *Lineamenta* to the II Special Assembly for Africa, The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace, (The General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops and LibreriaEditriceVaticana, 2006), #1. The purpose is “to keep alive the synod event. Ecclesia in Africa has been given as a legacy. In this regard, each person is invited to take an inventory and make an examination of conscience; in other words, to ask three basic questions:

- What has Ecclesia in Africa accomplished?
- What has the Church in Africa done with Ecclesia in Africa?
- What remains to be done, using its guidelines in response to the evolving situations on the African continent?


47 What should be discussed first was significant in the arrangement of *Lumen Gentium*. See Richard Gollardetz, *The Church in the Making* , (New York: Paulist Press, 2006), 20-27.

recall that the grace of the First Week is for a pure intention and action that is directed to the praise of God. It is in the light of this grace that one can understand the first point of AM: that “commitment to the Lord Jesus is a precious treasure” which is lived in reconciliation between individuals and communities in such a way that it promotes “peace and justice in truth for all”⁴⁹ Like Isaiah’s treasure in clay (Is 64:8), Africans are invited to consider the carrying of this treasure as the mission of contemporary Church. The disposition for accepting the mission of reconciliation, justice and peace is one that the grace of First Week will supply to the African Christians who are conscious, like the exorcitant, that they are sinners and in need of healing, in need of peace and justice. Africa, like the Fathers of the Synod would no longer be “afraid to face the truth” about African conditions and seek to “reflect sincerely on possible solutions” to the problems facing the world at large and Africa in particular.⁵⁰ The two models of those on mission presented by AM are Moses and Jesus. In Moses, AM saw an image of a person who continued to journey in faith, as Hebrews testify, even though the future is not very clear. Jesus is presented as the one telling His disciples in (Mt 5:13-14) to be Salt, Leaven and Light. Jesus’ call is regarded by the Pope as the unifying theme of AM. Why did he wish thus?

A possible answer is that AM is a continuation of First Synod of Africa (Ecclesia in Africa, EA). Just in the second paragraph of AM, it is made clear that there is continuation between the EA and AM. The First Synod was described “The Synod of Resurrection and of Hope.”⁵¹ This description is astonishing if one remembers that “biblical icon that best described the situation of the African continent was no doubt that of the man who was on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell in the hands of robbers, who robbed him and brutalized him and abandoned him half-dead (Lk 10: 30-37).”⁵² The link one can establish with the aid of graces of SpEx is that this almost dead continent survived and its Christians are now matured⁵³ to take on a mission. The mission is a pastoral and concrete⁵⁴ one which is based on the power of life.⁵⁵ To be salt, light and leaven according to the injunction of Christ is to base the “principal parameters of mission for an African that seeks reconciliation, justice and peace”⁵⁶ on Master Himself. If there is truly a change in perspective as the GC 35 argued, then African Church will be beginning its mission in ways “directed purely to the service and praise of His Divine Majesty.”⁵⁷

The grace of the Second Week is apt for getting ready for the mission. The exercitant asks for the grace from “our Lord that I may not be deaf to His call, but ready and diligent to fulfill His most Holy Will.”⁵⁸ What is the call of AM? It is the call to love. It is a call to love by reconciling oneself to God and to another. “Christ re-established humanity in the Father’s love. Reconciliation thus springs from this love; it is born of the Father’s initiative in restoring his relationship with humanity, a relationship broken

⁴⁹ AM, #1.
⁵⁰ AM, #4.
⁵¹ Ecclesia in Africa, #13
⁵³ AM, #4.
⁵⁵ AM, 12.
⁵⁶ AM, 14.
⁵⁷ The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, #46.
⁵⁸ The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, #91.
by human sin.”

It is also a call love that does justice whereby the spirit of beatitude is the guarantee true justice. The “Divine justice indicates to human justice, limited and imperfect as it is, the horizon to which it must tend if it is to become perfect. Moreover, it makes us aware of our own poverty, our need for forgiveness and for God’s friendship.” Finally it is a call to love that eventually manifest in peaceful coexistence among all peoples. At this level, a graced person will understand that “The inner logic of love” goes beyond justice however perfect it could be, but leads to peace in God.

When one really looks at what Christ wants His disciples to do, one would know that He is the perfect exemplar by walking the talk on the way to the cross. The grace of the Third Week - the grace for “grief, feeling and confusion because for my sins the Lord is going to the Passion” – makes sense for the African Christian who really wants to see how to proceed in the mission and what the road may look like. On the road, Africans will notice that there are “lack of ethical clarity at international meetings, and specifically the use of confusing language conveying values at odds with Catholic moral teaching.” And that various unjust orders prevent the people of Africa from consolidating their economies and developing according to African cultural characteristics. More important, Africans will come to recognize deeply that “peace in Africa, as elsewhere, is conditioned by interreligious relations.” Peace will come through “attentive listening, fraternity and respect without fear of each other.” The grace of grief will make African realize that the continued existence of factors that inhibit reconciliation, justice and peace. These factors are sins and those who continue to uphold them are sinners who continue to send Christ to the cross again and again. If the grace of the Third Week comes to bear on AM, then, all the members of the Church will recognize that they are partakers of the sins of Africa and must feel really sorry for it. Passion as suffering can turn into passion as joy when true sorrow is expressed.

As a sure sign that the transformation of passion is desirable, possible and feasible, the grace of the Fourth Week must be ardently sort for. The exercitant desires to “rejoice and be glad intensely at so great glory and joy of Christ our Lord.” As pointed out above, the joy is an empathetic sharing of Christ’s joy who is happy that He has been raised. The exercitant is a friend of Christ who shares His joy. In AM, different apostolates of the Church are called upon to share in the mission of the Church in Africa because they empathize with the people whom they serve in those missions. Addressing Health care workers who may be cast down bourgeoned problems in their work, the Pope enjoined them to “bring Jesus’ compassionate love to those who suffer! Be patient, stand firm and do not lose heart! As far as pandemics are concerned, while financial and material resources remain indispensable, seek also constantly to form and inform people, especially the young.” The shared joy of Christ, in the light of the grace of the Fourth Week, is the lens through which one can understand the steadfastness

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59 AM, #20
60 AM, #26.
61 AM, #28.
62 The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, #193.
63 AM, 70.
64 AM, 79.
65 AM 88.
66 AM, 88.
67 SpEx, #221.
68 AM, #140.
necessary to continue an apostolate in a difficult situation.

To rejoice with Christ, therefore, will spur the African Church to celebrate the Word as “source and summit” of faith,\(^6^9\) to celebrate at the continental level a Eucharistic congress which will “bolster the effort of Christians to testify to the fundamental values of communion in every African society.”\(^7^0\) The joy will also embolden the desires of men and women of African to engage in day-long, week-long, or yearlong celebration of reconciliation where all “beg of God special forgiveness for all the evils and injuries mutually inflicted in Africa, and for the reconciliation of persons and groups who have been hurt in the Church and in the whole of society.”\(^7^1\) Doing all these things with the joy that comes from grace will be a new evangelization in Africa,\(^7^2\) and part of Africa’s contribution to the missionary spirit of the Church. An exercitant who have received the graces of the weeks of the exercises and especially that of the Fourth Week, would go ahead and sing the *sucipe* three times. Like the triple *sucipe* and in concrete ways, the Christians in Africa, as a response to the graces of the SpEx, could attempt the following ways of living out AM.

### Some pathways through which African Ignatians could “receive” AM and Conclusion.

The first way that readily comes to mind is to pray with the texts of AM. One prays with the text when one uses the text as a basis for the Examen, meditations, contemplations and application of senses, or other forms of prayers which Ignatius suggests. One can also pray with the text if one could adopt the themes of AM and adapt them into different weeks of the SpEx. For example, the material for the First Week could come from Part 1, Ch II, which shows, to some extent, how to live reconciliation, justice and peace in the family through a vision of life that respects creation and ecosystem and nurtured by dialogue and respect for all. In order to implement this kind of praying with the text, the giver of the SpEx may need to study deeper the dynamism of AM and match it up with the dynamism existent in SpEx. Looking deeply into the Annotations (Annotation 17, 18, 19 among others) that talk about adaptations of the SpEx, one would find creative ways of doing three days, eight days and thirty days retreat using the texts of AM.

A second way is to participate in the putting together of various structural changes that AM suggests. The changes that one can initiate, participate or support include finding ways of coordinating the works of Bishops in Africa,\(^7^3\) remodeling the formation system in the seminaries to encourage more community living and sharing,\(^7^4\) and creating more Catholic higher institutions of learning which will be a true salt to the education system in Africa,\(^7^5\) among others. Any of these structural changes would require discernment, investment, time and resources. More importantly, they would require long term com-

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\(^{6^9}\) *AM*, #150.

\(^{7^0}\) *AM*, #153.

\(^{7^1}\) *AM*, #157.

\(^{7^2}\) *AM*, #159-166.

\(^{7^3}\) *AM*, #103.

\(^{7^4}\) *AM*, #112.

\(^{7^5}\) *AM*, #133.
mitments from every Christian. In a way, the success or failure of the structures will be an testimony of Africa’s Christian commitment.

A third way is to pay attention to three principal contemporary concerns that the Synod Bishops highlighted as the major challenge for the African Church today. They are, and I quote in full:

- The principal concern of the Synod members, as they looked to the situation of the continent, was to seek ways of inspiring in Christ’s disciples in Africa the will to become effectively committed to living out the Gospel in their daily lives and in society. Christ calls constantly for metanoia, conversion. Christians are affected by the spirit and customs of their time and place.76

- Beyond differences of origin or culture, the great challenge facing us all is to discern in the human person, loved by God, the basis of a communion that respects and integrates the particular contributions of different cultures.77

- In recent decades, the Church in Africa has been asking itself a great many questions about the emergence and growth of non-Catholic communities sometimes known as African Independent Churches. Frequently an offshoot of traditional Christian Churches and ecclesial communities, they adopt elements of traditional African cultures. These groups have recently made an appearance in the ecumenical field. The Pastors of the Catholic Church will have to take into account this new phenomenon affecting the promotion of Christian unity in Africa, and they will consequently have to find a response suited to the context, for the sake of deeper evangelization as a way of effectively communicating Christ’s truth to the people of Africa.78

A further study on these principal concerns of the Synod Fathers is an assurance that the reception of AM in the light of the graces of SpEx will be an on-going reality. It will surely be a marvelous way of participating in the mission of the Church in Africa as articulated by AM. It will be a way of being Christian in Africa today – a true “commitment of Africa.”

Bibliography


76 AM, #32.
77 AM, #39.
78 AM, #90


Une promotion de la *lectio divina*, dans le sillage d’*Africæ Munus* de Benoît XVI

*Mouanga Ildevert Mathurin*

**Abstract:** Dans l’Exhortation Apostolique Africæ Munus, le Pape demande à l’Église-famille de porter l’Évangile au cœur des sociétés, d’être servante de la Parole de Dieu. La raison est que cette Parole nous enracine profondément dans le Christ. Il faut donc la lire et la méditer quotidiennement. Un moyen assuré pour approfondir et goûter la parole de Dieu est la lectio divina, qui constitue un véritable itinéraire spirituel par étapes. La parole de Dieu est comme une échelle sur laquelle nous pouvons monter et, avec le Christ, également descendre dans la profondeur de son amour.

**Summary:** Pope Benedict XVI signed the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation ‘Africæ Munus’ at Ouidah, Benin, on 19 November 2011. This is a presentation of the fruits that emerged from the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops which took place in Rome from 4 to 25 October 2009 on the theme “The Church in Africa, at the Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace. ‘You are the salt of the earth; […] you are the light of the world’. (Mt 5:13-14). ‘Africæ Munus’ recognizes the beneficial effect of the 2008 Synod of Bishops on the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church. Thus, the document is full of references to Holy Scripture. Father Mathurin’s article – the promotion of lectio divina in the light of Africæ Munus – is made up of four points. The first point is trying to define the concept of lectio divina. The second and the third points are a reflection on the importance of the Word of God in Jewish Tradition and Christian Tradition respectively. The last scrutinizes the fundamental stages of lectio divina.

In order to be salt of the earth and light of the world, Christians need to be nourished by the Word of God. The Liturgy of the Hours presents a passage from Psalm 118 on the Word of God: a praise of his Word, an expression of the joy of Israel in learning it and, in it, to recognize his will and his Face. The Apostles received the Word and passed it on to their successors as a precious gem kept safely in the jewel box of the Church. The Word of God is like a stairway that Christians can climb and, with Christ, even descend into the depths of his love. A time-honoured way to study and savour the word of God is lectio divina which constitutes a real and veritable spiritual journey marked out in four stages. The first stage is the lectio, which consist of reading a passage from Sacred Scripture and taking in the main elements. This is followed by the meditation. It is a moment of interior reflection to understand what the Word is saying. The third moment is prayer in which we linger to talk with God directly. The fourth stage is contemplation. This helps the heart to be attentive to the presence of Christ whose word is a lamp. Reading, study and meditation on the Word should then flow into a life of constant fidelity to Christ and his teachings.

* Fr. Mathurin is a lecture at Grand Séminaire Cardinal Emile Biayenda, in Brazzaville (Congo).
Listening to father Mathurin, the Word of God can lead to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and bring about conversions which produce reconciliation, since it is able to shift the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

By Raphael Ndaphet Bazebizonza sj


Dans le souci de donner un écho aux paroles du Souverain Pontife à l’Eglise-famille, nous nous sommes attelés à mettre à la disposition de nos lecteurs quelques idées sur la lectio divina, pour une meilleure connaissance de cette pratique. Notre réflexion est construite autour de quatre points essentiels : la définition de la lectio divina, l’importance de la Parole de Dieu dans la tradition juive, puis dans la tradition chrétienne, et enfin, nous donnerons les différentes étapes d’une lectio divina pour encourager sa pratique par les chrétiens.

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1 Africae Munus, n. 15.
2 Africae Munus, n. 16.
3 Africae Munus, n. 37.
4 Africae Munus, n. 150.
5 Africae Munus, n. 151.
Qu’est-ce que la lectio divina ?

De prime abord, il sied de signaler que la lectio divina est une pratique ancienne de l’Eglise qui vise la lecture attentive, la méditation, la prière et la contemplation de la Parole de Dieu. Elle est enracinée dans la liturgie. Elle y trouve sa source et y conduit. Au cours de la lectio divina (que l’on peut traduire en français par lecture sainte), « la Parole de Dieu est lue et méditée pour devenir prière ». L’effort de la réflexion qu’on y déploie, est lui aussi d’une grande valeur. C’est, en quelque sorte, une « réflexion priante ».

Au sens strict, elle est en principe pratiquée individuellement. Mais elle peut aussi l’être collectivement. En groupe, elle prend plusieurs formes, soit comme partage de la Parole de Dieu (collatio), soit comme méditation publique collective sur un passage des Ecritures, qui s’appuie sur les différentes étapes d’une lectio divina. La communauté chrétienne est composée de disciples réunis au nom du Christ. Et c’est la Parole qui les tient unis. Des frères peuvent ensemble lire, écouter et chercher à mettre en pratique ensemble la Parole de Dieu. Ici il est question de partage, d’échange, de don, sans dispute ni exhibitionnisme.

Dans les lignes qui vont suivre, nous chercherons à présenter l’exercice depuis son enracinement juif, avec l’importance qu’y prend la méditation de la Parole de Dieu, jusqu’à sa pratique aujourd’hui.

La Parole de Dieu dans la tradition juive


Le livre du Deutéronome insiste sur l’écoute-obéissance et la pratique de la Torah (Parole de Dieu remise au peuple d’Israël par l’intermédiaire de Moïse) qui est la sagesse et la grandeur d’Israël au milieu des autres peuples (Dt 4,6; 6,4-9). Le Psaume 119 (118) est resté comme cet éloge de la Parole de Dieu qui aide le croyant à se maintenir dans une qualité de relation avec le Seigneur et dans une droiture de vie (Ps 119,1-8,9,105). C’est pour cela qu’un juif pieux se repose en méditant, en murmurant la loi du Seigneur (cf. Dt 6,4-9).

Un exemple nous est donné dans le NT, dans le récit de la vocation de Nathanaël que Jésus dit avoir vu sous le figuier (Jn 1,45-51, surtout v. 48). Etre sous le figuier devrait être synonyme de repos après le travail; mais un repos rendu fructueux par la méditation de la Parole de Dieu.

En continuant avec la tradition juive, on peut s’arrêter sur l’épisode de la lecture de

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7 Jean Paul II, Catéchisme de l’Eglise Catholique, n. 2708.
la loi en Né 8,1-12. Ici, on peut observer l’articulation entre lecture, explication pour une meilleure compréhension et surtout pour une meilleure application dans la vie, pour mieux vivre son rapport avec Dieu et avec les autres. Ceci est intéressant, lorsque, remontant plus en arrière, au début de l’histoire d’Israël comme peuple, on considère que c’est pour entendre cette loi que fut convoquée l’assemblée du Sinai, que Dieu lui-même parle au peuple rassemblé au pied de la montagne (Ex 19-20). Et cela restera le point de référence de toute la vie religieuse d’Israël (cf. Dt 5,1-32). De même, au début de la nouvelle expérience comme peuple qui se reconstruit, après la catastrophe de l’exil, c’est sur l’écoute de la Parole de Dieu qu’Israël veut bâtir sa vie. Dans la conclusion de la nouvelle alliance, la loi sera écrite non plus sur des tables de pierre, mais directement sur le cœur, pour parvenir à une vraie connaissance du Seigneur (Jr 31,31-34).

Cette manière de concevoir la Parole est importante à un point où elle est considérée comme la nourriture indispensable à la vie de l’homme (Dt 8,3), pour le maintenir pendant sa marche sur cette terre : « (…) L’homme ne vit pas seulement de pain, mais que l’homme vit de tout ce qui sort de la bouche de Dieu ». Le Deutéronome est comme un sommet en ce qui concerne l’appel à écouter et à pratiquer la parole de Dieu.

Au centre de la vie et du culte juif se trouve la Parole de Dieu, comme nous l’avons signalé ci haut. Dans la liturgie synagogale, on la lit longuement, on l’explique, on l’actualise. Jésus lui-même a fréquenté la synagogue et a eu à lire publiquement la Parole de Dieu (Lc 4,16-21). Le but visé est de susciter l’adhésion de foi au Seigneur, maître de la vie et de l’histoire. La pratique de la Parole de Dieu aboutit à l’enracinement de la vie dans l’alliance.

Enfin, on peut souligner la nécessité pour chaque juif pieux non seulement de lire la Torah, mais d’en avoir pour son propre compte une copie (dans le Deutéronome, cette recommandation est faite de manière explicite au roi ; Dt 17,18). Ce n’est que de cette manière que l’on peut répondre à l’amour de Dieu avec tout l’amour de son cœur (Dt 6,5). Il ne suffit pas seulement de l’observer, mais de s’appliquer à la lire et la mettre en pratique. Le Psaume 1 déclare bienheureux l’homme qui médite jour et nuit la loi du Seigneur.

Dans la tradition chrétienne

La pratique juive de la lecture assidue de la Parole de Dieu a été assumée aussi dans l’Eglise naissante. Le livre des Actes, par exemple, fait mention de cet eunuque éthiopien, qui, venu adorer le Seigneur à Jérusalem, retourne chez lui en lisant un passage du prophète Isaïe. C’est sur ces entretiens que Philippe le rejoint, lui explique la Parole en l’actualisant au Christ, et finalement lui donne le baptême (Ac 8,26-40; cf. 2 Tm 3,14-16). Mais c’est dans les milieux monastiques, au Moyen Age que cette pratique va connaître sa floraison. Guigues le Chartreux (+ 1188) invente l’instrument qui réalisera cette union à Dieu, à travers le moyen de la lecture et de la méditation de sa Parole, ce qu’on finira par appeler « l’échelle du paradis » ou encore « l’échelle monastique ».

Pour les Pères de l’Eglise, la théologie elle-même consistait à étudier la Parole de Dieu, et la spiritualité, une confrontation avec elle9. De cette période patristique,

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on peut citer Origène (185-254), prêtre d’Alexandrie (Égypte) qui pratiquait la *lectio divina* avec toute sa communauté. Grand lecteur lui-même de la Parole de Dieu, il se nourrit et nourrit les autres de cette Parole. Il cherchait à y découvrir le sens spirituel, en dépassant la lettre\(^{10}\). Il insistait vivement pour que les chrétiens la scrutent avec la sollicitude d’un amoureux. Les Pères du désert font un grand usage de la Parole de Dieu. On dit de St Antoine Abbé (le père du monachisme) qu’il connaissait toute la Bible par cœur. St Jérôme et autres fondèrent sur la *lectio divina* toute la vie anachorétique ou cénobitique. Les Pères de l’Eglise en général pratiquent la lecture assidue de la Parole de Dieu, à la manière de la tradition rabbinique juive, mais enrichie, cette fois-ci d’éléments de la révélation chrétienne. Leur théologie montre un effort constant de référence à la Parole de Dieu.

