POWER OF THE POWERLESS!
Solidarity and Collaboration As Mission

PUBLISHED BY
The Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians
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BULLETIN OF ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY
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CONTENTS

Editorial 1

Paulinus Ikechukwu Odozor
The challenge of Africa to the Western Conscience: US Bishops and Solidarity with Africa 3

Valentin Dedji
Human Poverty: A Scandal in God’s Project for the World 29

Uzochukwu J. Njoku
Solidarity and Collaboration without Boundaries: Shifts in the Social Teachings of Pope John Paul II 49

Ferdinand Nwaigbo
Ethnicity and a New Image of Nigeria: Explorations in Creation Theology 70

Theophilus Okere
Collaborative Ministry and Renewal in the Church: Comments on the Nigerian context 89

Peter Okafor
Authority as Service in the Nigerian-African Church: Challenge of the Twofold Apostolic Heritage 103

FEATURES
Patrick Claffey
“Clash of Ignorance” or “Clash of Civilisations”: Edward Said’s Critique of Bernard Lewis and Samuel P. Huntington 128

BOOK REVIEW: 151
EDITORIAL

Our world of the 21st century is so interconnected technologically but still remains very much separated by inequalities, prejudices, violence and hatred. In this world the powerless, or the world’s poor, get a raw deal amidst plenty. Across cultures and civilisations, among religions, movements and sects, in the North and the South, seething anger that reveals the bitterness of the powerless is sometimes translated into violent confrontations and terror. The powerless are based not only in the South, or the so called Third World, but also in the North. Globalisation creates islands of the powerful decision-makers located mainly in the Northern capitals and their Southern collaborators. But globalisation also distributes the powerless throughout the globe – not only in the South but also in the North – though not in an even way. Samir Amin in a recent almost alarmist publication, warned of the dangers of the militarization of globalisation in the American style. He called for collaboration and solidarity across the world – North and South – to change the dangerous trend.

This issue of Bulletin focuses on collaboration and solidarity across the globe as answer to poverty, to “make poverty history”. Collaboration and solidarity is the answer to religious and ethnic intolerance and violence. Through collaboration and dialogue we discover the close ties between humans who can work together to realise the common project of transforming the world. Our cultural and religious differences and our technological and economic advancement should no longer be allowed to create inequalities that would be exploited by political or religious fanatics. Rather a new internationalism of peoples associating Europeans, Asians, Africans, and Americans would through solidarity and collaboration realise the utopia of a transformed world despite our cultural, religious or civilizational diversity.

Contributions to Volume 17 of the Bulletin are weighted on the side of collaboration and solidarity as mission of the Christian church. The first four contributors, Odozor, Dedji, Njoku and Nwaigbo, tackle the scandal of poverty in Africa and among the powerless of the third world. If poverty, diseases, wars and refugees, etc must be made history there must be a radical reform of leadership, a search for a new kind of interreligious relationship, and a collaborative approach to resolve the ethnic question in multi-ethnic and multi-religious communities of Africa. Solidarity and collaboration between the West and Africa must be taken in all seriousness. It should not be considered a simple question of compassion or pity, but rather a matter of justice and fairness in a world suffused with the ambiguities of globalisation. This eschews prejudicial stereotyping of Africa and the rest of the powerless third world. Justice and fairness would require that there should be no privileged measuring rod in approaching issues of poverty, ethnic conflicts, and disease in Eastern Europe and the same issues in Africa.

The next contributors, Okere and Okafor, call for radical reform in the Church’s structures to move the Church away from crippling clericalism that could be traced to copying the regime of Caesar. Solidarity and collaboration in the church would empower laypeople and display the whole church as servant and witness of the reign of God. This will have a healing or transforming effect on Africa and the world. The proposal of a radical structural reform in form of democracy or synodality not only draws from the earliest experience of New Testament Christianity but also from the dynamic egalitarian and communitarian structures of some African societies.

The final contribution by Claffey draws attention to the pertinence of Edward Said’s critique of the mistaken but popular thesis of “clash of civilisations”, a sabre rattling ideology proposed for the realisation of the economic and political objectives of America and the West. It calls on all to embrace the humanist project and to set aside stereotyping, prejudice, essentializing theories and ignorance. In the dangerous world of the 21st century solidarity and collaboration, dialogue across religions and cultures bring together the gospel ideal and the ideal of secular humanism. The power of the powerless rests on the faith that today across the globe men and women do, and can, mobilise to build a better world based on the universal principles of justice.

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The American Catholic community has shown increasing interest in Africa in recent times. American missionary involvement in Africa especially from lay missionaries is evidently on the increase and many American Catholic institutions are also trying to find ways to engage Africa in a more meaningful and sustained way. One of the most significant official indications of this new concern for Africa is the 2001 pastoral letter of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *A Call to Solidarity with Africa: A Statement of the US Catholic Bishops*. This paper is based mostly on this pastoral letter of the Bishops of the United States. There are three major parts to my paper. In the first part I present an overview of the letter of the US bishops. The second part is a deeper reflection on some of the points the bishops raise in their letter. In the third and final part I take the letter of the bishops a step further by discussing an issue the bishops simply hinted at but did not talk about, namely, the question of solidarity between Africans and

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1 Various versions of this paper have been presented to audiences at the University of Notre Dame (specifically a sub committee of the Notre Dame Board of trustees, the board of trustees of the Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame, the preparatory commission for the dialogues on solidarity with Africa, and the faculty of the theology department at Notre Dame), in Washington D.C. under the auspices of the USCCB department for refugees and migration; at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago where I was the Augustus Tolton Lecturer for 2005; and at the workshop on solidarity with Africa organized by the office for black Catholic ministries in the diocese of Sacramento, California, from June 16-18, 2005. I have borrowed from these various presentations some of the insights which constitute the core of this paper.

their African-American brothers and sisters. I currently live in the United States. And from my vantage point here in the US I am convinced that the relationship between Africans and African Americans deserves more attention than it is now getting.

A Call to Solidarity with Africa – Highlights
The *Call to Solidarity with Africa* arises from the recognition that all is not well with Africa, or to put it in street language, that Africa is in very bad shape. The drafters of this text seem to be concerned with three basic questions. The first is how a continent so richly blessed could be in such poor shape. The second question is how the continent can be prevented from total annihilation. The third issue is the question of how the rest of the world can benefit from the riches that Africa has to share. In searching for answers to the first question the bishops wisely note that while some of Africa’s problems have deep historical roots in Africa’s past, many of the problems have more recent origins. However, almost all of these

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3 This letter was part of the millennium project during which the Church as a whole, and in its various parts, took time to rethink our way of being Church and tried to find ways of living the gospel ever more faithfully. In a world that was celebrating the achievements of the human community, and of the contributions of the Christian faith to that achievement, Africa appeared to be left out. The continent appeared to many like a poor cousin amidst so many rich and prosperous relatives, a poor Lazarus infested with sores from head to toe forever begging from the crumbs that fell from the rich neighbour’s table. In response to the Bishops’ letter, the university of Notre Dame undertook a series of consultations on Africa with a view to finding ways the Church and the people of the United States of America can enter into mutually fruitful relationships with Africa. The first of these meetings took place in October 2002 when a small delegation of Africans came to Notre Dame to initiate a dialogue between the University and the African Churches based on the text of the bishops’ letter. The next gathering took place in September 2003. This meeting brought together many politicians (including the President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo), academics, policy experts, clergy, religious and other people from all walks of life, in an unprecedented effort to discuss Africa, the challenges it faces, and the promise it holds for the entire human family, and to find ways of supporting the continent in its struggles. A third conference was held in Nigeria from January 5-9, 2004. This meeting was a continuation of the discussion already begun at Notre Dame during the two previous conferences. Fifty one persons from the US, including thirty two from Notre Dame, made this trip.
problems are structural in that they have continued to be fostered by a spirit of denial and inattentiveness. And because these problems have been unchecked and unattended to, they have robbed the peoples of Africa of the ability to live in peace and prosperity and they continue to threaten the integral development of the peoples and nations of Africa.

The bishops list the following as historical or current issues that have wreaked or which continue to wreak havoc on Africa. The first of these issues as listed by the bishops is slavery. "Slavery, a system fundamentally evil and base, stole from the African continent many of its most precious resources: men, women, and children. Millions of people were forcibly uprooted from their families and communities to lands and conditions so alienating and dehumanizing that words cannot convey the depths of their suffering." The bishops not only acknowledge that this phenomenon has devastated Africa, they also note the role of the United States in this saga: "Our nation (US), still lives with the effect of this evil. Our own people still bear slavery's scars and live its history – a history that has not yet been fully acknowledged or entirely reconciled." The bishops go on to argue that America’s responsibility to overcome the legacy of slavery and racism should be reflected in America’s domestic and international programs. Other historical and current causes of Africa’s problems, according to the Bishops’ pastoral letter, are colonialism, corruption, bad and inefficient governance, issues of land use and agrarian reforms, poverty, hunger, disease, crushing international debt, HIV/AIDS, conflicts and insecurity on the continent, the manipulation of religious and cultural identity to gain and consolidate political, social and economic control, ethnic strife even among Christian faithful, and conflicts over resource control, etc. The issues are legion. The summary of it is that Africa is in trouble, or as the Nigerian would say in one of those historically laden short lamentations: “trouble dey for Katanga.”

One obvious aspect of this text is the generosity and balance with which it approaches the reality on the continent. For example,
while on one hand they note the many challenges facing Africa today, the Bishops carefully note on the other hand the contributions of the African Church in its ancient and more recent incarnations to the growth of the Christian faith and the contributions of Africa, past and present, to human civilization. They also show appreciation for the contributions of the more recent arrivals from Africa – laity, religious and priests to the growth and well being of the US Church in particular. “The experience and wisdom of all this people,” they say, “can help provide direction and momentum to our efforts to preach the Gospel and to promote justice, peace, human rights, and full human development in Africa.” On the African continent itself, the bishops point out that governments, Churches and other organizations are doing so much to bring succour to the peoples of the continent. These, the bishops argue, constitute signs of hope in Africa today.

Realistically, however, these signs are overwhelmingly overshadowed by many indications of death. Africa faces many challenges that must be sincerely acknowledged and realistically dealt with. The questions are: why should anyone outside the continent, especially Americans care? And what anyone can do? The bishops answer the first question by pointing out that we all share a common humanity and it is the Christian thing, on the basis of our common humanity, to work to stop any erosions of respect for human dignity wherever this occurs. The suffering in Africa constitutes an affront to human dignity, properly so-called. The situation of dire need and desolation among many Africans invites the Church to exercise a prophetic role. The first task, as the bishops see it, is to help Africa find a voice in the world community. Africa needs help at least on the grounds of what one may refer to as enlightened self-interest. Say the bishops, “The immensity of poverty, violence, disease, and despair, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, threatens the stability and security of the international community.” The promotion of international common good “will help all peoples live in peace and security.”

