CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL RELEVANCE

Ethical, Economic and Social implications of Solidarity

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Editorial

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL RELEVANCE

A recent back page comment on Thisday, a leading Nigerian daily, noted the high rate of unemployment in the poorest state in Nigeria, Zamfara State. Over 33% of the youth are unemployed. This underestimates the crisis. Conversations with industrialists, importers and traders show that the general insecurity in Nigeria is fuelling violence, unemployment, and poverty. This is the story of Africa: the increasing poverty, inequality and wars plague the continent. Statistics show that 70% of the “bottom billion” or poorest countries of the world are African. The continent is inconsequential in economic terms and is “excluded in the search for solutions to the present international financial crisis”.

The Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology has considered, in past issues, the impact of the Gospel and the Christian Church on society. The generalised economic downturn, the massive corruption in the mega finance systems have drawn Church organisations and NGOs to call for a review or reform of the international financial system. The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, for example, has called for a “general public authority”. Is this desirable or even possible? Is there a way institutions can be renewed to enable humans created in the image of God to fully accept one another as “brother” and “sister”? Can one even lay down rules to guide capitalistic multinationals to become “citizens”? These and similar questions informed the articles in this issue of the Bulletin.

The lead article by Ikenna Okafor grapples with the inspirational dynamics of the cultural experience of being “brother” or “sister”; this forms the template for a creative reinterpretation of solidarity in the social teachings of the Catholic Church. Augustin

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1 Paul Collier, The bottom billion: why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). xi
2 Second Synod of Bishops for Africa, Instrumentum Laboris art. 29.
Ramazani Bishwende discusses in the second article the possibility and ethical relevance of multinational capitalistic oil mining corporations functioning as citizens wherever they are found in Africa. Without undermining the profit motive that drives the companies, the health and human developmental imperatives become top priority for the “citizen” corporation. Is the globalized world we live in today capable of the type of “revolutionary power of forward-looking imagination” that can “transform not only institutions but also lifestyles and encourage a better future for all peoples?” Critiquing this and similar proposals by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Anna Floerke Scheid recognizes the insight of the Council but favours a bottom-up approach. This will involve all stakeholders, especially the indigenous communities, check abuses that arise from structural sin, and maximize human rights and dignity. Finally, arguing from the political structures of African nations, Emeka Nwosuh proposes a radical move to restructure, reconfigure, and reconstitute the States of Africa. The political courage to move away from the colonial structures, as in the creation of South Sudan, may not resolve all the crises in the continent, but may reduce the crisis, reduce the suffering and poverty.

Two contributions are presented in the Features section of this issue of our Bulletin. Are there images of God that dehumanize and are psychologically destructive? Ursula Glienecke draws attention to, and condemns, such negative images. Following closely the study of Karl Frielingsdorf, she underlines the destructive character and gender insensitivity of negative images of God, and proposes positive images that are inclusive of all humans and respectful of religions and cultures. Finally, Peter Osuji presents a special study on informed consent in African Traditional medicine and compares it with the Western demands of consent.

Elochukwu Uzukwu C.S.Sp.
Nicholas Ibeawuchi Omenka
"Ọ NURU UBE NWANNE AGBALA QSQ", A THEOLOGY OF FRATERNAL SOLIDARITY: AN IGBO PERSPECTIVE TO LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Ikenna Ugochukwu Okafor

Introduction

The development of Christian theology and the growth of its social relevance in our time will always depend on its ability to boast of being intelligible to the lay person. Such a development consists less in sensational discoveries of hitherto unknown truths, nor in the reformulation of dogmatic precepts, which often seem to repudiate a true commitment to aggiornamento. It also does not consist in the abstract academicism of the Symposia that tends to confine theology and reduce it to an object of the intellectual sports of a few elite theologians. No, it consists rather in new ways of perceiving old problems which lead to articulating credible diagnoses that advance the goals of Christian theology. If one were to appreciate some of the achievements of inculturation and liberation theologies in recent years, one will note their priceless contributions in liberating theology from the barren so-called academicism and of assisting it to reach out beyond the walls of the university classrooms or seminaries to confront the human being in the society. Even as these two theologies still face the threat of being discarded or relegated either as echoes of a leftist ideology, or as a glorification of syncretism, the perspectives which both theologies have illuminated in theological discourses, especially in Africa, are important and remain to be fully explored. It is in fact the inspiration, which came from the discourses in liberation and inculturation that compels me to engage myself in this reflection on what I have chosen to call “a theology of (fraternal) solidarity”.

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1 Dr. Okafor got his PhD from the theological faculty of the University of Vienna Austria and specializes in fundamental theology.
The phrase ‘fraternal solidarity’ in fact awakens in me the memory of a somewhat uneventful encounter with a young African boy of about seven years old who, carrying his younger sister on his back on a long distance trek turned down my offer of help, to give him a lift, with such a gentle rebuff that was thought-provoking. I (a stranger who suddenly stopped with his car by the roadside) was trying to persuade him that I meant no harm to him, and that his sibling sister is undoubtedly too heavy a burden for him to carry under the circumstances. And in response to my argument the little boy retorted: “O naghi anyi m alo, obu nwanne m”, which means, “she is not a burden to me, she is my sister!” Reasoning about this reply, I was forced to admit that the primary reason why the human burden on the boy’s back was not heavy is precisely because she is his sister. Invariably, the boy could not have been able or willing to carry any other type of load that weighs exactly as his sister on such a long distant trek. This response from such a young innocent lad illuminates a profound truth, that in the awareness of a commitment to fraternal charity, human beings discover incalculable inner strength or potentials capable of making heavy burdens seem light. This boy’s demonstration of altruism exemplifies perfectly what the virtue of solidarity is all about. When love is present, carrying one another in fact becomes a beautiful experience—a welcome duty. And one of the essential purposes of Christian theology is to ensure that the countenance of fraternal love is reproduced in the faces of most, if not all, women and men of this world. In other words, that most women and men will learn to appreciate the virtue of seeing one another as real brothers and sisters and consequently be prepared to carry one another on this journey of earthly life whenever the need arises. This is not only an ideal of the Christian faith; it is also a divine imperative.

This ideal is the joint-aspiration of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) and the theologies of liberation and inculturation. CST, understood as the on-going reflection on the human person as a social being and about how society can best be structured to
provide for people's well-being both as individuals and in community, admits to having a common ground with liberation theology on the theme of solidarity. Speaking at the 20th anniversary of Pope John Paul II's Centesimus Annus, Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that solidarity is a "responsibility on the part of everyone with regard to everyone, and it cannot therefore be merely delegated to the State." In that address the Pontiff reiterated an aspect of his message in the encyclical Caritas in Veritate that the family model of the logic of love, of gratitude, and of gift goes together with a universal dimension: commutative justice, "give to have", and distributive justice, "give to owe", are not sufficient in social living, because it is necessary to arrive at gratuitousness and solidarity in order to have true justice. This demand of gratuitousness and fraternal charity is painted in the story of the little boy carrying his sister and also encapsulated in the Igbo pithy saying, "Ọ nuru ube nwanne agbala ọso" which literally means, 'one who hears the cry of a brother/sister should not ignore it (i.e. walk away, or show apathy)'. This Igbo saying articulates laconically the heart of African theology of solidarity and an Igbo perspective to liberation theology. It is an exhortation to hearken to the brother's or sister's cry for help in the spirit of solidarity. However, it leads us invariably to ask a fundamental question: Who is my brother or sister to whom I am so indebted in love and solidarity? Jesus' answer to this question breaks the boundaries of consanguinity (cf. Mt 12:48-50) and of nationality (cf. Lk 10:29-37). It opens for us a new way of perceiving one another—a way that also requires in our time a shift in theological hermeneutic.

My African understanding of solidarity compels me to acknowledge the exigency of this shift in hermeneutic—a shift that appreciates the merits of both liberation theology and Catholic

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3 Ibid.
Social Teaching while at the same time looking deeper into the dark waters of oppression and exploitation which form the subject-matter of liberation hermeneutic. In the light of this hermeneutic, the primary cause of discriminations that are based on race, gender, social status, ethnic or religious affiliation etc., is identified in this essay as a mental construct that must first of all be dismantled if there will be hope of effectively addressing the problem of unjust structures in human society. *O nuru ube nwanne agbala osọ*[^4] is in this context an Igbo clarion-call to every member of society to join in building the highest form of civilization worthy of human history—the civilization of love. In this pithy saying, which, for the Igbo, is no less a theological treatise, an idiomatic perspective to liberation and solidarity is disclosed and compactly and profoundly articulated. My aim here is to demonstrate how this idiom adequately synthesizes the basic tenets of Catholic Social Teaching and the theologies of Liberation and Inculturation in the one singular theme of fraternal solidarity.

As the Roman Catholic Church commemorates the 50th anniversary of Vatican II ecumenical council, and as theologians engage in the intellectual stock-taking of the church’s pastoral endeavours, it is important to remember what was at the heart of the council’s most popular document, the *Gaudium et Spes*: “*The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way....*”[^5] It is precisely on this note of sharing the afflictions of the poor that one must consider it important to shed light on the theological depth and significance of this Igbo saying whose relevance for African theology cannot be ignored or overemphasized.

[^4]: This terse saying was made popular in Igboland by musician Bright Chimezie and his Zigima Sound with the song “Ube Nwanne”. See You Tube, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qO4ZR1xjvzI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qO4ZR1xjvzI).

[^5]: See *Gaudium et Spes*, 1
Meaning and Theological Implication of “Ọ Nụrụ Ube Nwanne Agbala Osọ”

As already mentioned above, this is an Igbo pithy saying, which is primarily a moral appeal, an exhortation, and above all, a theology. Western thinkers and readers may find it difficult to comprehend how a ‘mere’ African saying translates into a theology. This is one of the noteworthy examples of how the epistemic structure of the African intellectual world differs from that of the West. This African otherness and uniqueness is a preponderant logic of the inculturation theology. We shall come back to this later. Meanwhile, let me state that any theology that wants to be socially relevant must be ready to confront men and women of every age with the question: Cain, where is your brother Abel? This is because theology is all about interaction—vertical and horizontal—between God and humans, and between humans among themselves. In a pluralistic multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-religious world polluted by conflicts of various kinds, identifying the brother or sister in the above question may be fraught with difficulties. The true picture of human interactions in the society today suggests that covert and overt hostile attitudes of many persons are often influenced or in fact dictated by prejudicial perceptions of other human beings who are seen as not belonging to one’s own group. Such aberrant perceptions are in fact responsible for such deplorable phenomena as nepotism, sexism, exploitation, marginalisation, intolerance, condescension or downright murderous hatred. The mission of the church is to offer some sort of contrast to such anti-social behaviours. In the church, the utopia of harmonious living is always what every theologian and Christian will call the “Kingdom of God.” The major emphasis of liberation theology has been the biblical notion of this kingdom of God: a new vision of societal existence marked by justice, peace, dialogue, and loving collaboration. According to Juan Luis Segundo, “the prophetic content of Jesus’ proclamation moves and revolves around the words, kingdom, salvation, the poor, and good
news." And Jesus declared himself a brother to all those who are attentive to this proclamation (cf. Mt 12:46-50; Mk 3:31-35; Lk 8:19-21). To be church or to belong to the family of Jesus Christ is to have the compassion and gentle sensitivity of Jesus for the multitude. Blessed John Paul II admitted at the twentieth anniversary of Populorum Progressio—on the Development of Peoples—that “in a world divided and beset by every type of conflict, the conviction is growing of a radical interdependence and consequently of the need for a solidarity which will take up interdependence and transfer it to the moral plane.” In fact, the hope of a better world arising from the consciousness of our mutual interdependence has been a recurrent theme in theological discussions recently. Hence, the liberation that is sought through acts of solidarity is liberation from interior blindness that obscures our appreciation of this mutual interdependence; a liberation that brings men and women to a new level of understanding one another and relating accordingly, thus liberating the oppressed as well as the oppressor. Such a new level of enlightenment requires also a new theological hermeneutic that edifies the mutual perception of human beings, educating peoples about the need for a healthy social mentality that realizes the hope of the kingdom of God. In fact such a mutual perception of an ontological fraternal bond between human beings is apriori to any commitment to liberation. The saying, “Ọ nuru ube nwanne agbala ọso”, pre-empts such a new trend in theology and aptly summarizes it in a very intelligible and compact lecture.

The saying could be said to be propagating a theistic anthropology that has been recently elaborated by Benedict XVI’s encyclical Caritas in Veritate. It in fact evokes the memory of the

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first paragraph of *Gaudium et Spes*. It also actually recapitulates the first Act of the covenant God: “Yahweh then said, ‘I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying for help on account of their taskmasters. Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings. And I have come down to rescue them from the clutches of the Egyptians and bring them up to that country...’.” In this Exodus text, which is fondly quoted by liberation theologians, Yahweh sees the misery of His people, He hears their cry for help, and He comes down to rescue them. Yahweh’s intervention in the book of Exodus demonstrates a historically divine precedence in salvation history that gives the dictum, *O nuru ube nwanne agbala ọsọ*, when interpreted in that light, the status of a divine precept and no longer that of a mere idiomatic exhortation. Invariably, the Igbo remind themselves here that all are obliged to act with empathy and fraternal charity in any encounter with social evil or suffering (the cry—*ube*), because God wills it so.

As we know, in the Old Testament biblical theology, Yahweh’s action is by virtue of His filial relationship with Israel (cf. Hosea 11:1-4). It was a saving intervention that is analogous to the obligations of a senior uncle, *גאל - go’el*, (Isa. 43:14; 47:4; Jer. 50:34). In this sense God is seen analogically as a supra-cosmic member of the family of Israel and invariably cannot abandon His family to the mercy of cruel persecutors. His intervention does not only have a paradigmatic moral significance, but also a relational significance by virtue of its familial character. Over and above the need to render justice to Israel, God’s pathos is that of a father or a

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8 The New Jerusalem Bible, Ex 3:7-8
9 See Ex 19:4; *Go’el* is the Hebrew participle of the verb *gaal*, “to redeem”. It is rendered in the Authorized Version of the Bible as “kinsman” (Num. 5:8; Ruth 3:12; 4:1, 6, 8); “redeemer,” (Job 19:25); “avenger,” (Num. 35:12; Deut. 19:6, etc.) The Jewish law gave the right of redeeming and repurchasing, as well as of avenging blood, to the next of kin, who was accordingly called by this name. The word is often used of God, the Saviour of his people and avenger of the oppressed. The early Jewish rabbis applied the term to the Messiah, and this probably induced St Jerome to translate it as ‘Redeemer’ (see *The New Jerusalem Bible*, Job 19:25, footnote 8).
kinsman. This decisive exodus-event reveals to us an empathic God, a liberator and a kind of senior ‘Brother’ who proverbially carries his people on eagle’s wings (cf. Ex 19:4) and delivers them to safety and prosperity. Through the exodus-event God invites us not just to acknowledge his mighty deeds as a liberator-God but above all to take after His example and intervene likewise in those historical situations where the cries of need earnestly call for our attention and make urgent appeal to our humanity. This is what Igbo theology of solidarity entails. The theological import of the nwanne idiom of solidarity requires, however, further hermeneutic clarification.

Hermeneutic of “Nwanne”

As the study of meaning, hermeneutic is important to literary discourse in disclosing that wherein the intelligibility of something maintains itself. The contextual meaning of the word “nwanne” in O naru ube nwanne agbala oso would be crucial in understanding the pithy saying and the moral it intends to showcase. According to Heideggerian hermeneutics, the reciprocity of text and context in which the hermeneutic circle is recognised, would consider the understanding of this idiom to be ontological and not merely epistemological. Hence, it is not just meant to communicate knowledge, but rather to state an existential truth of being (facticity) and, of course, motivate human action—‘being-for’, or ‘Dasein’. Nwanne is in fact a Dasein; and the facticity of his or her being, expressed in the context of the above pithy saying, portrays him/her as an addressee and a moral agent who is confronted with his or her “suffering other”. In that context, nwanne refers to everybody whose image of his or her “self” is authenticated in his/her empathy for a suffering other—his/her needy self. To refuse to hearken to the anguished cry (ube) of this other is to repudiate

what it means to be *nwanne*. This is why our people sometimes say (when they are disappointed with the West): “*Bekee a bughi nwanne anyi*”, “the Whiteman is not our brother”! Accordingly, the basis of empathy, μπάθεια (*empathia*, ‘in passion’, *suffering with*) as a necessary social duty, is the ontological facticity of *progeneration*, that is, the fact of being umunne—children of the same mother or father.

The meaning we seek is the phenomenological basis wherein the word “*nwanne*” maintains its intelligibility in Igbo verbal communication. ‘Meaning’ in fact resides basically in the “in-here” of a concept or thing. This definition is without prejudice to Ricoeur’s *The Rule of Metaphor*, in which he underscores the importance of ‘resemblance’ in the theory of interpretation and thus advances the positions of earlier thinkers. However, adopting the classical understanding of hermeneutics, meaning could be said to be that, which is *inherent* to the concept whose content is being disclosed in the hermeneutic process. And inherent to our concept of ‘*nwanne*’ in Igbo linguistic morphology is primarily a sense of a *shared origin*, and secondarily, a sense of shared *purpose*, *familyhood* (ujamaa), *togetherness*, *team work*, *friendship*, and *community*.

In her erudite study of this Igbo kinship terminology, albeit with a view to underscoring its matrifocal thrust, Joseph-Thérèse Agbasiere acknowledges that *nwanne* is a primary kinship idiom.\(^\text{11}\) The word ‘*nwanne*’, which translates as ‘brother’ or ‘sister’, is actually a compound of two words, ‘*nwa*’ (child) and ‘*nne*’ (mother). From a purely lexical point of view, ‘*nwanne m*’, literally means ‘the child of my mother’, and by implication ‘*nwanna m*’ ‘the child of my father’. The latter is usually used to designate members of the extended family, the kindred, clan, village, town, etc., although one can also refer to an extended family relative as *nwanne*. Agbasiere informs us that the notion of *nwanne* is symbolic, in the sense that it is often manipulated in socio-

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economic and religious interactions. It also emphasizes Igbo propensity towards the orderly or appropriate. The concept is all-inclusive, it is not gender-specific and it is seen to operate as a means of asserting group membership.\footnote{12}{Ibid. p. 83f.}

The ‘inherent’ meaning which the word ‘\textit{nwanne}’ or ‘\textit{nwanna}’ communicates is the fact of a shared descent from one common progenitor. From this indication of a common biological descent and heritage, brotherhood in Igbo language and culture is linked inseparably with parenthood, so much so, that whoever rejects the one must necessarily reject the other. Accordingly, one cannot talk of \textit{nwanne} status (brotherhood or sisterhood) in Igbo language without at the same time expressing the \textit{filiation} that is the common denominator in the relationship. By implication, one cannot sever fraternal relationship without necessarily injuring maternal or paternal relationship and invariably jeopardizing the bond of the family and one’s own existential root. Theologically considered, when Christians recite the Lord’s Prayer, they profess exactly this bond: a profession of faith which lays the foundation for an ecclesiology of communion that can only be sustainable through a transparent attitude of fraternity in solidarity. Christians invariably confess that God is the transcendent origin of fraternity. This unique position gives God the absolute right to judge and punish sins against fraternity as he judges and punishes Cain for murdering his brother Abel (cf. Gen. 4: 9-12).

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=0.2\textwidth]{nwanne.png}
\caption{The triangular essence of \textit{nwanne} (as in a \textit{nwanne catena}: the loving subject; $\leftrightarrow$ the object of love; $\leftrightarrow$ and the origin of love), also makes it an adequate theological resource for comprehending analogically the Trinitarian logic, insofar as the Trinity communicates the existence of community in the Godhead. And I think that I am not alone in maintaining that we can try to}
\end{figure}
understand the mystery of the Triune God from the point of view of our own domestic relationships. In fact some other African theologians believe that the notion of the ‘Church as family’ is a mystery of unity and communion which has its origin fundamentally in the Blessed Trinity. And it is not by chance that the strong sense of family as the epicentre of all African social systems, which is entrenched in African culture, came to constitute the bedrock for the 1994 African synodal ecclesiology. The Vatican II ecclesiology of communion enunciated by the dogmatic constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, also speaks of the “mystery” of the Church and of her divine dimension, which proceeds from the Trinitarian missions of the Son and the Spirit in history. According to *Lumen Gentium*, the Church is seen as ‘a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit’ (LG 4). Cardinal Marc Ouellet admits that “this Trinitarian vision of the mystery of the Church is not new. It belongs to the great tradition, but was obscured in modern times by a predominantly juridical approach to ecclesiology, that of the *societas perfecta.*” Theologians may have taken diverse orientations in articulating this mystery of the Trinitarian unity. What is unique or new here is that I relate it to the duty of solidarity. In this sense, the implicit triad that is embedded in the word ‘nwanne’ embodies community, of which primary expression of unity is the family. It could be seen to express, at least on the theoretical linguistic level, a form of “circumincession” illustrated in the diagram above, insofar as the one word, ‘nwanne m’, represents a triple interlocking relationship. It also symbolizes the Kingdom of God in its micro-phenomenal fullness, since to share in the life of the kingdom means to enjoy the community of saints—of men and women who are truly brothers and sisters to one another. Consequently, personal faith in God makes no sense

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14 Marc Ouellet, *The Ecclesiology of Communion, 50 Years after the Opening of Vatican Council II* (Maynooth, Ireland, June 7, 2012 (Zenit.org)).
without the acknowledgement of this God as ‘our God’. This is a fact of theistic anthropology which theologians like Pope Benedict XVI recognize.\textsuperscript{15} I cannot address God in \textit{The Lord’s Prayer} without remembering that He is in fact “Our Father” and not my Father alone. Without the recognition of this all-embracing ‘we’, human society, whether acting as individuals or as a community, risks being emptied of its essence. This helps to illuminate why this idiom, \textit{O nụrụ ụbe nwanne agbala ọso}, is an important subject-matter for a theology of fraternal solidarity. Now I turn to the relationship between solidarity and the theologies of liberation, inculturation and the Catholic social teaching.

\textbf{Significance of Solidarity in the Basic Tenets of Liberation Theology}

Liberation theology, as its name implies, is a theology which assigns primacy to the liberation of the poor. It privileges the poor “as that part of the content of theology around which all of theology can be organized—all questions of who God and Christ are, what grace and sin are, what the church and society are, what love and hope are, and so on.”\textsuperscript{16} The starting-point of liberation theology is an analysis of the concrete socio-political situation and the uncovering of the discrimination, alienation, exploitation, and oppression within it.\textsuperscript{17} The main thesis of liberation theology is one that is anchored on a reinforced emphasis on the \textit{kairotic} character of the kingdom of God which was proclaimed by the prophets of

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the Old Testament and by Jesus himself (cf. Mk 7:37; 12:2-6; Lk 4:16-21; 7:18-23; 11:20). This programmatic proclamation of Jesus demands conversion, faith and discipleship (cf. Mk 1:16-20), understood in terms of a commitment to struggle against the opposition of the anti-kingdom. According to Jon Sobrino, God’s “reign” is the positive action through which God transforms reality and God’s “Kingdom” is what comes to pass in this world when God truly reigns: a history, a society, a people transformed according to the will of God.\(^\text{19}\)

Because of its attention to the cries of distress, liberation theology is credited for having given the poor a strong voice in a world in which the phenomenal victory of the powerful has installed the deplorable principle that might is right. It is a constant refrain of all liberation theologies that the perspective of the poor and marginalised offers another story, an alternative story to that told by the wielders of power whose story becomes often the ‘normal’ account. A perfect example of such a ‘normal’ account is the infamous account that was chronicled in British colonial historiography as “the pacification of the Lower Niger”: At the dawn of the colonization of southern Nigeria, the Onitsha Igbo wanted to protect their economic, cultural, and religious interests and to negotiate on terms of equality with the missionaries and their British trading partners (the West African Company), whose trading terms and trade monopoly were against the best interests of the Onitsha community. The Onitsha chiefs objected then to what they perceived as harmful missionary preaching; the introduction of an alien lifestyle; and the creation of social dichotomy. They then proposed “that an agreement should be entered into for intermarriage between the children of the settlers and those of the

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\(^{18}\) Jesus’ answer in Lk 7:18-23 to the disciples of John the Baptist who came to query whether he is the “One who is to come” is particularly remarkable. It evokes the idea of a “Kingdom of God” that is already present and at the same time should be made present by the liberating actions of healing for the mind and body.

\(^{19}\) Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, p. 71
natives of Onitsha that all may become one people..." Their proposals were turned down and relationship deteriorated, such that between 1868 and 1880 living together became very tense. Finally, on October 28, 1879, after British citizens had been carefully evacuated, Onitsha was brutally bombarded by a British gunboat. A similar bombardment took place in 1880. Such gunboat diplomacy as witnessed in Onitsha was popularly known in the British colonial historiography as 'pacification'.

Theologians will agree that such 'human story' as we see in the Onitsha narrative is closely bound with the history of salvation, insofar as salvation history is also about the story of human hubris and God's just and loving interventions. For liberation theologians, Christology is the centre of that history—a story that encompasses the incarnation, the life of Jesus, which found its ultimate fulfilment in his cross, resurrection and ascension into heaven. And precisely because the salvation offered by Christ (i.e. his saving works), remain inseparable with his person, all Christological statements have at the same time soteriological character and vice versa. In order to situate Jesus in the history of the exploited people of Onitsha, the Christology of liberation required a new hermeneutic. Such a Christology goes hand in hand with a critical exegesis that devotes itself to a new interpretation of fundamental Christological dogma and an elucidation of the liberative dimensions of the Christian faith. Traditional images of Jesus Christ are hence criticized by liberation theologians as serving the colonial project. Consequently, the Christology of liberation feels empowered by a new understanding of the historical Jesus and engages itself for the interest of the oppressed and the marginalised. To be neutral means to give a tacit support to the privileged group that perpetuates structures of inequality and injustice. In other words, liberation is seen as a gospel imperative—a fraternal and salvific duty. Liberation theology hence asserts, in its discourse, the priority of the anthropological

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element over the ecclesiological. In Africa, where Jean-Marc Ela champions this perspective, liberation theologians insist that the basic project of Christianity in African society must be redefined. Ela asks: “At a moment when the privileged of the system are stifling their consciences to protect their situation, who will dare to confront the forces of oppression that condemn men, women, and children to suffer atrocious living conditions and all but starve…?\(^\text{21}\) In other words, who will hearken to the cries of need that is ever present in African society? The simple answer to this question is: Everybody. Everybody should be Nwanne.

It is everybody’s duty to see in the suffering poor the distorted image of the crucified God and to continuously seek peace through justice, charity and solidarity. This includes the poor themselves. I say this with the awareness and sincere acknowledgement of the fact that such atrocities like the Jewish and Rwandan genocides were neither dependent on the failures of the Church’s institutions nor on the errors of ecclesiological models in dogmatic teaching. We are the Church (the people of God) and we (rich and poor alike) all bear responsibility for the shortcomings of our world. As a cosmic family that desires to live in harmony, each and every member is obliged in the task of building the kingdom of God by casting off all kinds of prejudice that obscure healthy human relationships and deprive humanity of the chance for peace and integral development. The Christology of liberation, insofar as it is an historical Christology, is a Christology from below. It begins with the concrete story of Jesus and considers it as a whole. Albeit, it includes the resurrection as a decisive moment, it refers ultimately to the activities of Jesus as service to the kingdom. And the most historical aspect of the historical Jesus is his actions through which he influenced his immediate environment and sought to change that environment towards the direction of the search for the kingdom of God. The most historical thing about the historical Jesus is, therefore, his invitation (or demand) for us to

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continue his works.22 “O nuru ube nwanne agbala oso” typifies the call of Jesus to discipleship and the duty thereof. Hence, the theology of fraternal solidarity which is encapsulated in this pithy saying finds its ultimate expression also in an indigenous Christology of Jesus as Brother which I wish to examine in the next section.