Similairement, la liturgie de l'Eglise primitive met en exergue un usage abondant de la Parole de Dieu. La tradition nous a fait parvenir le témoignage de St Justin de Rome (Martyr, +165) au sujet des premières Eucharisties célébrées par l’Eglise: « Le jour appelé jour du soleil, tous, qu’ils habitent la ville ou la campagne, ont leur réunion dans un même lieu, et on lit les mémoires des Apôtres et les écrits des prophètes aussi long-temps qu’il est possible. Quand le lecteur a fini, celui qui préside fait un discours pour nous avertir et pour nous exhorter à mettre en pratique ces beaux enseignements.\(^{11}\)

C’est en travaillant manuellement que Guigues le Chartreux demande à Dieu de lui suggérer un instrument qui lui permettrait de monter jusqu’à lui. Et se présentèrent à lui à l’improviste quatre marches spirituelles : la lecture, la méditation, la prière, la contemplation. C’est ce que nous avons appelé plus haut l’échelle monastique, qui s’élève de la terre vers le ciel ; instrument pour l élévation de l’âme vers Dieu.

A partir du 12ème siècle jusqu’au Concile Vatican II, la *lectio divina* connaît une longue période obscure. C’est donc le Concile (du 11 octobre 1962 au 7 décembre 1965), avec son mouvement biblique qui retrouve la centralité de la Parole de Dieu et ouvrira son usage à tout le peuple de Dieu. Une Constitution dogmatique entière, *Dei Verbum* (18 novembre 1965) traitera de la Révélation. Celle-ci définit le rapport entre la Parole de Dieu et l’Eglise, comme un rapport d’écoute religieuse et d’annonce hardie\(^{12}\). Les Saintes Ecritures tout comme la Tradition vivante sont, par ailleurs, considérées comme la règle suprême de la foi. D’où l’importance que la prédication et toute la religion chrétiennes soient nourries et guidées par les elles\(^{13}\). D’ici, tous les fidèles du Christ, à commencer par les Evêques qui ont le dépôt de la doctrine, les prêtres qui assurent le ministère de la Parole, les personnes consacrées, jusqu’à tous les chrétiens, sont vivement invités à la pratique quotidienne de la lecture et de la méditation de la Parole de Dieu\(^{14}\). Depuis lors, l’enseignement des pasteurs ne manquera pas de recommander la *lectio divina* à l’usage de tous les chrétiens. Tout dernièrement, dans l’Exhortation post-synodale, *Verbum Domini*\(^{15}\), le Pape Benoît XVI est revenu sur la nécessité de la pratique de la *lectio divina* dans la vie de chaque chrétien et dans la vie des communautés ecclésiales.

\(^{11}\) Le texte utilisé ici est celui que nous retrouvons dans *La Liturgie des Heures*, vol. 2, p. 532.
\(^{12}\) *Dei Verbum*, n. 1.
\(^{13}\) *Dei Verbum*, n. 21.
\(^{14}\) *Dei Verbum*, n. 25.
\(^{15}\) Benoît XVI, Exhortation apostolique post-synodale *Verbum Domini* (30 septembre 2010).
Les étapes principales de la lectio divina

La lectio divina se déroule dans son essentiel en quatre étapes principales qui peuvent se développer en autant d’étapes intermédiaires : la lecture, la méditation, l’oraison et la contemplation. Celles-ci sont en fait des étapes d’intériorisation et d’approfondissement de la Parole de Dieu. Dans une certaine mesure la Parole de Dieu croît avec son lecteur, comme le pensait Saint Grégoire. Elle a un sens dynamique ; elle n’est pas statique.

Elle se développe, s’enrichit avec le sujet qui se met en contact avec elle. Avec elle, l’homme entreprend un cheminement qui le conduit à une plus grande connaissance du Christ, à une plus grande proximité avec Dieu, jusqu’à la vision béatifique.

- **La lecture** (répétée au moins trois fois) qui donne la compréhension du texte déjà dans son sens littéraire. Je dois comprendre chaque mot, chaque phrase, les différentes idées, etc. Il s’agit d’une lecture (si ce n’est une étude) attentive, faite par un esprit qui veut s’appliquer.

- **La méditation** de la Parole lue. Elle est une action de l’intelligence, de la mémoire, mais aussi du cœur. C’est dans mon cœur qu’habite Dieu. Elle mobilise la pensée, l’imagination, l’émotion et le désir. « Cette mobilisation est nécessaire pour approfondir les convictions de foi, susciter la conversion du cœur et fortifier la volonté de suivre le Christ ».

- **La prière** sur cette Parole de Dieu et sur ce qu’elle m’a inspiré au cours de la méditation. Il s’agit ici beaucoup plus d’une application religieuse du cœur à Dieu, dans le but d’éviter le mal et faire le bien (Ps 34,15).

- **La contemplation**. La parole lue, méditée, priée, doit habiter dans mon cœur. Je la laisse agir au-dedans de moi, pour qu’elle me transforme, m’élève jusqu’à Dieu qui attire mon âme, comme la fiancée du Cantique des Cantiques est attirée par son fiancé (Ct 1,4). Elle est Parole de Dieu pour moi.

La Parabole du semeur que l’on rencontre chez les Synoptiques (Matthieu, Marc et Luc) décrit plusieurs attitudes qui peuvent correspondre aux différentes étapes de la lectio divina: « Celui qui entend la Parole et la comprend » (Mt 13,23); c’est l’étape de la lecture. « Ceux qui écoutent la Parole et l’accueillent » (Mc 4,20); c’est l’étape de la méditation et de la prière. « Ceux qui écoutent la Parole avec un cœur parfait et la gardent » (Lc 8,15); c’est l’étape de la contemplation.

Pour clore ce bref parcours, on peut proposer la Vierge Marie, celle qui garde tout dans son cœur; qui y cherche le sens profond des choses (Lc 2,19.51), comme modèle pour la lectio divina. Vivant tous les événements relatifs à la conception, à la naissance de Jésus, elle gardait tout dans son cœur, cherchant d’en saisir le sens en mettant les choses ensemble, en les interprétant, etc. Mais bien que Luc ne mentionne cela que dans l’évangile de l’enfance, on peut aussi, sans hésiter, évoquer l’épisode de la croix ; parce qu’elle y est présente, debout et en silence (Jn 19,25). Et peut-être plus loin, la préparation à la Pentecôte, où Luc la nomme au milieu des apôtres (Ac 1,14). Ceci implique un effort de compréhension, de réflexion qui est indispensable dans la lectio divina. Marie, après avoir entendu la prophétie de Siméon et d’Anne, après avoir retrouvé l’enfant Jésus dans le temple, au milieu des docteurs de la loi, retourna avec la famille à

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17 JEAN PAUL II, CEC, n. 2708.
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Nazareth, et elle gardait tout dans son cœur (Lc 1,51). C’est cela la contemplation qui se poursuit dans la vie concrète, au milieu des occupations ordinaires quotidiennes. Ainsi la prière peut nourrir toute la vie, et la vie tout entière devenir prière.

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Challenges and Possibilities of Developing Ecologically Conscious Technologies in Africa

By Dr. Nathan Gichuki* and Dr. Austin U. Denis**

Abstract: Africa has great potential in the development of eco-friendly indigenous and local technologies. It also has the potential to import eco-friendly technologies that does not destroy its natural environment in the name of urbanization and unsustainable development. What are the challenges that stifle these potentials? What are the possibilities of developing ecologically conscious technologies that can contribute to sustainable development and growth? Is Africa ready to do what it takes to save its environment?

“Because technological solutions do not exist in isolation, but are embedded in complex social behaviors and institutions, the ultimate success of an innovation may depend less on the merits of new innovations or technology than on the effective introduction of new modes of social organization or administrative control necessary to make them work (Jacobs 1972).

Africa: A Rich Continent Plagued By Poverty

Africa is a large continent that covers approximately 11 million km² and has a population of approximately 650 million people, 62% of whom are rural and depend heavily and directly on natural ecosystems for their livelihood (Economic Report on Africa 2002). The continent is endowed with abundant human and natural resources. There is abundant wealth of mineral oil reserves in practically all regions of the continent. About 30% of the world’s mineral resources, including 40% of gold, 60% of cobalt, 90% of platinum and other important minerals, such as copper, diamond and titanium also occur in commercial quantities in Africa.

On a global scale, Africa is a water deficit continent. However, the continent has abundant water resources in major river basins, such as Nile, Congo, Niger, Senegal and Zambezi. There is also abundant water in large lakes, such as Victoria, Tanganyika, Malawi, Chad and Turkana. The inland and coastal fisheries resources yield about 1.8 million metric tons with gross value of one billion US dollars a year (Neiland and Bene 2004). These resources support diverse commercial, livelihood and recreational activities.

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on the continent. There are also extensive areas, especially the river deltas, with fertile soil for agriculture and livestock production.

Extensive tropical forests and woodlands cover a large part of Africa and are vital sources of wood, food and medicinal products. Forest products and ecosystem services support human livelihoods and national economies of many African states. The savanna regions of the continent support agricultural production as well as abundant livestock and wildlife resources. The varied landscape and rich diversity of plant and animal resources in national parks and national reserves coupled with rich cultural diversity make Africa the richest continent in terms of tourism resources. With all these resources Africa is wealthy and apparently should have no poor people or need for foreign aid.

Though offering enormous potential in natural and human capital, Africa’s efforts to achieve sustainable development have been hampered by lack of appropriate technology, social and political conflicts, insufficient resource investment, limited access to markets and supply side constraints, unsustainable debt burdens, gradually declining foreign aid, increasing proportion of the poor and devastating effects of HIV and AIDS. About 44% of the population in Africa lives on US $1 or less a day. The continent’s average GDP growth rate of 4.3% in 2001 dropped marginally to 3.9% in 2010. That GDP growth rate is misleading because it tends to mask the huge disparities among African countries. The oil-producing North African states have generally higher GDP growth rate than the states in sub-Sahara Africa. Furthermore, 60% of the countries listed by United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Index (2010) as Least Developed Nations in the world are in Africa.

Poverty is a negative force that slows down practically all aspects of social and economic development in Africa. Widespread and increasing poverty levels in Africa makes, families, communities and nations highly vulnerable to negative impacts of climate change, including food insecurity, poor health, social and political conflict as well as mortality. Since most of the communities in Africa directly exploit biological resources for livelihood and subsistence economy, they gradually become “potential predators of natural resources” (IIED 2001).

There has been a tendency for resource users, including individuals, communities and governments to use cheap but inappropriate technologies to exploit resources for short term gain with disastrous consequences on the resource base and the environment. How has the use of inappropriate technology contributed to environmental, social and economic problems affecting Africa today? This paper explores the challenges of promoting ecologically conscious technologies and opportunities for applying them to achieve sustainable livelihoods and development in Africa.

Rise and Fall of African Indigenous Technologies

A technology can simply be defined as a way of doing things and the tools used to do them. The simplicity, the complexity of the method or the tools used does not matter. Prior to the advent of colonialism in the 19th century, Africa depended on indigenous technologies to exploit natural resources, produce food and provide healthcare for humans and livestock. For instance, let us look at few instances where indigenous African technologies have played a crucial role in social and economic development in Africa:

- **Traditional fishing technologies**: Fishing communities used canoes, spears and traps to obtain fish for domestic consumption and sale in the local markets. Advances
in fishing technology have improved wild capture fishery, negatively affected the resource base and necessitated regulation of fishing activities.

- **Traditional eco-agriculture technologies**: Farming communities produced food by using shifting cultivation, flood recession agriculture, and simple technologies for crop irrigation, crop breeding and seed preservation. **Shifting cultivation** is eco-friendly and based on cycles of soil fertility renewal and low density of human population. Advances in agricultural technology, especially in the soil fertility and water conservation, crop breeding and protection, have significantly improved agricultural production to meet the food demands of a growing human population but the technologies used have increased dependence on agrochemical products to sustain production.

- **Traditional healthcare technologies**: Community healthcare providers used carefully identified and prepared medicinal products from plants and animals to provide health care to communities and their livestock. Advances in pharmaceutical and health care service delivery have improved human health and survival, and reduced the significance of forests and woodlands as “natural pharmacy” and the daily need for skills of traditional healers.

- **Traditional livestock breeding and husbandry**: Pastoralists relied on long-tested skills, tools and natural products in livestock breeding and treatment of diseases and other ailments. Advances in pharmaceutical and modern veterinary services have reduced the need for using traditional methods and natural products in the treatment and care of livestock.

- **Food storage and preservation technologies**: Perishable foods were preserved by continuously growing them or through drying or smoking as well as storage of harvested crop in moisture free containers or conditions. For instance, grains were stored in well aerated cribs or mixed with wood ash and preserved in airtight guards. Advances in technology implied that food can be preserved for longer periods and be readily available in modern supermarkets or state grain stores. These advances reduced the need for continuously growing crops, improved dietary diversity and access to food in general.

- **Water harvesting and treatment technologies**: Traditionally communities used simple technology, such as animal skin bags attached a system of levers and pulleys driven human or animal power to access raw water from streams, springs and wells. Water was also harvested from rock catchments as well as from mist. For instance, water harvesting from rock catchments and from mist and its treatment with known herbs are still common practices in communities living in Kenya’s semi-arid lands (e.g. Marsabit and Wajir Counties). Drinking water was filtered by passing it through sand and disinfected by using known concoctions of herbs. For instance, the sap of known shrubs and fruit pulp of baobab tree were traditionally used to reduce water turbidity and salinity.

- **Cottage industry technologies**: African technologists using local materials, indigenous knowledge and skills have produced unique products from wood, non-woody plants, leather, stone and metal. Excellent wood and stone carvings, metal tools for work and warfare as well as ornaments have been produced for centuries by African technologists. They have also produced unique products, such as low density paper, beautiful linen, bead and artworks that can be found in major markets all over the world.
African technologists crafted products and tools needed to meet diverse needs of their community. These need-driven technologies were effective, ecologically conscious and sustainable. They were not commercialized and are still making significant contribution to social and economic development of rural communities in Africa.

**Advent of Modern Technologies, Their Transfer to and Consequences in Africa**

The advent of colonialism in the 19th century in Africa brought with it scrambles for natural resources and massive transfer of foreign technologies. Colonial governments and companies imported technologies to Africa in order to improve their lives, their health and security; and to exploit natural resources efficiently. Colonial governments made deliberate efforts through policies and laws to suppress the growth of indigenous technologies, describing them as crude and unsuitable for modernizing Africa. For instance, the laws that grant agricultural rights to those who grow export or cash crops as opposed to those growing indigenous food crops.

The imported technologies revolutionized all sectors of social and economic development: crop breeding and production; livestock breeding and husbandry; water extraction, treatment and distribution; mining and mineral processing, medicine manufacture and administration; transport and communication; harnessing of energy from different sources; building design and construction as well as many other social and economic developments. In some cases, the new technologies were improved, replaced with newer ones or adapted to local conditions as need arose.

The importation of foreign technologies was accompanied by the inflow of foreign technologists and investors in the new technologies. Deliberate efforts were made to provide training abroad to Africans so as to enable them apply or maintain the imported technologies. The widespread use imported technologies improved exploitation of natural resources, food production, human and livestock health and other sectors of socio-economic development. Imported technologies have permeated all productive and service sectors in Africa. Consequentially, they have dramatically changed the way people live, utilize resources, conduct business and deliver products and services to wherever they are required. They have even changed the way Africans perceive themselves and their future.

However, the widespread adoption of modern technologies in social and economic development in Africa has had major repercussions. Let us look at some of the negative consequences (Box 1).

1. Hampered growth of indigenous technologies and slowed down innovation.
2. Increased dependence on modern tools and skills.
3. Increased the cost of accessing the technology and the associated services.
4. Changed people’s lifestyle, especially increasing consumerism.
5. Altered the way people acquire knowledge and communicate.
6. Dramatically changed the way business is conducted.
7. Contributed to rapid population growth as a result of improved nutrition, healthcare and survival..
Unlike positive impacts of modern technologies, which are rapid and readily detectable, the negative impacts are slow and not readily detectable. The long-term impacts of modern technologies in the exploitation of natural resources is evidenced by declining environmental productivity, food and livestock production, loss of biological diversity, increasing environmental degradation and poverty. These damaging effects may be partly responsible for shrinking national economies and vulnerability of many African states to global economic down turns and climatic variability.

Possibilities of Promoting Ecologically Conscious Technologies in Africa

Ecologically conscious technologies or eco-friendly technologies are a combination of knowledge, skills and tools that can be used to solve economic, environmental and social problems without damaging the resource base or diminishing its capacity to regenerate enough resources to meet the needs of future generations. The technologies are appropriate for different physical, social and economic environments. Such technologies may be indigenous, modern or a combination of the two. Their relevance may vary according to the needs of communities and the challenges that they face in the different environments in which they live in Africa.

Ecologically friendly technologies should be low cost, easy to maintain, simple to use and readily available. These technologies are an integral part of Village Level Technology Operation and Maintenance strategy (VLOM), which emerged from the Water Decade (1981-1990). This concept recognized that technical issues are part of management solution of development problems in Africa. Even with good training of community members, some external technical support is still necessary to maintain the technology and the benefits derived from it. This is where universities, technical institutes and development partners can make valuable input to produce appropriate technological innovations that meet community needs.

Ecologically conscious technologies are diverse and there are many opportunities for using them to solve economic, environmental and social problems in the continent. In most cases, eco-friendly technologies combine aspects of modern and indigenous technologies to generate products and services that people need to improve their lives and their local economy. Let us now look at some eco-friendly technologies that can be used in different sectors of development.
Agricultural Sector

*Conservation agriculture*

These are eco-friendly agricultural practices, for instance, minimum or zero tillage farming. This technology aims to conserve soil moisture, reduce soil erosion, and promote nutrient recycling. These actions can lead to higher farm yields and sustained crop production.

Inter-cropping of cereals and legumes enhances that nitrogen fixed to the soil by the leguminous crops is available to the companion cereal crop. This practice improves soil fertility thereby reducing the need for inorganic fertilizers. Inter-cropping legumes with other crops also create good habitats for pollinators thereby leading to proper pollination and better quality of crops.

*Organic farming*

This technology entails growing crops in soil enriched with organic manure with limited or no application of pesticides and other agrochemical products. This minimizes the human health risks associated with the application of agrochemicals.

*Plant propagation*

These are bio-technologies that are used to produce high quality seeds and other propagules in crop production and forestry. Tissue culture technology has been used to produce high quality fruits such as bananas, oranges, pawpaws and avocados. Clonal plant propagation is currently being used to develop fast growing tree seedlings for community forestry and reforestation in eastern and southern Africa. Current crop breeding initiatives in Kenya have produced quick maturing seeds of beans and maize, which are suitable for semi-arid environments.

*Food preservation*

These are technologies that are used to preserve food, water and medicinal products. Traditional methods of preserving food, such as drying, smoking and storage in airtight containers with wood ash are eco-friendly and are still used by many communities in Africa. However, they provide only short term protection against food loss through rotting or damage by pests, such as the greater grain borer.

The above technologies are effective and ecologically conscious because they are based on ecological functions that regulate natural ecosystems. These functions include cross pollination of plants by animal pollinators, organic matter decomposition and nutrient cycling, inter-specific competition (weed control) and conservation and improvement of genetic material (plant breeding, and tissue culture). These eco-friendly technologies can improve livelihoods and economies of nations.

Energy Sector

A wide range of eco-friendly technologies are being used to generate energy needed for domestic, farm and industrial use. *Hydropower* is clean and has been the main source of energy for many countries in sub-Saharan Africa. However, some countries, such as Kenya, have virtually exhausted their hydropower potential and are actively
seeking for alternative power sources to meet rising demand for electrical energy. Let us now look at some of the eco-friendly technologies that can be used to generate green energy at a local level to meet community needs.

**Biogas technology:** This eco-friendly technology is used to digest organic matter and to generate energy for domestic or farm use. This technology generates clean energy that can adequately meet the heating and lighting needs of rural families. It can also help to manage organic waste, produce adequate organic manure for food production. Biogas energy generation can reduce the need for fuel wood (hence save forests) and minimize emission of green house gases into the atmosphere. In so doing, biogas technology can help mitigate against negative effects of climate change.

**Wind power generation:** Wind power is inexhaustible and can be harnessed to generate clean and reliable energy that can be used to drive machines and support rural economic activities. A number of African countries are developing wind energy.

- South Africa generates 85% of its energy from coal and has therefore a high carbon footprint. However, the country plans to reduce dependence on coal as a source of energy by increasing wind and solar energy production to cover nearly 40% of the national energy needs by 2016.
- Egypt also plans to construct windmills to generate 7200 Mw of power and hence contributing 12% of the national energy needs by 2020.
- Ethiopia plans to construct 120Mw wind farm to generate up to 10% of her energy needs from wind power.

Many other African countries are experiencing serious industrial power shortages and are planning to exploit wind power. There is abundant potential for development of wind energy in Africa.

**Solar Energy technology:** Solar energy is inexhaustible and can be harnessed to provide clean and reliable energy for different uses in both rural and urban homes. Solar power generators can provide clean energy needed to drive water pumps, communication equipment and computers as well as provide light energy.