5 Ibid., p.9
Furthermore, the Church in the US is particularly interested in Africa, the bishops say, because there is a mutual bond which exists between the American Church and the African Churches on the basis of the faith in the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. In this regard, there is recognition that the universal character of the Christian faith and identity transcends national boundaries and calls everyone to live in solidarity and justice with peoples everywhere. Finally, the bishops argue that the unique position of the United States in the world today as one of the wealthiest nations on earth imposes on it an obligation to the world’s poor. This position imposes on it the moral obligation to commit a substantial portion of its resources for poverty alleviation among the poorest peoples.

To arouse the conscience of the American people, as it were, to the plight of Africa, the bishops partially note the role the United States has played in creating or fostering some of the current problems in Africa. They recall, for example, the way Africa was used by America in the Cold war era to fight proxy wars with the Soviet Union. Even though, they did not go into detail here, they could have easily pointed to Ethiopia, Angola, Congo Kinshasa, Mozambique, among others to show the lingering effects of the cold-war policies of both the United States and the then Soviet Union on Africa’s past and present. The Bishops argue that even though the Cold war era is gone, the United States must not forget or abandon Africa or write the continent off as having little relevance to its strategic needs. So, the first task is political. Africa’s interests must not be written off and Africa’s voices silenced as inconsequential in the international forum.

The second aspect to being in solidarity with Africa is economic. In this regard, the bishops state that America’s lack of serious attention to the needs of Africa is scandalous.

Contrary to popular opinion, the US commitment in development assistance ranks the lowest as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) among the developed nations. The US effort in sub-Saharan Africa falls far short of a responsible contribution, given the severe nature of the
The bishops argue that the US and other countries should give more to alleviate poverty in Africa. They should continue and intensify their commitments to debt relief for poorer countries; they should work more assiduously and in collaboration with the African countries themselves to improve the health care systems in Africa and especially to fight the diseases that devastate Africa such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, etc. The US must recognize the importance of promoting and strengthening education in Africa. The US government and people must foster a just and mutually beneficial trade relationship with Africa. America must open its markets to African goods as well and reduce or eliminate the excessively high tariffs imposed on goods from Africa. The bishops call on their government to take more active part in the search for peace in Africa’s hot spots. Specifically, they ask the government to take an active part in the search for peace and justice in Sudan; to contribute much more robust financial, logistical and political support to peace-keeping efforts in Africa, to ratify the ban on mines, to help stop arms trafficking in Africa; to work with other international political and financial bodies to ensure that “the legitimate development of Africa’s mineral resources does not contribute directly or indirectly to corruption, conflict, and repression.” The transnational corporations should be held to the highest ethical standards with regard to their business practices in Africa. The US should assist even more forcefully in helping African refugees and internally displaced persons.

What must the American Church and American Christians do? First, speaking for the Church, the bishops stress the contribution of the United States Church to the alleviation of suffering in Africa through such agencies as Catholic Relief Services, which devotes about $140 million annually for health, agriculture, and education,

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6 Ibid., p.20. Currently the US gives out less than 1% of her GDP as international aid.
combating HIV/AIDS, etc in Africa. As to the individual, Christians, the bishops recommend the following: prayer, responsible investment, self-education and involvement in public advocacy, diocesan and parish twinning, etc.

**An Initial Assessment:**
The Bishops’ document is really remarkable. It is a remarkable thing that it is written at all. Coming from a Church whose missionary involvement and interest in Africa until recently had been rather limited to the work of a few professional religious missionary groups, this work is interesting because it signals a missionary awakening of the US church as Church towards Africa. The era of otherwise increased predatory globalization has brought the plight of the poor Lazarus to the attention of their rich cousins in other parts of the world. This is not a bad thing. The United States public needs to be taught to accept more responsibility for the improvement of the life of the less privileged kids on the block named earth.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of the Bishops text is that it forces everyone to take a new and closer look at Africa. Life in Africa is under attack. This seems like a cliché. But sometimes even clichés must be taken seriously. I contend, as the bishops do in their document, that the diseases and deaths, which people talk about with regard to Africa, are only symptoms of a deeper malaise, which must be addressed if we are serious about fostering a culture of life on the continent. Therefore, in the next section I will isolate five factors for deeper analyses, factors that seem to me to put life in Africa under attack. The bishops have already mentioned nearly all these factors. Even so, I think they warrant a closer look if we must really understand Africa and thus be in a position help the continent overcome its problems.

**Africa: The Issues – Five Underlying Factors:**
There are five factors which appear to me to be at the base of much of Africa’s predicament today. These are leadership, God, ethnicity and race, Africa’s indebtedness, and HIV/AIDS. I am aware that questions could be raised as to how I arrived at this list or why the
list does not include this or that issue or phenomenon. The only answer I can offer is that the issues we are dealing with in this section are so fundamental that they encompass many others. In other words, if Africa were to get a grip on the challenges it faces in these areas, the transformation of the continent would be immediate and sustained.

Leadership
Chinua Achebe, the famous Nigerian and Africa’s foremost novelist, wrote a book some years ago with the title, “The Trouble with Nigeria.” The first chapter in Achebe’s book starts with this now-famous line: “The Trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely the failure of leadership.” What Achebe says of Nigeria is easily applicable to every other state on the continent. One of the great problems with Africa today has to do with leadership. There is a critical failure of leadership at all levels in Africa. In his book on Africa and its relationship with the rest of the world Chinweizu, the Nigerian economist/political philosopher and critic, notes that the leadership issue in Africa has a historical angle which dates to the last four hundred years or so. Chinweizu notes that African societies had all along developed at a pace that was in tandem with or in some cases superior to much of the rest of the world. However, that development stopped and in many cases went into reverse due to critical failures in two aspects of leadership – foresight/innovation and transparency/selfishness. The ensuing consequence was the colonization of Africa and the enslavement of African peoples. Here is how Chinweizu puts the matter:

We must recall that our invaders sounded their attack and our proud rulers sallied forth to throw them back. But at the testing point of arms against arms, of organization against organization, we failed. We did not muster the kind of organization that could deliver the right weapons in sufficient bulk and persistence to turn them back to the seas... We had long been pathetically weak; finally our weakness stood exposed. And all because, for the four preceding centuries, our leaders had been preoccupied with

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7 Chinua Achebe, The Trouble with Nigeria (Heinemann, 1984), p.1
exporting, with inadequate compensations or none at all, our human and material resources, had been too busy organizing our continent for the exploitative advantage of Europe, had been busy with slaving raids upon one another, too busy decorating themselves with trinkets imported from Europe and throwing away our invaluable manhood, our irreplaceable gold, diamonds and ivory – too busy, under various European inducements, impoverishing and disorganizing the land to take thought and long-range action to protect our sovereignty. And at the end of those four misused centuries, where our ancestors had sowed ruinous gain, we, their descendants, reaped conquest and humbling indignities... Four centuries, four long centuries wasted on particularist greed, four exhausting centuries bloodily exporting their kind, four centuries of political disorientation and social disorganization. May their souls sleep without rest in our memories to warn us away from any repetition of their ruinous neglect.  

Chinweizu’s prayers do not seem to have been answered because Africa’s leaders are still involved in the same self-serving and ruinous practices that brought indignities and maldevelopment on much of the continent. Many of Africa’s leaders are as self-serving, inept and as grandiose as ever. What little gains Africa made at the end of colonialism seem to have been wiped away. Here is how I have previously tried to describe the situation in a sermon I gave on Pentecost day at the Spiritan International School of Theology, Enugu on the eve of the return to civilian rule in Nigeria in 1999 in the presence of the state governor and some of his functionaries.

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9 This homily was delivered in the presence of the then Governor-elect of Enugu and many of his political associates. The sad reality is that things have not turned out to be much different or better under his government or that of the others who were elected with home at that time.
At the end of the twentieth century we are still the poor cousins of much of the civilized world. Our people are hungry, our youth are barely prepared to compete with their peers in the coming century, civic society has all but been wiped out – our courts are not dispensing justice, our universities are no longer places of serious teaching, robust arguments and research, our political and social system is riddled with corruption and ineptitude, our people are not secure in their homes or on the streets. Our workers are neither paid well nor promptly. There is decay everywhere you turn – all because we have experienced a barbarian invasion. The barbarians are no longer at the city gate. They have come not in animal skins but in well-ironed uniforms, agabda (danchiki), and Giorgio Armani suits. They are to be seen in our ministries sitting in air-conditioned offices. They are to be seen in our courts “dispensing” (mocking) justice. They are all over in our schools wearing lofty academic gowns and carrying a string of degrees after their names. They have also appeared in our churches, clutching bibles and carrying prayer books that are worn from over-use. They are in our hospitals carrying stethoscopes they really do not know how to use. Wherever and whatever guise they appear, these barbarians have only one aim – to end all civilization as we know it and to return us to the dark ages to which they are best suited. The tragedy in this country is that they have largely succeeded. We are all now victims.\(^{10}\)

The question of leadership in African states is all the more baffling when one notices the preponderance of leadership talents at family and local community levels. It may be that African states are only so in name and that the general citizenry has never quite been able to identify themselves with the state as such. But even at the local levels one often notices bizarre tendencies which indicate a penchant for self-aggrandizement, myopia and utter disregard for the common good which can be very baffling at times. In short, however, one looks at it, one must in all sincerity admit that Africa

is in dire need of good leaders today. And unless such wise people are forthcoming, to paraphrase *Gaudium et Spes*, the future of the African continent lies in great peril.

*Menace of abuse of “God”*

Ironically, one of the greatest threats to life in Africa is God. There is a serious God-problem in Africa. I do not mean by this that there is a problem of unbelief. In fact what A.G. Leonard said of the Igbo in 1906 is still applicable to the generality of Africans: “they eat religiously, drink religiously, bathe religiously, dress religiously and sin religiously”\(^\text{11}\). God is a problem in Africa today because of the abuse of this supreme symbol of human devotion by some people or groups of people in Africa. This *abuse* occurs *in three principal ways*. First, God has become a source of schizophrenia. Second, God has become an ideological and party patron for some people. Third, God has been turned into a sectarian leader by some political leaders.