“Jesu, Nwanne Otu Onye”—Jesus The Brother: an African (Igbo) Christology

In Matthew’s Gospel 25: 31-46, Jesus anticipated the last judgement and underscores God’s definitive, irrevocable, liberating, and gratuitous glory which is present and actual in the world. He demonstrates how this presence is hidden in his impalpable proximity to the hungry, the thirsty, the alien, the naked, the sick, and the impoverished, who he calls his “brothers” [and sisters]. Thus we know that in the combat for human liberation, nothing less than the divine is at stake. What concerns humanity by that very fact concerns God: “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you...?” (Matt. 25:37). Knowing who Christ is and where to encounter him is very essential to Christian faith. In fact Christ himself calls this knowledge “eternal life” (John 17:3). As I noted in my recent dissertation, “African Christians and theologians, like all Christ’s disciples, cannot evade the most fundamental Christological question: 'But you, who do you say that I am?’ (Mk. 8:29). Any response to this Christological question must also begin with the acknowledgment of concrete human experience. Hence, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, is also the One, who a pious Igbo in his or her supplications refers to as ‘Jesu, Nwanne otu onye’. The choice of this Christological title, which is widely used in Igboland, is very

22 cf. Sobrino J., Jesus in Latin America, p. 112
significant, even when it does not yet stand under theological limelight."\textsuperscript{23}

The meaning of "otu onye" in this title is worthy of note. The term, which literally translates as "one person", "an individual", does actually connote something different. "Otu onye" is an idiom that articulates a situation of helplessness and acute need; a feeling of abandonment; or of being alienated. "Jesu, Nwanne otu onye" accordingly addresses Jesus as the Brother of the needy, the lonely, the dejected, the marginalized, the social outcast etc. Jesus is thence, "Nwanne otu onye" (the Brother of one who has no brother) because in Him the lonely and marginalized find consolation and compassion; in Him all humans find help in moments of need. It is by virtue of being seen first as a Brother, that Jesus is also seen as the Liberator of the African people. The brother status of Jesus precedes and, in fact, lays the foundation for his liberator status. Hence Jesus, who is Christ, personifies in himself the historical reality of the paradigm of brotherhood. He is the perfect fulfilment of the ideal of brotherly love in both its historical and eschatological dimensions. As the King and divine Judge of history, he rightly punishes those who escaped or thought they could circumvent justice on earth, and rewards those whose brotherly commitment in the service of justice and solidarity still awaits to be duly rewarded (cf. Mt 25: 31-46).

The incarnation finds its meaning in this historical becoming-a-brother-to-us of Jesus Christ. The New Testament accounts of his birth situate it in the historical and sociological context of a human family. The letter to the Hebrews hence notes: "For it was not the angels that he took to himself; he took to himself descent from Abraham. It was essential that he should in this way become completely like his brothers so that he could be a compassionate and trustworthy high priest of God’s religion" (Heb 2:16-17). Jesus’ teachings, however, contain an express command to transcend the

narrow bonds of consanguinity in order to form a spiritual family of disciples uncluttered by blood ties (Mk 3:31-35; Lk 9:59-62). As a divine Brother in this spiritual family, he remains the refuge and consolation of all who suffer oppression and injustice, as well as the solace of all who grieve on account of having nobody as helper in need. And for this reason the Igbo call him “Nwanne otu onye”—the brother of the lonely, or brother of the “brotherless”. This Christological portrait of Jesus as brother is not an Igbo phenomenon alone. It is an image that is at the heart of African Christian spirituality, as has been confirmed by Diane B. Stinton.\textsuperscript{24} It is an image that communicates the humanity of Jesus in a meaningful way, incorporating notions of intimacy and solidarity, contemporary presence and availability, protection from harm, and peace amid the hostilities of a divided humanity.\textsuperscript{25} This Christological image of Jesus as a brother is invariably the centre and the driving force for a theology of fraternal solidarity. It is an image that is not only culturally relevant and dear to Africans; it has also ample biblical support. It is from the perspective of seeing Jesus as an intimate brother that some Africans understand or seek to understand the theology of liberation. In an attempt to synthesize such understanding of liberation theology with the basic thrust of the inculturation theology, “O nuru ube nwanne agbala ọsọ” could be described as a sort of prolegomenon to an African theology of solidarity. Its alignment to inculturation theology is very obvious.

**Inculturation and the Theology of Solidarity**

I fully agree with Emmanuel Martey, that theological hermeneutics in Africa must necessarily have a unitary perception of both

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p. 151
inculturation and liberation.\textsuperscript{26} Indeed, even if many inculturation theologians would be reluctant to call themselves liberation theologians, inculturation in African theological discourse cannot be seen to be lacking liberation motif, for it emerged as a reaction to the alienation of Africa in ecclesiastical matters. P. Arrupe defined inculturation as "the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question, but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about 'a new creation'."\textsuperscript{27} This is a definition which many African theologians agree with and which Pope John Paul II confirms in \textit{Redemptoris Missio}.\textsuperscript{28} But for some African theologians, inculturation in fact represents the specifically religious or theological reassertion of African memory. The quest for African identity lies at the heart of the project of inculturation; i.e. the attempt by Africans to create a new form of Christian self-understanding that is informed by an 'anti-colonial' recuperation of their own varied cultural traditions. Its 'anti-colonial' thrust and its location and largely implicit participation in the discursive practices of postcolonial theory, tie it to the history of colonialism.\textsuperscript{29} Therefore, it is a theology of protest whose efforts is to rethink African identity and whose goal is to resist or displace the epistemic claims of a western inflected Christianity. Accordingly, inculturation has been seen to testify to a crisis which "originated in the interrogation and devaluation of traditional modes of thought by and through the colonial project."\textsuperscript{30} Hence, it

\textsuperscript{26} Emmanuel Martey, \textit{African Theology, Inculturation and Liberation} (New York; Orbis books, 1995)


\textsuperscript{28} Cf. Pope John Paul II, \textit{Redemptoris Missio}, (Rome, December 7, 1990), # 52

\textsuperscript{29} See Edward P. Antonio, Ibid. p. 8

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid. P. 12
could aptly be described as the theological echo of the African cry. One should not forget that slavery and colonialism were predicated on a theory of anthropological otherness which successfully blocked any vision of fraternity between racial black and white peoples. The result of the power play that characterised this period of history was culturally devastating for Africa. According to Edward P. Antonio, “it is precisely in the realm of culture that the effectiveness of the colonial agenda is best evaluated for it was there that new epistemic structures were created, new ways of being human were prescribed, new modes of perceiving and describing the world were preached and enforced and it was also there that the new myths of Christianity imposed a new moral consciousness and new forms of identity.”

Antonio rightly observes that “again and again, new and foreign modes of rationality emphasized the difference and incompatibility of African and western cultures with the latter serving as the supreme norm for civilization, development and progress—the goals of the colonial project. This brought about disruption, discontinuity and alienation to the African self-understanding. The epistemic structure of the African cognitive world was alien to the West and as a result was derided as primitive. As I said earlier, it is true that western thinkers will not easily understand how a mere idiom, like “Ọ nụrụ ube ọwụụ agbala ọsọ”, equates to a theology. But to Africans, to whom this mode of thought belongs, idioms are repositories of folks’ wisdom and epistemologically valid and autochthonous modes of transmitting education and moral values in the society in a way that is compact, intelligible and morally edifying. However, African inculturation theology as we know it today is yet to tap the full resources of this mode of teaching and thinking. And I think that appreciating the theological significance of such pithy sayings like “Ọ nụrụ ube ọwụụ agbala ọsọ” in Igbo cultural pedagogy is an essential step to enriching inculturation theology today while at the

31 Ibid.
32 Edward P. Antonio, Ibid. p. 40
same time incorporating the liberation imperative that is urgent in African society. In a manner so subtle to grasp, yet too obvious to be overlooked, this idiom fulfils the vision of African liberation theologians, like Emmanuel Martey, who believe in the necessity of a synthesis between liberation and inculturation in African theology.

Solidarity with African women, especially those who suffer domestic violence and sexual exploitation, also demands a radical change in perception which this saying advocates—a change underlined by fraternal charity in which the woman is seen first of all as a sister with equal heritage and dignity as the man. The problems faced by Africa and the world in general call for remedies that must be based upon new forms of socialization that is mutually inclusive. The cause of gender disparity is traceable to the inability to perceive and appreciate the woman primarily as a dear sister and a worthy daughter of one cosmic family made up of men and women whose equal and complementary sexuality constitutes the image of God as revealed by the Scripture: “in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27). Humanity, therefore, will remain impoverished so long as women are forced to remain voiceless and supine partners in the divine mandate to govern the earth. The project of Christianising culture or inculturating Christianity in Africa cannot and should not ignore the unsustainability of extolling a culture that continues to subordinate women and discriminate against “osu” (outcasts). African theologians who engage in inculturation must bear in mind that culture is more than the arts. It is about shared patterns of identity. It is about how social values are transmitted and individuals are made to be part of a society. Culture is how the past interacts with the future. Culture is all about “onye aghala nwanne ya” (let no one abandon his/her sister or brother), and is essentially communitarian. Without this understanding of culture, inculturation as an expression of protest against “theological imperialism” becomes meaningless. The African continent reminds us that the future belongs to those who will have found a way to give present
generations reasons to live and hope. While it must be acknowledged that modern society is making progress on emancipation, “Ọ nụru ube nwanne agbala ọso” further challenges inculturation theology to become also a theology of solidarity. In this sense, it epitomizes a new anthropological perspective with respect to the gender question—a perspective that calls for a fraternal response to the cry of incarcerated womanhood.

Now having argued for the above Igbo saying as an essential tool of theological discourse in both liberation and inculturation theologies, I would like to further examine how it also satisfies the vision of Catholic Social Teaching since Vatican II.

The Post Vatican II Era of Catholic Social Teaching

The Second Vatican Council in its Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes, acknowledges that the earth has not yet become the scene of true brotherhood; and then asks how this unhappy situation can be overcome. In answer to this important question, the Council tells us that the Word of God, which became man “assures those who trust in the charity of God that the way of love is open to all men and that the effort to establish a universal brotherhood will not be in vain.” Keeping the flame of this hope alive is admittedly one of the major goals of Catholic theology and a concern that has predominantly preoccupied successive Popes since the past half century. The very questions that motivate the heretofore articulated theology of fraternal solidarity arise also from this hope.

Pope John Paul II defines solidarity as a Christian virtue, which seeks to go beyond itself, to take on the specifically Christian dimensions of total gratuity, forgiveness and reconciliation. Through an awareness of the common fatherhood of God, of the brotherhood of all in Christ—“children in the Son”—

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33 See Gaudium et Spes, # 37
34 Ibid, # 38
and of the presence and life-giving action of the Holy Spirit, this virtue brings to our vision of the world a new criterion for interpreting it.\(^{35}\) This criterion is one that enables all men and women to see in each other brothers and sisters who are mutually interdependent, and who are challenged by a young African boy to learn to carry one another without feeling the burden. A cursory look at three pontificates of the past five decades highlights how recent Catholic Social Teaching resonates in the Igbo saying that form the principal thrust of the theology of solidarity understood here both in terms of liberation and inculturation.

**Pope Paul VI**

In March 1967, with the encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, Paul VI stated categorically that the world is sick, and its illness consists less in the unproductive monopolization of resources by a small number of men than in the lack of brotherhood among individuals and peoples.\(^{36}\) This important observation distinguished this encyclical as a significant trailblazer to a theology of solidarity. Invariably, the problem the Pope saw does not consist in the fact of having rich people in the society living side by side with very poor people, but rather in the “rich man’s” lack of awareness that the “poor man” is his brother. Hence, the encyclical asserts: “there can be no progress towards the complete development of man without the simultaneous development of all humanity in the spirit of solidarity. Man must meet man, nation meet nation, as brothers and sisters, as children of God. It is in this mutual understanding and friendship, in this sacred communion, that the task of working together to build the common future of the human race takes its departure.”\(^{37}\) Pope John Paul II took over from where this Pope stopped.

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\(^{35}\) John Paul II, *Solicitudo Rei Socialis*, n. 40  
\(^{36}\) Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, n. 66  
\(^{37}\) Ibid., n. 43
Twenty years after *Populorum Progressio*, Pope John Paul II, in *Solicitudo Rei Socialis*, notes with disappointment that the hope for development, once alive, suddenly appears far from being realized. Faced with a waning optimism about overcoming the ever widening gap between rich and poor, between the different worlds, the Pontiff acknowledges that the unity of the human race is seriously compromised—an issue before whose moral implications the Church cannot afford to remain indifferent. In *Solicitudo Rei Socialis* the Pope points out that “the obstacles to integral development are not only economic but rest on more profound attitudes which human beings can make into absolute values.” Obviously such aberrant attitudes are rooted in the unwillingness to appreciate the other as a brother or sister.

In addition to other positions taken by John Paul II, one must note that the 1994 Synod of bishops for Africa which took place under his watch was a land-mark event in the history of African theology. Not only did the Synod speak of inculturation, but it also made use of it, taking the Church as God’s Family as its guiding idea for the evangelization of Africa. The Synod Fathers acknowledged the family as a model that expresses the Church’s nature in a way that is particularly appropriate to Africa. The family emphasizes care for others, solidarity, warmth in human relationships, acceptance, dialogue and trust. The new evangelization will thus aim at building up the Church as Family,

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38 Ibid. *Solicitudo Rei Socialis* n. 12
39 Ibid., n. 14. Pope John Paul II observes that the nomenclature which speaks of different worlds within our *one world* is an unhealthy symptom of a divided humanity. Such expressions as “Fourth World”, he notes, is used not just occasionally for the so-called *less advanced* countries, but also and especially for the bands of great or extreme poverty in countries of medium and high income. But all in all, this invention of a new hierarchy of worlds is a shameful index of an undesirable stratification that serves neither mutual respect nor human development.
40 Ibid. n. 38
avoiding ethnocentrism and excessive particularism. It will try to encourage reconciliation and true communion between different ethnic groups; favour solidarity and the sharing of personnel and resources among the particular Churches, irrespective of ethnic considerations.\textsuperscript{41} Such was the vision of the synod Fathers.

The synod went further to express the hope that theologians in Africa will work out the theology of the Church as Family with all the riches contained in this concept, showing its complementarity with other images of the Church.\textsuperscript{42} Ironically, while much is being said about the Church as family, the extent to which this image has impacted the depth of the spiritual consciousness of Christians leaves much to be desired. According to Agatha Radoli, “it is shocking to Christians that church buildings were turned into sites of carnage during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. They keep on asking themselves questions like: How could Catholics desecrate Christ’s Presence in the Blessed Sacrament by slaughtering their \textit{brothers and sisters} in the churches? What drove them to such a degree of savagery that \textit{they could not even hear the cries of innocent children} as they died in agony?”\textsuperscript{43}

A more fundamental question, however, should be: Do those Catholics realise that the innocent victims they slaughtered were their “brothers and sisters”? This is the kind of question that ought to shape the outline of a theology that seeks to go beyond liberation hermeneutics. In fact in the light of “\textit{O nụrụ ube nwanne agbala ọsọ}”, what transpired in Rwanda and in many other war zones is an abomination which undermined the ecclesiology of the African synod. The sad truth is that the victims of the genocide were first of all disparaged as “cockroaches” in nation-wide hate propaganda in order to make it easier to slaughter them in hundreds of thousands without qualms of conscience. This boils down to the question:

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\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{41} Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Exhortation, \textit{Ecclesia in Africa}, n. 63
\item\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{43} Agatha Radoli, Preface to Mario I. Aguilar \textit{The Rwandan Genocide And The Call To Deepen Christianity In Africa} (Eldoret, Kenya: AMECEA Pub., 1998) p. vi
\end{enumerate}
“Cain, where is your brother Abel?” It would have made a lot of difference, if the victims were perceived by their detractors as brothers and sisters. Such a perception would have imposed a moral restraint on the murderous anger that led to such tragic fratricides. Surely one must admit that in Rwanda as in similar historical situations, it is neither liberation nor inculturation per se that was urgent, but rather a theology that could bring to people’s consciousness the fact of their fraternal relationship and the spirituality expected thereof. It is a theology of solidarity. The need for such a theology remains acute even as the new pontificate encounters a new and different situation.

Pope Benedict XVI

The pontificate of Benedict XVI witnessed in the global financial crisis the sad reality that human society is still far from the ideals of fraternal solidarity. In his first encyclical, Deus Caritas Est, the Pope took up the theme of Love as the Christian image of God and the resulting image of humankind and its destiny. Using the parable of Lazarus and Dives, he reminded us of the eschatological consequences of ignoring the poor man’s suffering (cf. Lk 16: 19-31). And with the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10: 25-37) he underscores the exigency of a new hermeneutic for human relationship—a hermeneutic that recognizes the values of positive perception of other persons as the basis of every action of justice or mercy. In the light of such congenial perception, the helpless victim of unjust violence is immediately identified in one’s judgement as a neighbour in need; a brother or sister whose pain-filled groans (ube nwanne) one cannot ignore without being inhuman. According to the Encyclical, until Jesus’ teaching of this parable, “the concept of ‘neighbour’ was understood as referring essentially to one’s countrymen and to foreigners who had settled in the land of Israel; in other words, to closely-knit community of a single country or

44 Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est, n. 1
people. This limit is now abolished. Anyone who needs me, and whom I can help, is my neighbour. The concept of 'neighbour' is now universalized, yet it remains concrete. Despite being extended to all mankind, it is not reduced to a generic, abstract and undemanding expression of love, but calls for my own practical commitment here and now.”

This teaching finds a resounding echo in the Igbo saying: “Nwanne di na mba”. The saying expresses the far-reaching extra-mural dimension of the “nwanne” relationship that is at the heart of the ecclesiology of fraternal solidarity.

In *Caritas in Veritate*, his first social encyclical per se, Benedict XVI laments that “as society becomes ever more globalized, it makes us neighbours but does not make us brothers”. Identifying the cause of underdevelopment as the lack of brotherhood among individuals and peoples, the Encyclical acknowledged a need for “a new humanism which will enable modern man to find himself anew by embracing the high values of love and friendship”. True development of peoples, the Pope affirms, “depends, above all, on the recognition that the human race is a single family working together in true communion, not simply a group of subjects who happen to live side by side.” Benedict XVI thus recognizes that to tackle the task of global development, “what is needed is an effective shift in mentality which can lead to the adoption of new life-styles in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors which determine consumer choices, savings and investments in our world.” This shift in mentality requires a magnanimity that was demonstrated by the little boy who, carrying his sibling sister on his back, boldly declared that the burden was not heavy for him because she is his sister.

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45 Ibid. n. 15
46 Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, n. 19
47 Ibid.; See also *Populorum Progressio*, n. 20
48 Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, n. 53
49 Ibid. n. 51
Finally, the Pope cautions that, “while the poor of the world continue knocking on the doors of the rich, the world of affluence runs the risk of no longer hearing those knocks, on account of a conscience that can no longer distinguish what is human. Acknowledging the failure of human institutions to guarantee the fulfilment of humanity’s right to development, Caritas in Veritate invests the hope of integral human development in “a free assumption of responsibility in solidarity on the part of everyone.” In other words, everyone is called to carry everyone else in need.

In concluding this section, I want to raise objection to how CST often appears not to recognize in solidarity the very root and centre of all social questions. The encyclical, Deus Caritas Est, for example, allowed philia (that taken-for-granted manifestation of love which is neither demanding nor self-centred) to recede to the background, while Eros and Agape are juxtaposed as the predominant expressions of love. If the origin of love is God, then it is God’s philia, made flesh in the incarnate Logos, which is the decisive bond of the Divine-Human relationship. God’s philia makes us God’s children and members of a family through the Son, who He ‘filiated’ (begot) in eternity. Agape could be understood as the inundation of love, which divine grace effects in human philia engendering it to reach beyond the temporal (consanguinity) to the ontological (humanity). In order that charity maintains its splendour, it is important that it be exercised not as if to a wretched, helpless poor whose appearance evokes my pity, but rather to a needy brother or sister whose situation tests and challenges my humanity and spirituality. Owing to the significance of philia as the bond of the family and of friendship, its marginal treatment in Deus Caritas Est should, therefore, be regarded as a great oversight. For at a time when fraternal solidarity should have been the central theme of Christian theology, the Magisterium treated it without the attention it deserved. But theologians must

50 Caritas in Veritate, n. 75
51 cf. Caritas in Veritate, n. 11
recuperate the full force and dynamism of *philia* so that Solidarity will take its place as the centre and fulcrum around which the pertinent social questions of humanity revolve. The statement of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace on the Global Economy, which calls for recognizing “the primacy of being over having and of ethics over economy”, ⁵² apparently confirms this new shift in theological emphasis. We might well be entering into a period in the history of theology when the focus on solidarity will be the yardstick for measuring contemporary social relevance of theological discourses. Presuming that that time has come, I want to approach the end of this essay by drawing attention to a possible interpretation of a well-known biblical parable with the aim of highlighting how a shift in hermeneutic could enrich our reading of sacred Scripture and expose the insufficiency, or even absurdity of old theological perspectives that are hitherto determined by narrow socio-cultural and historical contexts. ⁵³

The Parable of the Prodigal Brother

The parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15: 11-32) is one of the few sublime analogies that Jesus used in teaching us the very mystery and essence of divine mercy, as a profound drama played out between the father’s love and the prodigality and sin of the son. At least, this is how it has been hitherto understood in official Church teaching. ⁵⁴ However, this parable has more to say than about a

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father and his son. It is at the same time a parable of the prodigal brother, because it also brings into the narrative, the disgruntled elder brother who has not been prodigal himself. I have intentionally renamed this parable to emphasize the fraternal charity that was called into question in the narrative. The role of the first son in the parable is remarkable, because what will in the end emerge as scandalous in the parable is no longer the fact that the prodigal son lavished his wealth in reckless living, but rather that the self-righteous elder brother would be willing to see him (as one might suppose) serve as a slave in his own father’s house, or even be cast out entirely.

As we know, the parable is a story of squandered inheritance, reckless vanity, and foolish delinquency that ended up in a miserable life: The prodigal son “would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate, but no one would let him have them” (Lk. 15:16). The young man’s loss of material goods brought him to a deeper consciousness—the consciousness of the tragic loss of his own dignity. This parable, apart from referring ultimately to sin and forgiveness, is also emblematic of those miserable life situations where the suffering subject may be held culpable for having made wrong and foolish choices. As events unfold, the judgement of history becomes too harsh for the prodigal son to bear and he is ready to undergo the humiliation and shame of becoming a slave in his father’s house. The obvious lesson, which emerges here, is that this humiliation is justifiable and even welcome by the prodigal son himself. The father, however, finds it intolerable and his mercy intervenes in the situation to prevent such a humiliation. He further prevail on his elder son to give up his indignation for reason of fraternity, arguing: “…it was only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found” (Lk 15:32).

Jesus concludes the story here, leaving it open-ended, probably to enable us draw a variety of personal meanings from the parable. And one meaning is indispensable: Apart from the lesson about the Father’s dives in misericordia (rich in mercy), the
conclusion of the parable opens a whole new perspective that informs the elder brother what his perception of his younger brother ought to be, namely, "your brother", and not "this son of yours".\footnote{See Lk 15: 30. The elder son tends to distance himself from the prodigal by referring to him as "this son of yours". And he went even further to allege that his younger brother squandered his wealth with prostitutes, thus attempting to underscore why this son should be undeserving of honour. It is not seldom that one hears this kind of argument from the privileged in attempts to absolve themselves from guilt on the misery of the poor. Some of the arguments against universal healthcare in the USA are similar.}

The lack of appreciation of this truth of a shared paternity in God is the root of resentments, hatred, oppression, exploitation, racism, ethnicism, and all sorts of bigotry and apathy in human history. Therefore, the task of restoring dignity to those sisters and brothers who have lost it through material poverty, whether it is their fault or not, is a noble and essential responsibility which humanity is called to fulfil. If poverty assaults the human dignity of any people, the dignity of all people is at the same time assaulted in every part of the world. Humanity cannot live in peace if a greater section of the world continues to live in inexcusable poverty. The paradox of the kingdom is such that by refusing to join the party organized by his father to welcome and honour his younger brother; by refusing to be gratuitous, the elder son suddenly becomes the one in peril of being lost (by ostracising himself from the feast of the kingdom). His reluctance to engage in a filial embrace posits an open question to individuals and groups in every generation and in various circumstances about their relationship with others. And whether this elder son eventually succumbed to his father’s plea to join the party or not is left unanswered by Jesus. The parable of the prodigal son will, however, be a story with an unhappy end, if the merciful father were to lose his elder son again simply because of his magnanimity to the younger son. Therefore, the ‘good news’ in this parable lies in the fact that the father was able to bring his two sons together again (the indignant and the lost) to share in the same patrimony as brothers. The elder son...
hence had to learn to be merciful as his father in order that he too shall obtain mercy (cf. Mt 5:7; Lk 6:36). It is in fact in this mercy that his righteousness will consist. Mercy in this case cannot only mean that implied in forgiveness, but also that implied in empathy and fraternal charity.

One unmistakable lesson could be gleaned from this parable. Those who are unwilling to acknowledge the humanity of others are always the first to empty themselves of humanity without realizing it. Our fate and fortune are intimately tied and no nation on earth can demonstrate her greatness on top of the ruins of the anthropological poverty of her starving neighbours. An essential component of any civilization worthy of its name is how much respect and attention it gives to the weakest members of that society, and how it preserves and promotes the dignity of all its members and the common good. In this parable, the father’s call to his disgruntled elder son to join him in restoring dignity to his younger brother is significant. As much as it is a call to fraternal charity and mercy, which is divine, it is also a reminder of the fundamental humanism that is emblematic of the kingdom of God. In the end, whether we interpret this story in the light of a spiritual conversion of a sinner, or in the light of an exhortation to filial love, the significance of the story is all the more enhanced by the metaphor with which Jesus concluded it: [He] was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found.” With this metaphor, the celebration of the restoration of dignity to the poverty-stricken ‘lost brother’ assumes a new dimension—the dimension of a new life and a new profit—a treasure lost but found. If the elder son fails to see his brother in this context as a personified treasure, then he has really missed the point and is himself in peril of becoming the loser.

Relating this parable to our Igbo contextual Christology here, one can say that the prodigal has lived through the experience of what it means to be “otu onye”—alone and homeless, with nostalgia for home, losing his dignity on account of the loss of material possessions. However, the grace of Christ, “Nwanne otu
onye”, brings him back home and reintegrates him into the lost brotherhood where through divine compassion he is clothed with a new dignity. That divine compassion places a demand on all disciples of Christ: to value and cherish fraternal solidarity. In this sense, this parable, which is also known as the parable of mercy, provides the answer to such ‘apparently’ inexcusable situations which rationally question the call for solidarity simply on the reason that the poor man or woman is indeed responsible for his or her miserable life. Jesus teaches us then that even in such situations the duty to solidarity remains meaningful. Here the theology of solidarity teaches us not to despise and castigate others for their failures, but to help them on the path to new life, spiritually and materially. However, in addition to the above personal interpretation, what I intend also to demonstrate is how African idioms could be used to explore the depth of the Christian message and enrich theological pedagogy both for Africans and non-Africans.