**Geothermal power technology:** This type of energy requires heavy investment of resources, including funds and expertise to build the rigs and generators. Geothermal power is abundant in East Africa. For instance, Kenya has geothermal power potential of between 7000 and 10000 Mw. Only 200 Mw of that potential has been exploited though the annual power demand has been rising at the rate of 8 percent per year. This technology can significantly increase national power supply in suitable areas in Africa.

**Human health sector**

Most of the traditional herbal medicine used in rural areas to treat human and livestock ailments comes from natural forests and woodlands. A wide range of techniques have been developed to extract active ingredients from medicinal plants, manufacture and package the medicine. There are also new techniques of farming traditionally valuable medicinal plants, such as Aloe, Warbughia and Prunus. These initiatives will serve to sustain reliance on and avoidance of destruction of naturally occurring medicinal plants in forests and woodlands. Field trials, especially in Tanzania, Ethiopia and Mali have shown that it is economically viable to farm medicinal plants and generate income from the sale of crude medicinal products.
Municipal waste management subsector

Waste recycling technologies: Rapid urbanization in Africa has resulted in serious environmental problems, especially in the management of solid waste. However, a variety of practical and clean technologies that can be used at household and community levels have been developed to transform solid waste into valuable products. Recycling of solid waste has become a viable business for the poor in urban areas. They are recycling organic waste to produce organic fertilizer as well as recycled paper, glass, metal, rubber and plastics to produce marketable products. Waste recycling activities are currently providing livelihood and financial income to poor urban communities in many parts of Africa.

Can Ecologically Conscious Technologies Help to Promote Sustainable Livelihoods, Peace And Security In Africa?

The answer to this question is definitely “yes” but we need first to re-think our current models of economic development in Africa. Most of the African countries were colonized by Europeans and hence inherited the capitalist model of economic development. However, a few independent states subsequently changed their political orientation and adopted communist economic models (e.g. Mozambique and Ethiopia) or the socialist models (e.g. Tanzania) for a short period before sliding back to the capitalist model of their neighbors. In the 21st century the capitalist model appears to have been failing in western nations (Europe and America), where it originated. It is also likely to fail in Africa. In contrast, the Chinese economy seems to be doing better and hence her socialist model seems to withstand better global economic turbulence. So, which way should Africa go?

Africa also needs to carefully reconsider its policies on technology development, including biotechnology (e.g. genetic engineering) and the pattern of industrial development that it has adopted with a view to discarding technologies that waste resources, cause harm to people and environment or are efficient but not sustainable. It is therefore imperative that Africans strictly screen indigenous, local and imported technologies so as to determine those that are suitable for application in different environments in Africa. Africa cannot achieve the Millennium Development Goals or NEPAD goals as long as it continues to rely on resource wasteful technologies and traditional carbon heavy pathways of industrial development.

Africa should be reducing degradation and wastage of natural resources from the use of inefficient, wasteful and destructive technologies. Conservation of natural resources, such as fertile soil, fresh water, fisheries, and wildlife and plant resources will allow them to regenerate, increase and support the growing human population and create wealth for African nations. If adequate resources are available to all, then Africans can reduce poverty and minimize social conflict among communities. Africa should also increase exports of semi-processed goods and avoid commercializing livelihood activities, such as wild capture fisheries, extraction of medicinal plants and fuel wood from natural forests and woodlands.

It is investable that Africa should conserve natural ecosystems, such as natural forests, wetlands, woodlands and diverse plant communities that maintain vital ecosystem services, such as renewal of soil fertility, pollination of crops and wild plants as well as...
conservation of water (IIE 2000). These ecosystem services support all life on earth, including ourselves and all the biological resources that it depends on. In order to benefit from green technologies, achieve sustainable development and create wealthy nations in Africa building peace among communities and nations is absolutely essential.

Conclusion: Africa has abundant human and natural resources, yet her people are plagued by widespread poverty. The continent requires indigenous, local and imported technologies to develop her immense human and natural resources. Lack of appropriate technology, human capacity and poor governance have partly contributed to disparities in the levels of development and poverty in Africa. Most indigenous technologies are cost-effective, environmentally friendly and sustainable when used on a small scale and for livelihood activities. Commercialization of livelihood activities, such as fishing, hunting and extraction of medicinal plants from natural forests is highly damaging to species and natural ecosystems. Continued reliance on imported technology in natural resource exploitation and other socio-economic activities has stifled the growth of indigenous and local technologies, and in some cases has resulted in serious environmental degradation. It has also increased costs of essential products, such as medicine, food and socio-economic services needed for development. However, there is ample potential for development of eco-friendly technologies in Africa, especially in the production of food and industrial energy as well as harvesting and cleaning water. Because of the growing contribution of technology to social and economic development in Africa, it is imperative that governments invest more financial and technical resources to build capacity for research and development of home-grown innovations and technology. In view of the changing global economic patterns, perennial food insecurity and disruptive regional conflicts, African nations may have to reconsider their models of economic development, political and economic relations with developed countries and their largely open policies on technology transfer from developed countries.

Concluding statement: “Development or transfer of new technology must be based on expressed social or technological needs of the people concerned. Correspondence between the innovation proposed and the expressed need by the immediate beneficiaries is a fundamental factor determining the acceptance and success of an innovation”.

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Policy Based Challenges of Ecologically Conscious Technologies: A Case of Kenyan Environmental Governance

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Abstract: There are policy based challenges and possibilities of ecologically conscious technologies in Africa. In the case of Kenya, there is a 2010 constitutional provision for the right to a clean and healthy environment. What are the challenges in the legislation of laws, policies, rules and regulation to encourage environmental governance? Does the right to clean and healthy environment include a duty as well? What are the different policies that the Kenyan government has enacted and what are the challenges in implementing them? What are the challenges in legislating environmental friendly policies?

Introduction: Since the Rio Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, Kenya has made efforts to improve environmental governance in the country. As a result, the Environmental Management and Coordination Act was passed into law in 1999. The Government has taken necessary measures to implement the environmental legislation by creating institutional structures for the management of the environment including regulations, guidelines and standards. A major milestone on environmental management in the country was the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, where the right to a clean and healthy environment was made a human right. The other important positioning of good environmental management in the country is in the Vision 2030 that seeks to make Kenya a middle income economy by the year 2030. Clean and healthy environment has been highly prioritised in Vision 2030. Environmental management is increasingly institutionalised in the country, however, the full effect of these good legislative, policy and constitutional intent are far from being realised. It will call for deliberate and concrete efforts by all the stakeholders.

Despite these major initiatives, good environmental management remains a great challenge. Weak capacity on the part of enforcement agents as well as the general public remains a great challenge. The enforcement agents lack the requisite personnel with the supportive facilities/ technology to ensure compliance with environmental standards. Furthermore, members of the public including industrialists are not enthusiastic to safeguard the environment. Good environmental management is made difficult by heavy reliance on often outdated technologies from the West. In addition, low adoption rate of ecologically friendly technologies in Kenya has seen the environment suffer under the heavy burden of continued environmental degradation.

Constitutional, legislative and policy context

Environmental management in the country is provided for in the Constitution of Kenya 2010, Environmental Management & Coordination Act 1999, Vision 2030 and

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subsidiary legislations. Environment is one of the bills of rights as provided for in Chapter four of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, clause 42, which makes a clean and healthy environment a human right. The right to a clean and healthy environment is also linked to the obligation by every individual to contribute to creating a clean and healthy environment. Environmental management is elaborated in Chapter five of the Constitution. Clause 69 (1) of the Constitution obliges the state to:

a) ensure sustainable exploitation, utilization, management and conservation of the environment and natural resources, and ensure equitable sharing of the accruing benefits;
b) work to achieve and maintain a tree cover of at least ten per cent of the land area of Kenya;
c) protect and enhance intellectual property in, and indigenous knowledge of, biodiversity and the genetic resources of the communities;
d) encourage public participation in the management, protection and conservation of the environment;
e) protect genetic resources and biological diversity;
f) establish systems of environmental impact assessment, environmental audit and monitoring of the environment;
g) eliminate processes and activities that are likely to endanger the environment; and
h) utilise the environment and natural resources for the benefit of the people of Kenya.

Vision 2030, the country’s development blueprint covering the period 2008 to 2030 also states that Kenya aims to be a nation that has a clean, secure and sustainable environment by 2030. Specific strategies will involve promoting environmental conservation in order to provide better support to the economic pillar flagship projects and for the purposes of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); improving pollution and waste management through the design and application of economic incentives; and the commissioning of public-private partnerships (PPPs) for improved efficiency in water and sanitation delivery.

**Legislative Provisions of Environmental Management and Co-ordination Act (EMCA)**

**General principles of environmental management**

Kenya’s environmental legislation also known as Environmental Management and Co-ordination Act (EMCA) was passed into law in 1999. EMCA provides for the creation of National Environment Management Authority to co-ordinate the various environmental management activities being undertaken by the lead agencies and promote the integration of environmental considerations into development policies, plans, programmes and projects with a view to ensuring the proper management and rational utilization of environmental resources on a sustainable basis for the improvement of the quality of human life in Kenya.

The general principle of EMCA as provided for in Section 3 of the legislation states that every person in Kenya is entitled to a clean and healthy environment and had the
duty to safeguard and enhance the environment. The entitlement to a clean and healthy environment under subsection (1) includes access by any person in Kenya to the various public elements or segments of the environment for recreational, educational, health, spiritual and cultural purposes. Other principles governing environmental management in Kenya are:

a) public participation in the development of policies, plans and processes for the management of the environment;

b) the cultural and social principle traditionally applied by any community in Kenya for the management of the environment or natural resources in so far as the same are relevant and are not repugnant to justice and morality or inconsistent with any written law;

c) international co-operation in the management of environmental resources shared by two or more states;

d) inter-generational and intra-generational equity;

e) the polluter-pays principle; and

f) the precautionary principle.

Administration of environmental legislation

EMCA (1999) Section 9 (1) creates National Environmental Management Authority. The object and purpose for which the Authority is established is to exercise general supervision and co-ordination over all matters relating to the environment and to be the principal instrument of Government in the implementation of all policies relating to the environment.

The Act, sections 24 and 25 respectively creates National Environment Trust Fund and Restoration Fund to facilitate environmental Management. The object of the Trust Fund shall be to facilitate research intended to further the requirements of the environmental management, capacity building, environmental awards, environmental publications, scholarships and grants. The object of the Restoration Fund shall be as supplementary insurance for the mitigation of environmental degradation where the perpetrator is not identifiable or where exceptional circumstances require the Authority to intervene towards the control or mitigation of environmental degradation.

The Act (Section 28) creates instruments to cushion the environment from environmental degradation. The Authority shall create a register of those activities and industrial plants and undertakings which have or are most likely to have significant adverse effects on the environment when operated in a manner that is not in conformity with good environmental practices. The Minister responsible for finance may, on the recommendations of the Environment Council, prescribe that persons engaged in activities or operating industrial plants and other undertakings identified under subsection (28.1) pay such deposit bonds as may constitute appropriate security for good environmental practice. The Authority may, after giving the operator an opportunity to be heard, confiscate a deposit bond where the operator is responsible for environmental practice that is in breach if the provisions of this Act, and the Authority may in addition cancel any licence issued to the operator under this Act if the Authority is satisfied that the operator has become an habitual offender.
Section of 30 of the Act creates Provincial and District Environment Committee shall – (a) be responsible for the proper management of the environment within the province or district in respect of which they are appointed. (b) perform such additional functions as are prescribed by this Act or as may, from time to time, be assigned by the Minister by notice in the Gazette. The creation of environmental governance structures only up to the district level makes it difficult to reach the grassroots.

The formation of Complaints Committee under Section 32 of the Act is one of the important instruments for public participation in environmental management. The functions of Complaints Committee includes to investigate (i) any allegations or complaints against any person or against the NEMA in relation to the condition of the environment in Kenya; and (ii) on its own motion, any suspected case of environmental degradation, and to make a report of its findings together with its recommendation thereon to the National Environment Council.

**Environmental planning, protection and conservation**

EMCA part IV creates instruments for environmental planning, specifically National Environment Action Plan Committee, preparation of National and District Action Plans after every five years to guide environmental management. EMCA part V has specific provisions to protect and conserve the environment, especially river, land, and wetlands, protection of traditional interests, hill tops, hill sides, mountain areas and forests, and conservation of biodiversity. Part VI of the Act makes provisions for the preparation of an environmental impact assessment (EIA) for projects, which are likely to have negative impacts on the environment.

The Act (Section 57.(1)) provides for the use of fiscal instruments for the protection and conservation of the environment. The government can levy tax and other fiscal incentives, disincentives or fees to induce or promote the proper management of the environment and natural resources or the prevention or abatement of environmental degradation.

**Environmental impact assessment and monitoring**

Section 58 (1) states that notwithstanding any approval, permit or license granted under this Act or any other law in force in Kenya, any person, being a proponent of a project, shall, before submit a project report to the Authority before undertaking or causing financing, initiating or implementing by another person as specified in the Second Schedule (list of projects requiring EIA) to this Act. Environmental monitoring is an integral component of environmental management. Section 69 (1) states that, the Environmental Authority, in consultation with the relevant lead agencies, monitors:- (a) all environmental phenomena with a view to making an assessment of any possible changes in the environment and their possible impacts; or (b) the operation of any industry, project or activity with a view of determining its immediate and long-term effects on the environment.

EMCA part XI creates instruments for environmental conservation, specifically environmental restoration, conservation and easement orders. Despite the existence of these orders in the Act, there is no evidence that they have been used to remedy an environmental degradation. The provisions on environmental restoration orders exemplify the nature of these instruments.
Environmental restoration, conservation and easement orders

Part IX of the Act provides for environmental restoration orders, environmental conservation orders and environmental easements empowers the Authority to issue environmental restoration order to: restore the environment; prevent any action that can cause harm to the environment; award compensation for environmental damage; and levy a charge for environmental restoration. An environmental restoration order may contain such terms and conditions and impose such obligations on the persons on whom it is served as will, in the opinion of the Authority, enable the order to achieve all or any of the purposes specified in the order.

An environmental restoration order shall be issued to – (a) require the person on whom it is served to restore the environment as near as it may be to the state in which it was before the taking of the action which is the subject of the order; prevent the person on whom it is served from taking any action which would or is reasonably likely to cause harm to the environment; (b) award compensation to be paid by the person on whom it is served to other persons whose environment or livelihood has been harmed by the action which is the subject of the order; (c) levy a charge on the person on whom it is served which in the opinion of the Authority represents a reasonable estimate of the costs of any action taken by an authorised person or organisation to restore the environment to the state in which it was before the taking of the action which is the subject of the order. An environmental restoration order shall specify clearly and in a manner which may be easily understood:- (a) the activity to which it relates; (b) the person or persons to whom it is addressed; (c) the time at which it comes into effect; and (d) the action which must be taken to remedy the harm to the environment.

The object of an environmental easement is to further the principles of environmental management by facilitating the conservation and enhancement of the environment through the imposition of one or more obligations in respect of the use of the burdened land. An environmental easement may be imposed on and shall thereafter attach to the burdened land in perpetuity or for a term of years or for an equivalent interest under customary law.

Critique of the environmental legislation

EMCA has useful instruments for environmental management. Important instruments provided are: EIA, environmental restoration orders, environmental easement orders and environmental conservation. Effective implementation of the legislation can significantly contribute towards a clean and healthy environment. However, the legislation suffers from slow rate of implementation. The environmental legislation was passed into law in 1999, but up to now its impact is yet to be felt. This is blamed in part on inadequate financial allocation for the establishment of structures. As a result the environmental offices lack adequate number of personnel with the right mix of skills. It is not uncommon to find district environment offices run by one environment officer lacking transport and other basic services to effectively oversee environmental management. Despite good legislative provisions, its full benefits cannot be realised in the face of weak implementation.

EMCA is a co-ordination framework relying on the goodwill of lead agencies for implementation. The environmental Authority co-ordinates environmental management,
while implementation is undertaken by lead agencies. The co-ordination authority does not have a mechanism to compel lead agencies to implement decisions. In many cases, lead agencies have legislative mandates to implement as such environmental management is seen as an incidental activity. It becomes even more difficult in cases where decisions of environmental authority conflicts with that of lead agencies. In such cases, it is unlikely to expect much needed co-operation of the lead agencies.

NEMA generates revenue as provided for in the Act, but it cannot directly spend such monies on environmental management. This occurs even in circumstances when state allocations for environmental management falls far below projected expenditure. The environmental Authority generates revenue from sources such as Environmental Impact Assessment, Environmental Audit, and waste management. At the moment, NEMA is required to submit its revenue to the central government, and it can only spend allocations from the exchequer. One way of improving environmental governance is to allow the environmental authority to spend most of its revenue. This will even motivate it to harness resources for better environmental management.

There is evidence of conflicting mandate of the environmental Authority. The law states that NEMA is a co-ordination agency, but is also involved in actual implementation in some cases. This has been a source of conflict with some of the lead agencies. For example, EMCA empowers NEMA to manage waste water while at the same time Water Act empowers Water Resources Management Authority to manage not only water resources but also waste water. This can potentially cause conflict among state department, thus hamper effective implementation of the policies and legislation.

EMCA creates structures only up to the district level making it difficult to co-ordinate grass root organizations. EMCA provides for District Environmental Committees as the lowest environmental management unit while Kenya’s administrative structure evolves to Divisional, Locational, Sub-locational and Village levels. It implies that lawfully, the government cannot create structures at these lower levels making it difficult to effectively reach grass root communities.

The environmental legislation provides for community participation in environmental management. However, there are no mechanisms to ensure that community participation is effectuated. This is mainly because regulations, guidelines and standards for each of the legislative provisions have not been developed and implemented. For example, the Act states those likely to be affected by a proposed project should be fully involved during an EIA process, but there is no mechanism to ensure that this is realised.

**Conclusion:** Following the Rio Conference on Environment and Development, efforts have been made by the Kenya government to institutionalise environmental management. As a result, the Kenya government passed into law Environmental Management & Co-ordination Act in 1999 and made the right to a clean and healthy environment a human right in the Constitution of Kenya 2010. The environmental legislation has useful instruments, which when fully implemented can contribute to sustainable environmental management, through ecologically friendly technologies. Efforts have been made to implement the Act and integrate environmental concerns in the development process. The implementation of environmental legislation is ongoing. Effective implementation of the Act is hampered by weak capacity and inadequate financial allocation by the state.
In order to scale up environmental management in Kenya, there is need to focus on capacity building of environmental Authority, lead agencies and other key stakeholders. Capacity building should focus on adequate supply of personnel with the right mix of qualifications, equipment and other facilities and popularising good environmental governance among the lead agencies. These will require long-term commitment of political leadership.

References


Forms of Education and Formation of the Youth in Ecologically Conscious Technologies and Their Role in Development and Peace Building Processes in Africa

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Abstract: Every child has the potential to be a genius in any dimension of life. However, the educational system can either inflame this potential or stifle it. With respect to eco-friendly technologies, sustainable development and peace building, what forms of education and formation of the youth will be most appropriate? The intrinsic connection between ecology, sustainable development and peace building suggests forms of education and formation that are based on an understanding of technological process and youth cognitional aptitude. Thus, ecologically conscious technologies and sustainable development are grounded on ecologically conscious forms of education and peace formation. The appropriate forms of education for ecologically conscious technologies are those that inflame the genius in the child to become ecologically conscious in innovation, invention, consumption and preservation of technologies for sustainable development and peace.

Introduction: In order to understand the forms of education that are most appropriate for ecologically conscious technologies in Africa, one need only to turn to the youth themselves and see their efforts at innovations. For instance, William Kamkwamba, a fourteen year old high school dropout from a Malawian farming village, built his own windmill to generate renewable electricity. He managed to salvage parts from a bicycle, a tractor fan blade, a shock absorber, blades fashioned from plastic pipes, stereo speakers, and dynamos. With the aid of an old science book, he was able to educate himself on how to make a working windmill. Before long, the villagers were able to charge their phones using his 12 volt electrical generator. With more demand from the villagers, he upgraded his device to 48 Volts. In his book, The Boy who Harnessed the Wind, Kamkwamba narrates his intellectual journey from a high school dropout to a genius who built a windmill. The story of Kambwamba is similar to that of many youths across Africa, for instance, that of the twenty-four year old Nigerian physics undergraduate, Mubarak Muhammad Abdullahi who built a working helicopter from parts of old cars, bicycles and old 747 aircraft. His helicopter is powered by a 133 horsepower engine from a Honda Civic and the seats are from a Toyota Car. In like manner, a Nigerian student of engineering at the University of Nigeria Nsukka, Joel Nwakaire invented a green and cleaner bio-diesel fuel from vegetable oil. He modified his own car to run on cleaner, greener bio-diesel.

Given the state of formal education in Africa, the state of ecology and the technologies that are available to the continent, the question is what forms of education are most appropriate for the formation of youths in ecologically conscious technologies and their...