Most Africans are no longer primary adherents of African Traditional Religion (ATR). They are mostly either Christians or Moslems. They are Christians because they have been baptized in Christian Churches. At crucial moments in their lives, however, one often notices that many of these people are leading schizophrenic lives. They resort to ATR or rather to the bit of it they know. At other times, when it suits their purposes, they resort to Christianity, or to the bit of it they find ‘useful’. The result is akin to what Alasdair McIntyre considers as the crisis of modernity – disjointed speech caused by disjointed translation from various traditions, past and present. Although many of the city dwellers in Africa no longer adhere to ATR or adequately pay allegiance to Christianity, they have fallen into random and thoughtlessly selective appropriation of the beliefs and practices, which make these traditions work. Furthermore, they have tried to subject those

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traditions, or bits of them that they have appropriated, to a single and alien criterion of reasonableness. The fact is that the African religious worldview is now severely fractured, disoriented and, or in the words of Mathew Kukah, “a fractured macrocosm”\textsuperscript{12}

There are two factors that account for this situation. The first factor is the aggressive proselytization undertaken by Islam and Christianity since the advent of the two faiths. While Islam came from the north, Christianity came from the south. The second and most devastating factor is the haphazard and unsuccessful catechesis and translation which today characterizes evangelization in Africa. Nowhere has this arisen more perhaps in the African Christianity I am familiar with than in the area of God – the highest symbol of our faith. In a bid to plant Christianity, the missionaries chased the ‘gods’ of the ancestors from their groves. In their places they sought to place the God of Jesus Christ about whom the people were in fact taught little. In much of Africa, the missionaries merely changed the designation of the “Supreme Being” without as well changing the content it mediated. Today, many people treat the God of Jesus Christ as if he were one of the ancestral deities of pre-Christian African communities. The existential results are evident both in the lives of a massive amount of people who are not aware of their place in the world and have little regard for the universality of God’s love because God still functions for them as a “‘tribal’ warlord” or as political party leader.

As Mathew Kukah points out, God is being conscripted for political duties all over Africa by the high and the mighty and by those who want to cling to power at all costs. It must be said that such abuse of God is not peculiar to Africa. Western leaders also do it sometimes. Many African leaders camouflage their ineptitude and corrupt ways with a facile resignation to the will of God. They hand over to God responsibilities for which they assume or are elected to office. The point is not that leaders should not be pious and holy people. Indeed they ought to be. The problem arises when God becomes an alibi for human failure or for the manipulation of

\textsuperscript{12} Mathew Hassan Kukah, Democracy and Civil Society in Nigeria (Benin City/Kaduna/Lagos/Owerri: Spectrum books. limited, 1999), p.39
the national consciousness. When leaders say they fear God, should they be believed? When leaders call on God upon whom should those who are the victims call for assistance? As one prominent African scholar and cleric put it, "our officials swear in the name of God to serve us, but they end up neither serving us nor God. The illegitimate ruler prays to God for succour, the coup plotter prays to God so that his mission may succeed."^{13}

The third aspect to the God-problem in Africa has to do with a growth in a militant and intolerant brand of Islam which is bent on forced conversion and violent take over of states. From Kenya, to Nigeria, from Malawi to Senegal we see a faith with a jihadist mentality that is not interested in peaceful co-existence with other faiths in a plural society. Islam today in much of Africa is bent on wiping out difference by force with aid from sales of oil from the rich Gulf States. In countries like Nigeria and Sudan one sees in concrete form the intentions of the new face of Islam. In the name of God, much violence is still being visited on Africans who refuse to convert to Islam. Another aspect of the challenge of Islam in Africa today is the arabization of much of the continent. The Arab world is still on a colonial mission to Africa. Arab oil money is being funnelled to Muslim communities for the destabilization of the continent, and Arabic has in many cases become the language of the elite and of commerce.

**Racial and Ethnic Tensions**

One of the most death dealing elements in Africa today is the question of ethnicity. Consider the ethnic conflicts that are going on in many parts of Africa today. The Igala vs the Idoma, Bassa vs Gwari, Jukun vs Tiv, Tiv vs Hausa, Berber vs the black elements in the Sudan, and the Hutu vs the Tutsi, to name just a few who are continuously at each other's throat. The level of violence and number of lives lost in these situations are daunting. The level of violence gets even higher in those situations where ethnic disputes mix with religious differences.

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^{13} Ibid
The racial and ethnic tensions in Africa today often go back to pre-colonial times, when these groups were engaged in inter-ethnic battles for the control of territory, trade routes, slave routes, trade or other particular local interests. However, much of the ethnic tensions in Africa can be traced back especially to the policies of Africa's colonial masters. Consider the Rwandan case, for example. Although there had been tensions between the Hutus and the Tutsis for a long time, it was the policy of the Belgians in Rwanda, which really awakened the ethnic demon between these peoples.\(^{14}\) What the Belgians did in Rwanda, the British attempted also in Nigeria even though they did not quite succeed as the Belgians did. The British Administration in Nigeria adopted a strategy of divide and rule through the Indirect Rule or Native Administration system. They chose a beloved ethnic group, the Fulani, who are fair complexioned, tall, with nasal structure like the Caucasians, and with a penchant for administration and rulership. To the Fulani the British granted untold privileges with a view to making them the super race of Nigeria. The saving grace for Nigeria, if one may say so, is that the Fulani were slow in accepting Western education, because they felt that it contaminated their Islamic faith.

My point here is to show ways the genie of ethnicity was let out on Africa. This genie has shown itself to be a demon of the most wicked type, devouring African lives in the hundreds of thousands every year and preventing meaningful progress, which can only come from peaceful co-existence. The Rwanda story is still too fresh. And let me say outright that nothing whatsoever justifies the genocide that was visited on especially the Tutsi people in 1994 and 1995. The Nigerian situation is still a story in progress, because you have a situation where the Fulani are emirs in lands that are non Fulani land, and you have a situation as well where the Fulani are prepared to do whatever is in their power to make sure

that no one else rules Nigeria. They believe they have a God-given right to rule, and rule they must at all costs.

The ethnic tensions all over Africa represent a veritable challenge to life in Africa. These tensions are a challenge, first, because of the sheer scale of the violence, death and destruction which occurs in various African societies on this score and, second, because they show a refusal to accept the full humanity of the other who is not from my ethnic group.

The Debt Crisis
The massive attack on human life in Africa is worsened by the debt crisis. Africa's external debt stock now stands at about $350 billion with a debt-service burden of some 25% of exports. The Global Campaign Against Poverty, an international civil society organisation, at the forefront of the campaign for debt forgiveness for poor nations across the globe, notes that African nations borrowed a total of $540 billion and had, by 2002, paid back $550 billion, and yet owing $300 billion.\(^\text{15}\) This debt burden arose from a complex mix of factors. “The debt problem is a form of bleeding that sucks the lifeblood of indebted countries.” There are a few things that must be said about this phenomenon. Every indebted nation, whether in Africa or elsewhere has repaid the initial sum several times over with interests. So, it is a myth to think of these countries as defaulters. A study of the debt crises reveals among other things the inequities in terms of trade between the rich nations and the rest of the world, the problem of having loans denominated in the currencies of the creditors and the vulnerability of the debtor nations when there is no intervening supervisory authority and no means of declaring insolvency. Consider this situation. A certain country in Africa, which borrowed less than $6 billion dollars initially about twenty years ago, is now saddled with over $32 billion dollars in debt in spite of the fact that this same country has continued to pay yearly interests on the loan. It has come to a point for this country where the debt overhang is so

much that it has to use up more than 30% of its gross budget every year to service its debt without putting any serious dent on the principal loan. What this means is that this African country and others like it have little left to invest in the welfare of their peoples after servicing their debts. The ultimate result is crushing poverty, which is made worse by the notorious Structural Adjustment Programs, which the international lending institutions have bandied about as the panacea for everything that aches African and other Third World economies.

The debt burden is so unjust and its effects so evil that the failure of so many otherwise decent people all around the world to pay attention to its devastating effects on Africa and other Third World countries is tantamount to a conspiracy and an acquiescence to sin. The famous jurist and theologian, John Noonan, has written extensively about usury and of its demise as a theological issue in Catholic moral theology. I believe the time has come for theologians to return to a discussion on usury. How much is enough? Is it right to allow the world’s financial institutions the amount of latitude given them to determine the fate of so many people in the world?

**HIV/AIDS**

Another serious issue that is putting the lives of so many people in Africa to risk is HIV/AIDS. In some countries in Eastern and Southern Africa, the HIV/AIDS situation is at a point where those societies are now in danger of a demographic collapse, unless something is done quickly. Many people in the West ascribe the AIDS pandemic in these regions to loose living and therefore maintain that these societies are paying the price for indiscipline. Nothing could be further from the truth. Such assertions are reminiscent of the day when HIV/AIDS was thought by some as divine punishment on the Gay and Lesbian community. AIDS in Africa is mostly a result of ignorance, carelessness, neglect, poverty, inadequate funding of the health care sector of the economy and, of course, some measure of promiscuity by some individuals. Whatever its source, this is the time for concerted action.
Some Reflections and Some Initial Suggestions

I have so far in the preceding section tried to show that Africa is witnessing a massive attack on human life. I have also tried to show that this attack is the result of various factors, which are not always the concern of people outside the continent, factors that are not just unique to Africa but are also so widespread that they are indeed structural and endemic. The question therefore arises: what does being in solidarity with Africa mean? What can it entail? These are indeed very weighty questions which cannot be answered in a vacuum. I will make the following suggestions.

First, being in solidarity with Africa would mean taking Africa seriously as a continent of human beings. As Pope John Paul II pointed out, the exercise of solidarity is valid, when we recognize one another as persons.16 The rest of the world hardly takes Africa seriously enough. What happens on the continent is either exaggerated (when they are bad) or underrated when they are good. There is no doubt that Africa has had more than its fair share of diseases, political instabilities and other forms of disasters – natural and human-made. The roots of these problems are often both internal and external. Some of the current problems are daunting enough to crush any race of God’s people even on a good day. Yet much of the world does not seem to care enough. This apathy and indifference can be accounted for in various ways. The first is the human tendency to ignore persons and issues which do not appear to be of immediate relevance to us especially when these seem “safely” far away. With particular reference to Africa, this apathy is compounded by a set of factors like distance, the seemingly endemic and intractable problems associated with Africa and historic racism which prefers to see Africa in a somewhat less than human category.

Sometimes it is impossible for people and governments in the West to bring themselves to judge the sufferings and achievements of Africa and Africans with the same historical compassion and yardsticks that have been applied elsewhere. For instance, no nation or race has ever recovered from major cataclysms without

16 John Paul II, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, no. 39
massive, planned and sustained aid. Germany after World War II had a Marshall Plan. South Korea still receives substantive American aid. America gives Israel, whose population is less than half of Nigeria’s, $3b per annum, and Japan was helped to its feet after World War II by massive western aid. After the war in the Balkans, the western nations and Japan have pumped in billions of dollars to aid recovery. Already billions of dollars are being earmarked as aid to post-war Iraq. What many fail to realize is that no place in the history of the world has had to survive the magnitude of affliction that has befallen Africa; no peoples forced to endure the persistent plunder of its people and resources as has Africa for centuries. The ravages of slavery and mindless vandalism of colonial rule have never been addressed by the world. So for Africa, there has never been a clearly thought-out aid plan.