Conclusion

In concluding this essay, I want to highlight the views of a prominent African inculturation theologian. According to Charles Nyamiti, the most difficult and central problem in creating African theology consists in the effective adoption of African elements into sacred science. Among the reasons for deficiency in African theological essays Nyamiti identifies a lack of intrinsic employment of cultural themes and a narrowness of approach to the factors involved. Hence, African ideas far from entering internally into the theological elaboration of revelation so as to form an organic part of it are rather used as a mere propaedeutic providing exterior illustrations or subjective preparations.56 The theological

appraisal of "Ọ nụrụ ụbe nwanne agbala ọsọ" is intended to avoid this pitfall or deficiency. Nyamiti also singled out the theme of family as an example in his essay—a theme that is emphasized in both African and western communities, albeit in distinct ways. The African family is more extensive, Nyamiti observes:

It extends to the whole clan and sometimes even to the whole tribe. It includes all living members of these groups, besides being mystically connected to the ancestors and, through social pacts, to outsiders such as friends and others. Moreover, the relations between the members of an African family differ in many respects from those of the West.... In other words the category “family” in Africa evokes not only blood communal membership of a few living members, but also the themes of clan, tribe, affinity, maternity, patria potestas, priesthood, ancestors (thereby including the themes of mythical time, archetypes, heroes, founders), initiation, and hence fecundity, life, power, sacrality, and so forth.57

To appreciate fully the African originality of the category “family”, Nyamiti counsels that the themes it evokes should in their turn be examined in the light of the African context. This means that, although the formal content of the category “family” is identical in Africa and in the West, the mode of its integration in its cultural contexts is different. And it is particularly in this concrete mode of integration, i.e., in the local colouring of the cultural themes, that the originality of the African themes has to be sought.58 Accordingly, it is this methodology which ought to guide theological enterprise in Africa today. For even if African theology will still continue to be articulated in terms of an “ethno-theology” (i.e. the theology of a people rather than of an individual theologian), that will neither make it less authentic nor less relevant. It is on this note that I gladly but earnestly flash a relevant

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57 Ibid., p. 39
58 Ibid.
light on the Igbo prolegomenon to a theology of fraternal solidarity. If Christian theology hopes to make a social impact in the 21st century, if it is to remain faithful to the vision of the Second Vatican Council in its *Gaudium et Spes*, it may have to be receptive of the Igbo wisdom and exhortation to hearken to the cry of the abandoned humanity. It is a cry whose echo resounds in cultural, economic, religious, and socio-political dimensions of human life, and yet a cry that could be responded to in a very simplified manner through solidarity, both in thought and action.
TOWARDS A BLACK-AFRICAN ETHICS FOR CAPITALISTIC OIL AND MINING MULTINATIONALS

Augustin Ramazani Bishwende

Introduction

Ethics is pertinent to multinational businesses opening in those African zones of great poverty and conflict. Nevertheless, it is much too vague to speak of ethics in general. Is there an ethics for the oil and mining multinationals that are opening in Africa? Put differently, in the event that an African ethics for capitalistic multinational businesses would not exist, can Africans muster the courage to develop their own ethics to propose to or impose on all firms, particularly on Western, Asian, and even African multinationals that want to exploit the oil and mining wealth on the African continent? But before even conceiving of such an ethics, we must first and foremost settle on the principal objective of our intervention: to understand the intrinsic connections between ethics and the political and social economy by going deeper into the modes of regulation of multinational activities starting from a triple, long-lasting developmental approach in Africa: economic performance, social achievement, and respect for the environment. Finally, against the extreme capitalistic theories of Milton Friedman, a plural and holistic approach, integrating the social responsibilities of businesses and linking ethics and business in a harmonious manner, is necessary because it integrates the triple approach of a lasting development. This perspective also permits conceiving of all enterprise as an integral part of the human and

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social community. And it is starting from this plural and holistic approach that we can develop a uniquely African ethics for capitalistic multinational businesses that they would have to respect and integrate into their professional code of ethics. That is the reason why, in this article, we fiercely oppose neoclassical and liberal concepts as extolled by the Chicago School in the United States, represented by Milton Friedman (1912-2006).

The Business as a Good Citizen: Definition, History and Philosophy

What is a “Good Citizen” Business?

According to Christian Forthomme, one can speak of a “Good Citizen” business if there exists, at its heart, the will to act as responsibly as possible in relation to the environment widely understood. Three main lines emerge from this definition:

First, Action: One cannot speak of ethics without speaking of action. Ethics intervenes in order to bring critical judgment to human affairs. It is a feature of ethics to analyze both good and bad, just and unjust human acts. Ethics imparts meaning to action and permits a halt to certain kinds of drift. Given this penchant for action, ethics adds extra heart to action. “In this sense, ethics inscribes itself in the Aristotelian vision for which ethics is a search for meaning starting from actual situations experienced by individuals and groups.”


\[3\] Ibidem, p. 5.
the kinds of activities that are likely to cause environmental pollution, unemployment, exclusion, poverty, violence, exploitation of the populace, and, in general, to create products that are bad for one's health whose harm could become tolerable or intolerable for future generations. Such being the case, the business must be attentive and sensitive in taking into consideration the legitimate concerns brought up by those populations that are calling for a better quality of life: leaving poverty behind, breathing clean, unpolluted air, consuming uncontaminated food, having decent roads and access to professional education, being well cared for in general.

Next, Responsibility: It is evident that all people and every business are responsible for the future of humanity. The invitation to be attentive to the future is an invitation to revisit Hans Jonas's ethics of responsibility. As Jonas asserts:

Care for the future of mankind is the overruling duty of collective human action in the age of a technical civilization that has become 'almighty,' if not in its productive then at least in its destructive potential. This care must obviously include care for the future of all nature on this planet as a necessary condition for man's own.... A kind of metaphysical responsibility beyond self-interest has devolved on us with the magnitude of our powers relative to this tenuous film of life, since man has become dangerous not only to himself but to the whole biosphere.4

For Jonas, all previous ethics is also deployed in the present, immediately and simultaneously with the stability of human nature that such ethics presupposes. There, it is a question of a highly

egoistic and extremely individualistic form of an ethics of self-perfection. Kant’s ethics served as the model for all these prior ethics. There, acting occurs with a view towards the future in which no one benefits, not the agents, their victims, or their contemporaries.

Moving forward, we can conceive of an ethics of the future comprising a temporal extension of a responsibility assumed, an enhanced subject (all of future humanity), and a more profound plan (the entire essence of the future human being). The new types and dimensions of acting necessitate an ethics of prediction and responsibility that finds its roots and source in the works of the *homo faber* in the age of technology. But henceforth, humankind itself is also a subject of technology. *Homo faber* applies his art to himself. This domination of technology over humans summons the urgency and importance of the ethics of responsibility.

The domination of technology over humans is made manifest first in the prolongation of the human lifespan (death and procreation are hypothesized as no longer being part of the nature of the living), the control of behaviour (the amount of progress in the biomedical sciences raises serious questions concerning human rights and human dignity), and genetic manipulation (the human desire to take charge of our own evolution with the goal of conserving, improving, and transforming the species according to our purpose). And so, for Jonas, technology would not be able to resolve the problem that it creates; it has gone wild and as a consequence it must be domesticated. We can control nature using the means of a technology that we do not control. Also, traditional morals such as Kant’s, have become ineffectual for political decision makers because of the evolution of modern technology. The ethics of responsibility is forever urgent; it will be founded on the heuristics of a fear that detects the menaces that humanity can experience in its future. “Now, where this [heuristics of fear] is not vouchsafed on its own—that is, by evil already present—it becomes our duty to seek it out by an effort of reason and imagination, so that it can instil in us the fear whose guidance we
need” because it invites action in order to protect humanity in relation to the menaces it could be subjected to. All active responsibility commences in response to fear.

Finally, The Environment: In effect, responsible action leads to respect for the environment. Because of modern technology, the world experiences changes, mutations, disruptions, and such novel consequences that even traditional ethics is no longer capable of taking them on. Human technological intervention has made nature vulnerable. Such vulnerability had never been sensed before manifesting itself as a result of damage caused by human technology. It is thanks to the new science of the environment (ecology) that humans have become aware of our responsibility towards the natural world as a result of the impact provoked by damage that is tied to technology. Nature, as an object of human responsibility, presents itself as a novelty on which ethics must reflect. As a result, businesses must not remain unaware of this important dimension of lasting development. According to Hans Jonas, the most serious danger is in regard to the equilibrium of the world’s ecosystem. “Good Citizen” firms must respect and practice a consistent categorical imperative with regard to the survival of future generations, the survival of humanity. “Act such that the effects of your act may not be destructive to the future possibility of such a life”. Or simply: “Don’t compromise the conditions for the indefinite survival of humanity on earth.”

The History of the Concept of the Business as a Good Citizen

The concept of the “Good Citizen” business comes to us from the United States. It came into existence in the 1970’s across the Atlantic with the intent of showing off the participation of

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5 Ibidem, p. 27.
6 Cf., Ibidem, p. 43-44.
businesses in cultural, social, and sports activities. "Community services" are created within the business in which a large number of employees participate voluntarily. Such businesses demonstrate their engagement and dynamic participation to the life of the society by investing in hospitals, schools, and charitable works.

_The Philosophy Conveyed by the Concept of the Business as a Good Citizen_

First and foremost, the "Good Citizen" business opposes the dissociation in history that has occurred between economics and ethics. However, according to Amartya Sen, the modern economy has, in essence, issued forth from ethics. Adam Smith, the father of the modern economy, was a professor of moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow. The economy was long considered a branch of ethics. We know that ethics goes back at least to Aristotle: "At the very beginning of The Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle relates the subject of economics to human ends. He sees politics as 'the master art'. Politics must use 'the rest of the sciences', including economics, and 'since, again, it legislates as to what we are to do and what we are to abstain from, the end of this science must include those of the others, so that this end must be the good of man....Economics relates ultimately to the study of ethics and that of politics, and this point of view is further developed in Aristotle's Politics." From this perspective, the "Good Citizen" business comes to consecrate the marriage between ethics and politics.

Then, the "Good Citizen" business brings together the ethics and technologies that have been separated in the history of Western philosophy. We recognize this in the metaphysics of Heidegger: because of technology, the Western world lives in exile from Being

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8 Ibidem, p. 3.
as Being. The German philosopher maintains that technology has become the extreme form of the forgetfulness of Being in today's world. Technology does not only refer to the totality of machines, methods, and ideas intended for production. It is the manner in which modern humans relate to the world around them. Both humanity and the natural world constitute merely a fund, capital, from which technology draws. And so, technology engulfs humanity in its power; it holds humanity in its power and thus hostage far from Being. Technology occupies every space because of the void hollowed out by the forgetfulness of Being. Heidegger wants to fill in this void. According to him, only humanity can save itself by turning towards Being. It is not a question of rejecting technology, from the perspective of Heideggerian ontology, but rather of confronting it and exposing the extreme danger that it constitutes so that we may be liberated from it.9

Heidegger's thought will be followed in one way or another by the Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas in his ethical turn that clearly energizes the problematic of responsibility. How does one assume responsibility towards the other? “Otherwise Than Being,” by nature ethical, bears unlimited responsibility for the Other. The Other is not to be dominated, but rather affects Me in the midst of the ethical relation. And Hans Jonas prolongs this question in relation to the future of humanity.

Finally, the "Good Citizen" business comes to link business with social issues, profit with engagement and citizen participation in the social development of the milieu in which all businesses can fulfil their activities. The "Good Citizen" business wants to demonstrate that preoccupation with societal issues is not an antinomy; it accompanies a preoccupation with economics. "The 'Good Citizen' business expresses its involvement in the life of the town through concern about the environment, rehabilitation, and insertion. Its field of action is not only economic, in relation to its

particular interests, but it extends to that which elevates this area to the general interest.

It should be noted that the recurring reference to the concept of the ‘Good Citizen’ business is tied to the development of unemployment and poverty. The end of the 1980’s marks a rupture with the economic law connecting growth to the diffusion of wealth to all of society. A society that counts six million of the excluded is harmful and dangerous for business; a poor social climate produces a lowering of consumption in favour of protective savings. It is in this context that businesses decide to take the ‘Good Citizen’ initiative, implicitly recognizing their responsibility for that which certain parties call the fracturing of society.”

**The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Its Profits**

In the 1970’s, at the origin of the debate over the “Good Citizen” business, the economist Milton Friedman was drastically opposed to this ethical concept. Here is what he said in an article appearing in *The New York Times Magazine* on September 13, 1970:

> The businessmen believe that they are defending free enterprise when they declaim that business is not concerned ‘merely’ with profit but also with promoting desirable ‘social’ ends; that business has a ‘social conscience’ and takes seriously its responsibilities for providing employment, eliminating discrimination, avoiding pollution and whatever else may be the catchwords of the contemporary crop of reformers. In fact they are... preaching pure and unadulterated socialism. Businessmen who talk this way are unwitting puppets of the intellectual

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10 Christian Forthomme, as quoted by K.-O. Baya, « L’entreprise citoyenne une approche par les norms environnementales », 4ème Congrès international francophone sur les PME. Compétitivité et identité des PME. Défis et enjeux dans un monde en mutation. p. 7.
forces that have been undermining the basis of a free society these past decades.\textsuperscript{11}

Starting from his thesis, we take note of the fact that Mr. Friedman ascribes central importance to the idea of freedom. First and foremost in his estimation, a society must be founded on economic freedom. In what does such freedom consist? It advocates a free market with the free exchange of goods and services while accepting free competition. Mr. Friedman is a partisan supporter of an excessively free capitalism; he recommends commercial liberalism with minimal and weak intervention by the state within a society without causing any hindrance to individual free enterprise. Economic freedom is the \textit{sine qua non} of political freedom. Economic freedom gives power to shareholders; it presents itself as a counterweight to political power by influencing, accompanying, supporting and opposing it. In the aforementioned quote it is surprising to see his elision of \textit{social responsibility} into \textit{socialism}.

We can highlight three fundamental arguments in his thought:

\textbf{First Argument:} According to Mr. Friedman, a business must in no way bear social responsibilities; people can have them all by taking them on. But a business is an artificial person so it can only bear artificial responsibilities. Because of this one is not able to speak of social responsibilities belonging to the business; one can only talk of the increase in profits while respecting the rules.

\textbf{Second Argument:} The director who has been hired by the business must act in the sole interest of the shareholders, which is nothing other than increasing profits. And outlays made by the business concerning social responsibility reduce profits. This theory, commonly known as the “theory of the shareholder” does

not exclude respect of and recourse to the ethical rules in force in a society. To claim that the director bears social responsibilities is tantamount to claiming that he or she must act contrary to the interests of his or her employers. A substantial social responsibility participating in the reduction of poverty leads it, for example, to hire the chronically unemployed rather than better qualified and available workers.

**Third Argument:** As a result, the business only has one social responsibility—it must use the resources it has to create activities with a view towards increasing profits while respecting an ethical minimum. As long as it respects the society's rules of commerce, it must engage in open and free competition, without deceit or fraud. His argument is *deontological*; the director has the duty to honour his or her promises without regard for the consequences.

**Consequences—African Example:** Friedman has had several adversaries who have criticized his thought. And one of the most important critiques concerns his monistic point of view regarding the ends that a business can set, in contradistinction to a holistic and pluralistic perspective that recognizes the business as a moral agent that is responsible for its acts and not an aggregate of individuals as Mr. Friedman believes. His critics uphold the fact that a business pursues various ends, particularly those of all of the parties involved, and not only the maximization of shareholder wealth. Mr. Friedman's monistic and individualistic perspective ensures that the business is not a structure that is absorbed and integrated within human society but rather an island, an atom without any direct link to society and indeed cut off from it. In Africa, many multinationals, particularly those concerned with oil and mining, function in isolation, without any direct relation to human societies. They are in Africa with the only goal to exploit the continent; they care about nothing else in their *mafocracy*, as if they remained cut off from the population without provoking conflict, war, trouble. And if the pillage they organize on a grand
scale doesn’t suffice, they continue to sell arms to dictators in order to perpetuate their power; they provoke not only the displacement of local populations who become strangers in their own countries, but above all they kill and massacre those who resist their exploitation. In sum, these multinational businesses do not respect human dignity in Africa and they do not promote a life together among local populations because of their dishonest exploitation of the continent’s wealth.

Towards a Black-African Ethics for Capitalistic and Multinational Businesses

Given such a situation, what kind of African ethics should be proposed to both African and foreign capitalistic multinationals that exploit oil and mining resources? African societies are founded on an anthropological conception that is different from anthropology in the West. And African anthropology is not monistic and individualistic; it is an anthropological community of the visible and the invisible. According to Black-African societies’ customs, traditions, and cultures, the human person is comparable to an embryo that bathes, at one and the same time, in the love of the visible community and in relation to the invisible community.¹³

What do we mean by this assertion? It is impossible in Africa to conceive of the individual outside of his or her inscription in his or her milieu of life, or outside of his or her relation to living or dead fellow humans. It is impossible to understand and seize hold of oneself outside of a relation to the visible and invisible cosmos where the ancestral village is presumed to be located. One’s historical inscription in one’s native cultural milieu signals one’s membership in human life. And one’s relation to the world and nature signals one’s membership in the cosmos.

The Human Person is Fundamentally Life in Relation to His or Her Fellow Humans.

What is singular to the African, and particularly to the Bantu, is his or her attachment to life. This fierce attachment to life as lived leads to a categorical refusal of death. Placide Tempels, a Belgian Franciscan missionary, was the first to formulate philosophically this visceral Bantu love of life.14 This life to which the Bantu are attached is called the Vital Force. The vital force is the fundamental reality of the existential life of the Bantu person. It is the supreme worth that determines the fundamental aspiration of the Bantu person desirous of living infinitely. It is susceptible of increasing or decreasing. It inhabits not only human beings but also the other creatures of the universe. The central vision of the African, his or her faith and fundamental creed, is summed up in a sole existential paradigm: Life as the first and last reality, as the value of values. Life is the alpha and omega of the African person’s existence. Everything proceeds from life and everything is fulfilled and achieved in life. Let us recover briefly the summary of Elanga Pene Elungu over the conception of life, a spiritual heritage common to most African traditions. He shows that: “(1) the life that is mine is also fundamentally my life after my death. (2) It is my life in the clan, my substantial communion with the ancestors, those ‘alive’ and those to come in the future for they are the same. (3) It is also my participation in the other lives of the universe, other realities or forces. (4) Finally, it is my union with the source of life, the Father of everything, God.”15 This African creed imparts meaning to the ultimate mystery of death. Death is conquered in advance by belief in surviving it. Death is conceived as a simple passage from this world to the village of the ancestors.

As Placide Tempels showed, it is possible, beginning from this vital force, to develop an entire African philosophy, a Black-African ethics, and a Bantu ethics for the foreign and African multinationals that exploit oil and mining resources. And when a Black African speaks of Life as the fundamental reality and Value, he or she refers to everything that touches his or her entire existence, globally speaking. Life refers to the political, economic, environmental, and social progress of humanity in the midst of society, with a view not only of arriving at lasting development but also and especially of arriving at the growth, the blossoming, and the plenitude of life. Life refers to health, the environment, security, work conditions, taxation, the creation of jobs, the professionalization of employees... in short, life refers to the blossoming, the happiness of the African. A multinational corporation that wants to do business in Africa has to work for the respect and the dignity of the human person; in brief, it must work in favour of Life. That would be the first condition, the fundamental condition of every signed contract with any multinational. It is not because of wealth that one must humiliate, displace, massacre—in brief, exterminate—human lives. Ever since the observations of the Commission of the United Nations directed by John Harker in 2002, the Canadian Talisman Energy Company has been recognized for having not only exploited the oil of Sudan but also having participated in the massacre of civilians in complicity with the government of Khartoum. Canadian Talisman had participated in the expulsion during a five-month period (forced displacements, burned villages, summary executions, planned famine, incitement to rape, proslavery...) of local populations from their lands with the plan to proceed with the exploitation of oil. This campaign of terror and violence towards the civilian population did nothing but augment the armed conflict in Sudan between the government forces and those fighting for the independence of South Sudan, directed by Riek Machar and the
Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), formed by former mutineers from the Sudanese military forces. The permanent council of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), during its plenary session in Accra (Ghana) in May, 1977, the president of SECAM, Cardinal Paul Zoungrana, Archbishop of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, was indignant over the potential “Recolonization” of Africa! In the words of the Cardinal:

Because it is rich in enviable strategic points, and simultaneously in prime materials that are practically inexhaustible, Africa is the object of the developed nations’ covetousness. We must say it aloud; a recolonization is taking place. It is often ideological and it follows commercial and military interests, preventing Africans, who have an innate sense of dialogue and also of particular dispositions for consultation, from agreeing about the workable ways and means of obtaining a better evolution of the continent. Left to themselves, Africans would settle their problems amicably. We must take note that the continent would not be so violently troubled in our time if there were not Africans who lend themselves, consciously or unconsciously, to the game of colonialism on all sides, tempted by wealth or power. Faced with such a situation, there is only one alternative: either renounce one’s dignity by accepting to become ‘subject peoples’ again, or rally again to proclaim together a categorical no to colonialism and imperialism no matter their provenance and no matter under what form they present themselves. Salvation can only come from the second response, which is already engaged in the process of political independence. It seems to us that such a response that is indispensable to survival


It is readily apparent that Western, Asian, and even African forms of capitalism—in short capitalism of all types—is devoid of a soul; we must think, rethink, deconstruct, and reconstruct this. The wealth that Africa abounds in ought to contribute to the promotion, development, and blossoming of African life. Western, Asian, and African multinationals who do not respect human rights or the African’s right to life must cease their activities in Africa. We must prohibit these corporations from pursuing the business of blood\footnote{C. Boltanski and P. Robert, \textit{Minerais de sang : les esclaves du monde moderne}, (Paris: Grasset, 2012).} in Africa because they violate laws that are acknowledged internationally, and they also violate the African vision of the world founded upon an anthropology of life. The minerals of blood of which C. Boltanski speaks are nothing other than the cassiterite that we find everywhere in our cell phones, radios, televisions, jewellery, watches ...but at what cost? At the cost of African blood! From the mines of North-Kivu, where African miners disappear under ground at the peril of their lives to the beautiful Towers of Defense in Paris where global corporations feign to ignore the route that the minerals take; from the Africa of forgotten wars to the \textit{London Stock Metal Exchange}, from the offices of Malaya to the garbage dumps under the open sky of Ghana, passing through Brussels, Paris, London, New York, and Toronto, C. Boltanski’s book presents us with the lovely, post-colonialist
images of the globalization of capital, the obscure influences of multinationals and the politics that enslave, pillage, and set Africa back.

*The Human Person is Also Fundamentally Life in Relation to the Surrounding World.*

Cosmogony occupies an important place in the Black-African vision of the world. What is the Black-African person’s connection to the environment? According to Black-African cosmogonic belief, the individual lives in relation to a nature that is both hostile and benevolent. Given this relation to the world that surrounds the individual, the responsibility of multinational businesses must increase and become a true sensitivity to permitting Africans to actually live healthy lives without polluted air, erosion, and with a vegetation that is well watered by rain. The mining businesses like Katanga Mining Limited that dig in the open, leaving holes everywhere as is the case today in the Democratic Republic of Congo or Ghana but also the holes left by Barrick Gold at Bulyanhulu in Tanzania, expose villages and towns to erosion, cut down the vegetation and provoke drought as a result. Foreign and African mining companies must preoccupy themselves with the environment because of the future of the regions in which they exploit natural resources. Oil corporations should also occupy themselves with the security and the health of the population in oil pipeline transports to the port of loading and unloading. At Sange, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, an entire village was burned with more than 500 casualties because of the accidental explosion of a tractor-trailer truck carrying fuel. None of the families has been compensated. Even the current government of Joseph Kabila remained indifferent to a tragedy of such magnitude by not following up with legal proceedings. From this perspective, instead of considering the local population as animals that must be decimated without any justice, multinational businesses must
instead cooperate with such populations in order to strengthen their sanitary conditions and educational possibilities—in short, to work for full justice.

**African Person Living as a “Being with Others”**

The African person cannot fulfil his or her capacities except by living as a “being with others” and by participating thus to the development of the life of the society. This final ethical axis allows for getting back to social investment and not the socialism, contrary to Friedman’s thesis, according to which a business’s only social responsibility is *to increase its profits while respecting a moral minimum*. It is unacceptable for a multinational business spending billions of dollars exploiting natural resources to be uninterested in those affected by its activities by being left in poverty and in even greater misery. *Being with others* in Africa presupposes participation and engagement in promoting a life of clan, tribe, ethnic, and professional solidarity. In African societies marked by interpersonal relations, a multinational business, regardless of its status, cannot conduct itself like an atom; it must be an integral part of the social and life milieu in which it operates. Because of its integration into social networks, it cannot divest itself of its social responsibilities. It must take them on by investing in health, education, and infrastructure—in short it must work in a win-win and not a win-lose partnership with the local government and civil society in order to develop the social environment. This social and entrepreneurial engagement is capable of influencing its economic productivity and increasing its profits but it is also capable of lending itself credibility by attracting more clients and consumers of its products. If Friedman’s thought, consisting of a business’s accumulation of colossal profits come what may, can be well understood in the Western context of individualistic culture dominated by neoliberal capitalism, his thought would have trouble succeeding in an African context characterized by a holistic culture.
It would have trouble being understood and it would function as an economic ideology disconnected from the local reality. In brief, "African ethics want to promote life in abundance, but this is impossible unless one respects the diversity among cultures. Such diversity, far from being an impoverishment, is an unheard-of opportunity and blessing, whereas globalization is a cultural cloning that wants to impose a monoculture that can only be dictatorial and oppressive. On the contrary, the world will be unable to enhance the strength and fullness of life and to recover peace unless one respects the plurality of cultures that may be in dialogue with one another."\(^{19}\)

**Conclusion:**

What, finally, do we want to support with this article? Capitalistic mining and oil multinationals operating in Africa can become *citizen businesses*, that is, businesses that offer more to humanity than the simple development of their capital. This is why we are against the neoclassical and liberal concepts of the Chicago School represented by the American economist Milton Friedman. For him a business has only one responsibility: the increase in profits. From the moment that the business engages in open and free competition without deceit or fraud, it must utilize all of its resources to engage in commercial and economic activities to augment its profits. In the setting of free market economics, the only responsibility a business's director has is to work in the interest of his or her shareholders. Because of this, the Chicago School opposes the business world to the moral world—business to human. Rather than a monistic and individualistic ideology, we unequivocally support a harmonious co-existence between profits and ethics, between maximizing shareholder profits and the social responsibility of businesses vis-à-vis society. Such responsibility comprises three

\(^{19}\) B. Bujo, *op. cit.* p. 149.
dimensions: economic or social responsibility, societal responsibility, and environmental responsibility (*Triple Bottom Line*). The worldwide performance of a multinational would henceforth rest on its economic performance, social engagement, and the environmental sensitivity that would permit such a business to attain its objective of lasting development.\textsuperscript{20}

Speaking of *economic or social performance*, every society must have economic profitability in order to satisfy workers and anticipate social investment. There are five aspects that we must consider: competence, training, working conditions and life in the business, sanitation and security in the business, remuneration. On the subject of *environmental sensitivity*, since businesses consume natural resources, produce waste and emit different kinds of pollution, they are held accountable for putting in place policies that protect the environment. They have several obligations: reducing their carbon emissions, reducing the toxicity of their products, reducing the risks that their activities weigh on the environment (e.g. oil slicks, excessively risky transport of petroleum products...), investing in favour of the environment (e.g. reforestation). The *social responsibility* relates to all activities external to the business, for example, the charters that a business furnishes to its suppliers or stockholders, the financing of foundations, humanitarian associations. In Canada, Canadian Tire imposes an ethical code on its foreign suppliers regarding provisioning, such that foreign suppliers understand and respect the nature of the business relations that Canadian Tire will maintain with them. This code of ethics clearly forbids all of Canadian Tire’s

foreign suppliers and even their subcontractors from using child labour or the labour of minors for the sole purpose of using and even exploiting them for economic ends. Numerous businesses participate in the development of the territories in which they are active through the construction of schools, roads, hospitals or other services for the local populations. At Kiliba in the Democratic Republic of Congo, before the war of liberation conducted by Laurent Desire Kabila in 1997, the sugar industry, a multinational under joint Belgian-Congolese state control, not only transformed sugar cane into sugar but also invested in the social life by supporting education and health initiatives. The sugar refinery of Kiliba created a primary and secondary school, built a hospital, not state of the art but suited to the size of the city, in order to care for the local population; it built homes for its employees, etc. It is truly about a social investment in the local economy. In short, ‘businesses themselves want to be ‘citizens:’ they create foundations, engage in protecting the environment and financing schools in countries with a view towards development, declare their desire to promote human rights....’ From this perspective, the ethical business not only becomes an economic actor but also a social and territorial one. It adheres to internal values in the professional sphere by the salaries it pays and its social environment, its values of professional honesty and its respect for persons...but it also adheres to external values that refer to solidarity and equity. The ethical business plays a primary role in the worldwide environment of the human community. Nevertheless, when referring to Africa, Western, Asian, and African capitalistic multinationals must work to respect life, that is, the dignity of the human person and respect for human rights. They must work to respect a healthy and viable environment. Every business activity should be conducted by taking account of the

cultural values of each people, nation, and continent. In Africa, it would be impossible to promote capitalistic, monistic, and individualistic forms of exploitation leaving thousands of people in poverty. The business is not an atom; it must inscribe itself in a viable environment. It is a compelling member of the society in which it acts; because of this it must assume its social responsibilities. Using a holistic and pluralistic approach, the wealth of the African continent should be exploited such that Africans benefit, acceding to a quality of life that allows them to blossom and accords them much joy, permitting them to recover their human dignity. In short, the wealth of our countries must be exploited with the aim of strengthening the Vital Force in Africa. Being-with-others presupposes the participation and civil engagement towards developing a social existence with all of the actors of the society in a win-win partnership with local governments, civil societies and capitalistic multinationals.