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role in development and peace building in Africa? Firstly, in order to address this question adequately, this article will explore the interconnectedness of ecology, technology, development and peace to lay the foundation for a better understanding of the appropriate education for the youth. Secondly, it will explore three major forms of education that are capable of ecologically inspiring conscious technologies for sustainable development and peace. It will also explore the technological process as a theory that best explains these forms of education. And finally it will end with an evaluation and a conclusion.

The Connectedness of Education, Technology, Development and Peace

There is no doubt that education plays a major role in sustainable development and peace building in Africa, however, the question is what kind of technology would be most beneficial: if “sustainable development is the practice of protecting the environment while improving living standards for all, and invention and innovation is key to its success. Invention and innovation for sustainable development isn’t just about developing new technology, but includes new processes and new ways of solving old problems—creative thinking is the rubric [sic]”? Technological advancement, economic development and peace are interdependent and are only sustainable through conscious environmental constraints. According to the Brundtland Report, Our Common Future (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), “people will not be willing or able to afford to preserve the environment unless they have a high material standard of living, nor will they be able to maintain that standard of living (let alone continually increase it) unless they ensure the continued provision of environmental services.” Apart from human willingness to preserve the environment relative to their standard of living, there are factors that hinder creative thinking, innovation and invention, for instance, “insufficient financial resources, lack of role models, education systems that don’t inspire or value creativity, and social/political environments that discourage creativity, invention and entrepreneurship.” Our interest in this article is the educational system, among other factors, that lead either to ecologically conscious technologies and innovations that in turn lead to development and peace building or to their opposites. Every child has the potential to be a genius, to be creative and to innovate. However the educational system can either build up this genius or stifle it. Hence, Bernard Lonergan asserts, “How, indeed, is a mind to become conscious of its own bias when that bias springs from a communal flight from understanding and is supported by the whole texture of a civilization?” Educational systems and technologies are part of the texture of every civilization no matter how primitive or how advanced. Technological solutions to human problems emerge from the human desire to know, not for the pleasure of contemplation, but that of making and doing things, its main purpose is to transform human environment. As Lonergan points out “however elaborate the experiments of

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5 Ibid.
7 Lonergan, Insight, 230.
the pure scientist are, his goal is always to come closer to natural objects and natural relationships. But the practicality of common sense engenders and maintains enormous structures of technology, economics, politics, and culture, that not only separate man from nature but also add a series of new levels or dimensions in the network of human relationships. Human intelligence, therefore, is not simply contemplative or artistic, but most importantly practical and technological. What is our understanding of technology from this perspective? An ecologically conscious technology is a recurrent process for the improvement of standard of living built on accumulated human insights and constantly extended through insights without the destruction of the ecosystem on which all technologies and humanity depend. Technology is at the very foundation of the production process and the super structures of every society. According to Lonergan, “the production process in the broadest sense includes the extraction or cultivation of raw materials, their transportation and assembly, the planning and designing of products, processing and distribution. It also includes services like production management and sales management. It can be briefly defined as “the totality of activities bridging the gap between the potentialities of nature, whether physical, chemical, vegetable, animal, or human nature, and, on the other hand, the actuality of a standard of living.” The production process varies with physical geography, culture, political, social and technological aspects of production. It includes the simple and fixed routines of primitive hunters and fishers to the highly complex and mobile routines of modern civilization. The main task is that of converting potentialities of nature into a standard of living, a recurrent scheme of succession of activities.

The bridge between the recurrent schemes of ecology or nature is human innovation and invention in technologies, from the first hunting tool to advanced super computers. Thus sustainable development relies both on nature for sustenance and for its progress. And, ecologically conscious technologies would involve innovations and inventions that take from nature without destroying it. This is most pertinent in Africa because of the technological transfer of finished goods from Asia, Europe and the Americas that are simply dumped on the continent. Therefore, instead of improving the standard of living, they uncontrollably deteriorate it.

Learning by Innovation and Invention as a Form of Education

Given the complexities of the African situation, what forms of education would best encourage ecologically conscious technologies and identify their role in development and peace-building in Africa? What forms of education would best protect the continent from the acceptance or importation of non-ecologically conscious technologies as finished goods? Innovation and inventions have helped different countries in different ways, for instance, “’copy-cattting’ (i.e. Japan, Korea and China first mimicking

8 Lonergan, Insight, 232.
10 Lonergan, Macroeconomic Dynamics, 20.
11 Ibid.
manufacturing techniques and then becoming world leaders); ‘piggy-backing’ (i.e. India performing service work for rich countries and adapting information technology to local needs); and ‘leap-frogging’ (skipping over technologies that are inappropriate in a given place and time and adopting more sustainable solutions).” Each of these forms of innovations are effective. With respect to forms of education, each of these could be easily adopted. However, the form of education that encompasses all of them can be summarized in three different forms, the first is that of learning by innovation and invention; the second is goal oriented and functional education, and the third is politico-technological education.

Learning by innovation and invention is the form of education that promotes initiative, stimulates creativity, an interdisciplinary orientation and original thinking that is usually outside a traditional educational expectation. It is not uncommon in Africa to find an undergraduate completing his education and discovering that he/she is unable to find a job. He/she quickly goes for a masters degree with the same empty hope of securing a job. However with both degrees, he/she is still unable to earn a descent living because the education received was neither innovative nor oriented towards creativity. He/she completed the requirement for the degree, but not that of creativity and innovation. The illusion is that more schooling would yield better results. Learning by innovation and invention is the best form of education that is appropriate for ecologically conscious technological creativity in Africa. In the examples of youths whose innovations have made world records like Kamkwamba, Nwakaire and Mubarak, learning by innovation is most evident. Their form of education is based on the technological process. What is the technological process within this first form of education by innovation and invention?

The Technological Process and Education

The aim of the technological process is to improve the standard of living without destroying the environment at the same time, throughout the entire process, from the inquiry stage to that of preservation. The technological process developed by Evaristus Ekwueme is illustrated in the diagram below.

*Figure 1. Technological Process.*

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14 Ekwueme, 189.
The process sees the interconnection of ecology, technology and education as that of symbiotic existence in which development and peace can be sustained simultaneously with ecological protection. The technological process comprises of the following schemes of inquiry, innovative insight, practical conception, material development, utilization, preservation, and most importantly education. The process is related as a recurrent circular scheme that must occur and continue to re-occur in order to sustain ecologically conscious education, technological advancement, development and peace building. We must note that ecological consciousness is paramount in all the stages if one is to create sustainable development and peace. First, “in the scheme of inquiry, the human native intelligence and insight play a major role in seeking the virtually unconditioned that is grasped by insight. Pure inquiry springs from technological constraints, environmental difficulties or human operations that seem insurmountable.”\(^\text{15}\) In this scheme the innovator imagines the different possibilities of overcoming the problem. The next scheme is that of innovative idea, the learner comes up with original idea of an invention or an innovation, simply an insight.

However, this idea is useless without practical conception of the insight. Here the innovator assembles tools, methods, manuals, materials to answer the technological question. In the material development, he/she attempts to put the materials together, invent tools for the innovation and actually puts together a prototype of the insight. The next stage is utilization, the innovator tests his/her design and if there are problem he would go back to the earlier stages to rectify them. If the utilization scheme works out well, then the new technology is added to everyday use for “military, educational, economic, social, political, religious or intellectual purposes. With these additions the process moves to the standard of living stage.”\(^\text{16}\) Ecological consciousness is important in refining and upgrading the technologies. Sustainable development is the improvement of ecologically conscious standard of living through ecologically conscious technological process. In the next stage of preservation of the technologies, ecological consciousness is important in either their use as exhibitions in museums as artifacts, their re-utilization or their abandonment on street corners, laboratories, libraries, research facilities, homes and human memories: “each artifact is an epitome of its technological process”\(^\text{17}\) and a potential seed of insights for new technologies. The next scheme encompasses all the other schemes and forms the learning by invention form of education. It is from the study of already existing books, artifacts, technologies, devices in an educational system that new insights are gained and the next possible technologies emerge. An ecologically conscious learning by invention is crucial in the study. Education is both speculative and practical inquiry into accumulated insights in individual, groups, centers and communities of inquiries. These inquiries condition innovative insights to emerge: “the recurrent scheme of technological process is a self-corrective process, both of the insights that bring about the technology and the actual artifact produced.”\(^\text{18}\) Learning by innovation is self education by insight. It cannot be achieved without an inquiry mind and “it can neither be achieved through mastering of rules, following precepts or prescriptions, nor studying any methodology. The discovery of insight is a new

\(^{15}\) Ekwueme, 193.

\(^{16}\) Ekwueme, 194.

\(^{17}\) Ibid.

\(^{18}\) Ibid.
beginning. It is the origin of new rules that supplement or even supplant the old.”

As Lonergan points out “Genius is creative. It is genius precisely because it disregards established routines, because it originates the novelties that will be the routines of the future. Were there rules for discovering, then discoveries would be mere conclusions. Were there precepts for genius, then men of genius would be hacks.” Thus, insight cannot be taught. It cannot be achieved through following of rules, prescriptions and methodology. Creativity and novelty cannot be taught. However, there are methods of “educating for insight” which involve using mental models that bring out the innovative insights of students, given that understanding performance is more than what people can do than something they have.

Goal-Oriented and Functional Education

The second form of education for the formation of youth is that of functional education. This is a theory of education that has been found to be most effective in an already existing formation of youth in Africa. This theory is proposed by Yehudah Zeilberger. It has already been adopted by Pai Obanya and Nath M. Abraham. In functional education, the education of the youth comes from the child’s needs, and uses the child’s interest as a mechanism for activating him towards his desirable activities. Thus, the “purpose of functional education is to develop the life of the mind that acts from the wholeness of organic life, with relation to practical life in the present and in the future.” It enables the youth to gain thinking habits and develop the technical means for solving practical problems. According to Zeilberger, the starting point is the child and the focus is “activity as an educational principle”, which is “based on practical work-plan that is intended to have the child master the subject-matter. The subject-matter to be taught is considered according to its importance in the life of the human person in his childhood and adulthood. The instruction is based on phases in the life of the student: the country, the environment, and daily life. Functional education is a veritable means of achieving sustainable development and has proved very useful in both ecology and peace building. Abraham points out that this form of education has proved effective in the rehabilitation of the educational system of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria where oil exploration has caused tremendous ecological devastation. Abraham suggests that the militancy of the youth in the region may be attributed to their deteriorated eco-system: “Militancy and youth restiveness in the Niger Delta may not be unconnected with pent-up anger arising from destruction of the environment of the people’s homelands and sources of livelihood and lack of reasonable benefits.” Abraham quotes Obanya, that

19 Ekwueme, 24.
20 Ekwueme, 35.
21 Ekwueme, 24.
22 D.N. Perkins, Integrating the Curriculum: Educating for Insight.1991 By the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development., 2.
25 Abraham, 445.
functional education says that “the situation in which the child is growing, and the one he is going to live in, should determine the way education is carried out, including what is taught and how it is to be taught and learned.” Obanya asserts that “the purpose of education if it must hold any meaning is to acquire the skills of understanding life situations, adapting to it and acting to influence it by contributing to its development.” Thus functional education is effective for all kinds of education, in teacher training and in educating persons with disabilities among others. It is aimed at solving day-to-day problems as well as improving the living conditions of people and the environment. The variant of functional education that is most pertinent in this regard is that of both vocational training, and science and technology that is ecologically conscious. The rehabilitation and retraining of former Niger Delta Militant youths in both vocational training, in science and technology has proved most effective in the development of the region and the restoration of peace in that area of Nigeria. Functional education develops both the intellectual and moral abilities of the child, it grows with the child, and it is not dependent on memorized facts that mean nothing to real life situations.

**Politico-Technological Education**

Finally, the third form of education that would be most effective in the formation of youth for ecologically conscious technologies has a political nature. The education of the youth must have a political dimension if learning by innovation and functional education were to succeed. In politico-technological form of education the youth will be educated in the power of political will to resist the adaptation of non-ecologically conscious technologies for the common good of the polis. This will require instruction in the politics of technological adaptation especially from foreign investors and marketers who wish to destroy the ecological nature of the environment for their own economic, social, political and religious needs. For instance, the generation of electricity is a big problem in most African countries. The marketing of cheap alternating current generators that operate on petrol or diesel can be seen all over Africa as opposed to more environmental friendly technologies like windmills, solar power, biodiesel and thermo generators. The environmental dangers of these petrol and diesel generators are enormous. With the proper formation in the politics of technological adaptation, the youth will become aware of the dangers and summon the political will to prevent such destruction of the environment. Formation in the political will to fight for the good of the environment and that of the unborn generation is the responsibility of every youth. Simple political activism and demonstrations will not be enough, but an in-depth knowledge of science and technology in order to prevent technological enslavement. Thandika Mkandawire quotes Ali Mazuri as saying: “The African university was conceived primarily as a transmission belt for Western high culture, rather than a workshop for the transfer of Western high skills. African universities became nurseries for a Westernized black intellectual aristocracy. Graduates of Ibadan, Dakar, Makerere acquired Western social tastes more readily than Western organization skills. Those graduates became steeped in Western consumption patterns rather than Western productive techniques.

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26 Abraham, 443.
We became wordsmiths- and often despised blacksmiths.” The formation of youth in politico-technological education will enable them to resist indoctrination and reliance on others as their royal masters, but most rely on their best judgment in determining what is best for their countries and their people. Just being “wordsmiths” and political slaves of the more technologically advanced countries defeats the very foundation of insight based form of education. The education on political will enables the youth to protect the people and the environment and enforce ecologically sound policies and legislations that will promote creative education, social, economic and political justice for all and sustainable development and peace between people and their environment. This form of education has proved most effective in the works of two important women in Africa, Prof. Dora Akunyili, the former director of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control of Nigeria (NAFDAC). The mission of NAFDAC is “to safeguard public health by ensuring that only the right quality products are manufactured, imported, exported, advertised, distributed, sold and used” and “to eradicate fake drugs and other substandard regulated products.” Akunyili inspired a generation of youth who are conscious of the adverse effects of fake drugs both for human health and for the environment. For the first time in Nigeria, there is a politico-technological education in schools through competitions and awareness programs to combat fake medications. Similarly, late Prof. Wangari Maathai, who through the Green Belt Movement in Kenya inspired the youth to become environmentally conscious and to promote tree planting and the growing of indigenous foods as replacement for unhealthy “fast foods”, “GBM promoted indigenous food crops through the introduction of food security programs in schools. A pilot project was introduced at Kanyariri Secondary School in which indigenous foods were grown and consumed by the students. This was a strategy to help the youth appreciate the nutritional value of these foods as well as improve their diets since they had previously relied on ‘fast food.’ It turned out to be a success, especially because both the parents and students appreciated the value of the food.” The GBM inspired the youth to establish public tree nurseries in their schools and were taught the importance of environmental conservation.

**Conclusion:** In conclusion, it is plausible that “children who are lectured to learn how to lecture; if they are admonished, they learn how to admonish; if scolded, they learn how to scold; if ridiculed, they learn how to ridicule; if humiliated, they learn how to humiliate; if their psyche is killed, they will learn how to kill-the only question is who will be killed: oneself, others or both.” This is true of every education. As Dr. H.T.D Rost pointed out in his lecture on peace education, a teacher dreamt about his students fifty years later, and was able to see their disappointment in the kind of education they received. One angry student shouted in the dream: “You helped me

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32 Ibid., 37.
extend my hands with incredible machines, my eyes with telescopes and microscopes, my ears with telephones, radios and sonar, my brain with computers, but you did not help me extend my heart, love, and concern for the human family. You, teacher, gave me half a loaf.” In the formation of the youth, the connectedness of education, ecology, technology, sustainable development and peace must be held in a balance. Each educational approach should be multidimensional, so that even the hearts and love of the students are extended not only to their fellow human beings, but also to the entire ecosystem, not just in their innovation of technologies, but equally in their consumption. Forms of education should be education for peace and sustainable development through ecologically benign technologies and technological processes because “protecting the environment and preventing the deterioration of the Earth is critical to ensuring peace and social justice.”

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Africare Munus And Priestly Formation:
Some Practical Questions.

Peter Henriot, SJ.*

Abstract: The agenda for the future Catholic Church in Africa can be found in Africare Munus, the post-Synod Apostolic Exhortation presented by Pope Benedict XVI in Benin in November 2011. The document is challenging in developing the follow-up to the commitment of the Second Africa Synod (October 2009) to promote a “Church in service to reconciliation, justice and peace.” This article highlights four emphases in AM with questions that have implications for priestly formation in our seminaries today. Theological Development should be practical and pastoral and focus on the task of inculturation. Pastoral Orientation needs greater attention to a renewed Sacrament of Reconciliation. Social Involvement puts strong emphasis on the Church’s social teaching as a tool to effect commitment by Catholics in justice affairs. Personal Priority means building a spirituality that manifests zeal. In all, there must be a balance between politicisation and spiritualisation in our response to the Synod’s call.

Just how important is the Second African Synod for us? A good question!

About two and a half years ago, I published a Hekima Review article on the Second African Synod that had just been completed in Rome.1 In that article I emphasised a series of issues/themes that appeared to me to be central to the Bishops’ Message and set of Propositions that came from the Synod (more formally, the Second Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Africa) These included the topics of hopefulness, spirituality, church social teaching, public leadership, women, and HIV and AIDS.

In following up my own personal participation in the Synod (as an advisor to the AMECEA Bishops), I often spoke of these topics as forming the “agenda” of the Catholic Church in Africa as we moved into the Twenty-First Century as the fastest-growing Catholic community in the world. If we were to be faithful to the direction of the Synod’s agenda, I argued that we would have to pay attention to these topics in our pastoral work, formation programmes and social involvements.


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Now I believe we can speak even more directly and confidently of an “agenda” for our African Catholic Church. We can do that by reflecting on the message of *Africae Munus*, the post-Synod *Apostolic Exhortation* presented by Pope Benedict XVI in Ouidah, Benin, 19 November 2011. In a very long and nuanced text, the Pope explains what he sees as the central message of a Synod addressing “the Church in Africa in Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace.” Personally, I find encouraging the title of the *Apostolic Exhortation*, where the word “Munus” is being translated as “Commitment.”

Rather than giving an overall account of the dimensions of what the Pope speaks of our Church’s “commitment” to Africa, I want to explore only a few topics/themes that I feel have particular relevance to the task of priestly formation. I am presumptuous enough to undertake this task in this brief article since in my own work in Africa for almost a quarter of a century I have taught occasional courses at Hekima College, Nairobi, and St. Dominic’s Major Seminary, Lusaka.

I will look at four areas raised up in *Africae Munus* (AM), and suggest some questions I consider pertinent to priestly formation in seminaries across the Continent. In my opinion, while there are many good lessons in AM, there also are some serious disappointments. But on the whole the document is indeed very positive and encouraging and surely has great importance for our future African Church. Thus the document has constructive implications for priestly formation. Four of these implications touch our Church’s commitment to theological development, pastoral orientation, social involvement and spiritual priority.

**Theological Development**

From an admittedly limited perspective, I do not believe that African theologians did in fact contribute as much to the pre-Synod activities and the actual meetings of October 2009 in Rome. Not as much, I believe, as they did to the First African Synod in 1994. Happily, at least one very substantial book has been produced while we have waited for the *Apostolic Exhortation*. It contains twenty significant essays that treat the Synod theme from different perspectives, written by a cross-section of theologians and others working in Africa.

But the text of AM certainly provides a menu of issues that call out for solid theological reflection if the purpose of the Synod is to be fulfilled: the promotion of the “Church in service of reconciliation, justice and peace in Africa.” Overall, the theological emphasis is practical and pastoral and that surely has implications for seminary training.

Pope Benedict emphasises early in AM that the Synod documentation upon which he draws for his recommendations calls for “transforming theology into pastoral care, namely into a very concrete pastoral ministry in which the great perspectives found in sacred Scripture and Tradition find application in the activity of bishops and priests in specific times and places” (§10). For the Pope, a catechesis grounded on good theology must integrate theoretical dimensions of faith with the practical dimensions “experienced

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2 For full text, see http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus_en.html


at the liturgical, spiritual, ecclesial, cultural and charitable levels..." (#165).

I think it is correct to lift up one specific theological topic that has very significant practical and pastoral dimensions in need of serious consideration. This is the topic of inculturation. (“Making the Christian faith more African, making the African faithful more Christian” is my admittedly simplified expression of this very complex topic!) In three important paragraphs (#s 36-38), AM urges the need for serious study of cultural elements and traditions that may be negative as well as positive, discerning “those aspects of the culture which represent an obstacle to the incarnation of Gospel values, as well as those aspects which promote them” (#36).

The Pope recalls that the First African Synod “spoke of the need for an in-depth study of African traditions and cultures” (#36). Persons more conversant than I with the theological enterprise of the past two decades would have to answer whether that “in-depth study” has in fact gone on seriously in the theological centres across the Continent in ways the really influence the priestly formation in our seminaries. For example, surely Christological inculturation would push forward relevant soteriology, liturgical inculturation demands more than drumming, sacramental inculturation calls for study of new forms, canonical inculturation could be expected to touch more realistically on marriage law and custom, and spirituality inculturation would develop more relevant devotions.