Second, people are tired of hearing about Africa’s woes. They have grown pessimistic about its chances for redemption, so to speak. The result of this boredom is that many Westerners fail to see the structural injustices with which Africans are grappling and they are blind to the bright rays of hope coming out of Africa. The same is true of many Africans themselves. Therefore, anyone who loves Africa must help the peoples of Africa re-image their continent. Africans must be helped first to imagine an alternative world. Africans must again be helped to dream of a land ruled by leaders who see service of one’s country as an honour and not as an opportunity for self-enrichment or for ego-tripping. There is so much cynicism in Africa towards the ability of the state to look after the interest of its people. We must help Africans dream of a continent where citizens who want to work can find meaningful work to sustain them and their families. Africans must be able to dream of a continent where everyone is respected and treated with equal dignity, because he or she is also made in the image and likeness of God. In this new world, every child will have the right to education, no matter his or her parentage. In short, we must dream of African societies which are founded on freedom, justice and equality for all. It is only when this is done that we can chase the barbarians back whence they came. The good news is that Africans are not sitting down with arms folded, waiting for the rest
of the world to come to solve their problems. From the political to the social, from the religious to the economic, there is a vibrancy to life in Africa which is heartening and which is indicative of what President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa has so often referred to as the African Renaissance. Much is already being done. However, much more needs to be done.

Third, considering the role the religions are playing for good and sometimes for ill in Africa, I believe that the time has come for a truly African Religious Council. We have already had a synod of bishops for Africa. This synod was a purely Roman Catholic affair – a factor which limits its effectiveness. What we now need is a gathering of all African faiths in Council in Africa to deliberate on Africa’s many social, economic, cultural, and other problems with a view to determining in what ways the various faith traditions can help create a more humane environment in Africa. We need something like a religious equivalent of the new African Union, at least among Christians, to map out specific ways the religions can help.

The missionary effort in Africa has so far concentrated on planting the faith in parts of the continent where the Christian faith has not been heard and has been scarcely heard. This has yielded tremendous results. I believe however that one of the most urgent missionary tasks at the moment in Africa is that of preaching and working for reconciliation among the various peoples of Africa. As has already been pointed out, the African psyche has been very much bruised in many ways. People are going around with memories of true or perceived wrongs. And there is nothing on earth more dangerous than human beings walking around with memories that are hurting helplessly from oppression and other forms of injustices, real or imagined. Just look at the Balkans, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Sudan, among many other places. Failure to address some of these issues has resulted and continues to result in many ethnic clashes and much loss of life sometimes. The Church in Africa must pay attention to the historical issues that stand in the way of peaceful co-existence between several African peoples. It must, in other words, consider
it as part of its urgent missionary task in 21st century Africa to work to heal memories of so many aggrieved African peoples.

Fourth, the Christian Church in Africa must find a way to engage Islam much more closely. I am aware that much is already being done in this regard. However, I have a belief that Islam in Africa is being let off too quickly. The time has come to ask all religions in Africa to account for their contributions to Africa’s progress or decline, for Africa’s stability or instability. The time has come for all religions in Africa to be called to account for any acts of violence, abuse or injustice, which is perpetrated in its name. The Churches and other well-meaning persons have to speak up against the funding of Islamic militancy and terror in Africa by countries like Saudi Arabia and Libya in the name of Islamic expansion. I have nothing against legitimate missionary endeavours by any religion. However, such proselytising must be respectful of people’s right to decide what ways they want to worship God. It must accept the inevitability of pluralism of views as a way of modern life. The tendency to create pure Islamic societies by destroying anyone else who is not Muslim whether in the Sudan, parts of Northern Nigeria, or elsewhere, must stop.

Fifth, many parts of the world owe Africa a lot of apologies and restitution. The impact of hundreds of year of colonialism and slavery are still very evident in the social, cultural and economic life of African societies. The Japanese in North America have received apologies and compensation for their treatment in Canada and the United States during the 2nd World war. The Jews have rightly been receiving apologies and compensations for their treatment during the holocaust. Why does no one seem to think it is right for the Western world to officially acknowledge the evils perpetrated on Africa for the many centuries when foreigners vandalized the land, looted African wealth to support their own populations at home, forcibly took away some of Africa’s best men and women in servitude? These were all massive attacks on African lives that continue to influence the pace of events on the continent.

My final point comes in the form of a plea for help to Africa from all well-meaning persons everywhere. No, I am not just asking for money for Africa. Too many people have given up on
Africa as a hopeless case. This Afro-pessimism is doing more damage to African lives than anything else. We must encourage people to look towards Africa and not to give up on Africa. Look into Africa. Embrace Africa in whatever way you can. The ready pessimism, which characterizes much of the Western attitude to Africa, is preventing many good people around the world from noticing that God is doing some very good things for humankind in Africa and from sharing in the many blessings and joys which God is offering humanity in this present age through Africa. This should not be the case. Every African and every friend of Africa must resolve not to let Africa be relegated to the backburner any more. It is neither human, Christian, nor in the interest of humanity to do so. We must not let Africa die.

**Solidarity between Africans and African Americans**

In this final section I will consider the challenges of solidarity between Africans and African Americans. The need for a special consideration of how to create and sustain an atmosphere of solidarity between Africans and African Americans arises obviously from historical and racial consideration. Every person with an iota of “black blood” in him or her has racial and historical roots to and claims on Africa.

**The Situation of African Americans**

Let us now turn to look at the African American situation. Although the situation of peoples of African descent in this country has improved dramatically since the civil rights era it still leaves much to be desired. The African American community has yet to fully enjoy the dividend from the civil rights protests of yesteryears. Blacks in this country are more liable to drop out of school than anyone else. The pregnancy rate among black young people is proportionately higher than that of any other population group. HIV/AIDS is fast becoming a black person’s disease. As is the case on the African continent, so here: young black persons, especially women, are contracting the HIV virus at a much higher rate than their peers elsewhere. The gap between those who have broken through the glass ceiling imposed by old prejudices and the
rest of the black community who are still trapped in poverty and a life of hopelessness in the inner cities keeps growing. The results of all these are there for anyone with eyes to see: Our young people are more likely to be caught peddling drugs or being pawns in the hands of drug dealers. They are more likely to be arrested for violent crimes than their peers and they make up a disproportionately higher percentage of the prison population in this country than any other group.

Many years after the storied civil rights protests and marches we must ask whether the decadent sexually explicit gyrations that are the hallmark of some TV stations that are supposed to cater to black interests in this country are the reasons for which many of our African American ancestors suffered and died. Did Martin Luther King, Jr., die so that more black women can be single mothers at age 14 and 15? Was Malcolm X assassinated so that the few who have made it can live in homes that cost millions of dollars ride four of five Jaguars and Rolls Royces at the same time, own private jets all at once when the bulk of young black students are trapped in poorly funded and ill-equipped inner city schools?

The situation of the black person in America today needs to be looked at again by those of us who have been lucky to make something of our lives. I believe the civil rights movement and the gains therefrom were only a start and not an end. What was achieved was the assurance that the law would no longer be used as a stumbling block to the realization of the equal humanity of anyone, including peoples of colour. What the civil rights gains of the 60s and 70s did not and could not have addressed were the historical structural deficiencies which are largely the sources of today's problems in the African American community. Attention to these deficiencies is at the centre of the solidarity we seek between African Americans and the recent arrivals from Africa.

To get the discussion on solidarity between these two groups and beyond, I will first talk about the state of the relationship between Africans and African Americans as I can currently observe it.
Africans and African Americans in America Today:

An African American sociologist once wrote that there was remarkable ignorance about Africa among African Americans. St Clair Drake stated that despite the ever-present consciousness of Africa only a few African Americans since the American civil war had had any face to face contact with Africans.\(^{17}\) Shawn Copeland remarks as well that “even today, few Americans black or white, have been instructed adequately about the continent and its varied peoples. This deficiency leaves Americans ignorant: most of the time, most of us think of Africa and its people as a nether world, a dark and dangerous place whose peoples are unable to execute intricate programs or projects except with Western intervention.”\(^{18}\)

Ignorance of the history and socio-economic reality of African Americans is equally grave on the part of many Africans who have just arrived from Africa. Sometimes these recent arrivals hold African Americans in contempt due to lack of poor educational and professional attainments, loose moral value and poverty. They hardly ever want to know the cultural/historical realities they see and they often do whatever they can to distance themselves from the African American community. The fact is that every person of African descent in this country today is an African American. Whether our parents arrived here on slave ships or we ourselves came over on Boeing 747s we are all under the same constraints, we face the same challenges and we must find ways to work for a world in which persons and peoples of African descent can achieve their God-given potentials and take their place with dignity among human beings everywhere.


\(^{18}\) Shawn Copeland, “To Re-Member Us Whole: Pain and Promises in the Call to -solidarity Between Africans and African American”, p.11
What can we do?
Solidarity entails concrete praxis. And, as Shawn Copeland says, “the praxis of authentic solidarity requires that we act with and beside the other.”19 I want to suggest a number of ways we can act with and beside each other and thus create an atmosphere where peoples of African decent can flourish more than they now do.

First, solidarity between Africans and African Americans requires that we find ways to immerse ourselves in each others’ world. Every African in this country must find time to study African American history. If we do so we will be able to come to a better appreciation of the issues and challenges that shaped and continue to shape the lives of every African American person in this country. For priests, nuns and other pastoral workers from Africa to the US familiarity with African American history is doubly crucial. So crucial in fact that they should not be allowed to work in any pastoral setting until they have demonstrated such knowledge in some way.

Second, African Americans on their part should be more open to the presence of Africans among them. The experience of many Africans is that sometimes their greatest foes are African Americans. From the occasional African American immigration officer who does everything to make your life difficult when they discover you speak with an African accent (even when his or her white colleague has cleared you) to those African Americans in the work place who rather than see their African colleagues as allies see them as threats. Luckily, the situation I describe here is not the general norm since a lot of us, present company included, have had the experience of being accepted without reservation by their African American brothers and sisters. The point really is that Africans here and African Americans must all find ways to change the negative images we have of each other. In addition to the physical trauma and other types of suffering which the slave trade inflicted on Africans everywhere, that exercise left a deep scar of mistrust on the psyche of Africans on both sides of the Atlantic. For, let us face it, we Africans must admit that some African rulers

19 Shawn Copeland, Ibid., p.14
and potentates connived with the white slave merchants to sell off their own kith and kin "to unknown destinations in exchange for useless wares like trinkets, mirrors, firearms, and alcoholic drinks." Africans are becoming increasingly aware of the role our ancestors played in this despicable trade. I hope that one day we all of African descent will proclaim a period of common public atonement to ask the forgiveness of our kith and kin who endured the horrors of the Middle Passage and beyond and to excise the spirit of hate and backwardness which the actions of some of our ancestors have brought on African peoples everywhere.