Translated from the French by Marie L. Baird, Ph.D., Duquesne University
AN AUTHORITY OVER GLOBALIZATION?
CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Anna Floerke Scheid¹

Introduction

In late October, 2011, the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace issued a document that addresses the global financial crisis, which continues to impact negatively the economic well-being of nations, communities, and families. The writers of the document note that their task is not to involve the Church directly in the political affairs of any nation, but rather to safeguard human dignity and point towards the common good.² The document views the financial crisis as a kind of Kairos – a moment of crisis and opportunity – for the global community “to shape a new vision for the future,”³ which ought to be characterized by “sustainable global economic activity grounded in responsibility.”⁴ The Pontifical Council avers that the role of the believers in the midst of the financial crisis is to ask “whether the human family has adequate means at its disposal to achieve the global common good,” and the Church must encourage all those who seek to enhance the quality of their lives to do so in accordance with the will of God.⁵

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⁵ Ibid. Presupposition.
The document begins with a description and analysis of how the global financial crisis came about. The crisis is rooted "first and foremost," the council declares, in "an economic liberalism that spurns rules and controls." The document notes a particular dearth of financial regulation when it comes to the process of economic globalization, which at present includes the spread of market capitalism across the globe. Economic globalization has generated immense wealth, but the institutions that promote it contain no substantive mechanism, nor rules or regulations, for distributing that wealth fairly. Indeed, lacking in any such regulations, the current forces of economic globalization contribute to a growing gap between rich and poor. Thus, in addition to creating wealth, this process also exacerbates poverty. Decrying these economic inequalities and the resistance to regulations that would promote ethical globalization, the council argues for the necessity of "an authority over globalization." 

The task of this essay is to provide a simple response to the Pontifical Council’s call for such a global authority. I will begin with a brief description of the authority over globalization that the document envisions. Next, I will situate this call for a global authority in the wider context of Catholic social teaching and

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6 Ibid. Section 1. North American readers in particular ought not confuse the council’s use of “liberalism” here with its common usage in Western, especially U.S., politics. The council refers to liberalism in the classic philosophical sense of total freedom and autonomy. This classic philosophical meaning of liberalism is in fact closer to what in U.S. politics would normally be characterized as “conservative.” That is, lack of government restraints on individual behaviour and/or corporate activities.

7 Ibid. See also Robert J. Schreiter’s similar analysis in The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 7.

8 "Ethical globalization" is a term coined by theological ethicist David Hollenbach to describe how the processes of globalization ought to be used to create a more just socio-political global environment. See David Hollenbach, "Ethical Globalization and the Rights of Refugees," Grace and Truth: A Journal of Catholic Reflection for Southern Africa 27, no. 2 (August, 2010): 29-42.

9 The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Section 3.
thought. Finally, I will draw out several strengths and weaknesses of this proposed solution for the global financial crisis and the prospects for global economic equality.

"An Authority over Globalization" and Catholic Social Teaching

A global public authority is necessary, the council argues, not only to regulate financial institutions, but also to consider a broad array of questions which affect the world community. Questions of "peace and security; disarmament and arms control; promotion and protection of fundamental human rights...management of migratory flows and food security; and protection of the environment" along with "economic and development policies" all require the attention of a global public authority. This authority is presented in the document as the ideal servant of the common good in the midst of ever-growing interdependence throughout the world. The authority ought to be "the outcome of a free and shared agreement and a reflection of the permanent and historic needs of the world common good. It ought to arise from a process of progressive maturation of consciences and advances in freedoms as well as awareness of growing responsibilities." The authority should protect "minority opinions rather than marginalizing them" and "consistently involve all peoples in a collaboration in which they are called to contribute, bringing to it the heritage of their virtues and their civilizations." A transformation is necessary from the cold realism of nations acting in their own self-interest towards the integration of "respective sovereignties for the common good of all peoples." Implemented gradually, perhaps

10 This is the title of Section 3 of the Pontifical Council’s document.
12 Ibid. Section 3.
13 Ibid. Section 3.
14 Ibid. Section 4.
as an evolution of the United Nations, this document contends that a global authority has become a necessary solution to global crises.\textsuperscript{15}

The vision of a global authority is certainly an ideal, but that does not necessarily make it unhelpful. Indeed, the description of an ideal global authority within an ideal society is somewhat typical of Catholic social teaching because, as theological ethicists Thomas Massaro points out, the task of the Church’s social teaching is to “contribut[e] to a world of greater peace and justice.”\textsuperscript{16} As Pope John Paul II notes in the social encyclical \textit{Solicitudo Rei Socialis}, “the Church does not propose economic and political systems or programs,” which would be outside of its purview of expertise. Rather, the Church is an “expert in humanity” such that it is called to reflect upon “whatever affects the dignity of individuals and peoples.”\textsuperscript{17} Catholic social thought thus often presents ideals in an effort to call humankind to strive towards greater peace, justice, and respect for the dignity of persons and all creation.

Indeed, the ideal of a public global authority is a recurrent one in Catholic social teaching. As the Pontifical Council’s document itself notes, the call for a global public authority originates in Pope John XXIII’s 1963 encyclical \textit{Pacem in Terris}. Since the United Nations, which bears in some features a resemblance to the suggested global public authority, was formed in 1945, \textit{Pacem in Terris} has been viewed in part as Catholic support for strengthening of the UN. Since the papacy of John XXIII, support for an entity that would be a kind of stronger and more authoritative version of the United Nations has been present in the

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., Section 3.
Authority over Globalization?

writings and speeches of all Roman Catholic popes. It has been a consistent feature throughout several social encyclicals.

The most recent encyclical to call for a robust global authority is Pope Benedict XVI’s *Caritas in veritate*, and it is helpful to understand the Pontifical Council’s call for a global public authority to oversee international monetary and financial systems in the light of this encyclical. As North American theologian Lisa Sowle Cahill rightly points out, “the immediate precipitating cause and focal concern of *Caritas* is global economic meltdown.”18 The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace takes its cue in placing front and centre the idea of a global public authority from this first and, thus far, only social encyclical by Pope Benedict. In the context of support for strengthening the UN, *Caritas* declares an urgent need for a “world political authority” that would “be universally recognized and...vested with the effective power to ensure security for all, regard for justice, and respect for rights.”19 Cahill also sees this as the presentation of an ideal, remarking that Benedict has “remarkable expectations for the United Nations” and that “the very premise of global UN control – universal global recognition of and compliance with its ultimate authority – is highly unrealistic.”20

**Strengths: Setting Standards for International Institutions**

Despite the fact that the global public authority described by the Pontifical Council represents a model and even utopian vision of international justice, it can nevertheless be a helpful tool for evaluating and suggesting solutions for the global economic crisis.

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20 Cahill, 306.
Specifically, the ideal they present can provide a set of standards by which to judge existing or emerging global institutions. Based on the description which the document provides of the global public authority, we might judge international financial institutions by the ways in which they promote or harm subsidiarity, solidarity, and the common good.

With regard to subsidiarity, the document argues that the global authority "should put itself at the service of the various member countries...by creating socio-economic and legal conditions for the existence of markets that are efficient and efficacious precisely because they are not over-protected by paternalistic national policies..."\(^{21}\) In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, the public authority should be set up such that it "can allow each country to express and pursue its own particular good."\(^{22}\) This illustrates the document's sense that, even in the midst of a global public authority, local cultures and communities must be respected. Cultural diversity is prized over cultural hegemony. The more global institutions conform to this standard of subsidiarity in such a way that "guarantees both democratic legitimacy and the efficacy of the decisions of those called to make them,"\(^{23}\) the more such institutions can be judged to be morally good. By emphasizing subsidiarity, the council seeks to allay concerns that a global authority would really turn into a global authoritarianism. Decisions must be made in a way that the interests of local peoples are protected and promoted. At the same time, it also highlights a moral weakness within the forces of economic globalization, which often times do not operate under a principle of subsidiarity. As Todd Whitmore argues, subsidiarity is not only concerned with the intervention of the state into other spheres of life, but also with "the excessive intervention of any sphere in another" and "the excessive intervention of large and

21 Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Section 3.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
remote institutions within a particular sphere.” Economic globalization tends to prefer the financial interests of large institutions over the political and economic concerns of smaller localities. Hence the council’s focus on a global authority marked by subsidiarity actually serves as a critique of international forces shaping globalization, which do not guarantee "democratic legitimacy.”

The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace also connects the vision of a global authority to the principles of solidarity and the common good. “Thanks to the principle of solidarity, a lasting and fruitful relationship would build up between global and civil society and a world public Authority as States, intermediate bodies, various institutions – including economic and financial ones – and citizens make their decisions with a view to the global common good, which transcends national goods.” In accordance with these two principles, the ideal global public authority should encourage “policies aimed at achieving free and stable markets and a fair distribution of world wealth, which may also derive from unprecedented forms of global fiscal solidarity…” Solidarity and a commitment to the international common good thus become two additional criteria by which to measure the moral content of global financial institutions.

**Weaknesses: Taking Sin into Account**

Broadly speaking, Catholic social thought has a robust understanding of structural sin. *Solicitude rei socialis* makes reference to social sin or structures of evil over a dozen times. Here, structural sin is described as “linked to concrete acts of

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26 Ibid.
individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them and make them difficult to remove. And thus they grow stronger, spread, and become the source of other sins, and so influence people’s behavior." Given the strong tradition in Catholic social thought of seeking to make visible structures of sin, alongside the reality that global financial authorities such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have consistently fallen short of the ideal, it would seem to be a flaw not to take seriously the idea of structural sin when suggesting the creation of a world authority over globalization. Ignoring or downplaying concerns about structural sin in suggesting a global public authority is problematic if it fails to recognize the tendency of great power to corrupt individuals and institutions.

Developing countries might well be suspicious of the call for a global public authority. Indeed a consistent critique of international economic and political institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the IMF has been that they are dominated by Western industrial states who use their powerful global positions to exploit and dominate weaker nations. Moreover, the Pax Romana International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs has averred that “the poor countries have a weak position and no voice in the globalization process.” While there is some attention to this when the Pontifical Council acknowledges that “less developed or emerging countries” have been at times excluded from centres of power, there does not seem to be any real solution suggested to this inevitable power imbalance and the

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negative consequences for the developing world. From the theological perspective, sin is too pervasive to ensure that a global public authority would operate ethically without institutional checks and balances against domination and corruption, or that the prevailing forces in international politics would allow such a global authority to emerge that could check their interests. Presumably such checks and balances would fall under the rubric of subsidiarity, but much more must be said about how this works in a practical way and how various powerful stakeholders would have to be contained.

One possible form of checks and balances that might alleviate some of the effects of structural sin with regard to a global public authority is to strengthen the role of NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) in mediating between the local and the global.\textsuperscript{31} Pope John Paul II recognized the importance of NGOs:

No organization...not even the United Nations or any of its specialized agencies, can alone solve the global problems which are constantly brought to its attention, if its concerns are not shared by all the people. It is then the privileged task of the non-governmental organizations to help bring these concerns into the communities and the homes of the people, and to bring back to the established agencies the priorities and aspirations of the people, so that all the solutions and projects which are envisaged may be truly geared to the needs of the human person.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{31} For an excellent analysis of the work of NGOs in this context, consult Kevin Ahern, "Catholic NGOs: Mediators between the Local and the Global," paper presentation, College Theology Society, June, 2012.

Here, John Paul II recognizes how important it is that local needs and desires be effectively communicated to those in power in national and international governing structures. Indeed, he clearly links NGOs to the international community’s ability effectively to promote human dignity. On the other hand, the Pontifical Council’s document largely seems to view the ideal of the global public authority as consisting of representatives from various nation states. Given the power differentials amongst various nation states, it would seem critical to include non-state actors in any global authoritative body. If NGOs can indeed be “alternative centres of power”, then they can provide an important check on the inevitable power imbalances between competing nation states within a global public authority. Representatives from NGOs as well as representatives from large and small banks, corporations, and other businesses, and perhaps even representatives from small tribes and neighborhoods, should, at least periodically, be included and empowered within a world authority over globalization. This need to include non-state actors in any global authority seems particularly relevant in the context of the global financial crisis. The crisis was caused less by nation states themselves and more by financial institutions and corporations, and arguably those most negatively affected are small local communities and families.

The lack of inclusion of NGOs as well as other sorts of local and grassroots representation points to a final area of concern with the suggestion of a world authority over globalization: it represents a top-down rather than a bottom-up approach to solving a problem.

33 Todd Whitmore notes that classical liberalism “tends to overlook those forms of association that form the matrix of most of human life and provide a mediating buffer between the person and the state.” Whitmore, “Catholic Social Teaching,” 76. Just as subsidiarity demands intermediate institutions with a particular society, so do NGOs fill that role on an international level.

that was arguably created by those at the top. The document would be more balanced if it argued for strengthening and empowering local organizations so that they can keep financial institutions within their communities accountable to their needs. NGOs might help to empower local communities to an extent, but they may be best at mediating between those on the top and those on the bottom. Thus a truly bottom-up method must also approach some foreign NGOs with a degree of suspicion in local contexts. While arguably good mediators between the local and the global, many NGOs nevertheless approach development and problems created by globalization by lobbying and bargaining within existing structures of government, rather than radically shifting power to the local community.  

A bottom-up approach might include NGOs which want to adopt community organizing strategies and ultimately hand over decision making power to local groups. The famous community organizer Paolo Freire argued that this kind of leadership involves "organizing with the people." Such cooperation between NGOs and local contexts would be in accord with the traditional concept of subsidiarity, and it would further enhance the participation of people in working towards the common good, which are clearly concerns of the council. These forms of participation would seem especially important for African nations, as they continue to struggle and succeed in "addressing the challenges faced by the continent and demonstrating the inherent African capacity to handle its own problems." It is important to support small financial institutions, such as co-ops, community banks, and credit unions. The need to strengthen these

organizations has already been intuitively recognized at the grassroots, as individuals, families, and small businesses have divested from large financial institutions and invested instead in local banks. Grassroots organizing will be as, if not more, important than a large global public authority and even top-down NGOs in holding large financial institutions accountable to the common good. To consider more thoroughly the role of grassroots participation in economic life also seems more in line with the full meaning of the principle of subsidiarity.

**Conclusion**

The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace has responded to the global economic crisis by suggesting the formation of a world authority over globalization. The notion of a world authority can function positively as an ideal, which provides a set of standards or criteria rooted in subsidiarity, solidarity, and the common good, for evaluating existing and emerging global financial structures. The more financial institutions conform to these standards, the more they uphold the values of social ethics, including human dignity, and the more legitimate they are as institutions that promote the common good. On the other hand, the notion of a world authority over globalization raises questions about structural sin and the nature of power that cannot be easily glossed over. In his analysis of *Caritas in Veritate*, Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, insists that "What negates the principles of Catholic social teaching is the tendency for developed countries of the West and the East to pursue their economic interests in Africa at the expense of basic human rights, decent quality of life, and various indicators of development." The idea of a global public authority represents a top-down approach to problems arguably created by people and

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institutions at the top. It is important therefore to consider seriously how to place checks against structural sin in the organization of any such global authority. Empowering people and organizations at the grassroots—that is a bottom-up approach—will be more efficacious than the formation of a global public authority alone.
Outlining the Argument

Two concepts, "Problem" and "Project", readily come to mind in describing the continent of Africa with its 54 political States, the most recent being South Sudan. In the international comity of nations, the continent of Africa is a problem and a burden. It is a problem for reasons of the myriads of its seemingly intractable and endless crises: food crisis, humanitarian crisis, epidemics, inter-ethnic or religious conflicts, political instability and violence etc. In the eyes of the world, then, Africa is a problem child; a burden and a cog in the wheels of international progress and advancement. Africa is a cripple in the midst of athletes that run at supersonic speed. In view of these, it would appear that the rest of the world has taken the continent of Africa as a project; indeed, a massive project that requires enormous resources of all kinds. Think of the huge financial and economic "aids" that have been poured into different States of Africa. Africa can, then, be described as one huge Reconstruction Project. Employing Socrates’ myth or analogy of the cave, Luemba would liken this reconstruction project to an attempt or effort to lift Africa out of the cave. According to him:

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2 I prefer to use the term "States" than nations or countries, throughout this paper. Essentially, they mean the same thing.
“through series of economic recovery plans or through financing of several development projects, the international community has attempted to ‘raise the head’ of a sick and imprisoned Africa. These efforts are comparable to the attempts to liberate prisoners from a cave.”

But it is not only institutions and persons outside the continent of Africa that are interested and involved in this task of reconstruction; Africans themselves are equally concerned and involved in this project of reconstruction. In fact, Africans have often been challenged to take the lead in the huge task of reconstruction. Pope Benedict’s exhortation to Africans, “Stand up, take your mat and walk” (Jn 5: 8), can, indeed, be interpreted from this perspective. Africans must not lie around and wait for someone else to lift her up. She must pick up her mat and walk, even when she needs the aid of Grace. Speaking in a similar light, President Barack Obama of the United States of America reminded Africans that:

You have the power to hold your leaders accountable, and to build institutions that serve the people. You can serve in your communities, and harness your energy and education to create new wealth and build new connections to the world. You can conquer disease, end conflicts, and make change from the bottom up. You can do that. Yes you can! Because in this moment history is on the move. But these things can only be done if you take responsibility for your future. It won't be easy. It will take time and effort. There will be suffering and setbacks. But I can promise you this: America will be with you as a partner, as a friend. Opportunity won't come from any other place, though—it

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must come from the decisions that you make, the things that you do, and the hope that you hold in your hearts.\textsuperscript{4} The crux of Obama's speech is that Africans must grow up and face up to their responsibilities like adults.

This project of reconstruction is one that is, indeed, multifaceted and all embracing, such that no spectrum of the African life and society is left out; not even the field of Theology! Hence Jesse Mugambi will speak of "reconstruction as the paradigm of African Theology." According to him, reconstruction, as a paradigm, challenges theologians and other specialists to review the role of academic disciplines in social engineering, to make African leadership more accountable to the ordinary people.\textsuperscript{5}

A project of reconstruction, especially one of a significant magnitude like the one that is the subject of our discussion, is one that requires a lot of critical reflection. It demands critical study and analysis, careful planning, and right approach. A reconstruction project requires that all angles must be explored, studied and critiqued to ensure the success of that project. This accounts for the tons of academic reflections and studies that have been done and written on what could be described as a "reconstruction roadmap" for the continent of Africa. There have been approaches from economic and financial angles, which seek to discern the right economic models that will get Africa off her feet. The drive towards democratization is one of such roadmaps, designed from the political perspective that is believed to hold a key to the liberation of the African continent from its present state of underdevelopment. The once touted "transfer of technology" option was, at a point, conceived to be the solution to all of Africa's problems. All these different "roadmaps" whether taken individually or collectively have the same common objective: to set

Reconceptualising... Reconstituting the States of Africa

Africa on a firm standing among the international comity of nations.

The African Crisis—Identifying the Root Causes

Proper diagnosis is a precondition or prerequisite for proffering right solutions. Right solutions cannot be applied when a symptom is mistaken for a cause. While the causative and symptomatic distinction may oftentimes be clear and easily identifiable or distinguishable, it is not always so in all instances. As such, some phenomena may have both the features of a cause and a symptom. In this case, it may be proper to speak of a causative symptom. For instance, the internecine ethnic conflicts and violence that have rocked many African States can, indeed, be identified as one of the causes of the underdevelopment of Africa: such violent situations do not provide peaceful and enabling ambient that is needed for meaningful development of persons and institutions. Yet, can it not be equally held that such conflicts are themselves symptoms or manifestation of certain political structures or organizations that are inherently dysfunctional which often provoke such internecine conflicts and violence? In this instance, then, it will be too simplistic to identify political conflicts in Africa as merely a cause or rather one of the causes of its present situation of impotence and underachievement. We shall further explore this argument using the Nigerian situation as a typical example.

Traditionally, le crise africaine, has been often attributed to a double causality: endogenous and exogenous. The former includes: "the organized pillage by the ruling class, ... the practice of distributing State resources to cronies [that] derives from a mentality of predation has led to the ruin of a number of African countries..."7 "[M]ost of the wars and conflicts which have further

6 Cf. Luemba, 14.
7 Luemba, 14
impoverished the black continent can best be explained within the context of the geopolitical and economic manoeuvrings or intrigues which involve the control, by powerful interest groups, of natural resources such as crude oil, uranium, copper, diamond, cobalt, gold or aluminium..." The *exogenous causality*, on the other hand, is what can generally be described as *the responsibilities of the West.*

This will include: the slave trade in which over fifteen million men and women, most of whom, if not all, were among the healthiest and most productive of the African population were sold into slavery; the colonial experience which traumatized and destabilized the African society; and, of course, post-colonialism which continues to exploit, intervene in and emasculate the African continent. Commenting on this form of post-colonial politics of interventionism and emasculation, Diop and others stated that "the neck-deep collusion or connivance of Paris with Africa’s most corrupt leaders is undeniable, yet this fact remains a taboo in the French media... From Cote d’Ivoire to Togo, every crisis in Africa is an occasion to attest to French interventionism in the continent. She props up dictatorial regimes while at the same time secretly funding the most virulent opposition groups; she trains and arms ethnic and private militias; and in what could be described as a macabre or sinister comedy, pretends to watch over the good performance of democratic African leaders. These happen to be her puppets chosen from the most narrow-minded and corrupt political class." Of course, what Diop and others wrote about France and

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their former colonies is equally true of other western powers like the USA, Britain, Germany, etc.

Luemba, however, dismisses as obsolete, this approach of identifying the root cause of the African crisis and dilemma. The paradigm of Africa’s primary responsibility must serve as the theoretical framework for a new reading and interpretation of the African crisis.\(^\text{11}\) I entirely agree with Luemba that we must move away from an alibi mentality which seeks to exonerate us from taking real and full responsibility for resolving our problems. Africans must become adults and face up to their responsibilities. This is, in fact, a key mark of adulthood. An addendum which I would want to add to the fresh hermeneutics of understanding, interpreting and responding to the African problem is that such hermeneutics must be done in the light of history. In other words, it must incorporate elements and methods of historical criticism. It is in having an eye to history that Africans can, as part of their effort to seek solutions to their problems, discern what historic baggage or baggage of history that needs to be dropped or better still, what aspects of their history that needs to be redefined. This brings me to the second and very important part of this paper.

**The Concept of Statehood and the African Crisis**

Although it is always valid and legitimate to speak of the crisis of the continent of Africa, we must constantly keep ourselves from slipping into that error of thinking and speaking of Africa as if it were just a simple and unified reality. The similarity and commonality of the lived experience of crises does not justify or validate an approach that ignores or minimizes the fact that we are dealing with crises that are part of the lived experiences of persons or people living in territories with delineated boundaries that have sovereign status. And so, when we speak of the African crisis or the

crisis of the continent of Africa, we are, indeed, speaking of the crises of the States in and of the African continent first taken individually and then collectively. The recognition of this fact is, indeed, a very significant variable in placing in better focus the African crisis and in isolating the root causes of this crisis. And so, a complement to a global approach to the crisis of the continent of Africa is an approach that highlights the individuality of States that constitute the African continent. This latter approach makes possible the formulation or articulation of a very fundamental question, namely, are the crises of the individual and collective States of the African continent not bound up with the question of Statehood? In other words, is the notion of an African State not itself a key or central question in the whole spectre of crises that has marked the continent? In fact, one may even ask an even more fundamental question: does the continent of Africa really have what can, in the true sense of the word, be called States? Is Nigeria, for example, a (true) State? Or is the Democratic Republic of Congo a (true) State? Of course, questions such as these would lead inevitably to the question of the meaning of State or what constitutes a State. This in turn will open up the discussion on the various theories of State and theories of their evolution. We cannot in this paper go into such discussions so as not to lose sight of our primary focus and not to clutter the paper with many digressions. But what is evident is that the question of Statehood is an unresolved question in the continent of Africa.

Does, therefore, the mere fact that a defined territorial area that shares a common flag, one national anthem, a single government, etc., make such delineated territory a State? Could it not be that what we ordinarily consider to be a State is actually a conglomeration of States? For instance, up until midnight of July 8, 2011, what could now be referred to as “Old” Sudan was for all terms and purpose understood, even in international circles, to be a single State in the continent of Africa. But a few seconds after midnight, that single State ceased to exist. In place of one single
State of Sudan, there became two States: South Sudan and what may be referred to as “New” Sudan. That historic event is, indeed, an unmistakable statement of the fact that for that territory of “Old” Sudan, the question of Statehood was an unresolved issue. And there is no way one can fully interpret and grasp the crisis of “Old” Sudan and, indeed, of other neighbouring States without taking into cognizance the fact of this unresolved question of what State meant for the erstwhile “citizens” of that territory.

Although, one might wish to explain the crisis that, for decades, engulfed that region of Africa in terms of a political crisis, such explanation will remain, however, superficial, inadequate but also false or at best misleading if done without full reference to and recognition of the socio-economic and other developmental crises the struggle to uphold a certain notion of State—as a territory comprising of South Sudan—engendered during all those decades of conflicts and war. Can one adequately explain the intractable crisis in today’s Democratic Republic of Congo, without taking into consideration its present configuration as a single State or entity with a territorial dimension that surpasses the whole of Western Europe? Is its present constitution as a single State not itself a problem with multiplier effects that have social, economic, and environmental consequences? Similarly, can one adequately account for the crippled state of the so-called giant of Africa, i.e. Nigeria, in spite of its enormous human and natural resources, without factoring in the unresolved question of what a Nigerian State actually means? Similar questions may be raised about States of Africa.

The fact is that the concept of African States is an inherited and imposed one. It is the result of the historic balkanization of the African continent at the infamous Berlin Conference of 1885. And so, contemporary African States continue to bear the identity conferred on them by their erstwhile colonial masters. It is no longer a point for academic speculation or debate to argue that the conceptualization, configuration and constitution of African States
by colonial powers were inspired by mere economic interest and political expediency. In other words, there was no real intention to configure and constitute on the principles of virility and sustainability what became known as African States. It is not surprising, then, that most if not all African States suffer from a certain internal structural weakness that is linked to their very configuration and constitution as a State. There is, in other words, a personality crisis or weakness in their very constitution. This personality or identity weakness is the root or, at least, in some way or the other instrumental to the rest of the crises that each entity suffers as a State. One might liken this to the multiple difficulties or problems, that one who suffers from a serious personality or identity disorder experiences. African States suffer severe identity crisis in their corporate personality. And as long as this crisis of corporate personality or identity is unresolved, it is unlikely that the continent will resolve the other socio-political, moral and economic crises.