In what appears to me a significant point not to be lost is that Pope Benedict links careful attention to African traditional values to the promotion of peaceful societies on the Continent today. This is something that he sees to be necessary to strengthen the Church’s role of being a reconciler in society. He considers it imperative to transmit the values the Creator has instilled in the hearts of Africans since the dawn of time. “These have served as a matrix for fashioning societies marked by a degree of harmony, since they embody traditional formulae for peaceful coexistence” (#38). I feel that this is a topic which calls for closer cooperation between theologians and political scientists!

In a provocative call to theologians that is both theoretical and practical, AM challenges reflection on the relationship of the most profound mystery in Christian faith, the Trinity, to the every day events on this Continent:

While earnestly desiring to help implement the directives of the Synod on such burning issues as reconciliation, justice and peace, I express my trust that “theologians will continue to probe the depths of the trinitarian mystery and its meaning for everyday African life” (#172).

Questions for priestly formation:

1. How historically and geographically connected to the African reality are the major components of the theological curriculum in our seminaries?
2. Is inculturation of faith a central guiding principle in the activities of our seminaries, influencing both theoretical and practical considerations?
3. What is the link between pastoral experiences before and during seminary training to the raising of serious theological issues?

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Pastoral Orientation

Pope Benedict XVI has announced a “Year of Faith” to be celebrated beginning in October 2012, commencing with a Synod of Bishops that will address the topic of “New Evangelisation.” Thus it is significant that in AM the Pope emphasises this task of new evangelisation as being central to the Church in Africa in service of reconciliation, justice and peace.

In making this emphasis, he cites Synod Proposition #34: “The Synod Fathers insisted that evangelisation ‘essentially consists in bearing witness to Christ in the power of the Spirit by one’s life, then by one’s words, in a spirit of openness and respectful dialogue with others, while holding fast to the values of the Gospel.’ In the case of the Church in Africa, this witness needs to be at the service of reconciliation, justice and peace” (#160).

Thus it is clear why the Pope raises a pastoral orientation in MS when he points to the need for a strong commitment to ecumenical dialogue and to promoting good relationships with African Traditional Religions and Islam.

Throughout the African continent, it is not only the Catholic Church that is experiencing phenomenal growth but also other Christian churches. Hence any good pastoral approach by our Church requires “that the path to reconciliation must first pass through the communion of Christ’s disciples. A divided Christianity remains a scandal, since it de facto contradicts the will of the Divine Master (cf. John 17:21)” (#89). And dialogue must also include members of the sects that have sprung up out of traditional Christian churches (#90) and also the many manifestations of African Traditional Religion (ATR) (#92).

Possibly the biggest pastoral challenge in dealing with Islam is in those parts of Africa where more fundamentalist Muslim groups have clashed with Christians (e.g., in Nigeria). While acknowledging these tensions, that the Pope in AM insists that we Catholics strive for improved relationships with Islam: “I call upon the Church, in every situation, to persist in esteem for Muslims.... I ask the whole Church, through patient dialogue with Muslims, to seek juridical and practical recognition of religious freedom...” (#94).

But surely one of the most significant pastoral emphases in AM is directed to promotion of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. As might be expected in a document designed to strengthen the Church’s ability to serve reconciliation, justice and peace, AM calls for a conversion that has social dimensions. And the Pope believes that a better understood and more widely practiced celebration of the Sacrament will contribute greatly to this conversion. He specifically calls for more opportunities to be made available for confession, encouraging priests to “experience this sacrament in their own lives and to make themselves readily available for its celebration” (#156).

Many of the Propositions coming from the Synod explicitly encouraged that greater attention should be paid to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, celebrated individually or in communal settings, with new attention being paid to ways of inculturating the Sacrament. It is therefore important, I feel, that the Pope notes that there is some ambivalence among African Christians about the Sacrament, and that “it would be helpful if the bishops were to commission a serious study of traditional African reconciliation ceremonies in order to evaluate their positive aspects and their limitations” (#33).

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Would some of the aspects of these ceremonies be helpful in encouraging a practice of the Sacrament that would have social consequences?

Questions for priestly formation:

1. Does the theme of “new evangelisation” have practical consequences for pastoral training of seminarians, e.g., in relating to youth in the emerging global African culture?
2. Are pastoral experiences required of seminarians in the context of ecumenical, Islamic and ATR challenges?
3. Is a renewed Sacrament of Reconciliation a guiding principle and central activity in pastoral work training, as well as in the personal faith life of seminarians?

Social Involvement

There are those in Church circles and in the wider society in Africa (indeed, around the world!) who would hope that the Catholic Church leadership, organisations and ordinary members would tone down their socio-economic comments and curtail their political involvements. These people must surely be disappointed with the strong emphases of Pope Benedict in AM on the need for the Church to play a key role in practical promotion of reconciliation, justice and peace.

For instance, among several instances of very clear calls is the following: “Together with the Synod Fathers, I ask all the members of the Church to work and speak out in favour of an economy that cares for the poor and is resolutely opposed to an unjust order which, under the pretext of reducing poverty, has often helped to aggravate it” (#79).

AM stresses the need for good governance of African states and urges the Church to play a key role in promoting the implementation and administration of a just social system. “In order to put this ideal into practice, the Church in Africa must help to build up society in cooperation with government authorities and public and private institutions that are engaged in building up the common good” (#81).

AM is sharply critical of leaders who do not serve the common good: “Today, many decision makers, both political and economic, assume that they owe nothing to anyone other than themselves” (#82). The document repeatedly makes the point of the need for more active education of all Church members in the Church’s Social Teaching (CST). For example:

There is no doubt that the building of a just social order is part of the competence of the political sphere. Yet one of the tasks of the Church in Africa consists in forming upright consciences receptive to the demands of justice, so as to produce men and women willing and able to build this just social order by their responsible conduct (#22).

The Justice and Peace Commissions of the Church are recognised as key instruments in “the civic formation of citizens and in assisting with the electoral process in a number of countries. In this way it contributes to the education of peoples, awakening their...”

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7 But the Pope’s statement lacks the stinging bite of #23 of the Synod Bishops Message: “Many Catholics in high office have fallen woefully short in their performance in office. The Synod calls on such people to repent, or quit the public arena and stop causing havoc to the people and giving the Catholic Church a bad name.”
consciences and their civic responsibility" (#23). There should be permanent formation programmes for laity, especially for political and economic leaders, to assure commitment to work for the common good (#103). “It is my heartfelt desire that lay people with responsibility in the political, economic and social fields be equipped with a solid knowledge of the Church’s social doctrine, which can provide them with principles for acting in conformity with the Gospel” (#128).

I consider it significant that Pope Benedict highlights an element in the Church’s social teaching that surely has political consequences for service of reconciliation, justice and peace. This is the “preferential option for the poor,” originally lifted up by Latin American liberation theologians and then endorsed by Pope John Paul II in #42 of his 1988 encyclical, *Social Concern* (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*).

Thus AM links this pastoral orientation – indeed, political orientation – of the option for the poor to the spirit of the Beatitudes whereby...

... preferential attention is to be given to the poor, the hungry, the sick – for example, those with AIDS, tuberculosis or malaria – to the stranger, the disadvantaged, the prisoner, the immigrant who is looked down upon, the refugee or displaced person.... it will have to begin by resolutely implementing political, social and administrative justice at home; this is part of the political culture needed for development and for peace (#27).

One does not have to be conversant of the latest development figures from United Nations’ documents to appreciate the importance of this orientation of the option for the poor in the task of priestly formation. Most African seminarians necessarily know very well from experience the poverty realities of the Continent.

Questions for priestly formation:

1. Are courses in political, economic and social analysis part of the required curriculum in our seminaries?
2. How central in priestly formation is the body of the Church’s Social Teaching, including the CST of the various African churches?
3. Does training in the pastoral ministry of Small Christian Communities include ways of influencing political leaders in the work of reconciliation, justice and peace?

**Personal Priority**

In his *Apostolic Exhortation*, Pope Benedict calls attention to an image of the African Church that he had mentioned during his homily at the Mass that opened the Second African Synod: “A precious treasure is to be found in the soul of Africa, where I perceive a ‘spiritual “lung” for a humanity that appears to be in a crisis of faith and hope,’ on account of the extraordinary human and spiritual riches of its children, its variegated cultures, its soil and sub-soil of abundant resources” (#3).

This image of “lung” strikes me as a beautiful image, with profound theological implications relating to a universal ecclesiology. But I want to emphasise in this final

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part of my essay what I would perceive to be the personal implications of this image. It seems to me that AM raises in several places the priority for a deep personal spirituality as a requirement if the Church is really to be at the service of reconciliation, justice and peace in Africa now and in the future. In Part Two of AM, Pope Benedict calls for a mobilisation of spiritual energies (#98), “exhorting each member of the Church family to be ‘the salt of the earth’ and ‘the light of the world’” (#97) – the sub-theme of the Second African Synod.

Discussing the ministry of education for the people of Africa – a ministry of very high concern of many (most) local Catholic churches throughout the continent -- AM stresses “the need for educational programmes combining faith and reason so as to prepare children and young people for adult life. These solid foundations will be able to help them address the daily decisions arising in every adult life on the affective, social, professional and political plane” (#75). This requires that the Christian identity of our efforts be seen as “a precious good which must be preserved and safeguarded, lest the salt lose its flavour and end up being trampled underfoot” (#77).

Pope Benedict addresses his fellow Bishops in stressing the role they must play in leading the Church in the service of reconciliation, justice and peace. He does not hesitate to call attention to personal holiness as central to the effectiveness of episcopal ministry:

Your own holiness must be outstanding, to the benefit of those entrusted to your pastoral care, those whom you must serve. Your life of prayer will nourish your apostolate from within. The bishop must be someone in love with Christ. The moral authority and the prestige that uphold the exercise of your juridical power can only come from the holiness of your life (#100).

Priests are urged to deepen a life of prayer (#109), and seminarians are reminded that “The fruitfulness of their future mission will greatly depend on their profound union with Christ, on the quality of their life of prayer and their interior life, and on the human, spiritual and moral values assimilated during their time of formation” (#121).

I could be accused of belabouring an obvious point. But I wonder whether we who would like to see AM really be an agenda for the future of the Church in service of reconciliation, justice and peace in Africa pay sufficient attention to this personal spiritual dimension. Are all of our apostolic activities characterised by a zeal that fires us up to face the immense challenges of the day with a ministry that bears the distinctive mark of a close follower of Jesus?

This zeal moves us to a generosity that sustains service beyond personal satisfaction precisely because of whom we are called to serve. It is a zeal, a passion, that should be notable not only in the newly ordained but in those of many years of priestly service. (As I write this, I necessarily am called to honestly reflect on the quality my own commitment!)

Towards the close of its message, AM speaks of the need for the new evangelisation of Africa to be marked by an integration of

... the intellectual dimension of the faith into the living experience of the encounter with Jesus Christ present and at work in the ecclesial community. Being Christian is born not of an ethical decision or a lofty ideal, but an encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction (#165).

That is what I sense to be necessary for the agenda of AM to be worked on with real and effective zeal.
Questions for priestly formation:

1. Are the theological, pastoral and social emphases of AM seen as integrally related to the spiritual formation of future priests?

2. Is spiritual formation as central as academic formation in our seminaries, with all the implications that this might entail?

3. Are the products of priestly formation in our seminaries marked by a recognisable zeal for working in a Church in service of reconciliation, justice and peace?

Conclusion: A FINE BALANCE?

Those with more recent experience of African seminary education today – both staff and students -- can evaluate whether my four points are relevant and my questions are realistic.

But I would conclude with what I perceive to be the need for a fine balance in priestly formation that can serve the agenda of Pope Benedict’s Apostolic Exhortation, the agenda of the African Church for the near future. This is the need to balance political emphases with spiritual emphases in implementing the call to serve reconciliation, justice and peace.

As I noted in an essay in the volume of theological reflections on the call of the Second African Synod, the Pope in his remarks at the conclusion of the Synod pointed to a serious dilemma comprising two dangers. One danger is an over-politicisation of the theme of reconciliation, justice and peace. This could lead to less emphasis on pastoral work and more emphasis on politics, with a competence that is not primarily that of the Church.

But the other danger – precisely in order to flee from the first – is to retreat into a purely spiritual world, into an abstract but unrealistic world. This is the danger of an over-spiritualisation of the Synod’s theme.

I do believe that a careful reading of Africae Munus shows the path of balancing the two emphases of spiritual and political. While AM is hardly the complete or final word on the agenda for the Church in Africa in the years ahead, it is a certainly a balanced word that does speak to our everyday needs as Christians alive in a Continent that is evolving into the home of the largest and most vibrant Catholic Church in the world.

Surely that has implications for priestly formation in our seminaries today!

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Social Sins and Ecological Problems: Should Human Beings Continue to be the Sole Measure of all Things?

By Itua Ogbekhilu Egbor, SJ*

Abstract: Our ancestors say, “One who has no idea where he/she is going should at least know where he/she is coming from.” The world is confronted with the monstrous crisis of ecological imbalance stemming from environmental degradation. Confused as to what to do and which direction to take individuals, groups, societies and institutions continue to grope searching for a response or at least some people to hold responsible for the disaster that threatens us. To understand where we are, and in order to chart a way forward we have to ask how we came here in the first place. The human mind has been shaped by thoughts and ideas from historical past. The Protagoran maxim that, of all things, the measure is man, created a world where human beings saw themselves as ends in themselves. Not only did humans realize and emphasize their autonomy, they upheld an ethical vision in which the fate of the world and the shaping of history solely depended on them. Through the scientific prowess of the Enlightenment period the rest of creation became mere objects to be exploited. The reckless and indiscriminate exploitation of nature highlights the sins that humans continue to commit individually and socially. The eminent ecological crisis has also contributed to accentuating the concerns over ecological sin. St. Ignatius of Loyola’s Principle and Foundation represents one among many possible responses to the ecological crisis.

Introduction: In the course of this paper, I shall discuss how the Protagoran maxim that, man is the measure of all things, led to the development of an anthropocentric worldview. It is my assessment that the literal application of this maxim plunged humankind into the abyss of negative anthropocentrism. It also set human beings on the path to self destruction. Protagoran anthropocentrism in doing away with the divine and placing morality within the subjective realm transformed the human person into an end in him/herself. Each individual became the determinant of good and bad, right and wrong. This sort of subjective morality has thus given rise to several social phenomena of sin. One form of such social sin¹ that has and continues to threaten humanity is the crisis of ecological degradation. Confronted with a possible self annihilation brought about by egocentric and reckless exploitation of the rest of creation; the world grapples with finding a solution. This frantic search for a response has led to the human society resorting to scapegoat mechanism of accusation and counter accusation about who is responsible. I would argue that only if the human society is able to sit back and tell the human story as it is would it be able to see clearly that the whole of humanity is responsible for the ecological crisis. In order for human beings to accomplish the

¹ Aware of the internal and external manifestation of social sin, Peter Henriot asserts that social sin refers to: “(1) structures that oppress human beings, violate human dignity, stifle freedom, impose gross inequality; (2) situations that promote and facilitate individual acts of selfishness; and (3) the complicity or silent acquiescence of persons who do not take responsibility for the evil being done.” See Mark O’Keefe, What are they saying about social sin? (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1990), 29.

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aforementioned, I would propose as a response the need for the human society to re-read the Protagoran maxim backwards using the lens of the *Principle and Foundation* of St. Ignatius. This is one among many possible responses to addressing the situation of social sin that has eaten into our socio-political, cultural and religious fabrics.

**Protagoran Anthropocentrism**

Protagoras remains one of the famous Greek Sophists, who in reacting to Parmenides, emphasized experience at the expense of logic. According to Protagoras, there was no such thing as objective reality or absolute truth. Every person's perception of reality was limited to the sphere of his/her experience. This knowledge was extended to the mythical and religious sphere. In relation to the gods, Protagoras says, “I have no means of knowing whether they exist or not, nor of what form they are; for there are many obstacles to such knowledge, including the obscurity of the subject and the shortness of human life.”² Just like Protagoras, Critias, another Sophist, argues that the gods were mere inventions aimed at instilling fear in the heart of those inclined to perpetrate evil deeds.³ With respect to morals, he says that the basis of morality lies solely in custom and law.⁴ He claims morals are context-bound. What is morally right in one culture could be perceived as morally wrong in another. Thus, he leaves any form of moral assessment to the individual.

Human subjectivity plays an integral role in how we perceive, understand and impact on the world around us. It was in the light of his idea of human subjectivity that Protagoras made his famous maxim that the human being is the measure of all things. “Of all things the measure is man, of the things that are, that [or “how”] they are, and of things that are not, that [or “how”] they are not.”⁵ Though described by Plato as a generous, courteous and upright man, generations of sophists that treaded the path he blazed, push his ideas to unpalatable conclusions. This saw to the birth of moral mayhem and chaos as portrayed in Aristophanes' play *The Clouds.*⁶ The absence of the God and relativism of morals made everyone a god to him/herself.

**The consequences of Protagoras’ maxim**

Following the dogmatic implementation stemming from a literal comprehension of human preeminence, how one perceives the other person and the rest of creation became biased. Societies who did not consider other groups, race or people worthy of human dignity practiced slave trade, promoted and cooperatively sustained racism and sexism, and depleted the environment of its resource because the common good for them was narrowed to their specific development, wellbeing and their survival. If oil exploration resulted in destruction of the region where the exploration had taken place,

⁵ Poster, “Protagoras,” in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy.*
⁶ Poster, “Protagoras,” in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy.*
polluted the ecosystem in that region, created unhealthy living condition. This did not however, really matter if the purpose was to better the livelihood of a set of people, race, nation or continent. Utilitarianism thrived, that is, the flawed understanding of the common good as what benefits and greatest number of people.7

The sort of morality brought to life by Protagoras' maxim was one that was devoid of any reference to an absolute being, God, divine law or natural law, tradition and customs. It was a laissez faire morality. The individual alone could determine what sin was and what sin was not. There were no moral norms or ideals against which one's actions were to be measured. For example, the equal distribution of wealth and resource, what welfare policy to adopt, the destruction of vegetation and forests for developmental purposes, pollution of the environment would be subjected to personal judgments. The moral nature and moral culpability for anything or situation, that is, whether the welfare systems demean the poor, depends on whether the individual judges it sinful based on his/her perception of reality. Since each individual or group is the measure of all things, it completely cripples any reference to the effects of one’s action by another as morally wrong. The perpetrator can always relativize and argue otherwise basing his/her assessment on his/her experience. For example, if I do not recognize the dignity of another person, I am thus justified in abusing that person. Thus, Protagoran anthropocentrism succeeded in suffocating the communal effect or aspect of sin by emphasizing the personal morality and subjective experience. Even after the coming of Christianity, the notion of personalized morality or sinful action still remained. The Catholic theology of sin advanced “a rather private, individualistic understanding of sin with emphasis on individual actions (serious matter) and the degree of knowledge (sufficient reflection) and freedom (full consent of the will) supporting these actions.”8

Sin as personal act imputing guilt and requiring personal responsibility

The Scholastics and other theologians who grappled with understanding sin prior to the Second Vatican Council only developed a conception that was already present in the understanding of the various aspects of sin present in the early Christian and Jewish communities.9 The personalization of sin in connection to an individual's act is said to have gained momentum with the establishment of private auricular confession by the 6th century Irish monks. This was further buoyed in the 11th and 12th century BCE with the emergence of nominalism, which further emphasized the individual over and above the community and the universals.10 Sin was then perceived as personal and private transgressions against God which required the individual to take personal responsibility for the guilt incurred. The council of Trent in codifying manuals for confessor further fortified the conception of sin as personal and private act in their “attempt to identify clear and precise criteria by which confessor could act as judge in the confessional.”11 Reflecting on the Catholic Church’s understanding of sin as transgressions, Patrick McCormick says that, “while ‘stain’ and defilement language may represent the most primitive grasp of human fault, the notion of sin as a crime and the sinner as a criminal

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11 O’Keefe, What are they saying about social sin?, 8.
has, until the very recent past, clearly constituted the most dominant understanding of human sinfulness."\(^{12}\)

A qualification, however, is important while talking about personal sin. As Mark O'Keefe puts it, “True sin is thus committed when a gravely evil action is performed by an individual with sufficient knowledge and freedom. Any other form of sin (i.e. venial or original sin) is sin ‘by analogy.’”\(^{13}\) This emphasis on knowledge and freedom brings about a complexity when an individual examines him/her life in relation to the evils of our world. Going by this narrow and constricted understanding of moral sin, one is not said to have sinned if the evil in question is not directly linked to the actions of the individual performed in freedom and in full knowledge. For example, attitudes of injustices and policies which further marginalize the poor may not be perceived as directly caused by the actions of the individual. This personalized understanding of sin created an incubation period for social sin in history. The perpetration of several actions which impacted negatively on the other and the rest of creation were justified and rationalized by the perpetrators. However, human beings have awoken to the fact that sin can no longer be confined to the sphere of the individual since its social impacts are evident.