Third, as many African Americans as can do so should visit Africa. As President Olusegun Obasanjo said during his trip to Notre Dame in 2003 on the occasion of the conference on solidarity with Africa: "Visit Africa. What you know, you tend to love and appreciate." The sad reality is that the image of Africa which most African Americans carry with them is often as distorted as that of most people in the western hemisphere because it is an image which comes second hand from the media. A first hand acquaintance would go a long way to wipe off some of the negative imageries people in the west often associate with Africa and replace them with realistic ones. The Africa people are bound to discover would certainly reveal a continent of people who have their joys and their own challenges and who are striving like people elsewhere to live their lives as best they know how and are able to.

Fourth, many African Americans today are in the position to be advocates for Africa and must do so. One of the great disadvantages Africa suffers today is that it often has no voice where it matters most to have voice. In such circumstances Africa could benefit from the voices of her friends and her sons and daughters in the Diaspora who have managed to make it to these exclusive clubs. If we had such friends, Rwanda would not have happened. If we had such friends Africa’s debt overhang would not be so burdensome.

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21 President Olusegun Obasanjo, “The Wind of Change in Africa Today,” in Origins vol. 33, no..18 (October 2003), p.298
Fifth, for their part, Africans who now live in the United States must find ways to involve themselves in the local affairs of their areas especially in such crucial areas as education and health, and crime and HIV/AIDS prevention. If the local school is failing your child the answer is not just to pull him or her out and into a special private school. In those areas with a large concentration of African Americans and other racial minorities such an action means that the rest of the poor families are therefore deprived of the voices of those who have the visibility in the community to effect any meaningful change.

Finally, we must acknowledge the truth contained in the saying that united we stand and divided we fall. No one group can today effect change alone. In this regard we must find ways of being in constant communication with each other for the good of our people and other peoples everywhere. This is the basis for solidarity we seek.
HUMAN POVERTY: A SCANDAL IN GOD’S PROJECT FOR THE WORLD

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Introduction
Poverty in Africa has become a real stigma, a sort of an ugly birthmark nobody should be proud of. For the most pessimistic, poverty in Africa may be compared to a terminal disease for which there is no cure except for life-support machines provided by international aid agencies. For many in the West, Africa is still a vast geographical area that is little known, essentially backward and rather mysterious. If Africa is known at all in the West, it is mostly for its thousands (essentially women and children) who queue daily to die of malnutrition, AIDS and other ‘tropical diseases’.

My approach in this paper will be three fold. Firstly, I will start by asking crucial questions about the causes of poverty in Africa. For instance, why has human dignity become so alien to Africa? Have Africans really fallen under the curse of the ‘Cushites’ (‘tall, dark and smooth-skinned people’) as described in Isaiah 18? Secondly, I will attempt a theological reflection about the implications of poverty and injustice in the perspective of the divine project for humankind. Thirdly, I will try to outline some of the challenges that African government policymakers, the general public and Church organisations have to face if we really want to reduce poverty in Africa.

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1 Presented at the Theological Workshop convened by the All Africa Conference of Churches on Poverty Eradication, Lome, Togo, 18 – 22 Oct. 2004
2 Valentin Dedji is a Methodist Minister from Benin Republic; he is currently in charge of St Mark’s Methodist Church in North London. He is the author of Reconstruction and Renewal in African Christian Theology (2003).
Getting into the Caves of African Crisis

Alienation and Anthropological Impoverishment in Africa

In talking about the causes of poverty in Africa, what the Congolese philosopher Mudimbe termed ‘The Invention of Africa’3 may be one of the issues. According to Kä Mana, despite all the merits of their pioneering struggles, pioneer African poets, writers and social theorists failed to make a strong connection between a need for an African cultural identity and a genuine economic development. In his words, those African pioneers have succeeded only in making ‘African imagination dance magnificently in the clouds, without being able to descend into the caves of the very meaning of political, economic and socio-cultural existence of Africans today’.4 Therefore, it is urgent to bring about a radical change in the conventional ways of living and thinking about ‘what it is to be an African today?’ To do so, we need to keep our distance with regard to the general emotional statements about Africa’s fate, in order to transform those statements into thought provoking questions: Why famine in the midst of the abundance of Africa’s natural resources? Why are wars and ethnic conflicts so endemic in Africa despite African people’s legendary sense of hospitality and fraternity? Why those ugly ethnic cleansings despite our ‘Black Beauty’? Why is it that ecclesiastical boundaries are so strong in Africa despite the vaunted African people’s strong sense of community life? What is to be done with African Christianity to stop it being a ‘folklore’ of consolation and vindication that has not succeeded in empowering African people for the transformation of their social life?

There is a great challenge for today’s African writers, thinkers, politicians, economists, social scientists, theologians and Church leaders etc, to start scrutinizing afresh the process that, in the 1950s and 60s led many African countries to political independence. People laid down political ideas and the political

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leaders promised to lead their countries towards peace and prosperity. They promised to lead the colonised Africans into the land ‘full of milk and honey’. However, the bitter reality was that, before a real settlement in these lands, these same political leaders became the first to grab lands, monopolising honey and milk greedily, leaving the majority in the shadows of poverty and death. The ‘Exodus to Freedom’ has turned out to be an exodus to bewilderment. Honey and milk have turned out to be agony, killings and hatred. Many have been left in the wilderness to die as refugees and displaced people. Corruption is rampant everywhere. The millions of poor are becoming poorer, while the few rich are becoming richer. Finding that most of African contemporary societies do not provide the humanising contexts they so eagerly seek, millions of Africans find themselves estranged from these societies. I remember some years ago, visiting refugee camps and shanty towns in the slums of Nairobi, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Ethiopia. I will never forget those depressing moments, just remembering those thousands of people who go to sleep every night with empty stomach. There is a staggering figure of 6,500 Africans who die daily of treatable, preventable diseases – dying for want of medicines that ordinary people can get in the West at their local chemist shops. Even today, we still have on our television screens horrifying images of refugees and displaced people in Sudan, Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi. Even though international news agencies have lost interest in the plight of people living in Sierra Leone, Angola, Mozambique, Uganda, Somalia, Ethiopia, etc., their situation is not less critical.

There is a fact that wars together with other territorial disputes and conflicts, not only cause a lot of environmental problems (air and water pollution, damage to the earth, land-mines, etc.), but they are also a major cause of unemployment and poverty. This is where the vicious circle begins: the mass unemployment that has plagued many African countries for many years was partly responsible for many conflicts. Whenever any crisis started (like in
the case of religious conflicts in Northern Nigeria) ⁵, these idle hands (the unemployed) who, out of sheer intention to loot, would then aggravate little disagreements and blow them out of proportion. The bitter fact is that conflicts in African countries have assumed a monumental magnitude with the emergence of religious, ethnic and political conflicts which desecrate human life with reckless killing and shameless spilling of human blood through spears, swords, daggers and guns. Is it not a tragedy for the human condition in Africa that people have become refugees or displaced in their own countries? It is truly depressing to see that those people have no beds to sleep in; they have no houses to go into. What about the fate of those thousands of beautiful children we shamefully call street children? Can street beget children? Is it not an irresponsible flight from our human responsibilities? In many countries in West Africa as well as in Central and East Africa, I have met mothers, fathers who said to me that not only were they unemployed, but also, they did not get any kind of income – no old-age pension, no social welfare, no medical assistance, nothing. One of my questions remained without response: ‘How do you live then?’

The other reality is that, though African people are known to be notoriously religious by nature, religious movements have played major roles in many of the conflicts that have wrecked the continent. Oddly enough, the love, which is taught by the Bible, the Qur’an, and many sayings from the African wisdom tradition, was only in people’s head and not in their heart. Few who had the desire to love their neighbours discovered too late that their love had evaporated in the scorching heat of religious intolerance.

The above critical analysis is intended to open our minds and eyes more widely to the poignant realities of the situation of millions of African people caught between what the Cameroonian theologian Engelbert Mveng has termed an ‘anthropological impoverishment’ and an alienating Christianity. This calls for lucid questions regarding the ethical, social, political, economic and

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ecclesial dimensions of the African crisis. Kä Mana has the merit of grappling with this kind of questions in his L’Afrique va-t-elle Mourir?6 (Will Africa Die?) As a result of his critical reflections Kä Mana attempts at revitalising captivated African social imagination in order to reinvent a more adequate approach to our social responsibilities and ultimately, to reconstruct African human dignity. For instance, Kä Mana’s major objective in L’Afrique va-t-elle Mourir? was to analyse the new myths that provide the focus of African social imagery, in order to suggest rational ways to, “[t]ransform the myths that make us dream into problems that make us think, convert the problems that make us think into energies that make us act, change the energies that make us act into new reasons to live and die, and into new fundamental motifs to hope and believe.”8

The starting point of Kä Mana’s reflections in L’Afrique va-t-elle Mourir? is Hannah Arendt’s theory of the three dimensions of vital activities (labour, work and action) that structure the condition of modern human being.9 Kä Mana applied that theory to analyse the deep crisis of human existence in Africa which, in his view, is characterised by ‘the barrenness of intelligent creativity, an apathetic world and a crisis of human speech as a medium of social encounter for the realisation of the event of a space for life’.10 This analysis is enlivened by a theological reconsideration of God’s humanising project for humankind through Christ. It is a project that has nothing to do with myths which would just ‘comfort us in our nature and lock us in our history’. Rather, it is a project which, through Jesus’ cross, and death, his resurrection and exaltation, releases forces that impel ‘human beings into a self-transcendence,

7 For a detailed study of Kä Mana’s works, see Valentin Dedji, Reconstruction and Renewal in African Christian Theology (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2003), pp.93-165.
10 Kä Mana, L’Afrique va-t-elle Mourir?, p.22.
in order to make them responsible for themselves and for the world which they have to transform according to God’s plan’.11 Later on, in our theological reflections about the eradication of poverty, we will deepen the crucial aspects of human beings’ responsibilities as co-partners or co-creators with God. For now, let us turn to ‘globalisation’ as another source of poverty in Africa.