What is amazing and curious is that, in most analyses of the African crisis, little or no serious attention is given to the corporate personality of what we know as African States; and in particular how this question is intimately linked with other socio-political, economic and moral problems that bedevil the various African States. It appears that many citizens of various African States have taken for granted and accepted as an unquestionable dogma, the colonially bequeathed corporate personality and identity such that any attempt to raise a discussion on this subject is perceived and characterized as treasonable offence: territorial boundaries are fixed and immutable. These may be described as faithful disciples of Pontus Pilate who declared: ‘what I have written, I have written.’ In like manner, these affirm: ‘what is fixed is fixed.’ Thus, there appears to be a morbid fear to question and critically examine and even reject the corporate personality and identity which were defined and imposed on the African people by the colonial imperialists. This primitive fear gnaws at the heart of the opponents
of a sovereign national conference in Nigeria. Citizens of many African States are, therefore, yet to appreciate and comprehend the challenge to learn to reflect for ourselves employing conceptual categories that are properly ours.\textsuperscript{12} African States must, in other words, both individually and collectively reconceptualize and reinterpret for themselves what it means to be State. They must strip themselves of that imposed colonial concept of State and discover and interpret Statehood for themselves using their own images, idioms, colours, language, concepts and categories. This is \textit{the new point of departure for writing our common history}.\textsuperscript{13}

But there is even a worse kind of presupposition rooted, perhaps, in gross deficiency of history, or a facile analysis of it, which makes it rather difficult for some contemporary commentators and analysts to appreciate the importance of the question of Statehood in relation to internal and sometimes external crises in various African nations. Dipo Onabanjo in the cover story of \textit{Tell Magazine} speaks of the conviction of the \textit{founding fathers of Nigeria} at her independence. According to him, they had “expected that a united country with a strong faith in its abilities would not have difficulty achieving peace and progress that will make it a force to reckon with in the comity of nations. However, after 51 years of independent existence, these dreams of the country’s \textit{founding fathers} have sadly remained tall dreams as the country, buffeted by a cross-current of opposing influences appears to be drifting dangerously away from the set goals.”\textsuperscript{14} Without going into a detailed critique, I will quickly point out that Onabanjo seemed to have presumed that Nigeria as State was the deliberate creation of some Nigerians whom he ascribes the title \textit{founding fathers}. Nigeria was founded not by any group of Nigerians but by British colonialists who had not even the slightest vision or

\textsuperscript{12} Luemba, \textit{L’Afrique}, 15.
\textsuperscript{13} Luemba, \textit{L’Afrique}, 15.
expectation that Onabanjo outlined. The so-called *founding fathers*, i.e. the pioneer political leaders were men and women who tried to make the inherited entity called Nigeria work, without subjecting the nature and status of that corporate entity to critical questioning. By grossly failing to fully appreciate the fact that that entity as structured by the British colonialists was one in which, ‘the British through the policy of “divide and rule” exemplified in the differential treatment of regional elites, the amplification of pre-colonial differences, the heightening of inter-ethnic tension, sowed the seeds of inter-regional and inter-ethnic suspicion.’\(^*\) How could these *founding fathers* have presumed that an entity already configured and structured along such serious divisive line could function successfully? Could it be that this uncritical and perhaps naive presupposition is responsible for the “cross-current of opposing influences” that is buffeting the Nigerian ship?

**Attempts to Restructure the African Continent**

Looking at the post-colonial and contemporary history of Africa, one may identify a number of occasions or instances that could be characterized as attempts to redefine and reconstitute the corporate personality and identity of the African States. The earliest of this was Kwame Nkrumah’s Pan-Africanism. According to Mugambi, “Nkrumah cherished and promoted the idea that African peoples were one community—irrespective of the colonial boundaries which the Berlin Conference had endorsed in 1885. He believed that it was possible to transcend the language, immigration and tariff barriers imposed by the former colonial powers, and establish one economic and political community covering the whole

Reconceptualising...Reconstituting the States of Africa

Similar endeavours that follow, in some degrees the vision of Nkrumah, though in a less ambitious dimension, are the various regional integration bodies like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC), etc. Both the Nkrumah and the Regional Integration approaches to redefining, restructuring or reconfiguring the African States in ways other than the colonialists’ vision and intent, though well intentioned, suffer from a similar flaw, namely, naivety. Nkrumah’s naivety could be best described as the naivety of the Tower of Babel. The regional integration bodies suffer from a different kind of naivety. These bodies pretend to be capable of forming an integrated body with a single or common identity and corporate personality from different individual countries or States which have unclear, ambiguous or even dysfunctional corporate personality and identity. How much, for instance, can a State like Nigeria, with its own unclear status and corporate identity as a State, contribute to the quest for a common corporate image or identity of a larger entity like ECOWAS? Symphorien Ntibagirirwa encapsulates this critique perfectly when he affirmed:

Integration is impossible without first affirming one’s identity, and without affirming one’s identity it is difficult to consciously contribute to the eventual result or product of integration. To affirm one’s identity is to be capable of responding to the question: ‘Who am I?’ The whole dynamics of opening up oneself to the other centre on this very question. It is in recognizing and affirming one’s identity that one is able to know what about his person, he can bring or give to others and what he expects from others.

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16 Mugambi, Christian Theology and Social Reconstruction, 39.
in return. This mutual exchange or self-gift is the true basis for all philosophy of solidarity.\footnote{Symphorien Ntibagirirwa, “Affirmer Son Identité pour Bien S’intégrer au Monde et Contribuer a son Humanisation,” - Intégration Régional : Etat des Lieux et Questions. Ethique and Société, Revue de Réflexion Morale, 7/ 1 (Janvier-Avril 2011), 4-5. My translation.}

The present States of Africa must, therefore, first individually pose the question: “Who Am I?” But they must also pose a follow-up question, namely; “Who Do I Want or Wish to be?” This latter question is rooted in the fact that what each of the present State of Africa is, is the result of a \emph{hetero-definition}, i.e. a definition imposed on her by another. Each State must, therefore, seek to discover what she wishes to be in terms of her corporate personality or identity. In other words, each must strive for an \emph{auto-definition} of herself. It may well be that at the end of that quest, what she wishes to be may correspond with what she presently is and in that case, there would be no need for a reconceptualization or reconfiguration of her corporate identity. In that case, that State undergoes the process that in theology is known as \emph{reception}.\footnote{Reception is a key theological notion and process. Reception, according to Anthony Akinwale, is a process through which the Church in a given place discusses, interprets, and finally makes part of its own life the teachings or practices, decrees and decisions of [a] Council. Cf. \emph{The Congress and the Council: Towards a Nigerian Reception of Vatican II}, (Ibadan: The Michael J. Dempsey Centre, 2003), p. 4. In this case, we may speak of a State receiving or making as its own, the corporate identity, status and personality that was conferred on her by her colonial master.} But if, on the other hand, the \emph{auto-definition} is out of sync with her imposed \emph{hetero-definition}, then, there will be need to reconceptualise, redefine, reconfigure and reconstitute its corporate existence, i.e. corporate personality and identity as a State.

Perhaps, it is the likelihood of such political re-engineering that paralyzes many with fright. They, rightly or wrongly, imagine that such restructuring might be highly explosive and would, in
fact, open a floodgate of wild, bloody and uncontrollable anarchy that would result in the dissolution of many African States. The unmanageability of such a situation, they further imagine, would be worsened by the myriads of major and minor ethnic nationalities that will demand their own sovereignty. Such a scenario would lead to a balkanization of Africa, far worse than that of the Berlin Conference. This will ultimately weaken the African continent and further subject it to the predation of foreign powers thus, forever nailing the continent of Africa in her self-made coffin. This reasoning, therefore, presupposes that a proposal of this kind is a prescription for auto-destruction. It is, in other words, a *Hemlock Therapy*. In the face of such a suicidal option, it would then be best for the African States to continue in their present configuration and structure. This, in fact, is the classical argument of opponents of the convocation of a sovereign national council to redefine the Nigerian State.

One cannot dismiss with a wave of the hand the fears and arguments of those who espouse this position. Several secessionist agitations in different parts of Africa, with that of Northern Mali being the most recent on the list, seem to lend credence to this fear. But are these agitations, one may ask, not themselves a demand for reconfiguration and reconstitution, a demand which, when persistently ignored, begins to take up a radical character that may slowly but inevitably slide into violent and bloody confrontations. One can indeed note the increasing frustration and gradual radicalization in the position of one of the few African recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize, Prof. Wole Soyinka, who for decades had been in the forefront in demanding the convocation of a sovereign national conference that will examine and restructure the Nigerian State. Exasperated by the obstinate refusal of successive Nigerian governments (both military and civil, backed by individuals and institutions with vested interests in the present dysfunctional configuration of the Nigerian State), to heed to this demand, Soyinka at a public forum proposed an alternative to a national
conference. He declared: "[t]here need be no further calls for a national conference. Let each regional grouping with compatible ideas of the ultimate mission—the future of the humanity for which they are responsible—begin to call the shots, and relegate the centre to its rightful dimensions in any functioning federated democracy. Let each state call its own conference of peoples to articulate in just what direction they wish to direct their leaders and relate to the centre and other states."\(^{19}\) It can be said with all certainty that if Soyinka's invitation is followed through by any region or regions of the Nigerian State, such action will certainly provoke a serious political tension of no small magnitude between the Federal government and those regions; one that may eventually snowball into a more violent crisis if not civil war. But such crises are inevitable when pacific or peaceful demands for restructuring and reconfiguration are ignored or suppressed. This, then, belies the position or argument that the adoption of the proposal that aims at the reconstitution of African States is a *Hemlock Therapy* for the African continent. On the contrary, it is the refusal to adopt such a proposal that is, in fact, a sword of Damocles, that threateningly hangs on the head of States like Nigeria, DRC, etc., that stubbornly refuse to address the question of their corporate personality and identity. In recent history, one can point to the Balkan crisis that followed on the heels of the inevitable breakup of former Yugoslavia, as an example of how never to wish away strong national or ethnic sentiments of components of what pretends to be a State. And so, pretending that a problem does not exist or burying it in the sand, will never make the problem go away, it merely postpones the doomsday.

One can further fault the argument of those who insist that a platform that may lead to the reconfiguration of African States is suicidal rather than beneficial, on their unstated but false

premise that national boundaries are immutable. Again, recent history has amply demonstrated the contrary. The former Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (USSR) is a remarkable example of this fact of human history. There are no permanent boundaries!

But the greatest flaw in the position of those who object to the project of reconstruction and reconfiguration is their inability to grasp the intrinsic connection between the question of Statehood and the myriads of other crises that bedevil African States. Writing on the threat of the Islamic terrorist group Boko Haram, the Tell Magazine in its cover story has this to say:

...beyond the immediate problem of containing the onslaught of Boko Haram, there are sufficient grounds to believe that a bigger challenge facing Nigeria is to address once and for all the lingering questions over the political future of the country. The belief is that the phenomenon known as Boko Haram today is predicated on perceived injustice and social ills that have been associated with the Nigerian federation for sometimes now. As Ajayi puts it, the country is sitting on a keg of gunpowder because there is so much distortion in the Nigerian system.20

A superficial analysis of the “much distortion” which exists in the Nigerian system, may merely be reduced to questions about political arrangement of power sharing, or economic inequalities among the various components of the Nigerian State, etc. But a more critical analysis will indicate that such distortions or dysfunctions are ultimately tied to the very concept or idea of the Nigerian State itself. Unless, one arrives at this depth of comprehension and interpretation, one will merely be dealing with symptoms and shadows. It means, therefore, that an enlightened

and rigorous discourse on the present configuration of most if not all African States is a *sine qua non* for finding a comprehensive answer to the African Crisis. For such discourse to be meaningful, fruitful and beneficial, it must be informed and guided by rational principles and ideas. But above all, it must draw its resources from all fields of human knowledge including theology.

**A Theological Perspective to the Question of Reconceptualization and Reconfiguration,**

Here we come to the third part of this paper, i.e. the theological contribution to the discourse of the African Crisis. Pope Benedict XVI in an address, reiterated in his Post-Synodal Exhortation, *Africæ Munus*, called 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 [and theologians] in specific times and places. But the pastoral ministry into which theology is to be translated is not, however, limited to spiritual matters; it includes matters of politics, economics, society-culture: the subject of pastoral care is one who is influenced by, and strives after his/her salvation in, a context which is political, social, cultural and economic. What great perspectives found in sacred Scripture and Tradition can theology bring into discourse of the *African crisis* vis-à-vis its relation to the question of the present configuration and constitution of African States? This question is made pertinent by the insightful remark of the Bishop of Rome when he reminded African Christians that their contributions will only be decisive if their understanding of the faith shapes their

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understanding of the world.22 Although the task and mission of theology is not in the political, economic, and social order,23 theology must, nonetheless, constantly cast the reflected light of that divine life and revelation in a manner that consolidates society, and endows the daily activities of men and women, in the political, economic and social arena, with a deeper sense and meaning.24 African theologians must, therefore, offer insights drawn from their faith in the Crucified and Risen Lord in shaping the African society. The theology of communion offers a good starting point for developing sound principles that can be employed in the reconceptualization of Statehood in Africa.

The Theology of Communion

Christians and Christian theology have down the centuries come to accept as foundational the notion of a God who has revealed Godself as personal and thus relational. Far from the notion of an abstract or impersonal God or God who is shut up in Godself, Christians profess faith in a God who is Father of all things and who has perfectly and definitively revealed Godself in Christ through the Spirit. Thus, Christian theology understands God as a perfect being in communion. Created in the very image and likeness of God, men and women are also created as beings in communion: communion with God and with one another. Our relationships, therefore, are to be governed, shaped and guided by the essential characteristics of the Trinitarian communion. It is not surprising, therefore, that the church’s self-understanding derives from the very notion of communion: κοινωνία, communio. According to the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, the

22 Address to the Pontifical Council for the Laity (21 May 2010), Insegnamenti VI/1 (2010), 758, cited in Africae Munus, #32.
23 Gaudium et Spes, 42
24 Gaudium et Spes, 40
Church is the people of God called into communion with God and with his fellow human persons. Baptism sacramentally initiates believers into the life of communion both with God and with the ecclesial community; it calls the baptized into a new mode of living, a new relationship. Indeed, communion lies not only at the very core of created human nature but also at the core of God’s salvific plan for humans. Hence, the Fathers of Vatican II noted that, “God has, however, willed to make men and women holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness.”\(^{25}\) And so, communion is, indeed, part of God’s providential will for man since it flows from Him and points to His own nature.

At the very roots of the notion of communion is the idea of liberty, freedom and deep rooted spontaneity. These are distinctive of the nature of God himself but they also characterize the human person. Communion cannot be possible without the exercise of full liberty since communion is the meeting of two liberties: the one who extends the invitation and the other who embraces or welcomes it. Intimate and complete union, the highpoint of every communion, results from voluntary and spontaneous mutual self-giving. This does not admit of any force or compulsion. In this voluntary self-giving, one is even willing to offer up one’s life as a perfect expression and testimony of his/her total self-donation to the other.

We see this character of communion in the very person and life of Jesus Christ. Intimately united with his Father, he willingly emptied himself and assumed a lower state in order to accomplish the Divine plan (Phil 2: 3-9). But his kenosis was not only motivated by his intimate communion with his Father, but was equally motivated by his desire to enter into similar communion with humans. Thus, he willingly laid down his life, without any coercion or pressure, in order to open the path towards that full

\(^{25}\textit{Lumen Gentium}, \#9.\) Emphasis added.
communion between God and humans, and amongst humans themselves. He underscores the spontaneity of his decision when he declares: no one takes my life from me, I lay it down and I take it up again.

But bound up with the idea of liberty is the idea of mutual respect and dignity. To affirm the liberty of the other is to affirm and accord the other the respect and dignity due to him/her. It is to acknowledge the other as a subject that stands on the same pedestal as oneself and not an object which stands at an inferior level or status in relation to oneself. Communion, therefore, is connotative of equality. The Christology of the Nicene and Post-Nice Fathers like Athanasius, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa and Nazianzus, etc., intuits this insight, hence their vehement opposition to Arius and his supporters. To speak of Christ as not consubstantial with the Father is to destroy the very foundations of communion that is the very life of the Trinity; it is to introduce the notion of superior-inferior relations, which is foreign to the very notion of communion. Arius’ heresy lies in his inability to conceive a communion of Trinity, i.e. a relational God who is perfect communion and by that virtue, perfectly consubstantial.

Even in the earlier efforts by the Church Fathers of the second and third centuries to expound the mystery of the Godhead, particularly of the unity and oneness of God, one can discern, even though not yet very distinct, the underlying notion of communion as key to this theological exposition. In that Divine communion which is expressed in the plurality of the Divine Persons who are in relation with and to one another, Christian theologians, illumined and guided by the light of the Divine mystery itself, have come to understand that perfect unity in God is not necessarily best explained or expressed by the singularity of Person but rather by the plurality and distinction of Persons. In other words, plurality is not antithetical to unity. In fact, only plurality and not singularity or uniformity can best express the very nature of the Godhead which is a communion of Divine Persons.
It might appear theologically incorrect to speak of communion as connotative of equality especially when speaking of the communion between God and humans. Certainly humans in communion with God would not imply being equal to God. Yet, it is not theologically inappropriate to do so. In Christ, God established full communion with humans. But that communion was only made possible through the incarnation of the Word of God. In lowering himself at the incarnation, he made himself equal with humans in their humanity; or to use the expression of the Cappadocian Fathers, made himself consubstantial with humans. But by rising from the dead and ascending in glory to his Father, he divinized humans, that is, raised the human up to the divine state, without which humans will be incapable of eternal communion or fellowship with God. It needs, however, be pointed out that divinization makes humans only \( \text{homotheos} \) (the same as God) and not \( \text{homoitheos} \) (like God).

The aspects of liberty, dignity and equality which are characteristic of the notion of communion are very much evident in the mystery of the Church itself. The Church as the body of Christ is a sign and instrument of communion with God and of unity of humankind. But the incorporation into this body or communion by way of Baptism cannot take place except there is a manifest or unequivocal free assent on the part of those who wish to be so incorporated. In other words, one is never incorporated through coercion, subtle or manifest. The one who seeks to enter into this communion must do so, only after having responded freely to the invitation of the Gospel. This aspect of liberty or spontaneity is clearly underscored in the dialogues found in the liturgy of the Christian initiation, in which the minister questions the catechumen, or in the case of a child, his/her parents and godparents, of their free choice to renounce Satan and enter into “a new mode of living, a new relation” with God and with those who have also freely chosen to become God’s adopted sons and

\[\text{26 Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, #1.}\]
daughters through the waters of Baptism. Once that choice is made, and baptism conferred, the individual enters into this communion and stands in equal dignity and privilege with the rest of his brothers and sisters. From then on, there is no more Greek or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. All stand equal with the same dignity before the presence of God. Not even the diversity of charisms or offices or the condition or manner of life can alter or destroy that Christian equality and dignity that they all share in common. And so whether one is an eloquent preacher, a brilliant teacher, a powerful exorcist, a great prophet, or a zealous evangelist or missionary, all stand equal before Christ. That one is entrusted with the ministry of the episcopacy, or presbyterate or diaconate does not confer on him a higher baptismal dignity or privilege than the rest of his sisters and brothers.

Communion is predicated in the very act of mutual self-giving, the voluntary entrusting of oneself to the other or another. The act of mutual self-giving in turn guarantees and ensures unity. One cannot, therefore, speak of unity in the absence of that act of self-giving. Indeed, it is because the self-giving of the Father, Son and Spirit is absolutely total and complete that Christian theology can truly speak of the perfect unity and oneness in God. It is by virtue of the total and unreserved self-giving that the three persons of the Trinity are One God.

The mutual giving of one self to the other which is the foundation of communion is itself predicated on communication or dialogue. Dialogue is itself a form of self-disclosure, i.e. making oneself known and understood by the other. It is the unveiling of the secrets or the inner recesses of one's self to the other. This is what creates the bonds of trust which is the springboard for total self-giving. Dialogue, then, is key to communion.

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Delineating a Theology of State and Politics

Having completed a general exposition of the theology of communion, we shall in this fourth and final part of this paper, employ the insights from this theology to set out broad outlines of the principles that could serve as building blocks for a Catholic/Christian theology of State that can inform the reconceptualization, reconfiguration and reconstitution of the States of the African continent. It is a theology of State that embodies deeper insights than the Divine theory of State. The principles of a Catholic theology of State will include the following:

1. Unity rooted in communion is a positive act of God's providential will for humans. In other words, God positively desires and wills that men and women live in communion rather than in isolation. For this reason, communion and unity must be proposed to Christians and non-Christians alike as a positive value to be pursued over and above every form of division, factionalism, sectionalism, ethnicism and even nationalism.

2. The human person finds his/her full integrity and completeness only in the relationship of communion—with God and other human persons. The human society, which is what the State is, is therefore a society of beings in communion. The State can, in some way, be understood as being in the service of the “vocation to the communion of persons”.  

3. Since the unity that is rooted in communion is predicated on the spontaneity, freedom and liberty of the subjects of communion, the State must affirm, uphold and sustain this principle of liberty and freedom not only of single members

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28 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2419.
of the society but also of homogenous groups or communities of persons.

4. Communion is realized when one spontaneously and freely chooses to enter into communion with another. Since States are at the service of the "vocation to the communion of persons" as stated above, no State can compel any group of persons, homogenous or otherwise, to be part of that *society of beings in communion*, which we earlier indicated is the essential character of a State since compulsion is antithetical to the idea of communion. A community of persons, whether they are homogenous or otherwise, possesses the fundamental right of choice, in other words, they have the right to opt in or opt out of a particular *society of beings in communion*.

5. Communion cannot be possible without dialogue. For this reasons, every State, which is a *society of beings in communion*, must allow for unrestrained dialogue among the component members of its corporate personality. This dialogue may include issues which even touch the corporate identity or personality of that State.

6. Every State must be founded and structured on the principles of co-equality and *consubstantiality* of all the component members of that State or *society of beings in communion*. Any policy or governmental action that disregards or undermines these principles puts at risk the continued corporate existence of that State and in fact, provides sufficient ground for any of the component members to opt out of that *society of communion*.

7. Plurality and distinctions are important aspects of communion. But more significantly, plurality is not in any
ways opposed to unity. Plurality can, indeed, enrich and reinforce unity. States must therefore uphold and promote the distinctive and plural character of its corporate personality. And so it is indeed possible that men and women in the variety of their origins, cultures, languages and religions, are capable of living together in harmony, not only in a religious or spiritual community, i.e. the Church, but also in a socio-political community, i.e. the State. And so, acts or policies that seek to enforce or enthrone uniformity and singularity are detrimental to unity and, in fact, undermines the continuing corporate existence of that State.

Evolving a Unique African Socio-Political Model

The above principles, though essential for the process of reconceptualization, reconfiguration and reconstitution of African States may not, in or by themselves, be sufficient for the auto-definition of African States. The process of auto-definition is, in fact, twofold. The first or basic level is the readiness and capacity to freely redraw the boundaries of a State other than the ways that was previously drawn by the colonial masters. For instance, the boundaries of Nigeria or DRC may have to be redrawn in ways that may give rise to new States. This first level of auto-definition is to free each State from its previous hetero-defined image or status; to define each State in its relation to itself and in relation to other States.

But the more crucial level of its auto-definition lies in its internal socio-political structuring or organization. Here, each State will have to figure out the kind of political structure or system that will best guarantee its internal cohesion and stability while at the

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29 *Africae Munus*, #39.
same time taking into adequate cognizance the peculiarities and uniqueness of its component parts. The key principle here is the recognition of the diversity of the societies that make up each State of the African continent. An attempt to employ a uniform political structure or system that ignores these diversities and peculiarities will only be counterproductive. What this means is that each African state, without necessarily returning to its pre-colonial structures and status, must nevertheless, plumb into the riches of its pre-colonial socio-political systems and discover for itself the forms of political structures that it can best operate. It may require the adoption of a socio-political hybrid which combines both the traditional African forms of political structure and organization with some form of modern political organization. This hybrid political structure and organization affords the possibility of operating different systems at different levels. For example, in much of the highly rural areas of Africa, States may have to operate a form of political structure and organization that is best fitted to that area or region. It would, for example, make better sense to operate a traditional form of political organization in a rural area than to replicate a party based democratic form of political organization. The latter may make better sense in a megacity like Lagos or Abuja or even a relatively cosmopolitan town like Ibadan. Needless to say, coming up with a workable socio-political hybrid system or structure requires a lot of critical thought and analysis. Yet, it is one way out of the internal contradictions that are inherent in many African States.

Once again, the Nigerian State presents a good example of such incoherence. Constitutionally, Nigeria defines itself as a Republic, a Federal Republic. If one is to go by the very essence and implications of that concept, a monarchical form of government will be inconsistent with a republican and democratic form of government. Yet, the monarchical form of government even though not officially recognized in the Nigerian constitution, exerts much influence in the lives of many Nigerian societies. In
fact, there are regions of Nigeria, where the success or failure of political administration, whether civil or military, depends on the support of the local monarchs. Indeed, there are occasions where the constituted civil or military government will require the public support of a monarch or groups of monarchs to “sell” certain government policies. What this means, therefore, is that the Nigerian State is operating on a *hetero-defined* system while ignoring very important aspects of its traditional systems that need to be integrated or remodelled to fit into this received system. But of course, there are other parts of Nigeria where a different system of political system other than the monarchical system is dominant and influential. That too needs to be integrated. What this means then, is that African States, besides having to face the task of reconfiguring its component parts or entities must in addition evolve a political system that does not necessarily operate a univocal political structure or organization or worse still ape the so-called western democracies.

**Conclusion**

I wish to conclude by pre-empting what might be a possible critique of the position advanced in this paper. Would restructuring, reconfiguring and reconstituting the States of Africa resolve *all* the crises in the African continent? Certainly not! This paper does not make such a naïve claim. The reconstitution of Sudan into two States has not resolved the conflict and other human crisis in that region! Yet, although reconfiguring and reconstituting African States would not eliminate *all* crises in Africa, it will, certainly, resolve a good deal of crises. The submission of this paper is, therefore, that there are a good number of crises in Africa that will *never* be resolved if the question of Statehood is not critically examined and dealt with. And there will be some others that will remain only partially resolved if the solutions proffered are done
without reference to the question of Statehood. And so the key submission of this paper is that the resolution of the question of the status of the African States is pivotal or foundational to the resolution of the issues of inter-ethnic and religious violence, political instability, human and economic development, weak structures, food crises, and indeed, the overall developmental process of the African continent.

We do recognize that the urgency and critical nature of the question of Statehood varies across the African continent. While it may be a critical issue in a State like Nigeria, it may not necessarily be so in a State like Benin Republic or Ghana. But this does not imply that it is not a foundational question for those States. One may, for example, raise the question of viability and sustainability of a State like Benin Republic or Togo. If by reasons of their present configuration or constitution, these States are unviable and thus incapable of sustainable development, does that not already in itself constitute a basic problem that will set off other crises within that State? And in that case, would it not be legitimate to question the rationality of either State continuing to exist as presently configured or constituted? Would it not be more meaningful to explore an alternative configuration, which might mean the merging of two or more States, or the merging of parts of a State to other neighbouring States? In fact, the whole project of reconceptualization, restructuring, reconfiguration, and reconstitution of the States of Africa, is to create viable and workable States since, as presently constituted and configured, many States of Africa are either unviable or unworkable.