### A re-awakening to the social dimension of sin

The events of the Second Vatican Council saw to the revival of both personal and social dimensions of sin. The social, political, cultural and religious realities of the time awakened theologians to the gruesome reality of sin as it finds expression in both personal and social realities. The Church has become more aware of the good or evil impact that societal and institutionalized structures can have on the individual and the rest of creation. The fathers of the Second Vatican Councils say “As it is, man is prone to evil, but whenever he meets a situation where the effects of sin are to be found, he is exposed to further inducements to sin, which can only be overcome by unflinching effort under the help of grace.”\(^{14}\) This illumination has been largely due to the conceptual shift from the understanding of sin simply as an ‘act’ to sin understood as a ‘situation.’ Not only can an individual’s act be sinful, but, societal structures, policies and institutions can also be sinful.

This articulation of the reality of social sin as a social phenomenon has given rise to metaphors like sin as addiction, sin as illness, sin of the world, sinful social structures\(^{15}\), sin of solidarity and of course social sin. Aware of the communal nature of sin as well as the effects cumulative sinful acts of individual can have on creation, Piet Schoonenberg is quick to guard against misconstruction by saying that “the sin of a community, ultimately the sin of the world, is more than the sum total of the individual sins considered without inner connection.”\(^{16}\) In speaking about social sin he coins the term “sin of the world”.\(^{17}\) By sin of the world he takes into account the underlying denominator

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\(^{13}\) McCormick, *Sin as Addiction*, 10.


\(^{15}\) Kerans, *Sinful Social Structures*, 57.


that links the sins of a free person to another person. He calls this networking environmental situation of sin. Every person acts within this situatedness. “This situation is the connecting link between one free decision and another, so that history may be defined as the interaction of decisions and situations.”\textsuperscript{18} This sinful situation has the capacity to invite us to sin even though we have the freedom to act otherwise. “My free action always puts the other into a situation, which appeals to him for good or for evil, which provides him with help or withdraws that help from him...determines his freedom, not in the sense that it forces him to perform a good or evil action, but in the sense that it obliges him to react to it, for good or for evil, or to forego a reaction as the result of his own free decision.”\textsuperscript{19}

These emerging insights made the Church attuned and sensitive to the sinful structures prevalent in society. Nonetheless, they plunged theologians into the conundrum of defining the relationship that exists between personal sin perceived as acts of an individual and social sin.

\section*{Relationship between Personal sin and Social sin}

The perennial question of how personal sin stands in relation to social sin continues to provoke insightful thoughts and debates amongst theologians. Is social sin an accumulation or sum total of individual personal sinful acts? Is it the consequential expression of personal sins in society? Or do both social sin and personal sin have equal footing on the same conceptual pedestal of the theological development of sin? Attempts at responding to such aforementioned questions have given rise to different schools of thought.

The first school, that is, those to the far left argue that sin has primarily a social reality and that personal sins are only concrete ways through which it finds expression. They would deny that social sin is a mere consequence of personal sin. Rather personal sin is the way by which humans participate in the social reality of sin. According to Thomas Schindler, sin encompasses “the conscious and unconscious, the deliberate and indeliberate ways by which we participate in and contribute to original-social sin.”\textsuperscript{20} Some of those who advocate for this notion of understanding sin would argue that institutions and structures can sin. This raises the question of what does it mean to be a moral agent and how do we understand moral sin. To take this view to a logical conclusion would mean a subtle if not explicit denial of human freedom and responsibility for sinful acts.

A second group would argue that social sin is an analogue of personal sin. Social sin becomes the effect of an individual personal sinful act in history. Though they admit that there are powerful external as well as internal factors which impact on, incite or condition the individual, they argue that still the individual is free and responsible.\textsuperscript{21} The understanding that personal sin has social effect is a view shared by Catholic theologians with respect to sin-God-cosmos triangle. John Paul II in his apostolic exhortation says

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Schoonenberg, \textit{Man and Sin: A Theological View}, 104.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Schoonenberg, \textit{Man and Sin: A Theological View}, 104.
\end{itemize}
that “the mystery of sin is composed of this twofold wound which the sinner opens in himself and in his relationship with his neighbor. Therefore one can speak of personal and social sin: From one point of view, every sin is personal; from another point of view, every sin is social insofar as and because it also has social repercussions.”

The third school asserts that both social sin and personal sin are contained in the very understanding and notion of sin. Social and personal sin can be viewed as two sides of the same coin. Rosemary Radford Reuther would describe this as both the personal and systemic faces of sin. In this approach, no one dimension of sin is emphasized at the detriment of the other. Both deserve equal attention and utmost consideration if the issue of sin as an offense against God and the whole cosmos is to be taken seriously. This understanding of sin takes into account the dialectic between the traditional theology of sin prior to Vatican II – sin as personal willful evil acts, and the notion of sin as external, inherited, bearing down on the individual from without, a force that reigns. This goes to show that no one notion of sin sufficiently communicates the full reality of sin.

In the foregoing understanding of sin, one cannot conceive of sin without a direct link to the actions of a moral agent. Sinful and unjust attitudes apparent in society can be traced to the personal acts of selfish or ill intention of an individual. “Even ‘private’ sins (for example, avaricious thoughts) may eventually become manifest in actions and attitudes which can impact on the attitudes and perspectives of others.” Also connected to this view is the understanding of how social sin as effects of personal sin takes on a historical life of its own independent of the initial moral agents. The sinful attitudes, pattern and behavior ossify and become entrenched in structures, institutions, societal policies and religious symbols. However, despite this reality of an independent historical reality of social sin in structures, Pope John Paul II explains that such a historical reality or analogical meaning of social sin should not “cause us to underestimate the responsibility of the individuals involved.”

In my view, personal sin and social sin are inextricable. Here I would subscribe to those who argue that personal sin and social sin form two sides of a coin. One cannot do justice to the discourse on sin by emphasizing only one aspect at the expense of the other. Human beings through their decisions and actions create and shape society. Societal structures in turn influence and affect humans through processes of socialization. Through a continuous participation in these societal structures we, advertently or inadvertently, sustain these structures and their effects. Gula would argue that “since we participate in the process of creating society, we share in the responsibility for causing social sin.” He adds though that being causally responsible should not be equated with moral responsibility. In the light of social sin, humans are morally responsible when if being conscious of the social negative effects of structures we either continue to support it or refuse to act in a manner the puts an end to it. Furthermore, appeal to ignorance of sinful social structures and their effects should not be made too easily.

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26 Pope John Paul II, Reconciliation and Penance, no. 16.
27 Richard M. Gula, Reason informed by Faith, 120.
as the consequences of social sin are so glaring. Having looked at the relationship between personal and social sin I shall now turn to a specific example of the reality of social sin in our world.

Ecological degradation as example of Social sin

Persons are endowed with intellect and capacity to manage the environment in such a way that both human and environmental sustainability is achieved. One way through which humans organize their society and live in community is by setting up norms and patterns of doing things. Over time these patterns become institutionalized and engrained in structures. In the course of human development, there would be some who adopt habits and attitudes detrimental to the common good of the community. Persons governed and driven primarily by their selfish interest would act in ways that undermine the human dignity and integrity of others as well as disregard the rest of creation. The consequential effects of such sinful acts in society would eventually give birth to a sinful situation within which every other person being situated has to respond or react.

The understanding that humans occupy a prime position in the whole of creation has impacted negatively on the rest of creation. Economic prowess in pursuit of insatiable desires defines and is the driving force behind the choices and actions of humans in the industrialized world. Persons are socialized in an individualistic culture which perceives economic well being as the ultimate definition of a person’s success, meaning and dignity. The culture of economic growth has initiated a voracious lifestyle of acquisition and endless search for more. In simple term, this is consumerism. It is an attitude that has resulted in the indiscriminate and undue devastation and exploitation of the rest of creation. Langdon Gilkey alludes to this when he says, “The central dynamic of this infinite demand is not anxiety about security but desire, lust for more and more, and impatience and dissatisfaction with what is now possessed, a sense of yearning emptiness if more is not gained, of felt conviction that meaning, be it excitement or satisfaction, comes only with continual accession.”

A consumerist society would not have a holistic ecological view. A holistic ecology presents ecology as “the relationship that all bodies, animate and inanimate, natural and cultural, establish and maintain among themselves and with their surroundings.” It is an understanding that takes in cognizance political, economic, religious, social, cultural concerns and entertains them within the framework of ecological consideration. Leonardo Boff argues that this notion of ecology responds to the basic ecological question of how several factors, human activity, technology, structural and institutional activities help or destabilize the dynamic equilibrium that exists in the overall ecosystem?

In the light of this integral understanding of ecology, ecological sin would be understood as any activity of an individual or structure which brings about harm to the rest of creation thereby causing a disruption of the equilibrium of the ecosystem. This immediately raises the question: are humans supposed to stop all forms of exploitation

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28 O’Keefe, What are they saying about Social Sin?, 70.
31 Boff, “Ecology and Poverty: Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor,” x.
of natural resources for its own development and sustenance? The concept of ecological sin is one that is not unreasonably pushed to its limits. It does not go against the development of humans through the use of resources of creation. The Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms that it is legitimate for humans to use resources from the rest of creation for their own development and sustainability.\(^32\) What constitutes ecological sin in the mind of the Church is the “reckless disregard of the natural environment, (...) unrestrained development and possible depletion of the earth’s resources.”\(^33\) Such activities by humans and institutions invariably impact on the lives of both humans and other creatures alike. For example, a company that chooses to dispose of toxic waste in the river or sea knowing its hazardous effects would not only destroy underwater life but also poses a threat to human beings who depend on the water for their domestic use. In that way it is an ecological sin since such a harmful activity goes against the creative purpose of God which humans as stewards are supposed to maintain.

An example of Ecological sin

In discussing ecological sin I shall use the example of oil exploration as a point of reference. The discovery of oil as a rich mineral resource has resulted in both positive and negative legacies. The production and sale of crude oil has brought about structural, economical, and political growth to nations. It has helped promote the well-being of individuals, groups, communities and nations. However, amidst the prospects of positive development, history has also witness wars, corruption, pollution, massacres and deprivation of human basic needs because of oil. The exploration of oil in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria has given birth to acrimony, deprivation, exploitation, killings and poverty of the inhabitants of that region.

Greed on the part of governments and individuals influential in policy and decision making has led to the signing of contracts with multinational companies without proper care being taken to ensure that the environment is not unduly polluted. It has prevented them from ensuring that the resources and wealth produced is channeled towards the development of the environment, improving the well being of those who inhabit that region as well as set up structures that would facilitate an equal distribution of the wealth generated from oil exploration. The group bias of some blinds them to see that their choices and the present structures and institutions set up to manage the exploration of oil are oppressive and exploitative. In as much as the wealth coming from such exploration were channeled dutifully to the benefit of the group’s interest less attention was given to the adverse effects of such actions and choices on the environment.

The continuous exploration of oil, gruesome flaring of gas and the spilling of crude oil has left some part of that region devastated and uninhabitable. The air is polluted and unhealthy while the farmlands and rivers have been rendered derelict. The life on land and in water has been altered and the ecosystem is at the brink of total collapse. Humans, through irresponsible acts and policies, continue to destroy the very environment on which life’s sustenance is rooted. The inhabitants of the Niger-Delta region

\(^{32}\) The Catechism of the Catholic Church, n° 2417.

continue to starve because they can no longer feed from the products of the farms. That region known for its fishing culture has been rendered redundant as its oil-laden waters continue to suffocate aquatic life. Children are born, they grow up in this environment and all they are used to is hope to survive in this suffocating and depriving environment. The situation brought about by the choices and attitudes of some ossify into structures impervious to change. “Eventually, the accepted pattern comes to be seen as objective reality—both by those who benefit from the established structures and even by those who are oppressed by them.”

One can argue that there are social amenities available to promote the welfare of every citizen and individual. These institutions (schools, hospitals, welfare packages) are social and cultural benefits available to all but subtly out of reach to those who are poor and marginalized. The promotion and affirmation of human dignity, integrity and equal distribution of the human and natural resources becomes systemically directed at only those who have the monetary and social means to participate and enjoy such benefits. The poor and low-income earners in the Niger-Delta region are systemically excluded due to no deliberate evil intent of individuals or groups. The Niger-Delta people cannot enter into a healthy competition because they would be doing that from a disadvantaged standpoint. Kerans makes reference to this when he says, “lack of skills, poor education, malnutrition and poor health, lack of information about available jobs—these frustrate the poor when they seek employment.”

Who is responsible for such situations?

But the terror of measuring success through the consumption of material products is that the only benchmark of success can be invidious comparison. Since none of the gadgets is itself satisfying, the only source of satisfaction is knowing that others are less well off. The human emptiness of our competitive affluence and the persistence of poverty amid such plenty are two sides of the same coin.

Examining the situation under a Girardian microscope, modern society quest for power, influence, and affluence, has resulted in mimesis. According to René Girard, the human person is a complex of desires largely derived from mimesis. Thus, in mimesis we possess the desire that urges us to often subliminally imitate the other. Relationships within society are built largely on mimesis, which he says is good in itself. Human society is a differential system, which coheres as a unitary complex of differences or distinctions in terms of hierarchical, social, cultural, political and religious structures arising out of mimesis. Mimetic desire urges us to often subliminally imitate and try to outclass the other. As the mimetic world relationship progresses, it transforms itself into a competitive relationship which later degenerates into a rivalrous competition.

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34 Kerans, Sinful Social Structures, 60.
35 Kerans, Sinful Social Structures, 88-9.
36 Kerans, Sinful Social Structures, 104.
38 Girard, The Girard Reader, 290.
40 Girard, The Girard Reader, 290.
As the rivalrous mimetic competition continues, it produces violence as a by-product. Through the compulsive quest to satisfy the insatiable appetite to surpass the other, human societies have amass and continue to exploit natural resources without due attention to the required ecological balance and replenishment.

For Girard, these exploitative acts, structures and attitudes qualify as violence to creation. Violence is done when there is unequal distribution of resources. Violence is perpetrated when certain classes or groups of persons are excluded from the participating in societal benefits. Violence is initiated and sustained when human institutions, attitudes and structures undermine the common good and respond to the selfish interest of a few. “Violence is also attributed by many economists to the scarcity of needed objects or to their monopolization by social elite.”

When there is crisis in society brought about by mimetic rivalrous competition, Girard argues that it brings about undifferentiation, that is, the collapse of hierarchical and social distinctions. Since everyone is preoccupied with imitating the other in the course of a rivalry, there is transgression of categories. Culture is eclipsed and societal differences collapse. At this point, the community reaches the decision that the cause of the crisis which threatens it with imminent disintegration is the presence in their midst of a person or group of persons who must be discovered and expelled if the community is to be at peace. The community resorts to the scapegoat mechanism as a means of returning the community to relative order and peace. The community often chooses as its victims someone who is different from the group as a way to affirm their claims of defilement/contamination. These persons display what Girard refers to as preferential signs of victimage. They do not differ in the right way. That is the categories of the social system (the system’s complex of differences) do not explain and approve of them. Thus, they are always potential threats and may be the object of persecution and mob violence. According to Girard, persons who are susceptible to collective violence include: the rich and powerful (kings), the weak and poor, women, children, persons with disabilities, foreigners, and minority groups (either ethnic or religious).

The possible annihilation that looms as the monster of ecological crisis confronts us; our world today is up in arms. It has caused a collapse of religious, social, cultural, racial or political categories. The eminent threat cuts across frontiers. This crisis is forcing the society to return to what Girard calls the scapegoat mechanism. The anxiety and disorder that ecological crisis brings has to be resolved. In our attempt to address the crisis, we cannot help but ask who is to blame? Someone has to take responsibility for bringing about this crisis. There must be a scapegoat to be sacrificed so that the world society may once more return to peace and harmony with the rest of creation. We have to find someone, group, people or nation which possess what Girard called preferential signs of victimage. The poor point their accusing fingers at the rich. Poor nations and developing nations hold the developed nations responsible for global warming. In turn the developed nations grapple with finding among themselves who to lay the blame on. The world is cut in the quagmire of cross currents of accusations and scapegoat mechanism. We are so preoccupied with finding a scapegoat that we are completely

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blinded to the cries of creation and the resounding whispers of nature reminding us that we, humans, are violating it.

These social realities of sin are so prevalent and glaring that we cannot elude the daunting question of who is responsible for such a situation. The unpleasant truth is that everybody is to blame for the violation of creation and for bringing about the social sin of ecological crisis that plagues our world. Human beings have to take responsibility for the evil effects that our institutions, structures and policies impact on the other and world around us. Those who have preceded us and our modern society are liable to the harm done to creation and the world. We might argue that these sinful institutions and structures have taken on life of their own and we cannot be held responsible for the evil effects and actions they perpetrate. We could choose to push the argument further by saying that we cannot talk about moral responsibility for moral sin since these institutions and structures are not moral agents.

However, Institutions and structures do not emerge ex-nihilo. There is always a human face and dimension to every societal structure and institution. Human decisions, attitudes and actions eventually give life to and sustain social structures. The free cooperation of individuals brings about institutional and structural sustainability. This is why Bernard Lonergan says that sometimes individual, group, communal and general biases interfere and make humans deliberately refuse to ask the relevant questions needed to guide them into the path that impact authentic insights. The reality of social sin in our world is not something we can say we are unaware of. A failure to respond in view of transforming these sinful structures either because we have become accustomed to it, or because we enjoy the benefits of the system, or feel too resort to defeatism makes us morally responsible for the social sins of our world. Each time we wipe our hands and mouth with paper serviette, purchase automobiles, we share the moral responsibility of violating and exploiting creation. As Bernard Haring puts it, “people are responsible for the development of their knowledge and freedom and cannot facilely claim either ignorance or powerlessness. People can be responsible for their own blindness to value when this blindness is a facile attempt to preserve their own privileges and position.”

The Principle and Foundation: a possible response to the ecological crisis

St Ignatius of Loyola provides us with an invaluable resource kit as we navigate the complexity of our socio-historical, cultural, political and religious world. The “Spiritual Exercises” of St. Ignatius is a compendium of his spiritual experiences as he encountered God after his conversion. The Principle and Foundation begins the series of spiritual exercises divided into four weeks. It is the anchor and truly the Foundation on which the other exercises are rooted. The Principle and Foundation opens the door to Ignatius’ theology of the world—a vision of reality revealing God’s salvific plan and how human beings have a key role to play in God’s creative purpose. As we would see, The Principle and Foundation is both a foundation that launches us forward as well as a driving and guiding force (compass) directing and leading us into becoming authentic individual created in Imago Dei.

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46 O’Keefe, What are they saying about Social Sin?, 70.
Ignatius begins the exercise of *The Principle and Foundation* by stating in clear terms the end and purpose for human being. The conception of the human person is both communal and personal. We live in relation to other human beings and to the rest of creation. Human beings, he says, “are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of doing this save their souls.”

He expands the worship of God beyond the restrictive cultic sense and situates it within the sphere of everyday living. Human beings created in *Imago Dei* have a central place in creation and are charged with an end which is the praise, reverence and service of God. For Ignatius, service of the Divine Majesty is a great opportunity to honor God’s invitation to us. It is in invitation to collaborate with God creatively in God’s glorious and divine salvific work. God out of God’s immense love provides us with the rest of creation. There is no better way to serve God (reciprocate this love bestowed on us) than to help other human beings and the rest of creation on its course back to the Creator. Gilles Cusson would say that “having come from God, the person is, by his or her nature, set in motion toward God. To integrate oneself, by grace, in this movement of all creation is to exist more fully.” It is only in and through realization and solidarity that one would be able to in contemplating the love of God desire earnestly and truly to love and serve the Divine Majesty in all things. A choice not to join in solidarity as well as help with the upward movement of the whole cosmos to God would be to hamper the salvific work of God through Christ. That is, for Ignatius an act of ingratitude. This very longing to bring about a greater glory of God through relations with the whole cosmos is to define the men who would join the Society of Jesus.

It is in the light of the aforesaid that Ignatius brings into the picture the relationship of human beings to the rest of creation. “The other things,” Ignatius points out, “on the face of the earth are created for human beings, to help them in the pursuit of the end for which they are created.” Human beings thus have to assume responsibility in making sure they bring the rest of creation towards the Creator. In this way, Cusson would stress the point that for this to be realized, human beings would need to transform “themselves into a way or means, willed by God by which all of creation evolves until through them it reaches and praises God in the whole Christ.” Why we use, what we use and how we perceive and use the rest of the things in creation ought and should be informed by one thing, the ‘end.’

In the foregoing, Ignatius declares that “we ought to use these things to the extent that they help us toward our end, and free ourselves from them to the extent that they hinder us from it.” Ignatius uses the word “ought” to accentuate the freedom of the human person. Though created to praise, reverence and serve God, the human person is not determined to that end. The human person is not a pawn in the hands of God.