The Unjust Burden of Globalisation12

The ‘globalisation’ so often referred to nowadays is the latest phase in a historical development which began to take shape a little more than five hundred years ago and which was consolidated at the beginning of the seventeenth century. It was from about 1985 onwards that the term ‘globalisation’ has become fashionable. It is a process of the internationalisation of capital, of labour, of production and of trade, and it has serious social and cultural consequences. These historic changes have enabled few to become rich while many have become poor and still continue to be poorer and poorer. In other words, it is a system that has been built on a foundation of inequality and injustice. Internationalisation of capital and of the market has given rise to ‘the wealth of (a few!) nations’.

This economic, political and cultural order has since then been characterised by a hierarchical structure. There are the central powers, which accumulate wealth; the peripheries, which are exploited in all senses; and the secondary centres forming a link between the central powers and their surrounding regions. These secondary centres accumulate wealth and have insatiable appetites. Their prosperity is based on what they succeed in drawing in from their hinterland. The secondary centres linking the central powers with those on the periphery of the system maximise, in one way or another, the few benefits conferred on them by their role in the system. This hierarchical system is indicative of the existence of a

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12 Here, I have been inspired by an excellent article written by: Julio de Santa Ana, ‘Globalisation and some of its Problems’ in, Voices from the Third World, Vol. XXVI No.1, June 2003, pp.36-46.
regime of domination on a world scale, or, in other words, of empire.

Capitalism has evolved and modernisation has been achieved through very close networks. One has to see that, whenever the government of any African or Latin American country attempts to obtain resources for economic growth, the organisations responsible for overseeing the operations of the system (International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organisation, Inter-American Bank for Development, etc.) respond that, in order to have access to the funds, the national economies must be ‘modernised’. Thus, they have to be ‘adjusted’ to the requirements of the central powers of the system (mainly the G8 nations and the so-called Paris Club). The major decision-making power in the prevailing system is located in those groupings.

The consequences of this exploitative international economic system for African countries and their peoples are simply disastrous. Considering that globalisation is built upon a hierarchal structure based on greedy powers, sophisticated technologies, inequality and injustice, the access into any sphere of the inner circle of that system can only be possible through ruthless competition. But because in most of African countries what Hannah Arendt has called the three dimensions of vital activities (labour, work and action) are missing, one can understand that African countries, though being among the world’s first producers of raw materials, still remain at the periphery of the international economic system. The big tragedy is that, most of the time, when big international policymaking agencies meet to elaborate crucial decisions, the voices of representatives from poor (African) countries are very often pressured, bought and silenced. And because of the African saying that ‘when two elephants fight in the forest, only the grass and small trees suffer’, ordinary people in Africa remain permanently at the receiving end. They are the ‘innocent’ victims of a system that ignores them, tramples down on them and treats them as mere objects of history instead of allowing them to rise to the status of subjects of their own destiny.

The crucial question here is: How would God feel about the suffering of his people? Is there any source of inspiration for us
from the Bible about human beings’ duty regarding the eradication of poverty and injustice?

**Affirmation of Nationhood and Defence of the Poor:**

*A Biblical Perspective*

When the Bible speaks of God as redeemer of the people and defender of the poor, it means that Israel’s identity, or what it means to belong to the Hebrew people, consists in doing justice to the poor and restoring their trampled rights. Consequently, when Jewish people do not do justice to the poor, they are traitors to themselves. This means that not only do they act in evil ways, but their violations of the covenant are directly contrary to what identifies them and originally gave rise to them as a people, namely, the liberating event of the exodus and the historical experience of having come forth from Egypt thanks to God’s intervention.

The failure to do justice to the poor means turning one’s back on the true identity of Israel as a nation. It so happens that the defence of the poor is the very meaning of the Jewish people’s claim to nationhood. For this is a nation that, ever since the promise was given to Abraham, has been called upon to enthrone justice and right: ‘To do what is right and just’. This command completes the one given to Abraham when God told him to leave his own country and travel to an unknown land where he would make him father of a great people (Gen. 12: 1-2), a people that would be characterized precisely by the doing of what is right and just in order to create a society of equals. Therefore, the theme of rescuing the poor and practicing justice that runs through the Bible means ‘keeping the way of the Lord’. It is also the condition that must be met if God is to carry out his promise for His people.

The identity of Israel is rooted in the relation between the poor and the nation; the chosen people lose their dignity if they do not establish justice in their midst. For this reason, in many Bible passages, the prophets, speaking in the name of God, describe the powerful in their own Jewish nation as ‘foreigners.’ They are, in effect, foreigners to their native land because they do not do what is
right and do not establish justice as prescribed in the covenant that justifies the existence of the Hebrew people. Those who dominate may belong to the collectivity but they are foreigners as far as the very wellspring of the nation’s existence is concerned. So too, an affirmation of nationhood that leaves aside the effort to make justice reign in the land is a lie and a form of manipulation. We see this same manipulation at different levels of people’s life in Africa.

Firstly, many politicians and some social activists have used the themes of liberation, exodus and the quest for nationhood to point fingers at ‘foreign agents’ and invaders. But they have failed themselves to do for their own people ‘what is good and just’. They have turned their homelands into places of perpetual wilderness. As such, they are as guilty as the foreign invaders they replaced. Also, is it not a manipulation when some of African political leaders use their claim to be ‘born again Christians’ as a token to attract and silence Christian communities’ voices, while perpetrating injustice and corruption behind the political scenes?

Secondly, poverty, injustice and corruption are big challenges in Africa considering that this is the continent where we have the fastest growing Christian communities in the world. Here, I just want to stress the implications of God’s command: ‘to do what is right and just’ for churches – that is, for the people of God, the family of God, the sacrament of salvation in history. The building of the Christian community acquires its full meaning to the extent that this community defends and protects the poor, who are the privileged members of God’s Kingdom; otherwise, there is a contradiction of the very essence of the ecclesial community.

God is the defender of his people because He asserts the rights of the poor. More than this, God rejects the chosen nation when it does not practice justice. This is a recurring theme in the prophetic books. Some selected verses from Jeremiah chapters 21 and 22 give us this:

Thus says the Lord: Do what is right and just. Rescue the victim from the hand of his oppressor. Do not wrong or oppress the resident alien, the orphan, or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place. If you carry out these
commands, kings who succeed to the throne of David will continue to enter the gates of this palace, riding in chariots or mounted horses, with their ministers, and their people. But if you do not obey these commands, I swear by myself, says the Lord: this place shall become rubble... Many people will pass by this city and ask one another: 'Why has the Lord done this to so great a city?' And the answer will be given: Because they have deserted their covenant with the Lord... (Jer.,21:11-12; 22:3-5, 8-9)

Elsewhere in Proverbs 14:31 we read, 'If you oppress poor people, you insult God who creates them; but kindness shown to the poor is an act of worship.' Furthermore, Israel gradually comes to understand that Yahweh is the defender of the poor in all the peoples of the earth. The great Old Testament theologian of God's universal love is Second Isaiah. When God presents his servant, Yahweh says, 'upon him I have put my spirit; he shall bring forth justice to the nations' (42:1). God's servant's task of establishing justice and righteousness expresses God's will to life:

I, the Lord, have called you for the victory of justice,  
I have grasped you by hand;  
I formed you, and set you as a covenant of the people,  
A light for the nations,  
To open the eyes of the blind,  
To bring prisoners out from confinement,  
And from the dungeon, those who live in darkness. (Isaiah 42:6-7)

Jesus was given a response like that which Jeremiah had experienced. In addition, Jesus in his mission takes up and underscores the universalism of the prophets. The Gospel of Matthew in particular emphasises the all-embracing aspect of Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom of love and life, a preaching in which he declares blessed all the poor of the earth.

The implications of these biblical readings are vast for African Churches and nations. Christian communities, where fighting
against poverty and injustice is not a priority, go against the very meaning of the witness they give to the Lord’s resurrection. In other words, if Churches in Africa are to be truthful to their Christian mission, we have no choice but commit ourselves to prophetic planning and coordinated actions that would contribute to the eradication of poverty on our continent. But there is no point expecting civil society and political leaders to stand alongside the poor if Christian communities and their leaders fail to do so. Instead, we theologians, church leaders, together with our members should listen to the injunction from the prophet Amos: ‘Stop your noisy songs; I do not want to listen to your musical instruments anymore. Instead, let justice flow like a stream, and righteousness like a river that never goes dry.’ (Amos 5:23-24).

Likewise, African nations would no longer deserve to be proud of their nationhood if they fail to put the interests of the poor and the weak first. Again, Amos’ advice here is thought-provoking:

> Make it your aim to do what is right, not what is evil, so that you may live. Then the Lord God Almighty really will be with you, as you claim he is. Hate what is evil, love what is right, and see that justice prevails in the courts. Perhaps the Lord will be merciful to the people of this nation who are still left alive. (Amos 5:14-15)

This is where now more than ever, we need to promote alternative theological thinking that will empower, stimulate and give hope to African people. African people need to get the good news through a genuine commitment to their Christian faith. By taking up their full responsibilities as co-creators with God, African people can still be set free from the shackles of their abundant problems and move toward an abundant life that was promised to them by their creator.

**Re-appreciating ‘Small’ and ‘Local’ Stories: A Theological Challenge**

Christian theology has as one of its great challenges the re-appreciation of the ‘small’, the local, the particular – which is always being covered up by grand narratives and totalising

Zaccheus, we are told, was a small man. However, everything around him is big or happens in a meta-narrative way. He lives in Jericho, a big city, second only to Jerusalem. He has a big top job. He is a big official. He is the senior tax collector – directly accountable to Rome, the imperial city, to which all roads lead. He is therefore a wealthy man. He has heard of Jesus, of the many big miracles and powerful speeches he (Jesus) has been giving in the countryside. Zaccheus does not only wish to see Jesus, he is anxious to see him; that is, he has a big burning desire, a dream. Well, one day he had a chance, because Jesus happened to come to Jericho. But unfortunately, there is a big crowd. However, Zaccheus cannot be outsmarted. He runs ahead, climbs a big sycamore tree.

For Zaccheus, the climbing of the big sycamore tree is such a brilliant and smart idea. But it is as well a temptation, a temptation to dwell up there; of not getting involved with, and pushed around by, the crowd. He just wants to "see" Jesus clearly; to have a clear perspective of everything taking place (false universalism). This is why Jesus calls him to come down from the top of the tree to the ground; from the clouds to join the crowds – the smelly, disorderly crowd comprising both rich and poor, widows and orphans, well-fed judges and hungry children, muscular soldiers and feeble country women; a crowd, in other words, of the historical realities and contradictions.

Surprisingly, it is only when he had come down into this confused mess, that he noticed the widow and orphan for the first time. Only then did he "see" his life and others clearly. His invitation to come down was at the same time an invitation to "see" small things, small events, small needs, and small differences, to see realistically.