This project of reconfiguration is indeed no mean task. It is, indeed, a herculean task, and thus, one that requires a lot of courage. Bambo Sakho identifies *l'absence de courage* as one of the key factors that have contributed to the retardation of development in Africa. And so, just as the subtitle of José

Luemba’s book aptly suggests, Africans and African States must acquire *le courage de la vérité*: They must have the courage to face up to the truth of their corporate being, their corporate personality and identity. African States must look into themselves to critically assess if their present corporate identity as defined by the various States that make up the continent of Africa will truly set them on the path of successful and meaningful development, progress and greatness. If it does not, then each State must have the courage to begin to unmake and remake her corporate personality in a manner that will enable her reach for the greatest heights of her potentials. But in order for this process to succeed and not degenerate into a wild, chaotic and unmanageable process, she must first articulate and establish sound framework and principles that will guide that process of reconceptualization and reconstruction. These principles must be profound and comprehensive, and drawn from various sources: from traditional African systems, wisdom and philosophy.

What we have done in this paper is to elaborate some principles—drawn from the wealth of Christian theology—that could go into the articulation or elaboration of much broader principles. These principles are meant to serve as pedagogical materials or formative tools that will prepare the hearts and minds of the African people for this herculean but inexorable task that is required for setting aright the direction and future of the African continent.
FEATURES

"HALLOWED BE THY NAME": IMAGES OF GOD AND THEIR PLACE IN THE FUTURE OF MISSIOLOGY

Ursula Glienecke

Introduction

The way we understand mission and its tasks is closely related to our images of God. Given a time-honoured approach to mission, the exclusivist understanding of evangelism implies highly problematic images where the most destructive among them portray God as a merciless judge condemning the majority of humankind to eternal torture or annihilation.

Negative, destructive and “demonic” images, as Karl Frielingsdorf calls them, not only cause psychological suffering, they frequently alienate people from God and religion altogether. These images have driven humanity into the deepest abyss of our existence, namely the assumption that violence and war are God’s will. It can be hoped that embracing less aggressive images of God could not only improve our relationship to non-Christian religions, it could have a positive impact on the way we treat each other in general.

As evangelical and charismatic groups continue their missionary activities based on an exclusivist understanding of salvation (compared to the inclusivist or pluralist understanding)

1 Mrs Glienecke got her PhD from Milltown Institute of Theology and Philosophy Dublin, Ireland in 2011. From 1989 she had been very active in ecumenical services, studies, workshops and conferences in Dublin, Moscow, Latvia, Norway, Heidelberg, and South Africa. She is an active member of the Interreligious Conference of European Women Theologians and the European Society for Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies

and the problematic image of God that goes with it, the state of the world makes it more and more pressing to find alternative, healing, freeing and truly empowering images of God.

The paper reflects on destructive images of God, including their development, background and biblical reference, and then goes on to explore the positive images that could transform our lives and our missionary activities.

**What are images of God?**

There are two different types of images: one is the “visual” or conceptual image found in the biblical and theological books (impersonal, anthropomorphic or zoomorphic like eagle, lion, etc.); the other, which is even more important in a person’s life, is an unconscious, psychological image imperceptibly affecting our actions and our decisions. In the following chapters we will focus on these unconscious, “psychological” images.

Images of God are far more than just ideas about God but constitute a complex system of mental concepts and ways of thinking about ourselves, others, the world and the divine. The way a person experiences or imagines God points to how they experience and understand themselves, their life, other people and the cosmos.³ Vice versa, speaking about people is speaking about God. For example, speaking about others as being lost and condemned to eternal torment or annihilation in hell at the same time means to speak about one’s image of God. How people think, feel and behave is influenced by their image of God.⁴ This applies, of course, also to their missiology and praxis of mission.

To clarify what is meant by images of God, we have to take a quick look at the terminology involved, particularly the

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psychological terms used by the branch of the so-called *Object Relations theory* dealing with *God-representations*.

**Psychological Terminology: God-representations**

Various terms and notions are used in psychological literature to name one’s understanding or image of the divine, and there is also a certain confusion of terms between imago, image, prototype, concept, and representation.⁵

The psychological term *God-representation* has been developed within the branch of the object relations theory⁶ which studies the association of object relations and images of God.⁷

According to the pioneer in object relations theory, Donald W. Winnicott, in order to become able to deal with outer objects (persons), in the course of the development of a human person, first a “transitional object” such as a teddy bear or cuddly blanket is used which is neither completely internal nor external but occupies

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⁶ “Object relations theory is an offshoot of psychoanalytic theory that emphasizes interpersonal relations, primarily in the family and especially between mother and child. ‘Object’ actually means person …, and especially the significant person that is the object or target of another’s feelings or intentions. ‘Relations’ refers to interpersonal relations and suggests the residues of past relationships that affect a person in the present. Object relations theorists are interested in inner images of the self and other and how they manifest themselves in interpersonal situations”, available at: http://www.sonoma.edu/users/d/daniels/objectrelations.html, accessed 02.11.2009

a place midway between inner and outer experience. Later on, a psychic organisation called object representation is developed. An object representation is “an unconscious psychic organisation which is the source of the conscious symbols, images, fantasies, thoughts, feelings or actions”. God representations are a sub-type of object representations. The big difference between God representations and other object representations is that God is “the only relevant object which has not undergone and cannot undergo reality testing”. Conservative evangelicals might argue that this is not so, because, according to their viewpoint, God is clearly revealed in the Bible. But this argument holds only in the case where one believes that the Scripture is verbally, word-by-word, inspired and absolutely inerrant; therefore a direct and errorless evidence of how God is, contradiction-free, one unity and in perfect harmony. This statement has far-reaching consequences for the image of God. If we see all texts of the Old and the New Testament as one unity,

11 For evangelicals, Holy Scripture is clearly an absolute authority, because it is the verbally inspired “Word of God” and it is so, because God “spoke” all and every word of it (based on Heb. 1:1,2; 1 Thess. 2:13). See John Stott, Making Christ Known: Historic Mission Documents from the Lausanne Movement, 1974-1989, Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation (Grand Rapids, Michigan and Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 13.
12 Although conservative evangelicals share the belief in a word by word inspiration of the Bible, they differ in regard to the degree of literalism attributed to the biblical text and the method of inspiration. “Authority and Uniqueness of Scripture Report”, Chairman Kenneth S. Kantzer, Let the World Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelisation (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1974), Vol. II, 993.
with no inconsistencies or contradictions of any kind, it then has to be concluded that the God of the Bible is a God both of wrath and of love.\textsuperscript{14} If one holds fast to the literal understanding of the Scripture another problem arises: the vindictive, violent and abusive images found in the texts logically have to be taken as truth about God as well.

Karl Frielingsdorf uses a different terminology. He defines the basic unconscious attitude to life and oneself as a person’s \textit{key-position} that reveals itself especially in situations of crisis and conflict.\textsuperscript{15} It is connected and interdependent with one’s behaviour and methods of coping. The \textit{key-position} is found during the course of the therapy with the help of various methods.\textsuperscript{16} The key-position is also a reliable pointer to the unconscious image of God. Image of God in this sense is similar in its nature to the self and life-image that is entailed in the key-position. Both articulate a fundamental feeling and attitude that influences one’s life behaviour and consequently also one’s psychical health.\textsuperscript{17} Frielingsdorf’s theory is developed in the course of his work with people suffering from harmful images of God.

\textbf{Importance of the images}

Because images or representations of God are very powerful, and because negative ("demonic") images affect all levels of human existence including the psychological, social and political sphere of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} "Jewish Evangelism: A Call to the Church", 4. (d), \textit{Lausanne Occasional Paper} 60, Thailand 2004.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Karl Frielingsdorf, \textit{Dämonische Gottesbilder: Ihre Entstehung, Entlarvung und Überwindung}, (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 2001), 76-77 and 15 (Grundeinstellung).
\item \textsuperscript{16} including the writing of life script, therapeutical painting, dream work and bodily expression of the patient’s key-position
\item \textsuperscript{17} Frielingsdorf, \textit{Dämonische Gottesbilder}, 76-77 and 15.
\end{itemize}
life, these images are in need of the "discernment of the spirits"\textsuperscript{18} and require studying. Images of God matter because they may inspire love and relatedness but they may also destroy or cripple a life of faith\textsuperscript{19}. It is of crucial importance for the preservation of peace and for a wholesome theology and missiology that "Healthy images of God must awaken our capacity to wonder and stimulate our ability to see beauty and goodness in ourselves as well as in others."\textsuperscript{20}

Martin Buber came to the conclusion that purging our faith of all imagery portraying the divine as either vindictive or abusive is one of the great spiritual challenges of our time and that it is most regrettable that people often confuse the words of God with the words of man, the true God with human images of God.\textsuperscript{21}

One should also keep in mind that images of God (including those found in the biblical and theological texts), on the one hand, are psychological realities and far removed from their transcendent object.\textsuperscript{22} This fact is unfortunately all too easy to forget. To use Carl Gustav Jung's words, the term 'images of God' expresses the psychic reality of a certain individual rather than the metaphysical reality of God.\textsuperscript{23} On the other hand, as Karl Frielingsdorf puts it, the "image of God means the mental medium in which and through which the living encounter of the religious human with his/her God takes place".\textsuperscript{24} This medium can be little transparent and cluttered

\textsuperscript{18} Frielingsdorf, Dämonische Gottesbilder, 165-166.
\textsuperscript{20} Samuel, The Lord is My Shepherd, 67.
\textsuperscript{21} Martin Buber, Meetings (Lasalle, IL: Open Court, 1973), 52-53 as quoted in Samuel, The Lord is My Shepherd, 65.
\textsuperscript{22} Carl Gustav Jung, Antwort auf Hijob (Zürich, 1952), 391 as quoted in Frielingsdorf, Dämonische Gottesbilder, 22-23.
\textsuperscript{23} Frielingsdorf, Dämonische Gottesbilder, 22-23.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid. 20.
with negative messages from what the concrete person has learned and experienced (as it is in the case of the negative images.)

Representations or images of God not only control our thinking they also shape our actions. If we apply this to the image of God represented in atonement theory, in exclusivism and in the ideas of judgement day and hell, we can detect God consciously or unconsciously imagined as a merciless judge who sends “wrong believers” to eternal torment or annihilation in hell. The metaphor of coming judgement and condemnation (with the only logical answer to those who believe it being urgent evangelism and mission) then becomes the background pattern that determines one’s thoughts, emotions and actions even if their “official” doctrines proclaim a loving and merciful God.

The Problem of the Exclusivist Interpretation of Mission

Christian mission in the past has often been guided by a one-sided and, from the outset, rejecting position. According to David Pailin, Christian attitude to the believers of other religions (as “pagan and savage tribes”) frequently and for a long time “reflected a strong, confident, aggressive and often ill-informed type of Christianity.” This combined with the conviction that they were lost, condemned to punishment in hell, and that only Christianity held the way to salvation, defined the aim of mission to bring this salvation by converting them to the Christian faith.

The exclusivist mission understanding carries problematic images of God, especially as one who condemns the majority of humankind to eternal torture. These images have been revealed in

25 Jung, Antwort auf Hijob, 391 as quoted in Frielingsdorf, Dämonische Gottesbilder, 22-23.
countless psychological studies and therapy to be harmful to the psyche of many people. As M. Erickson puts it:

The problem takes a slightly different form when we consider the future state of the un-evangelised. The traditional doctrine has been that such persons spend eternity in an endless punishment in hell. How can this be reconciled with God’s love? Did not Jesus teach that we are to forgive those who wrong us, to love not only our friends, but also our enemies? How then are we to understand a God who apparently does not love his enemies, who takes vengeance on them, and eternally so, who is never satisfied with the punishment of these people?28

Many psychologists, therapists and theologians have criticised the idea of Judgement Day and eternal damnation to hell as highly problematic and destructive. Carl Gustav Jung described this apocalyptic vision as “a true orgy of hate, wrath, vengeance and blind destructive rage.”29 Karl Frielingsdorf points out that these pictures, ideas and visions not only cause fear in connection with death, but also embody vindictive images of God.30 These images, as Hanna Wolff contends, also pervert Jesus, the very “Prince of Peace”, into an agent of an essentially violent God.31 This is why Heiko Rohrbach sees only two options that are mutually exclusive: either to believe in a loving and forgiving God as experienced in Jesus or to believe in hell.32 There is no way of reconciling these two visions of God. The horrific nightmares painted in the Book of Revelation as well as in some other passages (for example Romans 1:18) show the punishing Judge-God going berserk to the effect

30 Frielingsdorf, Dämonische Gottesbilder, 107.
31 Wolff, Neuer Wein- Alte Schläuche, 178.
that the good news that Jesus brought is "pulped in a really terrible way." Should these images be the ones to motivate our mission?

Also the form of soteriology where Jesus’ death on the cross is interpreted as atoning, substitutionary sacrifice that saves from the wrath of God and eternal torment (or annihilation) in hell, results in a very negative view of the condition of non-Christians and consequently in the urgent need to evangelise and convert them to Christianity. The gravest problem of this position again is the violent image of God it carries. The mission connected with this soteriology means to inform the Non-Christians about the future judgement, condemnation and punishment in order to make them understand the necessity of salvation through accepting Christ’s atoning sacrifice for themselves.

**Resulting Neurosis**

Following Carl Gustav Jung, Jörg Müller is convinced that every neurosis can eventually be traced back to deleterious images of God, although this does not mean everybody suffering from such images is automatically neurotic. Müller’s claim appears to be surprising and even irritating, but long-term clinical studies provide ample evidence in support of this claim. He combines this with the theological idea that God suffers from these images too, because they torment people or motivate them to reject or misinterpret God.

Zellner adds that in the wider range there is a crisis of images and stories, a crisis of content and not merely—as is often thought—of interpretation. He corroborates Müller’s view that the God-condition of a soul and the general condition of a person’s

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35 Müller, *Gott ist anders*, 7.
psyche are closely linked. Small wonder that an increasing number of people find it difficult to relate to the old “traditional” vindictive image of God! Karl Frielingsdorf’s studies demonstrate that there are many people suffering from a “God-complex” (Hans Eberhard Richter) or from “God-poisoning”, an expression coined by the Swiss psychoanalyst Tillman Moser. The negative and destructive images of God found in peoples’ unconscious often stand in direct contradiction to their consciously professed positive images. Most of the clients would refer to themselves as believing Christians who expect salvation and deliverance from God and believe in “the loving and merciful God of the Good News”. Outwardly they profess God as a loving father and good shepherd, but in crisis situations they are shaken by fear of a punishing or unpredictable one. One is reminded of Nietzsche’s dictum “unredeemed-ness’ of the supposedly redeemed” ("Unerlöstheit" der doch angeblich Erlöst") meaning that they are in reality afraid of the God who they claim is love.

Karl Frielingsdorf not only addresses the connection between negative or what he calls “demonic” images of God and the psychological damage that such a wrathful God can do to the human psyche. He identifies too how century-old theological doctrines such as the prevailing atonement theory in Christian soteriology (today mostly evangelical) and its logic of justice by punishment ("Strafgerechtigkeit") are conducive to the rise of

37 Samuel, *The Lord is My Shepherd*, 64-65.
40 The latter being especially present in the case of people believing in the Double Predestination or the ones suffering from the psychological image of God. See Frielingsdorf, *Dämonische Gottesbilder*, 7.
negative images of God. This understanding of salvation or redemption can be summarised as the need to restore law and order after it has been destroyed by human disobedience (sin) by the means of an “adequate” punishment. In the end, it is the God-man Jesus Christ who has to take upon himself the punishment deserved by humankind.42 According to this logic reconciliation takes place by way of punishment. The punishment functions as the means by which to restore the unbalanced or disrupted order where everybody receives what they deserve.43 Friedrich von Gagern pointed out that the “traditional” concept of sin as disobedience automatically implies a judging God.44 This was the “wrath of God”45 Martin Luther feared so much that it moved him to search for a theological solution that would once and for all answer the tormenting question how to escape the threatening judgement and find a merciful God.46 Unfortunately, the solution Luther suggested maintained that God justifies sinners through the death of Jesus Christ and failed to abolish the fear-generating features attributed to God, namely, that without Christ all we see is a merciless judge demanding sacrifice and punishment.47

Karl Frielingsdorf welcomes what he observes as a current moving away in theology from the old soteriological paradigm towards a divine justice that works in form of love and creative righteousness rather than punishment.48 The new paradigm

42 Frielingsdorf, Dämonische Gottesbilder, 107.
43 Ibid.
44 von Gagern, Der andere Gott, 72.
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ascribes an entirely new meaning to the death of Jesus Christ. Christ so loved God that he was not only able to refrain from hatred and retaliation when he was dragged to his death, he lived God's love so fully that he loved those who killed him till the end, thus calling humankind out and away from the vicious circle of crime and revenge into participation in God's kingdom where love reigns. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ discloses what human hatred and God's love are capable to do. In other words, the life and fate of Jesus becomes judgement of our sins in the sense of revealing human punishment-justice and violence for what it is. At the same time it is a revelation of the completely different justice of God that reaches out towards human beings and their life with each other. This justice is no longer based on the "Do ut des" (quid pro quo or tit for tat) principle, but rather on the creative love of God meeting each individual with understanding. Instead of the Judgement Day being a day of last punishment or reward (once and forever, with no chance to change or repent), it becomes a time of purification and transformation of human beings. This is done by the virtue of God revealing to human beings God's innermost nature which is pure goodness and love. Instead of punishment—be it eternal torment in hell or annihilation—humankind could (if they would wish so) be transformed by unlimited and unreserved communion within the divine love. Frielingsdorf leaves open the possibility that the life of some individuals could be so hardened by their own self-centredness as not to allow the creative love of God to resurrect it to become a new life in love.

One example from psychology: The Punitive Judge

Karl Frielingsdorf has dedicated most of his life's work to addressing the widespread image of God the punitive judge and its

Vorgrimler, Der Tod im Leben und Denken der Christen (Freiburg: Herder, 1988), 88f.

He contends that this image is the one most frequently found among patients (94%) both in its basic form and in its diverse variations. It was Friedrich von Gagern who expressed his wonder about the strange reality that for many people it seems to be easier to believe in God’s punishment than in God’s unconditional loving kindness. That the punitive judge prevails unbeknownst in many cultures and societies is borne out by commonplace phrases like for example: “Let God not hear this!”, “God will punish him for this”, “Why did God do this to me?” (when something severe—like death of a child—happens) or “Be silent, God is angry!” (when hearing thunder.) It is rather unfortunate that sayings like these feature prominently in day-to-day conversation between parents and children. They attest to the deep roots that this image has in peoples’ minds, particularly when we consider that many among those who utter these phrases would not refer to themselves as “believers” or “Christians”.

When the punishing judge decides to show mercy he postpones or holds back his punishment for a while. This understanding of God’s grace is clearly expressed by a Latvian conservative evangelical in the following quote, “I understood God’s love: that He has not yet destroyed the Earth with fire or water and gives people time of grace every day to repent for their

50 Karl Frielingsdorf, Der wahre Gott ist anders: Von krankmachenden zu heilenden Gottesbildern (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1997), 63-66, also Zellner, Gottestherapie, 24- 25.
51 Frielingsdorf, Dämonische Gottesbilder, 112-113.
52 The negative and destructive images listed and examined by Frielingsdorf are: the “Punitive Judge-God”, the “Death-God”, the “Bookkeeper-God” and the “Hard-to-Please God” (Frielingsdorf, Der wahre Gott ist anders, 10 cf. F.W. Niehl, Hg Die vielen Gesichter Gottes) and The “God of the Gaps”, the “Capricious Player-God” (“willkürlicher Spielergott”), the “Tyrannical Despot” (Frielingsdorf, Dämonische Gottesbilder, 48 and 107) They form variations of the punitive Judge-God image as they are all in one way or another related to the God who punishes humans for their sins
53 von Gagern, Der andere Gott.
The punitive, judging image of God logically implies that people have to be “thankful” for not yet being rejected or condemned. This has nothing to do with free and genuine love. In other words, it is “love” in fear of hell.

The image of the punitive Judge-God as well as its other forms mostly remains in the sphere of the unconscious and works its influence from there. It is frequently hidden by the façade of a superficial positive image and in case of many of Frielingsdorf’s patients only appears occasionally in psychosomatic symptoms, depressions, fears and feelings of guilt. These negative, destructive images may appear consciously only in situations of severe crisis and conflict when the person falls back into his or her *key-position* and thus under the influence of corresponding God-images.

Hanna Wolff is convinced that the ultimate source of the judging God is to be sought in parts of the Old Testament where God resembles a despot ruling over the nations with violent omnipotence. With this image judgement and punishment comes into Christianity as a fundamental motive (as seen in atonement theory and the notion of hell and perdition.) It will also automatically carry violence. In her book *New Wine in Old Skins* Wolff takes up Moser’s point that fear and love are incompatible and criticises the century-old theological practice to try and synthesise at all costs diverging elements such as wrath and love, justice and love, omnipotence and righteousness, fear and love, creation and salvation or law and mercy. She warns about the suffering such synthesising has caused especially before any scientific and psychological aid had been put in place. Wolff asserts that these images are not only problematic because they preserve archaic views and obsolete levels of consciousness, but

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because they force the new image of God revealed by and in Jesus Christ into the Procrustes bed of old categories and ways of thought: the new wine is rigorously or consistently poured into old wineskins. She concludes that if Jesus brought nothing new to our understanding of God, he could have saved the efforts.\footnote{Ibid. 163-164.}

The harmful God-representations and images detected by therapists in their work with patients are neither purely individual nor are they new, because similar images of God can be found in the Bible. This brings us to the question where these notions have their roots. Studying the origins of biblical metaphors will inevitably lead to results that challenge the theory of verbal inspiration, for not only can biblical metaphors of God be traced back to much earlier stages in the history of religion, some biblical images are also highly problematic, to say the least. We cannot avoid asking the question whether all images of God mentioned in Scripture can be considered healthy and fit for use today, as we would have to do if we wanted to read the Bible as verbally inspired timeless expression of truth and according to its natural or literal meaning. Wolfgang Böhme remarks that taking Old Testament language portraying God as brutal, vengeful and unforgiving places the reader under the obligation to love God not because God is infinitely worthy of love, but in spite of the fact that such a God would rightfully deserve human loathing and protest.

\textit{One example from the Bible: The sexual Abuser}

Occasionally, God is described as directly involved in acts of sexual violence, so for example in those chapters of the Old Testament talking about the relationship between JHWH and certain cities. The cities appear in personified form as wives, daughters or other female figures. In Ezekiel 16:35-42 JHWH strips
and mutilates Jerusalem “before the eyes of her lovers”. The city who once was a foundling is thrown back into its primeval nakedness, and the city-woman is killed and her body cut up with swords. The brutality of the violence depicted in this story is still shocking for us today. But as Elke Seifert points out, the logic behind it is no less dreadful. Judgement and punishment are brought upon the woman-city because JHWH has kept her alive as a child. Now that she has grown up it is her duty to live only for him. This means that she is entirely at his disposal, which explicitly includes that she has to be available to him for sexual favours.

Another example can be found in the same book of Ezekiel. Chapter 23 talks about two sisters: Oholah (Samaria) and Oholibah (Jerusalem). They are presented as child-prostitutes who lust after their lovers, meaning they enjoy sexual relationships in early childhood (Ezekiel 23:3,5,12). This in itself is a dangerous misrepresentation. The text describes as sexual pleasure what is in fact childhood sexual abuse. Contemporary abusers use very similar language to justify their criminal activities. As a rule, abusers blame their victims and portray them as “little whores and seducers”. The story goes on to describe how the two sisters are


63 See Ulrike Brockhaus and Maren Kohlshorn, Sexuelle Gewalt gegen Mädchen und Jungen: Mythen, Fakten, Theorien (Frankfurt, 1993), 157; see also Ursula
punished in a brutal and humiliating fashion to force them into complete submission so that the surviving woman "could not lift her eyes". The responsibility for sexual contact is entirely assigned to the woman and she alone carries the consequences.

The above mentioned books of the Old Testament imply that a metaphorical female figure, be this a daughter or a wife, can be pushed about, rejected and abandoned at will (Hosea 1:6) used for sexual pleasure and producing offspring, because he has taken her in when she was born (Ezekiel 16:3). She can even be given away to be raped (Gen 19:8). A drastic form of violence is demonstrated when the woman is punished and humiliated (see Jeremiah 4:30-31; 6:2, 13:20-27.)

As can be seen from the examples above, the image of JHWH as abuser and sexually violent is not a singular, but a rather widespread image in the Old Testament. In these texts it is JHWH who actively and deliberately afflicts pain, sorrow and suffering: JHWH’s prophet uncovers the nakedness of his wife in front of other men (Hos 2:2), JHWH does the same to the city-women both in Ezekiel and Jeremiah (Ez 16:37; Jer 13:22,26), JHWH “treats her shame with violence”, JHWH treads “the virgin, the daughter of Judah, in a winepress” so that his garments are sprinkled with blood (Isaiah 63:2f.)

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64 Ezekiel 23:27
65 Ezekiel 23:28 King James Version
68 Ibid. 309.
69 "behandelt ihre Scham gewaltsam" (Jer 13:22) Seifert, Tochter und Vater im Alten Testament, 305.
70 Lamentations 1:15; see Artur Weiser, “Klagelieder”, “Das Hohe Lied, Klagelieder, das Buch Ester”, ATD 16/2 (Göttingen, 1958), 56, compare Isaiah 63,1ff (63:3b I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment); Seifert, Tochter und Vater im Alten Testament, 285.
Levels of Spiritual Development

Carl Gustav Jung once complained that in Christianity there is still a considerable lack of attention paid to the unconscious images that guide our actions. The psychological make-up between people or even within the mind and psyche of one person might differ by centuries and even millennia: some have the mentality of the Stone Age, others still feel at home in the views of the Middle Ages, many have never left the age of Enlightenment, and others still dream about the wonders of twentieth-century technology. The views and opinions, suggestions and plans are correspondingly diverse and controversial. This includes, of course, the images of God so that archaic, medieval, eighteenth-century and post-modern worldviews all exist side by side today. One can discover in oneself ideas and images that belong to very different levels of development and it can be a matter of choice to decide which one to take.

Striving For New Images of God in Theology and Missiology

Today Christianity is reeling in an age of crisis issuing forth in low church attendance and the scandals surrounding clerical sexual abuse in Europe, and the exponential growth of Pentecostalism and fundamentalism in the rest of the world. In this situation a new reformation is needed. We need new images, new language, new love instead of a supreme patriarchal ruler, king, judge demanding punishment and satisfaction or exclusivistic God who condemns the majority of humanity to hell. They should be tested by the results which the images produce ("the fruit it bears")—so to figure out if they are positive and healthy or rather unhealthy and harmful.

71 Frielingsdorf, Dämonische Gottesbilder, 165.
72 Wolff, Neuer Wein- Alte Schläuche, 169.
73 Ibid.
There is no alternative than to struggle for a Jesus-like image of God, a loving God.\textsuperscript{74} New ways of thinking and questioning images of God may become a source of healing.\textsuperscript{75} We are too much afraid of mistakes in our attempt to find new answers to old questions; instead we have reason galore to believe that the biggest sin is holding fast to a violent, punitive Judge-God.\textsuperscript{76}

Hildegard Wustmans calls for new images that are not static definitions but rather expressions of a dynamic relationship like friendship.\textsuperscript{77} God is the liberating companion of the creation\textsuperscript{78} and not its punitive judge. This corresponds with the image derived from Karl Fielingsdorf’s therapy. In the healing process most of the patients experience God simultaneously as coming down to everyone and meeting them exactly where they are, exactly in their situation and “key-position”, and being much greater than the images they suffered from. This God has been holding and supporting them through the past experiences, through the therapy and is leading them beyond.\textsuperscript{79}

The friendship metaphor is especially adequate for interreligious sphere, because within this paradigm “the diversity, cultural, interracial, and ecumenical, is consciously prized as a condition for connectedness, for women have the insight born in pain that a monolithic position inevitably works to the disadvantage of somebody, usually the most powerless.”\textsuperscript{80} This form of relationship is based on freedom and is not determined by purpose.