With the end in mind and the spirit motivating and driving us, we would be able when necessary to free ourselves from inordinate attachments to the extent that they hinder us from praising God. Ignatius here addresses the source of evil that exist in the human heart. In a bid to satisfy one’s personal interest one could foster and sustain

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certain attachments, habits or behavior which will introduce disorder, harm or evil in the rest of creation by hampering the upward movement of creation to God. The use of the term ‘indifference’ does not mean resignation. Rather, it is a state of self transcendence in which we desire over and above all the divine love of God which orders and embraces the whole of creation. It, thus, makes manifest the creative salvific work of God. Ignatius’ discourse of indifference exposes the human person to his/her original orientation in love and service of the Divine Majesty. In the light of the latter, one is able to recognize how the actual human reality has derailed from its original course. The difficulty in acting out of selfless love for others and without inordinate attachment is thus exposed. Ignatius would hope that this realization of the place of human beings in God’s plan of creation and salvation would evoke once again that craving, longing for “God, which Christ, the Word of God and the Savior of humankind, has come to satisfy beyond all expectation.”

When Ignatius talks about ‘things,’ he has a very comprehensive notion. It extends beyond mere physical things to a person’s make-up such as psyche, intellect, body, will, mind, emotion, imagination, and one’s personalities. According to Michael Ivens, Ignatius’ use of the word ‘things’ encompasses “every kind of event and situation, and in the case of these the concept of creation must be expanded to include that of Providence, a concept admitting of various interpretations, but without which the Foundation would hardly be applicable to large areas of human reality.”

Having expounded Ignatius worldview, you would agree with me that to a certain extent Protagoras’ notion of the human person is not completely different from that of Ignatius. However, Ignatius goes beyond the limiting notion of the human being found in Protagoras’ anthropocentrism. Where Ignatius departs and completely re-baptizes and transforms Protagoras’ maxim is his unveiling of the ethical aspect of the human person. While Protagoras conceives the human person as not only free but an end in him/herself devoid of any trace of the absolute or divine, Ignatius conceives a free being who, while having a sense of the absolute or divine can either choose to praise or not praise God. The fact that the human person can choose to use or not use the created things towards the end for which he/she was created makes him/her, in Ignatius’ conception of the human person, an ethical or moral being.

Ignatius’ theology of the world places the human person in constant relation with God. For him, love and desire for God remains the magnetic centripetal force that pulls us to the Creator. It is this same love and desire that makes indifference possible in such a way that we are preoccupied only with that which will enable us participate in God’s creative purpose. Ivens describes this state of indifference as a “stance before God and what makes it possible- and also something quite other than either apathy or stoicism- is a positive desire for God and his will.” Ignatius ends the Exercise on the Principle and Foundation by re-iterating the very idea with which he began. Human beings, in their choices and decision making, should and ought to be informed and motivated by that one desire which is to act in a way that is congruent to the end for which humans were created.

Like the ‘Protagoran’ human beings, in The Principle and Foundation, occupy a key role in creation. As I mentioned earlier, human beings occupy a significant part in

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52 Cusson, Biblical Theology and The Spiritual Exercises, 78.
54 Ivens, Understanding the Spiritual Exercises, 31.
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God’s creative salvific purpose. However, unlike the ‘protagoran’ man who is a god to himself and the determinant of morality, the human person for Ignatius occupies a prime position only in being created in *Imago Dei* and in relation to God’s purpose. Thus, whereas the ‘Protagoran’ man sees the rest of creation as simply objects to be controlled, subdued, exploited and manipulated for his own personal aggrandizement, development, pleasure and sustenance, the human being in *The Principle and Foundation* sees the rest of creation as arrays of opportunities by which the constant relationship with God is made manifest. As the International Theological Commission asserts, “visible creation is itself a divine gift, the “original gift,” that establishes a “space” of personal communion. (....) Given that the inner life of the Blessed Trinity is one of communion, the divine act of creation is the gratuitous production of partners to share in this communion. In this sense, one can say that the divine communion now finds itself “housed” in the created cosmos.”

In view of the ecological crisis, *The Principle and Foundation* becomes a source to which the whole of humankind needs to return in order to redefine and re-orient its course. If *The Principle and Foundation* becomes the launch pad and guiding compass as humanity charts its course through history, it would not have to burden the minds with what constitutes or does not constitute ecological sin. Humans would be predisposed, in view of doing whatever that is conducive to the end for which he/she was created. Someone inspired and informed by *The Principle and Foundation* would know that dumping toxic waste in the ocean would not be conducive to God’s creative purpose. Such a person would not incite conflict in order to create a market for arms trade. In addition he/she would not subject other human beings to unbearable dehumanizing conditions in order to maximize profit.

A person who operates from *The Principle and Foundation* cannot but see the other as one of integrity and dignity. One would not need someone to remind him or her that flaring of poisonous gas not only pollutes the air thereby creating health hazards for inhabitants of oil regions but that it also depletes the ozone thus creating an imbalance in the ecosystem. Though free to act or not to act, every human being would be morally responsible for his/her activities which go against himself, the other, creation and God. *The Principle and Foundation* brings human being into a close harmonious relationship with God’s gratuitous gift to us. Once we are able to find God in all things, only then would we have begun to respond to the looming ecological crisis threatening to annihilate the whole of humanity.

**Conclusion:** Protagoras’ maxim that man is the measure of all things, found favor in the minds of human beings, who saw it as an affirmation and justification for exploiting environmental resources. Having divinized the human person, thereby making the human person a demi-god to him/herself, the rightness or wrongness of an act became confined to the subjective assessment of each person. Good and bad were considered relative depending on how one perceives reality. This conception of man as the measure of all things saw to the successful delivery of multifaceted phenomena of social sin. The environment became a mere object, a mega machine to be controlled, dominated, and exploited. The survival of a group, race or people was priced at the expense of others. Human beings succeeded in bringing about ecological crisis and the earth continues to cry out under the spell of reckless exploitation.

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Where else can we turn? As T. S Eliot says, “The end of all our exploring [w]ill be to arrive where we started [a]nd know the place for the first time.”\textsuperscript{56} \textit{The Principle and Foundation} invites us to pause for a while and trace our way back to where we first started in order that we might recognize our purpose and reason of being. Only when we realize that our end is to praise, reverence and serve God would we be attentive to ensure that our activities are conducive to that end for which we were created.

Bibliography


Social Sins and Ecological Problems: Should Human Beings Continue to be the Sole Measure of all Things?


The book Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: The Second African Synod is a decisive reflection on the contemporary role of the Church in Africa in view of the challenges of reconciliation, justice and peace. This book is a collection of essays from different authors; writing in order to “identify multiple theological and ethical issues” (p. 3) surfaced by the Second African Synod and expands the focus of the concerns of the Synod to a variety of areas, topics, and domains. The ultimate goal of the essays is to generate, shape, guide and sustain amenable theological thoughts and discussions in order to respond to the challenge of realizing durable reconciliation, justice and peace in Africa.

As a response to the question, what is the role/mission of the Church in Africa, the book maintains a position that the Church in Africa has a primary duty of defending and promoting authentic reconciliation, justice and peace in all spheres of life. Besides, the Church need to be aware that “reconciliation, justice and peace are not [to be] understood exclusively as concerns for the secular world; they impinge primarily and significantly on the nature and mission of the Church” (p. 4). Consequently, the book affirms that reconciliation, peace and justice are central aspects of the mission of the Church in Africa today. At present, reconciliation, justice and peace constitute a crucial part of the essence of the Church because the three elements “touch the core of Africa’s contemporary socioeconomic, cultural, religious, and political predicaments.”

In order to vindicate the validity of the above position, the book adopts a method of ‘dialogue and listening in conversation’ and advances five categories of arguments in support of its position. The essays in this compendium, which forms the five categories, comes from twenty one authors, writing from their scholarly expertise and thus bring together a mosaic of multidisciplinary experiences in understanding the mission of the Church in Africa amidst the challenges of reconciliation, justice, and peace. Such a coherent multidisciplinary approach comes across to the reader as internal evidence on the relevancy of the aforesaid methodology in addressing Africa’s complex challenges.

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The multidisciplinary arguments advanced in the book to support its position can be summarized and categorized as follows. First, the book affirms that the principal place for practicing reconciliation, justice and peace is within the Church. The Church needs to “address this issue of reconciliation from within, especially in relation to its structures, using God-given resources” (p. 15). According to the texts, the Church can exercise this practice, through interreligious dialogue, use of African linguistic and cultural resources in theology, multivalent dialogue between the Word of God and African cultures, and best utilization of the evangelization model of Small Christian Communities.

The interreligious dialogue, a theme which linked the first and second African synods, is singled out as major aspect in realizing true reconciliation, justice and peace: “True justice, reconciliation and peace on the larger social plane will not materialize without peace among religions” (p. 35). Therefore, reconciliation, justice and peace are elements for witnessing to the gospel today and acting as salt and light to the world. To act like salt and light in the world presuppose existence of an efficient “art of seriously speaking together” (p. 35). So, the first section of the book endorses dialogue as a “defining aspect of African Christianity” (p. 38) and a reliable option towards genuine and durable reconciliation, justice and peace.

The second category of assertions in the book alludes to the fact that in order to conceive appropriately the mission/role of the Church in Africa, the Church needs to engage civil society on a wide perspective of socioeconomic and political issues. Then, the question is how to make a fruitful engagement. To this end, the authors, each writing from his or her own perspective, suggest various approaches and areas which need careful consideration e.g. facing boldly the challenge to be truly vigilant, prophetic, and engaged; rethinking the role of the Church in the social sphere so as to reveal its theological self-understanding; confront and overcome its uneasiness with democracy and assumes the new set of guiding principles for Church-state relationship: libertarian, equalitarian and neutrality principle; and “take advantage of improved means of communication, heightened awareness of human rights, increased availability of resources and improved cultural and political interactions to enrich its ought to dynamic presence that fully engages economic and social issues” (p. 114). In this way, the Church in Africa will be able to respond more adequately to the call for reconciliation, justice and peace and thereby move towards collaboration with the international systems rather than assuming unnecessary confrontational attitude.

Third, argument is addressed towards ecclesial leadership and gender justice in the society. Thus, the paramount argument in the third part of the book can be rephrased as: for an effective Church involvement in reconciliation, justice and peace, the leadership of the Church need to undergo a radical renewal. The text makes elaborate description of embarrassing gender inequality in the Church – the inauspicious and unnecessary patriarchal domination in social, economic and spiritual spheres of life. In general, the essay in this section revisits the raw suffering found on the continent and the need for justice, peace and reconciliation between those who cause the suffering and the sufferers. Through their review, the contributors implicitly make a point that to some extent, the Church as family of God, is failing in its treatment of the poor, women and ethnic diversity.

The fourth category of arguments has to do with the integrity of the earth. In this section, the principal argument alluded to by most contributors is that at present, ecol-
ogy is one of the major themes both in theology and in ethics. And so, the Church needs to pay sufficient attention to the theological and moral problem pertaining to ecology and natural resources. The text calls for adequate theology in addressing the paradoxical challenge of abject material and anthropological poverty amidst plenty of natural resources. Implicitly, the essays show that there is and always there should be a well developed nexus between the present mission of the Church in Africa and the concerns for environmental sustainability.

Fifth is about the theological and ethical issues pertaining to HIV/AIDS and other moral issues. The essays under this category are geared to generate theological and ethical insights appropriate to the scourge of HIV/AIDS and the way the Church has to understand its mission in Africa. The essays challenge readers to rise above the ethical dilemmas surrounding the scourge of HIV/AIDS and concentrate more on issues of justice, empowerment, and equity in prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, in order to revert its devastating trend (p. 205). Alongside these efforts, Africa needs to stop playing victim i.e. pointing fingers to the West for her current predicaments, but to take proactive action in developing the existing potentials in the continent. The text also shows that the notorious unethical practice of corruption, which is so rampant in the continent, needs to be tackled head on. “The post-synodal project of reconciliation should seriously consider the subject of corruption” and taking into account “the influence of African Religion” (p. 227).

In my opinion, this book provides some practical ways of implementing the recommendation of the Second African Synod. The editor remarks that some features of this compendium calls for additional observations. Nevertheless, I am of the opinion that the book Reconciliation, Justice and Peace is ‘a must read book’ for those who are truly eager and genuine on seeing a reconciled, just and peaceful Africa. A reflective critical reading of the thoughts enshrined in this book can empower one to take part more effectively in the on-going ‘dialogue and listening in conversation’ journey in the socioeconomic sphere in order to address Africa’s challenges of reconciliation, justice, and peace. Also, it is to be appreciated that unlike several other books, the essays in this volume not only enumerate several specific challenges for Africa but also diagnose their causes and offers some prescription of the way they can be alleviated. In the same way, the authors have not only offered blunt/direct and constructive critiques of the family-Church, but alongside to it is well-articulated critique of the cultural attitudes of its members.
In this postmodern world where religious communities are rediscovering one of their treasures, that is, Sacred Scripture, and the historical-critical method in biblical scholarship, the subtitle of this book resolutely alludes to a scholarly biblical work of Johny Thachuparamban. The book is a rework of his Ph.D dissertation that he successfully defended on November, 6, 2008 at the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium. The purpose of this publication is the study of the Matthean community and the reconstruction of Quelle (Q) source. The triadic relationship of Jesus, the Law, and the Community constitutes the complete core of Christian identity as the experience of the Community makes the gospel a whole. For the author, the issue of Matthew’s community is a controversial one among scholars. On one hand, some argue that the gospel is still firmly rooted in the Jewish world. On the other hand, others hold the view that it is written for Jewish Christian readership that breaks from Judaism, opening somehow a possible mission to the Gentiles. Through the exegetical study of Mt 5, 38-48 where Jesus teaches non-retribution and love of one’s enemies, Thachuparamban, in the final analysis, discovers the identity of the Matthean community. Likewise the exploration of this pericope and its parallel in Luke 6, 27-36 allows the author to critically reconstruct the common source of the two texts, that is, Q 6, 27-36.

The first part of the book is highly scholarly in its reconstruction of the admitted common source (Q) of the Sermon on the Mount in (Mt 5-7) and its parallel, that is, the Sermon on the Plain in Lk 6,20-49. For the purpose of precision the author limits his study on the above parallel pericopes and their corresponding common source Q 6,27-36. Throughout his endeavour, Thachuparamban works with the hypothesis that the two pericopes come from Q and tries to locate them. By thoroughly examining the similarities and variants between the two parallels pericopes, the inquiry favors the more possible closeness of the Lukan text to Q material. Meanwhile the Matthean text might be a comprehensive presentation that suits his theology, wording, structure and inclusio. Making abundant use of the Greek original text, the study sums its findings that “Matthew has made significant changes to the source” (p.134). Looking for the purpose of this modification calls for the reconstruction of the Matthean community.

Then, the second part, more slightly accessible, is devoted the exploration of Matthew’s community as it influences the actual form of the gospel of Matthew. It is good to draw one’s attention to the fact that scholars are divided on the nature of this community. Studies of the gospel show at least three models of the relationship between Judaism and Matthew’s community. “This community is either thoroughly Jewish (inner-Jewish
polemic), Jewish-Gentile (separated), or thoroughly Gentile” (p.135-136). The author finds some clues to characterize Matthean community through the lens of Mt 5,38-48. However, it is impossible to determine this community’s identity on the basis of historical evidence, neither from the text (mirror) nor from the setting (windows). The research reaches its climax where the author discovers that Matthew tries to “include both Jews and Gentiles into his community (p.248)” culminating in the great commission of the Risen Lord in Mt 28,16-20. In conclusion, the redaction of Matthew’s gospel is motivated by the social situation of his community.

Unlike the first and the second parts, the last part of the book is a proper exegetical study of Mt 5,38-48 in the context of the Sermon on the Mount and the gospel as a whole. It deals with three questions: “(i) how and why Matthew redacted Q 6,27-36 the way he does; (ii) why he chose to formulate the section in an antithetical form; and (iii) what does the text tell us about the Matthean Community” (p.249). The first antithesis, that is Mt 5,38-42, shows that the authority of the Matthean Community is based solely on Jesus and his interpretation of the Torah. The second, which is the climax of all antitheses (Mt 5:43-48) highlights persecution and confirms the hypothesis on the separation of Christianity from Judaism. Matthew therefore has distanced his community from Judaism by proposing the practice of a higher ethics. The author comes up with internal evidence that the Christian ethical teaching strengthens the separation of Christianity from Judaism and indicates an opened mission to the Gentiles. Hence, the Matthean community is a Jewish-Gentiles oriented one.

The great contribution of Thachuparamban is a fruit of thorough and scientific work. One can rightly appreciate the insights of the author leading to the portrayal of the Matthean community, which is the main purpose of this work. The study is well organized from the source Q to the exegetical study of the pericope Mt 5, 38-48. The work is a model of a clear use of the current historical-critical method. However, with a highly documented materials and the abundant use of Greek, the book can only be fully appreciated by a selected audience. As the author did, one needs to abnegate one’s self to undertake a fruitful reading of this literary product which can be compared to a pilgrimage. The first two parts might be discouraging for aspirants and challenging for even scholars to proceed further. But the author’s point lies in the third part. It might be commendable to indicate to the beginner in biblical studies to concentrate his/her efforts on the third part. Otherwise, reading this work can be painstaking. Although Thachuparamban’s findings contribute to the debate on the Matthean community, it is still a speculation which can be questioned by other scholars. For the time being, it should be rightly embraced as an accurate, sound and scientific endeavour.
The book is organized into eleven chapters in two main parts dealing with concepts and theoretical debates and issues in peace and conflict in Africa. Different writers have contributed to the book.

David Francis sets in Chapter One, which is the introduction of the book, the context for understanding peace and conflict in Africa. The critical focus of the contextual outline is to demonstrate that peace and conflict do not exist or operate in a vacuum or isolation, but essentially interact with and are influenced by specific historical and sociocultural forces, the nature of domestic politics and its international dimensions.

In Chapter Two, another writer namely Tim Murithi contributes by conceptualizing indigenous and endogenous approaches to peace-building, conflict management and resolution in post-colonial Africa. The writer differentiates the terms indigenous and endogenous. Whereby indigenous refers to that which is inherent to a given society but also that which is innate and instinctive. While endogenous term refers to that which emerges from a society (p.17). The writer went further through the examples of indigenous peace processes practised by the Tiv community in Nigeria, the guurti system in Somaliland (northern Somalia), the Mato Oput peace-building among the Acholi in northern Uganda, and the Ubuntu reconciliation tradition in southern Africa. To illustrate that for example, it is said that for the Tiv people of Nigeria, the discursive assembly was made possible by the convening of the jir or the “dispute mediation session’ in the communal square. The leaders of the communities in dispute sat in a semicircle, with the disputants located within the circle. Rather than legal or political codes or laws, the Tiv relied on cultural norms, values and the communal moral conscience to inform the resolution of conflict (p.19).

In Chapter Three we find a critical conceptualization and understanding of the meaning and construction of peace in Africa, irrespective of diversity and heterogeneity of the continent, as explained by Isaac Albert, the writer of this chapter. The focus is drawn from the continent’s rich traditional resources, such as proverbs, songs, elders’ and traditional chiefs’ cultural systems, folklore and religious belief systems.

Chapter Four sees the contribution of João Gomes Porto who presents an analytical interpretation of the conflict analysis perspective and its application to the context of Africa. The primary focus of the author here is examining the theories of conflict analysis to challenge some of the simplistic but dominant interpretations used to explain peace

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and conflict in Africa, such as the ‘greed and grievance’ thesis and the ‘resource curse’ interpretations. This is well articulate when the author says that “Economic factors are particularly acute when they are associated with patterns of discrimination between groups. The perception by some groups that there are strong inequalities of economic opportunities and access to resources, as well as vast differences in standards of living between groups, will contribute to a sense of grievance (p.65)”.

In Chapter Five the focus is on the definition and theoretical interpretations of conflict resolution in Africa. The writer Kenneth Omeje critically examines the different conflict management and resolution strategies and interventions used to contain, stabilize, manage and resolve violent and bloody wars and armed conflicts in Africa with the examples of ECOWAS, SADC, IGAD and the African Union.

Chapter Six is all about the examination of the concept and practice of security in the African context within the framework of the African state system and the state problematic in generating insecurity and underdevelopment in the continent. The writer Nana Poku highlights some of the critical issues to illustrate the challenges of Africa’s security problem, such as poverty, underdevelopment, the difficulties faced by the continent in achieving the targets of the Millennium Development Goals, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and how all these are further compounded by the debt burden, wars and political instability.

In Chapter Seven, Tony Karbo, the writer, went on defining and conceptualizing the dominant debates and interpretations of peace-building and examines why and how African indigenous approaches to peace-building have been neglected through the imposition of the liberal peace project in post-war peace-building and reconstruction, in what he describes as the ‘commercialization’ and ‘NGO-ization’ of peace-building in Africa. To illustrate NGO-ization, the author has this to say “…challenge with the peace-building in Africa is that external players often attempt to engage in peace-building activities without seeking sustainable solutions at the grassroots level. Very often, peace-building is managed by international NGOs and diplomats, who have no intimate acquaintance with the local environment. Peace-building programmes are designed by northern NGOs with specific strategies for implementation. This approach has problems in the sense that designers and implementer are not accountable to members of communities where such programmes are implemented. Funds are disbursed to CBOs, GROs and other implementing partners of the northern NGOs which in equal measure, are not accountable to local communities (p.126)”.