The greatest challenge for us today is to be able to "see" such small details, given as we are to living with big stories. And, just like in Zaccheus' case, it is only when we have come down from the big sycamore tress – of big concepts like globalisation, the Market, African Renaissance, as told on the tenth floor of air-
conditioned offices in New York, London or Cape Town (the sycamore trees of our day), into the messy, uneven trivialities of everyday contradictions of the African villages, the shanty towns, the squatter camps, and the back streets (the home of starving street children), that we can begin to “see” the full effect of the African Renaissance. Only then can we begin to realistically and critically ask, "Who has done this to you, Africa?" We have heard the story of Africa's renaissance from the top and I am sure we shall hear more variations. Can theology challenge whoever is telling that story – the World Bank, the IMF, the African leaders – to come down to the ground? What sort of skills would theology need to be able to do that? I am sure it will take more than pious words to be able to force Zaccheus down to the ground.

This is where I would like to bring in my semiliterate, rural mother in Africa. Where does she stand in this story about globalisation? She has been promised that with a liberal economy, free trade, industrialisation, the encouragement of foreign investments, etc., her life will become greatly improved. There will be clean drinking water, better health care – more and better food and a future filled with hopes of prosperity and a longer life.

I am afraid she does not recognize herself in this story, since she does not yet see any of the above signs of salvation. In fact, she has not yet experienced any renaissance in her own life, even as official reports have continued to celebrate the fact that the “economic miracle” is taking place. To be sure, my mother hears the jumbo jets roaring over her head, she encounters tourists with big cameras who ask to take her picture. She is bewildered by all the advertisements promoting all sorts of strange and fanciful articles she does not know anything about. She does not understand what all the fuss is about. On the contrary, she is seriously worried that she has less food to eat now than ten years ago. There is less medical care for her and the whole family. She has been warned not to drink the water from the river, because it has been polluted by the chemical waste from the nearby oil factory, but she cannot afford the nicely bottled mineral water. She is just one of the millions of other ordinary Africans who are similarly worried about the concentration of wealth in the hands of a minority, the
corruption in the public offices, the pollution of the rivers, the full scale destruction of the forests by foreign companies, the massive number of young people rendered unemployed and homeless, the growing number of street children and the scandalous gap between rich and poor.

These contradictions do not seem to feature in the official version of globalisation or of the African Renaissance story as it is told in New York, Washington, London, Paris or Cape Town and Kampala. This is not surprising, for such is precisely the danger of big stories. In their attempt to claim universal validity or be globally acceptable they do not account for the particular. Instead, they tend to confirm and perpetuate themselves through a highly selective sociology of statistics, which not only successfully cover up any contrary indicators, but as a result confirm the story as "inevitable".

One major requirement is that theology has to remain on the ground – within the realm of small stories, within the narrative context of the African’s ordinary struggles and aspirations. But this is where the dominant form of African Christian theology has so far failed.

**Alternative Theological Thinking**

*The Theology of Reconstruction*

I have laid down elsewhere my arguments and vision for a theology of reconstruction in Africa. It is a project for an all-inclusive and integrative enterprise which will draw its resources from multidisciplinary expertise involving social scientists, theologians, philosophers, creative writers and artists, biological and physical scientists, as well as builders and architects. This is a crucial point. For, in a continent where wars, drought, famine, land mines and other pernicious effects of political instability affect indiscriminately men, women and children, the reconstruction task cannot be achieved in isolation.

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Here I will just outline four principles which the theology of reconstruction as a concept as well as a reality has to take into account. It will aim at: (a) Rebuilding the conscience of builders who are themselves forged by a vision of God’s utopia and by an active faith in his word; (b) Re-forging a new spirit which carries the energy that moves through peoples’ history; (c) Reshaping an imagination capable of escaping from ethnicity and tribalism in order to live the faith in God in relationship with the whole cosmos; (d) Restructuring new institutions proportional to the dimensions of the conscience, the spirit and the imagination which our faith in God requires, in order to stop crises.

The matter at stake is to reconstruct the framework of a community’s creative forces in order to lay the foundation of a new destiny beyond the determinism of crises. Nehemiah’s restorative endeavour remains a profoundly motivating initiative because of its prophetic vision, its unselfish motives, its all-encompassing and inclusive dimensions, and its ethical principles:

I put all my energy into the rebuilding [enterprise] and did not acquire any property. Everyone who worked for me joined in the rebuilding ... I knew what heavy burdens the people had to bear, so I did not claim the allowance that the governor is entitled to. (Nehemiah 5: 16 and 18)

As ground-breaking though Nehemiah’s initiative might be, it was only a model of a project that was destined to overcome a particular kind of crisis in a specific period. That is why the overall relevance of the reconstruction paradigm cannot be fully appreciated today unless it is perceived in the perspective of the all-encompassing ‘abundant life’ inaugurated by Christ.

A Christology of Abundant Life
The purpose of a ‘Christology of abundant life’ in the perspective of the reconstruction paradigm, will not consist in rehashing or articulating over again the abounding Christological titles with

14 Kà Mana Foi Chrétienne, p.164.
which Christ has been crowned in African theologies. Instead, the matter at stake here is to take major steps forward in the understanding of the practical implications of the dialogue that has hitherto taken place between Christ and Africans. Whereas in their search for the ‘true character’ of African Christian identity, African theologians have attempted to answer Jesus’ question, ‘Who do you say I am?’ (Mark 8:29) In the reconstruction paradigm, Africans have to ask the same question back to Jesus, ‘Who do you say we are?’ It is through the answer to such a double interrogation that one can perceive the transformative dimensions of the project with which Jesus faces the African continent today and, reciprocally, Africans will be assigned to specific tasks as co-workers with Christ. In this perspective, I agree with Kā Mana that through Jesus’ statement in John 10:10, there emerges ‘a clear project and very significant structures of the type of relationship that is to be established between Christ and African peoples’: 15 “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” Through such a profound proclamation, Jesus has laid the very foundation that will enable Africans to ‘reflect theologically on the power and energy of the Christian utopia as promise and hope for the whole African continent that is besieged by so many problems’. 16 Therefore, the statement, ‘I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly’, does not only reveal who Christ is for us, but also who we are through our relationship with His Word and what are the tasks we are assigned to in these days that are ours, with the signs that characterise these days, the mutations that they imply and the challenges that they bear. 17 The haunting question is: how dare one speak of life in abundance in Africa ‘when poverty abounds; when people just disappear’? 18 In other words, Have Africans really ever experienced the abundance of life or only an

16 The quotation is from José Belo Chipenda, former General Secretary of the AACC; see, Kā Mana, Christ d’Afrique, pp.101-2.
17 Kā Mana, Christ d’Afrique, p.102.
abundance of problems? Are Jesus’ words on abundant life to be claimed exclusively as a future promise?

I am convinced (as were participants to the 6th All Africa Conference of Churches’ General Assembly in Harare) that “Jesus speaks to us in the contexts of our problems (abundance of poverty, refugees, diseases, high infant mortality, cultural confusion, corruption and even ignorance) and promises (abundance of raw materials and human resources, even children).” In the words of Philip Potter, ‘God’s final revelation in the Word made flesh in Christ was that God is the source and giver of life.’ This is fully in harmony with God’s logic in the Bible as we have been given an opportunity to choose between either being overwhelmed by problems which lead to death or being excited by the blessings which are ours from God: ‘I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live.’ [Deut. 30: 15-20].

In my theological view, ‘choosing life in Christ’ is an option for a new understanding of ourselves and above all, an active commitment to the reconstruction task of our countries in the perspective of abundant life. In our reflections on the ‘Christology of abundant life’ let us not give in to blind enthusiasm. For, realistically, choosing ‘abundant life in Christ’ in the context of anti-life forces in Africa (corrupt governments, political mismanagement, economic deterioration, hunger, civil wars, etc.) is not to be understood as a mere aspiration for an economic prosperity or for a material security in a tranquil spiritual atmosphere. Rather, it is a reorientation of our struggles, not as passive spectators, but as committed participants in the process towards the advent of a more dignified humanity.

Thus, it emerges that the quest of abundant life in Christ clearly encompasses three dimensions: a material, spiritual and ethical dimension. It is time for African Christians to shift their faith away from a ‘sleeping-pill Christianity’ in order to see in

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Jesus Christ a new consciousness of what is genuine in us, a new structure of the powers of the new dynamics of the institution of an all embracing life. Thus, Jesus Christ becomes what He is to be fully for Africans and for their destiny, the very operator and catalyst of a new way of being and thinking.

Here, we need to understand that Christ identifies us to Himself in uplifting us to the status of full human beings that he has revealed in making of God our true being, the down-payment of our destiny and the hope of our existence which is his kingdom. Therefore, 'the revelation of Africa in Christ' through Africa’s problems\(^{20}\) will enable Africans to discover anew in the Gospel, positive directions for the creative and innovative functions of their imagination.

The 'Christology of abundant life' implies that 'Christ has become our spirit' as He himself has been 'transformed' by God in order to create abundant life wherever powers of death reign. Therefore, as the very force of our spirit, the strength of our conscience and the energy of our imagination, Christ’s catalytic mission is to change our dreams into a will for action and our utopias into acts of commitment to the advent of the human.

I am truly convinced that in the reconstruction paradigm, Christ impels us into movement so that through us the world may become God’s world as the promise and as the reality of the plenitude of being for everyone and for all. In other words, the practical implication of the 'Christology of abundant life' is that Africa is being called to start the long journey to maturity. The challenge is to 'rise up, take up your bed and walk.' (Luke 5:24) This is a challenge to assume our role as subjects not as objects or victims of our historic circumstances. To 'rise up' means to gain a new consciousness of our situation.

\(^{20}\) Kä Mana recurrently identifies Africa’s problems as: the urgent need for a ‘cultural reconstruction’, chaotic economical structures that are obviously irrelevant for a genuine development of African societies at an international level, a general and irreversible yearning for political democracy and preoccupations for a spiritual and moral renewal of our social texture in its global setting. See, Kä Mana, Christ d’Afrique, p.104.
Conclusion
Poverty in Africa is more than any other endemic disease. It not only disables African people physically and materially, but also it deprives them of their human dignity. As such, the eradication of poverty from the continent is no longer a matter of barren discourse but a crucial issue that needs urgently a political conviction and courageous action. This should involve all-embracing strategies within an interdisciplinary network where politicians, social scientists, medical scientists, builders, architects, philosophers, creative artists, teachers, together with theologians, Church and other religious leaders learn to humble themselves and put together their resources, their structures and their talents for the sake of African people. In these concluding remarks I would like to propose an outline of some motivating principles and few possible strategic actions.