\textsuperscript{74} Frielingsdorf, Der wahre Gott ist anders, 109.
\textsuperscript{75} Jaschke, Dunkle Gottesbilder, 64, 84.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid. 12.
\textsuperscript{77} Hildegard Wustmans, Wenn Gott zur Freundin wird... Freundinnenschaft- der Weg zum neuen Himmel und neuer Erde, Würzburger Studien zur Fundamentaltheologie Vol 14, Ed Elmar Klinger (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 1993), 53.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid. 55-57f, 67-69.
\textsuperscript{79} Frielingsdorf, Dämonische Gottesbilder, 101.
or benefit as most other relationships like family bonds, work relations, etc. are. In friendship people are opening up to each other entering the adventure of mutual exchange, discovery and widening of horizons.  

It is a free relationship, because friends choose to be together, they are not forced to do so. There is no hierarchy, no "inferior" and "superior", in friendship contrary to the relationships inspired by the old, patriarchal image of God that is defined by hierarchical relations between people.

The further development of theology should, according to von Gagern, lead to partnership paradigm. Here the contrast between the old image of God and the new friendship image becomes apparent. The old image implied a powerful (potentially or actually violent) protector who is expected to solve the problems for both individuals and for societies or the world. The friendship paradigm however is a project of and for the future on our planet which is getting smaller and closer, where human beings and nature can only survive if they become friends. The contrast is between dependant ‘command-following’ relationship with God and one where cooperation, human responsibility and participation are expected. This also was the type of relationship expressed in Jesus’ life. He talked about being friends and not slaves. This message is therefore authentically biblical.

**Religious Pluralism in a Changing World**

The growing necessity to cope with a religiously plural world “which of course, is the only world there is” has been described

82 von Gagern, *Der andere Gott*, 18, 141.
84 Wustmans, *Wenn Gott zur Freundin wird*, 75.
85 Wilfred C. Smith, “The Christian in a Religiously Plural World”, John Hick and Hebblethwaite, eds., *Christianity and other Religions* (Glasgow: Collins,
by Wilfred Cantwell Smith as a current that is about to become a flood. At the same time the need to cooperate in the fight for justice and peace is also growing. As Bhikhu Parekh formulates it: "almost all societies today are multicultural and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future" Apart from that, more and more people are interested in other faiths, and this not only out of curiosity, but as part of their own spiritual search. A well-known example is the regular exchange between Western Benedictine and Japanese Zen monasteries, where monks hailing from seemingly unrelated traditions learn from each other's meditative practice and spiritual experience.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has been aware of religious plurality for a long period of time. A lot of effort went into dealing with the question what the appropriate Christian attitude towards other religions should look like. The ecumenical movement also responded to the call for a 'new' or 'wider' ecumenism. If all this was not difficult enough, then the real challenge posed by religious pluralism was the issues pertaining to the traditional understanding of mission and evangelism. The ongoing debate about this particular point gave rise to consent and substantial disagreement alike, even within the WCC itself.


86 Ariarajah, Hindus and Christians, 7.


89 Ariarajah, Hindus and Christians, 4.

90 Ibid. 6.

91 Jan van Lin's study Shaking the Fundamentals: Religious Plurality and Ecumenical Movement illustrates the wide variety of positions, standpoints and opinions taken by different groups (such as Continental, Anglo-Saxon and Asian Christians, especially from India and China) and individuals. Jan van Lin,
If plurality is to be lived, certain issues are most likely to arise such as: "is the Hindu really damned because he or she is not a Christian?" 92 This question becomes all the more pressing when the Hindu is our neighbour, colleague, friend or our classmate and not just somebody featuring in the television news.

In the past, Christianity has had a habit of feeling superior to other faiths. This attitude is at least partly the result of a certain understanding of the Lord’s commandment to baptise all nations. Not until very recently, only a small group of people had more than a faint knowledge about other world religions apart from the three Abrahamic traditions (and frequently even of them.) The whole situation has changed profoundly, as the knowledge of other religions "increased in proportion to the development of scholarly sciences such as anthropology, sociology of religion, history of religions and oriental studies." 93 Together with globalisation, media communication and massive migration, it transformed the face of the earth. J. Erickson sums it up in a few sentences:

Christians have traditionally tended to be condescending towards other religions. They were either regarded as idolatry, or at least as clouded or mistaken constructions of the revelation given to all persons. We must now, however, as a result of a closer contact, ask ourselves about the status of these persons and their religions. What should be our attitude toward them? Should they be evangelised, or regarded as fellow travellers, who although they express themselves differently, are really bound for the same place we are? 94

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94 Erickson, *How Shall They Be Saved*, 22.
Conclusion: New Approaches to Mission

The greater awareness and appreciation of religious plurality prompts many churches to move towards a more adequate theology of religions and understanding of mission. There is a widely felt need for such a theology, for without it Christians remain ill-equipped to understand the profound religious experiences which they witness in the lives of people of other faiths or to articulate their own experience in a way that will be understood by people of other faiths. 95

In today's multicultural, multi-religious, globalised and religiously polarised world, mission no longer can be seen in terms of church expansion, salvation of lost souls condemned to hell; or as supporting the outreach of colonial powers. 96 Instead the inter-religious dialogue and collaboration for peace, justice and the preservation of the creation is now recognised as some of the most pressing needs of our time. In addition to the theological issues arising from the "shrinking of the world and the ever more porous boundaries between communities, religion has become an increasingly significant component in inter-communal relations. Faith can make things better, or it can make them a great deal worse." 97 As Hildegard Wustmans puts it "if we do not learn to live with each other, we will die together.” In this situation, God calls for our participation, solidarity and friendship. 98 This implies very different images of God to those found in exclusivism, atonement theory and the notion of the punishment in hell.

98 Wustmans, Wenn Gott zur Freundin wird, 76-77.
Mission and evangelisation, even to a Protestant mind-set, does not necessarily mean converting others to one’s own form of religion, but it can be understood and lived as friendship, partnership and cooperation with God and with others. When we engage in missionary work we have to be careful as “first we need to rescue the words ‘mission’ and ‘evangelism’ from the clouds that hang over them [as a result of] long association of mission with imperialism and colonialism. In the West, Christians are only just now beginning to rid themselves of the sense that civilisation is in their hands and that they alone can bring light to benighted souls.”

Alternative ways of understanding and doing mission have to be developed: seeing the members of other religions as co-pilgrims with whom we cooperate, as suggested by the WCC. In this case, mission would mean to live and bring forth the good news of the loving God, in place of a cruel Judge threatening humankind with hell, and to work for the “already and not yet” of the Kingdom of God. True dialogue, according to the WCC, must lead to mutual empowerment so that Christians and their non-Christian partners can cooperate in the struggle for peace, justice and the equality.

God’s wisdom and justice extends “to the ends of the earth as he guides the nations through their traditions of wisdom and understanding” and God’s glory shines through the whole of creation. Therefore, “people have at all times and in all places responded to the presence and activity of God among them, and have given their witness to their encounters with the Living God. In this testimony they speak both of seeking and of having found salvation, or wholeness, or enlightenment, or divine guidance, or

100 Bevans and Schroeder, Constants in Context, 285.
101 Introduction to the Baar Statement.
102 Ibid.
rest, or liberation.” Therefore according to Hick theology needs a Copernican revolution and must “shift from the dogma that Christianity is at the centre, to the thought that it is God who is at the centre and that all the religions of mankind, including our own, serve and revolve around him”.

Wanda Deifelt points out that “when language about God speaks of mercy, compassion, grace, and the divine embrace, we remember the divine solidarity of the creator with creation. We should suppose that this language would have an impact on the way we see ourselves and how we act in this world. We are travellers on the way and we will not survive if we do not take others into account, trusting them and celebrating ourselves as God’s concrete bodies. To be created in God’s image means we participate in this divine creativity, in which we can, with the help of God, contribute to the blooming of small signs of hope and life.”

Along this line of thought is Hildegard Wustmann as well in pointing out that the church as a community of friends can become a powerful counter-model to xenophobia as it is not necessarily the enemy but rather only the stranger which we fear and therefore are willing to kill and die for in this approach. This way Mission will also become much more exciting as it is answering to “God’s

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106 Wustmans, *Wenn Gott zur Freundin wird*, 81-82.
gracious invitation to humanity to share in the dynamic communion that is at the same time God’s self-giving missionary life.”

Learning from the vision and praxis of Jesus it brings new healing and new light to the globalised poverty, religious violence and helps to find a new appreciation of local cultures and traditions. Mission is then "about preaching, serving and witnessing to the work of God in our world; [...] as partners with God in the patient yet unwearyed work of inviting and persuading women and men to enter into relationship with their world, with one another and with Godself.”

It is simply inconceivable that a loving God consigned the majority of humankind to perdition because these people did not know Jesus, often because of no fault of their own. There should also be place for an aspect of mystical experience and of apophatic theology of not having words and images to describe the divine. As Jaroš says: “God is bigger than all human imagination. This should be considered in each image, each metaphor and speculation about God.”

Lorenz Zellner reckons that there is probably no other single concept in human history that has been as much misunderstood and misused as that for which the word “God” stands. Therefore to love God must from here on also mean to “become more sensitive to what and how it is spoken about God.” This is especially important when we are talking and doing mission.

\[108\] Ibid.
INFORMED CONSENT IN WESTERN (USA) MEDICINE AND IN AFRICAN (IGBO) TRADITIONAL MEDICINE: A COMPARISON

Peter Ikechukwu Osuji

Introduction

At the very moment in human history when globalization has gained ascendance, we are easily tempted to ignore the profound cultural difference in bioethics that continues to exist among nations and continents. One such substantial cultural difference is the process of medical informed consent. African Traditional Medicine (ATM) is still popular in Africa despite the powerful impact of Western medicine. It is estimated that more than 80% of people in Africa use ATM. Part of the reason behind this is that ATM is relatively affordable and available to the poor people who cannot afford Western medicine. ATM tends also to be holistic in its approach to health, attending to the physical, psychological, and spiritual wellbeing of the patient. However, ATM is often seen as unscientific. It is alleged that it lacks proper information regarding the composition, ingredients and strength of the drugs; it is therefore difficult to predict the results and possible complications of the use of its drugs. Consequently it is said that it is impossible

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to consent to ATM since it is impossible to consent to something unknown.

This article explores the concept of informed consent in ATM, paying particular attention to the concept of autonomy in African bioethics and how it affects the understanding of informed consent in ATM. The article compares the concept of informed consent in ATM with that of the USA, as a representative of the Western bioethics. It argues that because of the African communal culture, that places emphasis on relationship, ATM adopts a relational autonomy that is fostered and exercised in relationships with other people—relatives, friends and community. This relational autonomy contrasts with the individual rights oriented autonomy in the USA, which emphasizes individual patient rights. This accounts for the difference in the concept of informed consent in both ATM and USA-Western medicine. The article also contends that, with the improvement in the ATM pharmacological practices, and with better regulatory and monitoring policies, which guarantee better knowledge of the therapeutic potency, the side effects and the level of toxicity of the herbal medicines, proper informed consent is ensured.

Informed Consent in the United States of America

Informed consent is a relatively new concept in medical ethics even in the United States. Nonetheless, informed consent existed long before it was legally adopted in the physician-patient relationship and its formulation and details have changed considerably. Informed consent as a term didn’t become prominent until the

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1950s after the Nuremberg trials. Before the widespread adoption of informed consent, the principle of paternalism was dominant. The principle of paternalism presupposed that due to experience and expertise, the physician knows best what the patient needs. However, it was not until the early 1970s that informed consent received scholarly scrutiny which continues until today. In recent years, the focus of informed consent has shifted from the obligation of the physician or researcher to disclose information, to the quality of a patient’s or a research subject’s understanding and acceptance, or even refusal. In moving away from paternalism, informed consent has been shaped in Western thought by an understanding of autonomy that greatly emphasizes individual freedom and individual rights. To properly understand informed consent, its connection with the principle of autonomy needs to be explored.

**Autonomy**

Etymologically, the word “autonomy” has its origin from two Greek words *autos* meaning “self” and *nomos* meaning, “rule,” “governance” or “law.” Autonomy stands, therefore, for “self-rule or self-governance of independent city-states.” The autonomous person acts freely according to a self-chosen plan. Such an individual is not supposed to be controlled by others. That is why liberty (independence from controlling influences) and agency (capacity for intentional action) are identified as the two essential conditions for autonomy in the Western culture. For example, Beauchamp and Childress recognize that some other condition could be added to enhance the meaning of autonomy. One of the

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6 Beauchamp and Childress, *Principles*, 77.
9 Ibid., 61.
conditions that needs to be added is the community which is especially pertinent to cultures like those of Africa. In such cultures, the individual is not isolated from the community and, likewise, the individual’s autonomy and decisions are understood within a context of community. Individual liberty and the independence component of autonomy tend to have been overemphasized in the USA ethos. This sort of understanding of autonomy, supported by the first and fourth Amendments of the US Constitution, has been adopted as a significant ethical justification for informed medical consent in the USA. This approach to autonomy emphasizes individual freedom, individual rights, the right of self-determination and free choice, thereby necessitating a legal need to obtain consent for any act to be performed on the person’s body. For example, as far back as 1914, in an American case, Schloendoff vs. Society of New York Hospitals, Justice Cardozo ruled that “Every human being of adult years and sound mind has right to determine what shall be done with his own body; and a surgeon who performs an operation without his patient’s consent commits an assault, for which he is liable in damages.”

Cardozo did not really rule about a consent that was informed, it was in another case in 1957, that it was ruled that physicians “have the duty to disclose any facts which are necessary to form the basis of an intelligent consent by the patient to proposed treatment.”

**Elements of Informed Consent**

From the foregoing discussion, it can be seen that informed consent is not just permission to treat. Rather, it can be described as the pact in which a capable patient voluntarily entrusts or refuses to

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entrust his case to a clinical professional\textsuperscript{12} after considering information from the professional regarding the treatment. The following elements have been identified in informed consent:\textsuperscript{13} (i) Competence, (ii) Disclosure, (iii) Understanding, (iv) Voluntariness, and (v) Acceptance. In other words, one has to be competent; one has to receive a detailed disclosure; one has to understand the disclosed information; and one has to voluntarily accept or refuse the intervention in question.\textsuperscript{14}

This ethical approach to informed consent is different from the legal doctrine of informed consent as well as from the courts' understanding of informed consent, which tends to focus largely on the obligation of disclosure.\textsuperscript{15} The courts require disclosure based on a physician's general obligation to exercise reasonable care by offering information. Lawsuits have occurred over informed consent as a result of injury to the patient brought about intentionally or negligently by the physician's failure to disclose.\textsuperscript{16} In contrast, ethically informed consent has less to do with the liability of specialists as agents of disclosure and has more to do with the autonomous choices of patients and subjects. Thus, the disclosure of information is "less vital in clinical medicine than a health professional's recommendation of one or more actions."\textsuperscript{17} Medical convention and malpractice law influenced the courts' understanding of informed consent. However, this ethical emphasis on autonomous choice does not diminish the importance of disclosure in informed consent.

\textbf{Disclosure:} Physicians are duty-bound to disclose the following: (a) those facts or descriptions that patients usually

\textsuperscript{13} Beauchamp and Childress, \textit{Principles}, 79.
\textsuperscript{14} Beauchamp and Childress, 79.
\textsuperscript{16} Beauchamp and Childress, \textit{Principle}, 81.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 79.
consider material in deciding whether to refuse or consent to the proposed intervention. For example, the nature and purposes of the intervention, risks and benefits involved, diagnoses, prognoses, and alternatives. Also required are information the physician believes to be material, the physician's recommendation, the purpose of seeking consent, as well as the nature and limits of consent as an act of authorization.\(^\text{18}\)

It is worth noting here that, even though these components of disclosure are required in the informed consent in the USA, study shows that many physician-patient encounters in outpatient practice were far from fulfilling these requirements. For instance, one study on ‘informed decision-making’ revealed that in over 3500 clinical decisions, only nine percent met the investigators’ definition of completeness for informed decision-making. The authors concluded that “by the most minimal definition consistent with an ethical framework, decision-making in clinical practice may fall short of a basic level of patient involvement in routine decisions.”\(^\text{19}\)

**Understanding:** Informed consent requires that the patient understands the information disclosed, at least the essential information. Such understanding does not have to be complete since a grasp of the central facts is generally sufficient. A patient or the surrogate usually ought to understand at least what a healthcare professional considers as relevant to authorize an intervention.\(^\text{20}\) These include the nature and purposes of the intervention, risks and benefits involved, diagnoses, prognoses, and available alternatives.

**Competence:** Competence involves being legally of age to exercise a legal right including rights to make healthcare decision

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and decisional capacity. The person needs to have the ability to communicate choice, understand relevant information, appreciate the situation and possible consequences, and manipulate information. Thus, when individuals “lack the ability to make decision that promotes their well-being in keeping with their own previously expressed values and preferences,” we say they are incompetent. Being competent to make a decision is different from willingness to make a decision. Being competent or having the capacity enables, but does not obligate, a patient to act autonomously or independently. Furthermore, a person can be competent in one thing and not in another. For example, a patient may be competent in deciding what to eat but not in making medical decision. Therefore, lacking the ability to make medical decision does not mean that one is incompetent in other things.

**Voluntariness:** Voluntariness requires that after the patient has received the information and understood the core message, one “acts voluntarily to the degree that one wills the action without being under the control of another’s influence.” Sickness, psychiatric disorders, drug addiction or substance abuse can diminish voluntariness. However, this analysis is restricted to control by other human beings. For example, if a physician orders a reluctant patient to undergo dialysis and coerces the patient to comply by threatening to abandon that patient, then the physician’s influences appear like control. Whereas, should a physician persuade the patient to undergo the procedure when the patient is at first reluctant to do so, then the physician influences, but does not control, the patient.

**Acceptance:** Having received and understood the disclosed detailed information, the competent patient voluntarily does one of the following: either decides in favour of the planned

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22 Beauchamp and Childress, *Principles*, 93.
23 Cf. Ibid., 94.
24 Ibid., 93.
intervention and authorizes it or refuses to go on with it and therefore declines to authorize the intervention in question.

Exceptions to Informed Consent Requirement in the USA:

In the USA, the requirement for the informed consent as a prerequisite for treatment may be suspended in the following circumstances.

**Emergency Care:** A patient can be treated without informed consent if there is clear, immediate, and serious threat to life and the time it would take to offer an informed consent would significantly increase the risk of the patient’s mortality or morbidity. In this case, the courts have ruled that physicians treat patients under the doctrine of implied consent, with the assumption that reasonable patients would consent to such treatment if they were able. Implied consent is said to occur when a patient agrees to be treated at an institution: by asking to be treated, the patient agrees to routine hospital procedures like physical examination. The treatment that is provided without informed consent should be in accord with standard medical practice. In other words, it should be the treatment that most physicians would tend to recommend for the condition in question.

**Therapeutic privilege:** Therapeutic privilege occurs when the physician judges that informed consent might itself seriously harm the patient. The reason for this must be documented, and when possible, consent must be obtained.

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Waiver: Finally, in a waiver, a patient can give up his right to informed consent and delegate someone else, but s/he must be aware and be counseled as to her/his legal and ethical right to informed consent. The physician should not be the initiator of the waiver. The reason for the waiver is to be documented in case of later questioning as to inappropriateness and litigation.  

Having outlined the concept and practice of informed consent in the USA, the next section explores the concept and the practice of informed consent in ATM and compares it with that of the USA.

African Traditional Medicine

The term “African Traditional Medicine” means the medical practices and knowledge of the Africans. It existed before the arrival of modern Western medicine to Africa and continues till date. The method incorporates plants, animal and mineral-based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques as well as exercises, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of illness and maintenance of health and well-being. This has evolved over thousands of years interchanging with other regions like the Mediterranean. It is recorded that the “medicine of ancient Egypt, reflecting African impulses, shaped ideas of neighbouring civilizations, including the medicine of classical Greek and Roman antiquity.”

Traditional medicine is not particular to Africa; rather, people all over the world “developed unique indigenous healing traditions” and practices, which are defined by their culture, beliefs, and environment. More or less, these healing traditions and practices

29 CF. Post et al, Handbook, 46; and Wear, Informed Consent, 162.
attended to the health needs of these communities over the centuries.

In Africa, as is the case in other continents, such as Asia and Latin America, traditional medicine helps to meet some of the primary health care needs of the people. It is reckoned that up to 80% of the population of Africa use traditional medicine for primary health care. In Nigeria, as well as Ghana, Mali, and Zambia the use of herbal medicines at home is the first line of treatment for 60% of children with fever resulting from malaria.\(^{32}\) ATM has a rich bio-resource base since 90% of ATM is based on plants. This is good because it is reckoned that Africa is endowed with a rich biodiversity of about 40,000 plant species.\(^{33}\) More than 4,000 of about 6,377 species are used as medicinal plants.\(^{34}\) So, the raw materials are available.

**Nature of health and disease**

Unlike its Western or American counterpart, the African Traditional Medicine approach to healing is holistic because its concept of health is likewise holistic. Good health includes mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being for patients, their immediate and extended family members as well as for the

\(^{32}\) WHO, *Traditional Medicine*.


community. Good health is also "conscious harmony with God and the creation, an alliance of love with all beings, a sympathy with all that is pure and happy, a participation in the spirit and life of 'The intelligent Universe,' and entire concord of purpose with the infinite original." Ill health is the reverse of all these.

While the western approach to treatment is analytic, ATM focuses on the whole human being. During the medical intervention, the mind, soul as well as the body of the patient is considered together. In traditional African belief, it is recognized that the gods, the spirits and the ancestors do influence human affairs including health and illness. Thus, the cause of disease or ill health in ATM is sometimes attributed to mystical forces or spirits. That is why the traditional medicine doctor employs divination in the diagnostic process to discover the mystic forces involved.

Likewise, medical intervention is inextricably linked with African Traditional Religion (ATR). In Africa, religion pervades all aspects of life. There is no real formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and the non-religious or mundane, between the spiritual and the material aspects of life. Major A. G. Leonard summarized it thus:

The religion of these people is their existence and their existence is their religion. It supplies the principle on which their law is dispensed and morality adjudicated. The entire organization of their common life is so interwoven with it that they cannot get away from it.

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38 Ibid., 62.

As in Judaism, Africans believe that medicine comes directly from God and that God is the healer. An Akan proverb asserts thus: "If God gave you sickness, He also gave you medicine."\(^{40}\) The practice of medicine is, therefore, linked to God and the divinities till today.

**ATM Practitioners or Doctors**

Traditional medical practitioners or traditional doctors are those who provide healthcare by using plant leaves, barks, roots, fruits, animals, dead insects, and mineral substances. They are recognized by the community in which they live as competent to provide such healthcare.\(^{41}\) Most of them acquired their skills through inheritance and apprenticeship. They undergo a lengthy initiation and training and these programs vouch for their competence. In traditional African society, the traditional doctor can be a herbalist, healer-diviner, or a traditional priest. Among the Igbo of Nigeria for example, the traditional doctors (*dibia*) are delineated into three groups as follows: (a) *dibia-ogwu*, the general physicians, (b) *dibia-afa*, the diviners or fortune tellers, and (c) *dibia-aja*, the ones who offer people's sacrifices to the gods.\(^{42}\) In some cases, the general physician, the diviner, and the priest can be the same individual. In that case, that individual divines the cause of illness, the treatment and plays the part of the general physician as well as the priest if need be.\(^{43}\) They diagnose out of experience acquired from training and years of practice.

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African Traditional healers can be very caring and have the interest of their patients at heart. They are expected to be "trustworthy, morally upright, friendly, willing and ready to serve, able to discern people’s needs; and they do not charge too much." They also provide the needed answers to the adversaries imposed upon the community by outside forces that the people do not comprehend. They prepare charms and prescribe the rituals to neutralize the effects of the enemy’s charm. They ward off evil spirits and intervene between the community and the divinities as well as the spirits. Furthermore, they advise the “community head when to embark on community purification rituals in order to remove the burden imposed on the community by contravening the society’s norms and taboos.” Like other professionals, some of them are skilled in their work, healing psychotherapy, counselling etc. Some of them, however, are not good in their work and some perform shady activities like preparing charms for good luck or fortune to pass exams, to succeed in business or make money. A good example is the case at hand in Tanzania. Some ATM doctors, or rather charlatans, came up with the ridiculous idea that a wealth potion prepared with a body part of an albino is sure to deliver the desired wealth. This sparked the hunting down of albinos in Tanzania for body parts. As a result of this, the government has

44 Ibid., 46.
45 Dime, African Traditional Medicine, 47.
banned all the ATM doctors in the country from plying their trade for now.⁴⁷

**Some Recent Developments in ATM**

In 1978, WHO, in conjunction with UNICEF, called on their member states to recognize, and promote cooperation between ATM and Western medicine as a vehicle of realizing the goals of the primary healthcare initiative. WHO made this call because it realized that traditional medicine forms the main and often the only source of health care in many areas of the developing world.⁴⁸ This call renewed and heightened interest in ATM in various places and at various levels, leading to developments and improvements in ATM. Some of these developments and improvements include: the formation of organizations and associations of ATM practitioners; the establishment of research and educational or training centres, and the garnering of political commitment to ATM. One of the bodies that is still absent is Ethics committee for ATM. There exist some non-ATM research ethics committees which take care of research studies involving human subjects. But there is need for ethics committees in clinical institutions for both traditional and Western medicine. Let us now examine some of these developments and improvements, one by one.

**Organizations and Associations**

In the wake of the call and campaign made by WHO, the status of ATM practitioners was boosted. They began to reach out more to

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one another and to form more support groups and associations. Organizations and associations of ATM practitioners now abound. Examples of organizations include Association for Scientific Identification, Conservation and Utilization of Medicinal Plants of Nigeria (ASICUMPON); Ghana Federation of Traditional Medicine Practitioners Association (GHAFTRAM); Traditional Medicine Healers Associations Bulamogi county, Uganda, to mention but a few. These groups and associations share information regarding their experiences in the practice of ATM and the *materia medica*. They share information about new herbs and medicine, their usages, therapeutic potency, side effect, the etiology of diseases and their treatment. The groups also facilitate the regulation, monitoring and evaluation of ATM practices and the practitioners. They serve as peer review.

**Research Institutes**

Besides the formation of associations of ATM practitioners, there are establishments of ATM training and research Institutes such as Pax Herbal clinic and laboratories Ltd., St. Benedict's Monastery, Ewu-Ishan, Nigeria; Centre for Scientific Research into Plant Medicine, Ghana; *Centre Experimental de Médecine Traditionnelle* (CEMETRA, dominantly Senegalese); and *Promotion de Médicines Traditionnelles* (PROMETRA, international) which abound in many WHO member countries of Africa. The research institutes promote and protect traditional medicine and indigenous science through scientific research, education, training, advocacy, and through local and international exchange of research results, cultural and spiritual ideas.49

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Political Commitments

Following the call of WHO to member countries, the fiftieth session of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa adopted the Regional Strategy on Promoting the Role of Traditional Medicine in Health Systems, in 2000 at Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The African Union Heads of State and Government that met at Abuja, Nigeria, in April 2000 and at Lusaka in July, designated the period 2001-2010 as the decade for ATM to show their commitment. This strengthened the collaboration between WHO and the African Union, offering WHO the authority to form and assist African committees in developing and publishing regulatory and ethical codes and policies for ATM and its practitioners.