The following chapters constitute the part two of the book. In Chapter Eight, the writer Jannie Malan went on defining and conceptualizing the key debates and theoretical approaches to the understanding of transitional justice in Africa. Through the case studies of the Gacaca traditional approach to justice and reconciliation, as well as the International Criminal Court for Rwanda and the Truth and Reconciliation model of South Africa, the writer critically evaluates the implications of these two contradictory models for peace-building, justice and reconciliation in Africa. The author demonstrates how these models enable an understanding of the link between democracy/democratization and the opportunities as well as the challenges for peace and conflict in Africa. The writer says, “Rwandans seemed to have taken the interrelatedness of truth, justice and reconciliation seriously. One could have expected a vengeful retaliation by the Tutsi minority, perhaps with help from supporters from the international community, or a forceful suppression of all opposition to the Hutu majority. What happened, however,
was that justice, particularly rettributive justice and reconciliation was also addressed” (p.136). Similarly, “in South Africa, with regard to the granting or withholding of amnesty, justice was indeed sought, but mostly as an ubuntu-friendly restorative justice which could contributes to the rehabilitation of perpetrators and their reintegration into the new society” (p.138).

Chapter Nine, Belachew Gebrewold the writer, also gives definitions and concepts to the notion and construction of democracy and democratization and their application in the context of Africa. The major focus of the author in this chapter is the examination of the problems, challenges and opportunities of democracy and the democratization experiment in post-colonial Africa. The writer argues that though democracy is not alien in the continent, the consolidation of democracy as an associational life’ is challenged by several factors, including lack of long-term democratic institutions and culture, ethnicity and neo-patrimonial politicization of ethnicity, bad governance and the strategic interests of some sections of the international community. The author goes on illustrating this issue of democracy in Africa, saying “Eritrea continues its anti-democratic policy and Ethiopia disappointed many after the elections of May 2005. Kibaki’s Kenya has become a further disappointment, as the violence after the elections of December 2007 demonstrates. There are, however, different variables which determine successes as well as failures on the intra-state, regional and global levels. On the intra-state level, for example, the political elites in Botswana and post-apartheid South Africa determined the democratic success story, whereas in Togo, Cameroon, DR Congo, etc., political elites hampered the democratization processes. On the regional level, the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia is unfortunately contributing to undemocratic policies in both countries, where the governments’ policies seem to be geared towards war rather than democratic reform. On the global interests (fighting terrorism, and resources, especially oil) undermined the democratization process in countries such as Nigeria, Angola and Sudan. Democratization and stable governments cannot come about through incessant exhortations, appeals, threats and orders, but by making the state omnipotent, but rather by addressing the variables on the above three levels(pp.169-170)”.

In Chapter Ten, the author Mohamed Salih examines the different interpretations and theoretical understanding of poverty and human security in the context of Africa. In exploring the poverty-human security nexus, the author focuses on the practice and policy-relevant implications of the human security dimensions of NEPAD and the MDGs in Africa. Africa’s place in the context of globalization has been the focus of controversial policy and academic debates.

The last chapter, chapter eleven written by Jim Whitman provides a lucid conceptualization and interpretation of globalization and looks at the nature of FDI, China in Africa and the mobile phone revolution and Internet communications/digital divide.

The conclusion of the book ends on hope. Hope which brings a generic theme that unites all the contributions is the view that Africa will no longer witness the generalized chaos manifested by perennial political instability, bloody civil wars and brutal armed conflicts which became the defining feature of the continent between 1990 and 2002. Generally the book’s conclusion by David Francis gives an overview of the key themes and arguments advanced as critical to the understanding and appreciation of the problems, challenges and opportunities for peace and conflict in Africa.
The book is a systematic collection and synthesis of isolated religious monographs and ethnographic beliefs about God across Africa. The first edition was published in 1970: a pioneer work which captured the concepts of God amongst 300 African peoples - consulting nearly 200 authors and individuals. The second edition is a response to the increased demand for a reference work which can serve as a foundation for the continued research on inculturation especially for the emerging movement of African Renaissance. A jewel to the discourse on African identity and culture, the second edition captures a broader landscape of Africa’s ontological homogeneity covering 550 African peoples and languages. It highlights empathetically, the distinctive features or emphasis of the various peoples and languages. The second edition also contains 1600 names of God in Africa. This is in some way, a synthesis of the concepts of God in Africa given the deep significance and meaning of a name for the African people. In addition, this edition makes some stylistic changes. Most notable of these is the gender balance.

The 522-page-book is divided into four parts: the nature of God, the dynamic attributes of God, anthropomorphic and natural attributes of God and lastly, God and humans. In the first part, John Mbiti carefully examines the intrinsic, the eternal and the moral attributes of God amongst the African peoples. The intrinsic attributes of God includes God as immanent, transcendent, omnipotent and omniscient. Mbiti notes that the concept of God as immanent captures a deep sense of the sacred amongst the African peoples; for many, the concept of God as immanent gives the people a deeper sense of hope and confidence but also elicits fear and moral uprightness from the people. The African concept of God as transcendent is broad and divergent because it is understood within African’s concept of time, space and outreach, worship and exaltation, limitlessness, and human incomprehensibility of God. Each of these dimensions reveals the deeper worldview that illuminates African’s concept of God. For instance, African concept of time lays greater emphasis on the “past” and the “present” than on the future. Consequently, Mbiti notes that “we have no myths that talk about or look to the indefinite future beyond a few years.”(35) Hence, within the framework of time, God as transcendent is perceived as being in and beyond the past.

One of the eternal attributes of God in Africa is the concept of God as mysterious. Mbiti notes that the people of Bacongo, for instance, refer to God as “the marvel of marvels” while for the Maasi people, the word for God, Ngai actually means “the unknown One”. “One outstanding feature of the concepts of God in Africa, is that nowhere do African people make nor have they made physical representation of God.”(13)
This great sense of marvel towards God is widespread amongst the African people. The concept, however, is captured vividly in the traditional hymn of the Pygmies of DRC which reads: “In the beginning was Khmvoum (God), Today is Khmvoum (God), Tomorrow will be Khmvoum (God). Who can make an image of Khmvoum? (God) He has no body. He is as a word, which comes out of your mouth. That word! It is no more, it is past, and still it lives!” (53).

The dynamic or active attributes of God, Mbiti notes, reflects African’s concept of God as creator as well as an understanding of God’s providence, human predestination and natural law. He notes that, “our written sources indicate that practically all African peoples consider God as creator, making this the commonest attribute of the works or activities of God.” (91) African people believe that God made natural laws which brings order within the created world and therefore sustains life. Amongst the many dynamic attributes of God, God is thought of as a nursing parent. The Bemba, Koonde, Lamba and Tonga refer to God as “Leza” - a derivative of the verb lela which means “to nurse or cherish” (127).

Mbiti notes that anthropomorphic and natural attributes of God is common amongst the African peoples. God is referred to as Father, Mother, Grandmother, Elder and friend. The Boran of Ethiopia speaks of God as both Mother and Father. The Edo of Nigeria depicts God as a king with many wives and children – a symbol of greatness. Natural phenomena such as the moon and the earth are also seen as the wife or younger brother of God. Mbiti notes interestingly that, “only one example exists in our sources, in which God is assigned a sister.” This is among the Ogiek (Dorobo) where the moon, Araua is seen as God’s sister (207). Furthermore Mbiti notes that anthropomorphic attributes such as walking, resting, becoming angry or rejoicing abound in the concept of God amongst the African people. The Lango people, for example, see God as having “a good sense of humour” (167). Mbiti also demonstrates the significance of the natural order, mountains, rivers, animals and even insects in African mythology and life.

The relationship between God and Humans begins with creation stories. Mbiti notes that all African people have one or more creation stories. The Azande, Chagga, Ewe, Lugbara, Luo, Ovimbundu and the Turkana people among others, believe the first person was dropped from the sky. The Fon, however, view the creation of human as a process of evolution, “the third day, God gave the human sight, speech, and knowledge of the external world. On the fourth day God gave the human technical skills...” (276). Mbiti notes that acts of worship in the light of human disobedience of God are understood as “acts of restoring the ontological balance between God and humans, the spirits and humans, the departed and the living.” (300). Prayer, Mbiti notes is the most common act of worship and are often short, extempore and to the point (321). In some cases, men who have been initiated are expected to pray on behalf of the community. Mbiti also highlights the valued role of the diviner towards the “physical, psychic, mystical and spiritual welfare of society” (373). Turning to the eschatological dimension of African thoughts and beliefs, Mbiti leads the reader through the subjects of death, the living-dead and spirit possession; resurrection and judgement; reincarnation and transmigration of human soul; among others. Mbiti notes that “African people are extremely sensitive to the existence of the spirit world ... and cannot be excluded from African ontology.” (444).

The book succeeds in offering the reader a simultaneous overview of the diversity and similarity in the beliefs, attitudes and practices of the African peoples concerning
God and the divine. The gift of Mbiti as a linguist seem to have enabled him, at an interpretative level, to identify pertinent correlations, distinctions and even questions that arise from the findings during his research. The lucidity of his writing makes is readable for a wider audience which may include Social Anthropologists, Theologians, Ethnographers, tourists, peace builders and students in universities and colleges interested in understanding the concepts of God in Africa. Benezet Bujo makes an important link between a people’s culture and their socio-economic growth when he notes that in order to attain a sound economic status, it is necessary that black Africans be proud of themselves, and the attainment of such degree of self-esteem is possible if and only if they identify themselves with their own culture. The centrality of African’s belief and concept of God in the discourse on identity, critical consciousness and creativity cannot be over emphasised. Therefore, as we await the 15th Assembly of the All African Conference of Churches in Kampala, Uganda in June, 2013, this book comes as a reference work in the continued inquest for the development of authentic African theologies.
Cosmic Symbiosis

Waweru Gichuki, AA*

O humankind, give the creatures a day in the Creator's court to lodge their complaint,
Awaken, respect and stop exploiting us since we all have the same author,
You are not autonomous for we also play a role in your worship;
Grant us an opportunity to worship Him through you.

Every ascent you make to the altar for worship is an act of undermining us,
You show indifference to our plight due to your rational advantage over us,
We may be harsh; but, give an ear to the groan over our predicament;
Be still and discern whether without us you can live and worship efficiently.

Remember your soil fashioned body was revitalized by sister breath in Aden,
God has subdued us to your stewardship though you wound us with a mortal blow,
Hear the wind praising her maker among the trees and reduce your hubris;
Her silent whistles edify her Creator more in humility than your proud grumbling prayer.

Noisy humankind, contemplate the sun’s brightness as he oversees his companions,
He enlightens your path; warms you up and enlivens your environment,
The moons docility pacifies the night accompanied by the stars her children;
Is it not good the family that lives united and mutually supportive?

Are not your shrines and sanctuaries made in and from nature?
You use animals and plants to do reparations for sins we never committed,
You never, out of solipsism, allow us a moment of invocation: thus we lament;
The nature that fed you like a mother, you have abused and raped.

You stand vulnerable before nature due to your dishonor for it Punishment comes to you as hurricanes, cyclones, Tsunamis, famines and earthquakes,

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Environment moans regretfully that you have defiled her; 
Protect her from all forms of pollution and exploitation for her 
to be motherly to you.

Forces of nature have been too patiently un-avenging to you, 
Though we have down the ages venerated you for being in the creator’s 
Image and Likeness, 
You have failed to acknowledge our generosity for priestly adornment; 
Your priestly vestments, altar vessels and offertories for different 
ceremonies are from nature.

Despite your Dignity, God has chosen to reside in the Earth’s Tabernacle, 
Grapes and wheat He has chosen to prolong His Incarnation in Eucharist, 
In the golden ciborium and chalice they become the body and blood 
of His son; 
In humility, God-Among- His –People dwells in the sanctuary's tabernacle.

Away with Sin and regret; He made all of us for His Glory, 
Perfect joy is in mutual edification though collaborative complementary 
praises to Him, 
Past buried, humankind and lower creation join hands towards mystical 
union with God; 
Creation offers to become your amicable path to the Creator of all;

Never again shall Creation conspire against humankind, 
As the mediator to our Creator; we will support you for our Re-consecration, 
Earth is now recreated to become the place of the Creator’s glory; 
Come Lord and Reign in and around us: War and division is long 
forgotten behind us.

Pleurs et joie d’une religieuse africaine

Bienvenu Matanzonga, SJ*

Ils étaient tous deux là 
Là à la portée de mes mains et à la lumière de mes yeux 
Ils avaient construits leurs demeures dans mon cœur et dans mon esprit 
Les voilà disparus le temps d’un matin et à la différence des heures 
Incapable de les voir, de les contempler, de les caresser 
Je garde néanmoins de beaux souvenirs à coté d’une maman 
Modèle de foi, de persévérance et de pugnacité 
Autour d’un frère, symbole d’une vie donnée pour les autres

* Fr. Matanzonga, SJ is a Jesuit priest, a visiting lecturer of psychology and theology at Hekima College.
A cause de ces réminiscences poignantes et grâce à ma foi en Dieu
Je peux proclamer tout haut que les morts ne sont pas morts
Venez chanter et célébrer avec moi que les morts ne sont pas morts…

Aujourd'hui, je dois choisir entre un passé connu et douloureux
Et un futur prometteur quoiqu' incertain
Je sais que Maman était porteuse de la vie, de la Vraie vie
Et j'ai choisi de me consacrer à la Vie, à la Vraie Vie
Je sais également que je n'ai pas expérimenté les joies de la maternité
Mais je comprends que Dieu a mis sur mon chemin
Une multitude d'enfants connus et inconnus
Pour lesquels je décide à chaque instant de témoigner de l'affection
A cause de la vie qui va au delà de la chair que je transmets chaque jour
Je me souviendrai toujours de la vie de Maman et de mon frère
Avec larmes bien sûr mais aussi avec une joie indescriptible
Confessant que les morts ne sont pas morts, ils vivent autrement…

En ce temps pascal
Où je célébre avec l'Eglise et mon peuple meurtri du Congo
La résurrection du Christ
L'apothéose de la foi chrétienne
Avec le Ressuscité, la souffrance et la mort changent de contenu
Elles deviennent une réalité transitoire vers une vie
De béatitude, d'amour, de compassion et d'empathie
La souffrance et la mort ne sont plus une fatalité
Mais un chemin vers une autre vie
Dont celle-ci n'est que prélude et copie imparfaite
Oui, je contemple cette autre Vie avec ma mère
Femme de caractère, extraordinaire et sainte
Avec mon frère
Homme de devoir, de famille et de travail bien fait
Oui, je crois me réunir un jour avec eux
Et avec les autres membres de famille
Qui m'ont précédé avec leur entrée précoce
Aux noces de l'Agneau Immolé
Ensemble nous crierons, nous chanterons et dirons
Que les morts ne sont pas morts, ils vivent autrement…

En partance vers la rencontre d'avec son Maître et Créateur
Maman a demandé le soutien de la Maman Céleste
Signe de la confiance totale à la Mère de Dieu
Celle qui est montée au Ciel avec son corps glorifié
Celle qui a vaincu la mort avec son Fils
Par sa fidélité à Dieu et à son œuvre du salut
En se confiant à elle, Maman a choisi la vie, une vie meilleure
Une vie qui dure au delà du temps et de l'espace
A l'instar de Marie, Maman a offert à Dieu
A song in the blowing wind of Africa

By Emmanuel Yohana.

In the beginning who protected our society, if not the ancestors? Who could warn the immoralities within it, if not the ancestors? Who did foster love, unity, equality and harmony, if not ancestors? And who could become those who lived virtuously, if not ancestors? Today, what do some leaders make us inherit, if not disasters? In big cars they go, but we walkers what do we get, if not disasters?

All you hungry street children of Africa, beside stands your maker; and you beggars holding up cups in roads, do that in your maker! You drunk drivers stop crashing them, you kill your life giver, bodaboda, matatu and citi hoppa drivers, stop crashing the Lord! And you rich unshaken by their blowing cry, you reject the Lord, prisoners, refugees, strangers and abandoned, trust in the Lord!

Tomatoes, bananas and sukumawiki mama sellers; work in the Lord, you cooks, cleaners, gardeners and watchmen, do that in the Lord. All you single women crying for husbands, be patient in the Lord, lonely widows crying for your lost husbands, offer this to the Lord. You drunk fathers who beat wives and children, you offend the Lord, good parents who love their offsprings, you please much the Lord.

All who die for African peace and justice; the Lord holds you tenderly! And you who died innocently in the Kenyan post-election violence; the Lord holds you tenderly! Those dying in hospital corridors because of striking doctors and nurses; the Lord loves you tenderly! And who die in their homes from HIV and AIDS, cancer and malaria; the Lord embraces you tenderly!

* Yohana is a Tanzanian Canossian brother, a second year theologian at Hekima College.
You lonely orphans and mistreated children by step mothers and fathers;  
the Lord looks on you tenderly!
Grand fathers and mothers who cannot stand and walk independently;  
the Lord assists you tenderly!
And all the youth with sincere heart helping the aged and needy;  
the Lord will repay you tenderly!

You African big rivers irrigate and keep green our land!  
Our uncle sun, who makes the day brighter, have mercy on our fields!  
Our aunt moon with all your children stars, shade light to our selfishness!  
O God, our great Creator, may each one touch you in the land of Africa.

The Ethiopian Eunuch.

_Evaristus O Ekwueme, SJ*

I am the Ethiopian eunuch of old  
I am the counselor of kings  
I am the confident of prophet Jeremiah (Jer 38:7-13).  
The Chrysolite of Ethiopia cannot compare my wisdom.  
I was born there; I am among those who know “I AM.”  
I was told, “Let Ethiopia hasten to stretch out its hands to God” (Ps 68:31).  
I am of a divine plan, the Lucy of all ages  
I am the envy of the Queen of Sheba  
I am the one saved by the mighty one.  
I sing to God as a kingdom of the earth from India to Ethiopia.

I am the Ethiopia eunuch of New  
I am a court official of Candace, queen of Ethiopians  
I am the treasurer of the powerful kings and queens.  
I am a pilgrim of Jerusalem (Acts 8:27-38)  
I am a disciple of Philip, one of the twelve.  
I am a disciple of the True Cross  
Do I understand what I read?  
With no one to explain to me?  
Let him who is led to the slaughter, remain silent  
Let him not open his mouth before his shearer.  
I am he baptized by not Paul, not Peter, but Philip.  
I am he who rejoiced for receiving the Holy Spirit.  
I am he who learnt of the fulfillment of the prophets in Immanuel.

I am the Ethiopian eunuch  
I am he who is a descendant of eunuchs and a parent of eunuchs.

* _Evaristus_ is a Nigerian Jesuit Scholastic. He is a student of Hekima College.
I am he who lives beyond the source of the Blue Nile.
I am he who travels in vessels of papyrus on the Lake of Tana.
I am he who lives in the islands of the monasteries
I am he who carved the Holy of Holies on the rocks of Lalibela and Entoto
I am he whose sweat built the fasils of Gondar
I am he who counseled the four kings.
I am he who translated the good books of Immanuel
I am he who guard the Ark of the Covenant in Axum
I am he who wrote manuscripts and monographs before
Ahmed Baba of Timbuktu.

I am the Ethiopian eunuch of now
Here I lie as if ship wrecked in the hills of time
Here I lie in stupor of ancient hangover
Here I lie in a life encrypted in wretchedness
Here I lie exchanging my misery for Birr
Here I lie on the thoroughfares of Addis, Awasa and Lalibela
Here I lie on the entrance to the monolithic
Here I lie pleading for bread on the streets of Gondar
Here I lie a swam of flies
Here I lie in wait like a tourist guide
Here I lie in ruins of fading memory
Here I polish my shoes as if for a war
Here I walk with blind staff in hand as if for ontological compass
Here I stand weighing self against drought at the Horn of the Sudans
Here I lie in cold wait and oblivious past
Here I lie anesthetized before the shearers who make the true cross
of my desolation.
Here I lie as the cranium of the Sudans, a person acolonized.

I am the Ethiopian eunuch
My other is the superlative of beauty
My other met the admiration of Herodotus
My other is admired by Egyptians, Greeks and Mesopotamians
My other is exemplary of beauty in Aristotle’s
The lust for my other drove kings of old insane
The lust for my other drove rich and poor
My other’s splendor is without measure
My other is only beautiful before man, not before the Holy of Holies.
My other is not different, but unequal to me.
My other is as unworthy as I am, but even more
My other dare not near me.
My other can be admired, but neither loving nor lovable
My other stands no chance of universal pageantry, what a castrated beauty?
Here they lie with radiant eyes and thread hair like weavons for the Sudans.
Here they lie with gloom, looming behind their lustful eyes
Here I lie delirious of my fortune and my adversity.
Am I the Ethiopian eunuch?