Now federal and local governments in some countries of Africa have in place some regulatory and monitoring systems for ATM and its practices. For example, the Ghanaian Ministry of Health, in October 2004, issued the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Traditional Medicine Practitioners; and South Africa has the Traditional Health Practitioner's Act No.22 of 2007, and the Traditional Healers Practitioners Code of Ethics, of 2010.

ATM Versus Western Medical System

There are varying degrees of development in the relationship between ATM and the Western medicine in Africa. Some countries have not begun the integration of the ATM into the National Health Care System. Some have only established a system of registration and regulation of ATM practitioners; and others, like Ghana and

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South Africa, have truly incorporated ATM into their primary health care system.  

Finally, what do these developments mean for informed consent? The developments confirm that ATM is not a quack or illicit practice, but an effective health care service recognized locally, nationally and internationally. Thus, there is the call for its integration into the National Health Care System. The developments also confirm that ATM has a scientific base upon which it can be evaluated like the Western medicine using empirical science. Thus, the pharmaceutical products of ATM are tested, regulated, and monitored. Now we turn to the analysis of informed consent and its practice in ATM.

Informed Consent in the African Worldview

Just as the concept of informed consent in the USA is shaped by the understanding of autonomy, so also, the concept of autonomy informs the understanding of informed consent in ATM. Therefore, in order to really grasp the concept of informed consent in ATM, it is necessary to take a look at the understanding of autonomy in the African worldview. Before continuing with the discussion, it will be appropriate to note here that since there are various local cultures in the continent of Africa, there will be some nuances in the understanding of autonomy and informed consent across the continent and even within any one of the countries of Africa. It will be difficult, though not impossible, to articulate all the different nuances in the understanding of autonomy and informed consent in all the African countries and cultures in a short article such as this

one. However, there is a basic underlying understanding that is common to the people of Africa. This article will, therefore, attempt to articulate some general common understanding of autonomy and informed consent in African thought while at the same time highlighting a few examples from some local cultures as representative of Africa.

**Autonomy in African Worldview**

As in the American bioethics, autonomy, in the African bioethics, more than the other elements of informed consent, helps to define informed consent. Therefore, it requires a special attention and exposé. A good understanding of the concept of autonomy in African thought requires an understanding of the individual in relation to the community. A brief look at the person vis-à-vis his or her community is, therefore, in order here.

**Individual and the Community:** In Africa, persons are defined both individually and communally. Individuals are defined in relation to their community. John Mbiti, a renowned writer on African culture and religion, expresses the relationship of an individual to the community in Africa in his book as follows,


In traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes his existence to other people, including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole. The community must therefore make, create, or produce the individual; for the individual depends on the corporate group... Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: "I am, because we are; and since we are therefore I am." This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man.54

The African ethos presupposes an existing community into which individuals are born. Thus, there is in this community an organic relationship between the individual members. African bioethics asserts that persons are relational and interdependent beings because Africans believe that persons are, by nature, social beings and are embedded in the community by social ties. They are to a large extent constituted and defined by their social or communal ties. This idea differs markedly from the notion of the nature of human being as asserted by such social contract philosophers as John Locke, John Rawls and Thomas Hobbes. These social contract philosophers claimed that, in their original nature, human beings were first isolated individuals but later decided to live together by contract. Thus, in the dominant western view, the tendency is to move from individuals to society, whereas, in Africa, there is a move from society or community to individuals. In other words, there is an acknowledgment or confirmation of an existing community ("we are"), which is a basis for defining the "identity of the existent and thinking self (‘I am’)."55

54 Ibid.
55 Menkiti, “Person and Community,” 167; and Ikuenobe, Philosophical Perspectives on Communalism, 53ff.
Concept of Autonomy: However, it is not the community alone that defines the individual or personhood, rather, the individual helps to define himself or herself and the community as well. Individuals evaluate and reappraise the inherited values, beliefs and practices, and sometimes, even, challenge the community. Sometimes, it would seem as if the individuals have no will and autonomy of their own, that the individuals are lost in the community. That is not the case. Persons are partly the product of the community and partly help to define themselves, that is, they are partly their own individual products. The work of Kwame Gyekye, an African Professor of Philosophy at the University of Ghana, and a visiting Professor of Philosophy and African-American studies at Temple University, supports this view. Gyekye argues that the fact that it is possible for individuals to re-evaluate existing or received values of a community and to inaugurate new ones implies that the self can set some of its goals and, in this way participate in the determination or definition of its own identity. The upshot is that personhood can only be partly, never fully, defined by one's membership in the cultural community.  

Therefore, Gyekye sees the concept of autonomy in African bioethics as moderate as opposed to radical autonomy.  

Furthermore, because individuals are never isolated beings but always members of a community, who are in interdependent relationships with other people, it is better to speak of relational autonomy. Here autonomy is exercised in relationship with other people, relatives, friends and members of the community. Choices and decisions are made with the relatives, friends and members of the community bearing in mind the good and interest of the family, relatives, friends, community, and that of the individual concerned.

57 Ibid., 36-41.
When individuals make personal choices and decisions, they consult relatives, elders, or community representatives, as may be appropriate. Besides consulting these others, the individuals also consider seriously their good and interests. This process applies also to medical and moral decisions. However, sometimes, conflict of interest may arise, between an individual’s interest and that of the community. The resolution of such conflict is built into the principles. The way communal principles are framed and the way people are socialized, minimize the conflict.

Here are some proverbs drawn from various ethnic groups of Africa which help to illustrate some of the points I am making about the relationship between the individual and the community, relational autonomy et cetera. Kudha radingu dhedho dzdjo, or even a hawk returns to the earth, in order to die there. This Behema proverb is a criticism of individuals in a community who avoid contact with the community or individuals who think that they can develop independently of the community. The proverb cautions such persons to be aware that they are not fully human without the community and that their venture will fail. It also shows that individuals can and do develop partly apart from community or contest community’s norms, values and practices. Individuality is not obliterated by the communal structure. Along this line also the Igbo of Nigeria say, Otu nne na-amu ma otu chi adighi eke, or although siblings may be of the same mother, each possess her or his own fate or destiny bearer spirit (chi). First, it recognizes the common origin or community. Then there is an acknowledgment of individuality; that a person does have an individual existence, personality and a certain degree of autonomy.

58 Ikuenobe, Philosophical Perspectives, 77.
Another proverb that speaks of the relationship between an individual and the community is *Otu aka ruta mmanu ya ezuo ibe ya onu*, or, if one finger is smeared by oil it soils other fingers. This adage from the Igbo of Nigeria underscores the point that what affects the individual affects the community. The individual exists in relationship with others in the community.

It means then, that in ATM, when it comes to authorizing or refusing medical treatment, individuals do not just decide on their own. While the Western bioethics of the USA places emphasis on the individual autonomy, authorizing one to consent or refuse medical treatment without consulting other people or so much consider their interest, ATM emphasizes relationships and therefore relational autonomy. In ATM one consents or refuses medical treatment in relation with relatives, friends or community members. Some of these people accompany the patient to see the ATM doctor. Some sit in the physician-patient meeting. The process of informed consent takes place within this context, and the treatment is authorized or refused. In other words, the patient gives the final consent following the consensus reached by the group and not just by the individual patient. This sort of relational autonomy with emphasis on corporate existence does not stop at decision taking only but includes other forms of support and solidarity. When a member of the community is ill, it is as if the community is ill too.\(^{61}\) As the family and community are part and parcel of the decision-making so also they show their solidarity in other forms as needed, such as lending financial support. For example, they may assist in paying the hospital bill, or assist the patient, and sometimes the patient’s family, with food and drink. Through the time of illness and treatment, the relatives, friends and members of the community, are available for evaluation, consultation and further decision regarding the patient. This sort of relational

autonomy with emphasis on corporate existence makes it necessary to include or incorporate the community and the family in seeking informed consent even in clinical setting.

**Paternalism**

Likewise, it is difficult to speak of paternalism in this relational autonomy. Autonomy is exercised in relationship with other people rather than by other people. The emphasis is on relationships because human beings exist in relationships with others and are partly socially constituted. Moreover, in many cases, especially in the rural communities, given that the traditional doctors are often members of that community, they know not only the customs but the families and their history. They have multiple roles, as elders, as members of the community and as physicians. They are, therefore, in a position to speak for the family. It is difficult, then, to speak of paternalism, at least, in the sense of the Western individual right oriented autonomy.  

In this form of relational autonomy and emphasis on relationships, the rest of the elements of informed consent may bear the same title or name as in the American bioethics; they acquire nuanced meaning and practice pertinent to relational autonomy and communal culture. Unlike in the USA, the emphasis in the African context is not so much or only on the patient being given the information, understanding the information, or being competent. Rather, the physician-patient relationship is open to the pertinent relatives and/or community elders of the patient. They can sit with the physician to make the necessary decisions regarding the medical intervention. The meaning of this will become clearer as we analyze each of the remaining elements of informed consent.

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Competence

Besides autonomy, other elements of informed consent include competence, disclosure, understanding of information, voluntariness, and acceptance or refusal. Regarding competence in the African context of relational autonomy and communal relationships, other than the concern for the patient’s capacity to make medical decision as is required in the Western/American bioethics, one would be thinking also of the capacity of the patient’s relatives and community members to make medical decision. The patient’s contribution will depend both on the patient’s age and state. Generally, only adults or emancipated minors can actively join in such decision making. Every culture has its own way of distinguishing adults from children. One of these ways is by some form of initiation, by which individuals pass to adulthood. The civil government may have a different legal age stipulated by civil law as the age of exercising legal right and decisional capacity.

Disclosure

Furthermore, as applies in the American bioethics, disclosure of relevant information is required in ATM. The practitioners are


required to furnish the patient and the group with the facts that are usually considered material in deciding whether or not to refuse or consent to the proposed medical intervention. This requirement is now enshrined in the codes of the ATM practitioners of some African countries such as Ghana as follows,\(^65\)

Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall inform/educate all clients fully of their conditions, management, as well as procedures involved in the treatment, which they intend to administer, and the possible risks involved, except in emergency situations when the client is unable to make a decision and the need for treatment is urgent.\(^66\)

**Understanding**

If patients and their relatives were to make meaningful decision regarding an intervention, they have to comprehend the information given them. It could be difficult when the medical treatment in question is a complicated one. Or in divining the cause of the sickness, the result of the divination may not be easily understood by a young and uninitiated patient. Hopefully, someone, an elder, among those accompanying the patient, would understand the information and help to explain it to the patient and others. This is the added advantage the African practice of informed consent would have over the Western or USA process of informed consent.

In some instances, where the particular ATM doctors have earned the peoples’ confidence; the patient and his or her entourage

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leave the decision and or the choice of treatment in the hands of those ATM doctors. They do not worry about understanding the information being given by the doctors.

**Voluntariness**

Following our discussion so far, we can say that when a patient abides by decisions reached in relational autonomy and collective decision making, the patient is not necessarily being coerced. Rather, autonomy is exercised in relationship with others—relatives, elders, and the community, through consensus. And the best interest of all is considered. However, sometimes the patient may see things differently and reach a contrary decision. The family or the community will respect the patient’s wish after unsuccessful efforts to get him or her to see the group’s point of view. They may see the person as being disloyal. Nevertheless, in some serious cases, especially when the patient is judged incompetent, for example in cases of mental illness, they may prevail on the sick person to following their decision. On the other hand, the ATM doctors are required to respect the patients’ decisions and not coerce them.

**Acceptance or Refusal**

Finally, when competent patients, along with their relatives have received and understood the information given, they can freely accept the proposed intervention and, therefore, authorize it. Or they can refuse the intervention by not authorizing it. As noted above, they can also abdicate their rights and leave the doctor to make the call. This is the same as in the USA system. The difference is that, as aforementioned, in a situation where the patient toes the line explicitly contrary to the interest of the family and community, the people will respect the choice but may not be
happy. They may look at it as betrayal and pay no further attention to the patient as happens among the Mbuti people of the Congo.67

Exceptions to Informed Consent Requirement

Emergency Care: As in the USA, in case of emergency, the ATM practitioners are permitted to treat without consent.68 For instance, the Ghanaian code of ethics requires ATM doctors to attend to patients below the age of 18 only when such minors are accompanied by responsible person/s; except if it is an emergency. In case of an emergency, an ATM doctor is permitted to treat even a minor without consent. Likewise, adult patients can be attended to in an emergency without consent.

Therapeutic Privilege: Similar to the USA procedure for informed consent, the ATM physicians may judge that discussing the intervention with the patient might further endanger the patient’s health. In such a case, the physicians would talk it over with the family members or relatives of the patient. If they agree, then the patient is excluded from the consent process. However, in the African context, the relatives or the elders may initiate the exclusion, if they judge that involving the patient might seriously harm the patient. They will try to convince the ATM physician not to give the patient any information regarding the patient’s sickness. The two parties will try to arrive at a consensus.69 In some cultures, such as among the Igbo of Nigeria, it is permissible to keep the medical bad news from the patient. It is generally considered to be for the best interest of the patient, the therapeutic good of the patient. The information is given to the relatives, who sweet coat it for the patient.

68 Ministry of Health, Code of Ethics, Sect. 2, Article 36.
Waiver: Patients, in the African culture, can waive their right to be part of the informed consent process. This is understandable and there is no fear of litigation. Patients, especially older patients, are likely to yield their right to make medical decision to their children, relatives and elders. For example, among the patriarchal societies like the Igbo, Yoruba and Ibibio of Nigeria; and the Guji and Borana of Ethiopia, the first born (especially the male) child is usually expected to take up the right to lead the decision making for the parents in such cases. Among the matrilineal of Ghana, the nephews would do that. This prerogative is also seen in the inheritance right in Ghana. Nephews would work the farms of their maternal uncles, and afterwards they would inherit the property. Even though times have changed, this custom persists. On the other hand, for a young married woman, the husband would be expected to take up the responsibility of leading the decision making for her. In the event that he is unable, then, the elder child and the woman’s sister or parents will step in.

Before rounding up our discussion on informed consent in ATM let us consider one major factor that is posited as mitigating informed consent in ATM. This is the issue of some “unknown information.”

The Issue of the Unknown

Some scholars have raised a question about informed consent in ATM; whether there can be really informed consent because there seems to be many unknowns in the ATM. Aceme Nyika, for example, fears that sometimes the potency, the side effects, and the level of toxicity of the medicine are not known. Consequently,

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71 Galanti, Caring for Patients, 80.
72 Ibid.
this leads to serious unforeseen results and complications. Thus, Nyika wonders how one can truly consent to the unknown in such a circumstance. She concluded that it is difficult to inform the patients or their surrogates of the effects or side effects of the treatment if these have not been proved.

Nyika’s concern has now become an issue of research. If truly the therapeutic potency, the side effects, and the level of toxicity of a medicine are not known, such a medicine should be under trial and not be used. The Policy guiding ATM prohibits the use of such medicine. For example, the Ghana National Drug Policy under section 5.0, which deals with the Local Manufacture of Pharmaceutical and Traditional Medicinal Products, expresses the objective of the Ghanaian government as the promotion of self-sufficiency in the production, packaging and marketing of essential drugs, as well as herbal preparations. The aim of this, according to the document, is to decrease the dependency on imported drugs. In spite of these necessities, the document strongly warns the local manufacturers to ensure the quality, efficacy, safety and affordability of these products.74

In pursuance of this need to ensure the quality, efficacy, safety and affordability of medicine in general and traditional medicines in particular, the policy stipulates that:

Only drugs conforming to nationally accepted and/or internationally recognised quality standards shall be permitted to be manufactured and distributed in the country.

The regular and thorough inspection procedures for manufacturing and quality control facilities shall be instituted by the FDB.75

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75 Ibid. nos. 5.3.2 and 5.3.3
Also, being under trial, a medicine should follow the regulations and guidelines for medical research or clinical trials involving human subjects. There is, for instance, the Research Guidelines for Evaluating the Safety and Efficacy of Herbal Medicines. This document was adapted by WHO for Africa from the Western Pacific Research Guidelines for Evaluation of the Safety and Efficacy of Herbal Medicines, which was put together by the Manila office of the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Western Pacific in 1993. The guidelines for ATM stipulates how to test and evaluate both short and long term toxicity of medicines, the required doses, as well as the number and sex of animals for the research.

Furthermore, the Model Code of Ethics for Traditional Health Practitioners in WHO African Region, also, deals with the conduct of research on the evaluation of the safety, efficacy and/or quality of traditional medicines on humans especially in collaboration with scientists or institutions, traditional health practitioners or their associations. Section 5, Article 4, of this code, which is entitled Experiments Involving Human Subjects and the Use of Traditional Medicines, requires that members of such a research team shall:

a) Participate in such joint experiments involving human subjects only when all the ethical standards are fulfilled. Each experiment should receive prior ethical clearance and approval by the appropriate authority, as well as the written consent of the subject.

b) Immediately report, to the principal investigator of the research team, any adverse findings, especially when the health and/or wellbeing of the subject are in danger.

Otherwise, in the general administration or in the use of the ATMs, the ATM doctors ought to tell the patients the truth regarding the side effects and the level of therapeutic potency of the medicines concerned. Then, they leave it up to the patients and their relatives or their surrogates either to consent to or to refuse the treatment. This would be in line with the physician-patient relationship espoused in medical ethics and in the code of ethics for the ATM practitioners, to furnish the patients with true and adequate information.\textsuperscript{77} Tools for Institutionalizing Traditional Medicine in Health Systems in WHO African Region, for example, requires ATM practitioners to show a high sense of integrity at all times in their interaction with their patients. Inform their patients about the procedures involved in the treatment, which they intend to administer. Respect the right of a patient who either accepts or refuses treatment by traditional medicine, except if the law requires such treatment of the disease.\textsuperscript{78}

The Ghanaian Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Traditional Medicine Practitioners corroborates these ethical standards thus:

Traditional Medicine Practitioners shall inform/educate all clients fully of their conditions, management, as well as procedures involved in the treatment, which they intend to administer, and the possible risk involved, except in

\textsuperscript{77} WHO African Region, \textit{Tools for Institutionalizing}, 51. See also \textit{Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Traditional Medicine Practitioners in Ghana}, article 35. It is interesting that these codes are using the language of Western codes in addressing the patient rather than the patient and the relatives or community members.

\textsuperscript{78} WHO African Region, \textit{Tools for Institutionalizing}, Section II, articles 1, 2 & 3.
emergency situations when the client is unable to make a decision and the need for treatment is urgent.79

Nyika’s fears have been overtaken by the developments and improvements in the ATM and its practices. The therapeutic potency, the side effects, and the level of toxicity of most common herbs and traditional medicines are now known.80 ATM and its practices are being standardized and regulated, as we showed above, thanks to the research and experiences of individuals, associations, research institutes and the networking among various ATM practitioners both within a nation and internationally. For example, the following countries—Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe—are collaborating in the research and evaluation of herbal treatments for HIV/AIDS, malaria, sickle cell anemia and Diabetes Mellitus.81 It is possible in ATM, therefore, to have informed consent.

Finally, following from the reasons adduced above, the idea of ATM and its practices being mixed with magic or being magical, shoddy and secret, is practically gone, or at least, fast disappearing. The secrecy is giving way to a new openness, aided by training, the involvement of governmental and non-governmental organizations as noted above. However, in spite of the openness and government involvement, ATM still maintains its community and holistic approaches to health and disease, integrating social ethics, African traditional religion (ATR) and moral values. The belief still persists that the well-being of an individual entails harmony between the body, mind, and spirit; that wholeness requires maintenance of a

79 Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Traditional Medicine Practitioners, article 35.
good relationship with the community, including the ancestral world and the external environment.  

**Conclusion**

By paying attention to the understanding and practices of elements of informed consent especially autonomy, this article makes a comparison of informed consent in the USA and in ATM. The Western bioethics as represented by the USA understands and emphasizes individual autonomy and individual patient rights to make final healthcare decision, hence, the individual rights oriented informed consent. On the other hand, ATM which arises from a communal culture that emphasizes relationships, communal values, and consensus decision making adopts the relational autonomy mode of informed consent, wherein final medical decision is made following consensus opinion by friends, relatives, or community members.

The article also established that because autonomy is exercised in relationships with relatives, friends or community, it is difficult to speak of paternalism in ATM. Likewise, with the improvement in the ATM pharmacological practices, and with better regulatory and monitoring policies, a better knowledge of the therapeutic potency, the side effects, and the level of toxicity of the herbal medicines, is guaranteed; therefore, a proper informed consent is ensured in ATM.

Finally, the article recognizes that the individual right oriented informed consent works for and suits USA society, relational autonomy model does the same for ATM in societies of Africa. It is not a matter of which is right or wrong, but a question of what suits and works for each society. Therefore, in this age of global bioethics, both ways of defining and practicing informed consent need to be respected as legitimate processes that they are.

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82 Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for *Traditional Medicine* Practitioners, vi.
**BOOK REVIEW**


Missionaries to Latin America and Africa, before and after the establishment of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (1622), were less respectful of indigenous cultural traditions than missionaries to Asia. They had all the answers; they did not need to learn the local languages nor eat the local foods. They maintained, in the main, the ideology of European cultural dominance. The exceptions proved the rule.

This fascinating study of *Maryknoll Catholic Mission in Peru, 1943-1989*, by Fitzpatrick-Behrens captures in part the cocksure posture of missionaries; but there is a difference. As the first missionary congregation created in the USA in 1911, Maryknoll embodied Catholicism in American style—its ethnic configurations, the focus on sacraments, catechetical instruction and relief to the poor and needy. The mission insight, expressed in *Field Afar*, connects intimately Catholic Church and nation—the panacea to all world problems after World War II. The inescapable attraction of Fitzpatrick-Behrens’ narrative centres on how Maryknoll’s Catholic Faith and their belief in the American way plays out in the mission field: missionaries collaborated with the State in Peru without obviously appearing to do so. However, in less than two decades the same missionaries distanced themselves from, and challenged, their nation, and severed the link with the Peruvian state. This book that should be in the hands of every student and expert in mission studies provides interesting missiological and historical suggestions.

Arriving in Peru in 1943, Maryknoll missionaries were intent on implanting a Romanized Catholic church, made in the USA. On the other hand they focused on erasing the “magic” and “superstition” that supposedly dominated the local cultural Peruvian and Latin American Catholicism. The narrator creatively
and beautifully presents the background of USA ethnic Catholics, their ritual life, their marginalization from mainstream USA Protestant culture, and their struggle for freedom thanks to the Catholic Social Teachings. These constituted the ready-to-hand instruments for developing mission policy. The initial expected outcomes failed to materialize. The Maryknoll missionaries were rather distant from the rural Indian population. They used intermediaries, the shark feudalistic landowners and the catechists trained to memorize the essentials of their Catholicism, with whose aid they plunged single-mindedly and passionately into their mission. Catholicism branded in the USA, combined sacramental rituals with material aid; the missionaries, culturally sensitive but politically cautious, were opposed to leftist leaning.

Change in mission strategy was fast-forwarded by the new church of Vatican II that impacted Maryknoll and the church in Latin America and Peru. Investment in personnel ready to learn the indigenous Aymara language and culture, and live with the people yielded different results. After Vatican Council II, the Latin American Episcopal Conference adopted the Theology of Liberation and preferential option for the poor: the conferences of Medellin (1968) and Pueblo (1979) introduced a defining difference that was both disturbing to the cautious and energizing to the progressive missionaries. Maryknoll discarded the catechists as intermediaries, opposed the feudalistic landholders, and fully supported the land reforms of the military regime. However, their appropriation of the main tenets of liberation theology, the option for the poor, and the effort to implement the social teachings of the Church firmly rooted Maryknollers within a progressive church. Missionaries moved out of their isolation from the local church, and were fully committed to issues of justice, peace and human rights: no longer limited to cultural concerns, they turned into social and political activists. Advocates of human rights and defenders of the indigenous cultures and peoples, they broke with the policies of their Nation, broke with the brutal policies of the Peruvian government, and were targeted by both the government and the Maoist rebellion. Today, right wing bishops in charge of
the dioceses where Maryknoll missioned since 1943 would have nothing to do with their human rights stance based on the Catholic Social Teachings. They have been forced to leave Peru.

This is a fascinating and easy to read book. The only shortcoming is the lack of glossary of terms, and a comprehensive list of abbreviations. The index is very helpful.

This book is not only for the Maryknoll missionaries and supporters; it is important for the study of mission strategy in general, and missionary activity today from world perspective. As the Catholic church celebrates fifty years of Vatican Council II, the author’s epilogue is instructive: the pushback coming from the newly appointed bishops could be interpreted as a sad story of rewriting half a century of history, or it may simply represent “one more cycle in the long history of the Catholic Church and its relationship with the indigenous people in Peru”.

Elochukwu Uzukwu, C.S.Sp.
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This collective work is a timely contribution to the commemoration of the event of Vatican II. Reaping the Harvest is put together by three Irish theologians to challenge the Catholic Church in Ireland and the world Church to rekindle and embrace the promises and hopes of Vatican II. Hope rests on the progress made so far to realize the promises of the council, especially in the area of the social teachings of the church. Much has been done, but more needs to be done. Embracing the more that needs to be done is imperative for the renewal of the Catholic Church undergoing a severe crisis particularly in Ireland.
Reaping the Harvest is however realistic. The expectations raised by the aggiornamento of the Council of John XXIII, the euphoria of Vatican II, and the disappointed hopes and promises are clearly noted by each of the three contributors. For Jim Corkery Vatican II was not an illusion. The expectations of a change in leadership style, from the monarchical to the collegial, supported by a vibrant Synod of Bishops that operates from below rather than from above; the perception of the Church as People of God made up of all the baptized, a church that learns from the world in order to teach, were realizable promises. But the Church suffered from a loss of nerve, and, perhaps, a loss of faith or trust in the God who owns the future. The victory today of those who interpret Vatican II in terms of continuity rather than rupture with the pre-conciliar monarchical and centralist image of the church is a challenge that the three optimistic theologians try to clarify.

Gaudium et Spes (Vatican II Constitution on the Church in the modern World) was the litmus test on where prelates stood 25 years after the council—the 1985 Synod: a neo-Augustinian trend favoured the restoration of the past and the strengthening of power at the centre, while a humanistic and communitarian trend wanted stronger communion, collegiality, openness to the world and the religions as presented in Gaudium et Spes.

Sue Mulligan reviewed Gaudium et Spes and the Papal encyclicals it inspired with enthusiasm. There may have been a loss of nerve in the church leadership, as Cokery claims, but Mulligan insists that the Church leadership, from Paul VI, whose support of Gaudium et Spes ensured its presentation and adoption at Vatican II, through John Paul II, continued rolling out Catholic social teachings firmly on the track of Gaudium et Spes. This displays the image of the church as “light of the nations”. This light is shown in the insistence on the primacy of conscience, the importance and vital role of the laity, collaboration with and learning from peoples and cultures while not shying away from the role of teacher. (Humanae Vitae was a low point of learning; an exercise in top-down policy). Mulligan concludes that the social teachings of the church present a vision of Vatican II we must continue.
The Church, as People of God, has suffered and continues to suffer worldwide, and especially in Ireland. The sexual abuse scandal reveals structural problems within the church that calls for renewal. Gerald O’Hanlon insists that renewal in the church involves not only change in the personal and spiritual life but also structural changes; both are needed to develop a spirituality of responsibility. In a Catholic church that has developed a culture of deference and silence, the laity must recover their voice, subsidiarity must be real and not negative—blaming individual bishops when things go wrong and letting Rome go free; whereas, in reality, all power in the Catholic Church tilts towards Rome.

There is no doubt that the church is passing through trying times today. The wide vision and optimism or promise of Vatican II, that needs to be recovered, convinces us that the church is God’s work. The life of the church within (ad intra) and its witness in the wider world (ad extra) draws energy from the presence of God. Reaping the Harvest tells the story of how to keep this hope alive. It is worth a while to pick up this book and to read it.

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