First, we have advocated that ‘protecting the poor, doing what is right and just’ are the very foundations of God’s alliance with his people. Ultimately, a great nation is a compassionate nation. As such, if Churches in Africa are to be truthful to their Christian mission, we have no choice but commit ourselves to setting up the mechanisms and coordinating actions with our partners (within and outside church’ organizations) in order to lead the battle against corruption and injustice on the way to the eradication of poverty on our continent.

Second, educate African people on the true meaning of Jesus Christ’s injunction to them to ‘rise up’ and take up their bed and walk. This would open their minds on the importance of ‘labour, work and action’ as key principles of their future destiny. Jesus Christ’s offer of an ‘abundant life’ is an invitation to start a journey towards empowerment where people who used to be objects and victims of history would eventually become subjects of their own lives’ stories.

Third, though the cancellation of ‘Third World’ countries’ debts at the beginning of the third millennium might have offered some relief to the economy of the beneficiary countries, that would never have a long term effect towards the eradication of poverty. In the light of the dangerous conjunction of military and economic
power in the hands of a new stage imperial empire, it is high time for a worldwide coalition to be formed that not only voices opposition to the unjust and violent use of power, but begins to imagine and organize around an alternative vision of how world affairs need to be constructed. This vision has begun to be outlined in international gatherings, such as the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil in January 2003. This would be a unique opportunity for African nations and religious organizations to make their voices heard, not to sell their voices.

Fourth, considering what President J. F. Kennedy once said: ‘If humankind does not put an end to war, war will put an end to humankind’\footnote{Quoted by Martin Luther King, Jr. See, James M. Washington (ed.), \textit{A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.} (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991), p.275.}, Africans should not spare any effort in order to foster a culture of fraternity that goes beyond ethnicity. For, wars are a major cause of poverty that destroys human dignity.

Fifth, another way towards the eradication of poverty will consist in how seriously Africans, including theologians and other religious leaders start tackling ecological issues. Here are some thoughts for us to ponder: (a) ‘If people did not prefer reaping to sowing, there would not be a hungry person in the land.’ (b) ‘We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.’ (Aldo Leopold). (c) ‘You forget that the fruits belong to all and that the land belongs to no one’ (Jean Jacques Rousseau).
SOLIDARITY AND COLLABORATION WITHOUT BOUNDARIES
SHIFTS IN THE SOCIAL TEACHINGS OF JOHN PAUL II

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Introduction
On 18th May 1920, a child was born in Wadowice (in what is known today as) Poland. He was called Karol Jozef Wojtyla. He was ordained priest November 1946. On September 28, 1958 he was appointed auxiliary bishop of Krakow. He became archbishop of Krakow on December 30, 1963. In 1967, Pope Paul VI created him a cardinal. He was elected pope on October 16, 1978, with the name John Paul II.1

On Saturday, 2nd April, 2005 he died at 21.37 (central European time). He ruled the Roman Catholic Church for 26 years, 5 months and 17 days. Within this period, he made 104 foreign trips and visited 129 countries. He gave 2,416 homilies, published 14 encyclicals, issued 10 Apostolic Constitutions, 15 Apostolic Exhortations, 41 Apostolic letters and 19 Motu proprio. There were also messages which accompanied either his recitation of the Angelus or the imparting of the Urbi et Orbi. Besides these were

also other messages given at specific celebrations such as the annual Lenten messages, messages to priests on Holy Thursdays, world day for peace, world day for the sick and many others. He beatified 1,338 and canonised 482. He created 232 Cardinals and appointed 321 bishops.

What are the impacts and legacies of John Paul II’s pontificate on to the Catholic Church and the wider society? This essay attempts to make a contribution to an obvious question, which scholars in various fields of research are discussing. Though this is not an easy venture, I nevertheless try to make some input based on the resources of my studies and the information at my disposal. By doing this, I also recognise that the pontificate of John Paul II could be described as strongly characterised but also complex. The next pages may help to argue this point.

The Beginning of a Pontificate
The white smoke that rose from the chimney of the Sistine chapel on 16 October 1978 announced to the world the beginning of a new pontificate in the Catholic Church. This was the second time within a period of two months in 1978 that an anxious public would gather in St. Peter’s Square in Rome to await the announcement of a new Pontifex Maximus. The death of John Paul I (Albino Luciani) after 33 days as pope necessitated the October 1978 conclave. The combination of factors in electing the successor of Paul VI ranging from the search for ‘a hopeful holy man who could smile’, a pastoral pope and the blockages which the camps of the Italian Cardinals Siri and Benelli put on the paths of each other helped respectively in the emergence of John Paul I (Albino Luciani) and later gave room for the role of the then Austrian Cardinal Archbishop of Vienna (Cardinal König) in propping up the candidacy of the Polish Cardinal Archbishop of Krakow (Karol Wojtyla) who finally emerged as Pope John Paul II.  

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His election as pope in 1978 was a surprise since he was relatively unknown before the conclave and also because he was the first non-Italian in 455 years to be elected after Pope Adrian VI (from Utrecht, The Netherlands). He was elected during the period his home country of Poland was still under the Iron curtain of Communist government. Moscow was alarmed by his election. Washington was elated. A pope from a communist country, a young man of 58 years and a non-Italian to sit on the papal throne after over four centuries helped to create a remarkable interest in the papacy of John Paul II from the onset.

From Karol Wojtyla to John Paul II: Shifts in the notion of Church

The transition from Karol Wojtyla to John Paul II was a transition from being a bishop in a diocese in Poland to being the head of the universal Roman Church. It was a transition from living in the archbishop’s house in Krakow to being the master of the papal palace in the Vatican. Was this movement (from Krakow to the Vatican) a mere geographical re-location? Were there some implications involved in it? Was it merely a change in name? Did it effect a major change in theological thinking? In short, how much of Karol Wojtyla persisted in John Paul II?

A discussion on the extent to which the movement from Krakow to the Vatican modified the one person who was Karol Wojtyla and John Paul II can take different directions and could also be complicated. Nevertheless, one can make some attempts in answering the question. My studies indicate to me that one of the areas that experienced a major shift from Karol Wojtyla to John Paul II was the notion of Church. This change is noticed when one studies such writings as *Sources of Renewal* side-by-side with *Redemptor hominix.* These two books correspond to the two

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3 *Redemptor hominis* was the first encyclical, which John Paul II issued as pope. The inaugural encyclical of a pope is usually very significant because it introduces the main thrust(s) of the pontificate. One can at this juncture, readily recall John XIII’s inaugural encyclical, *Ad Petri cathedram* [See JOHN XXIII, *Ad Petri cathedram*, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 51 (1959) 497 – 531.] and Paul VI’s *Ecclesiam suam* [See PAUL VI, *Ecclesiam suam*, in *The Pope Speaks*, 10/3 (1965)
different periods being considered here. In the book Sources of Renewal, which he wrote as the archbishop of Krakow, he presented the Church as the communion of free individual persons with God and each other.¹

The Church is more than a community (communitas) – it possesses the nature of a communion (communio) in which, by means of mutual services, in different ways and in various relationships, 'that sincere giving of himself' takes place in which man can fully discover his true self (Gaudium et spes, no. 24). Thus conceived, the communio constitutes their common and reciprocal membership of the Mystical Body of Christ, in which all are members one of another. (Gaudium et spes no. 32).⁵

This treatment clearly reflects the influence of Max Scheler’s notion of the Gesamtperson (a communion of free individual persons) on Karol Wojtyla.⁶

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² K. WOJTYLA, Sources of Renewal, p. 120.
⁶ While Wojtyla’s study at the Angelicum brought him in contact with Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, his contact with the faculty of the Jagelonian University in Cracow brought him in contact with Roman Ingarden. Garrigou-Lagrange introduced him to the thoughts of St. Thomas Aquinas and that of St. John of the Cross, Roman Ingarden (and other Cracow phenomenologists), introduced him to Scheler and the thoughts of such modern philosophers like Kant. To be qualified to teach in the university in Cracow, Wojtyla had to write a habilitation. He chose to write on the Possibility of Constructing a Christian Ethics on the basis of Max Scheler’s Formalismus. [See R. BUTTIGLIONE, Karol Wojtyla. The Thought of the Man who Became Pope John Paul II, P. GUIETTI and F. MURPHY (trans.), Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1997. p. 44. See also G. H. WILLIAMS, The Mind of John Paul II. Origin of His Thought and Action, New York: The Seabury Press, 1981. pp. 93-94.] Scheler’s Formalism outlined four types of social unity or relatedness. These include, firstly, the
This approach, which characterised Karol Wojtyla's vision of the Church would fundamentally start a long process of suppression from John Paul II's first encyclical *Redemptor hominis*, where the notion of Church was treated less as a communion of free autonomous individual persons and more as an authoritative institution and the guarantor of truth. The approach in the *Sources of Renewal* (of free individual persons) would accept differences, diversities and even that "communio in fact means the actualisation of a community in which the individual not only preserves his own nature but realizes himself definitively." It would also consent to the right to dissent and oppose. In his earlier book *The Acting Person*, he argued that opposition does not contradict participation in community life. Rather, the person who opposes makes contribution through his or her act of opposition.

Theologians who initially read John Paul II's notion of Church from his writings as Karol Wojtyla would sooner than later discover that his ecclesiological perspective remarkably changed. Many of these theologians fell into big troubles.

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relation of the mass- or herd-life, secondly, the relation of *Lebensgemeinschaft* (life-community), thirdly, the relation of association (*Gesellschaft*) and fourthly the relation of the *Gesamtperson* (corporate person), or *Liebesgemeinschaft* (love-community). Another name he ascribed to this fourth level of social relatedness is "the moral community of totally personal relationships." [See F. DUNLOP, *Thinkers of our Time. Scheler*, London: The Claridge Press, 1991. p. 34]. Wojtyla's treatment of the Church in *Sources of Renewal* adopted the form of Scheler's fourth level of social relatedness.


9 K. WOJTYLA, *Sources of Renewal*, p. 120.

The transition from the notion of Church as community (communio) to that of authoritative institution was a major philosophical and theological change in John Paul II. It led to one of the features of John Paul’s pontificate namely, a steady departure from Vatican II’s vision of episcopal collegiality to a greater centralisation and concentration on Vatican bureaucracy.\(^{11}\) It later turned more draconian in the handling of theologians who held different opinions from him and the Vatican, which led to a situation where the pontificate of John Paul II, while preaching about human rights to the wider society, may go down in history as one which sanctioned and silenced a greater number of theologians and dissenting voices more than any other pontificate in the 20\(^{th}\) and 21\(^{st}\) centuries.

**Human Rights, Freedom and Democracy ad intra and ad extra Ecclesia**

The change in the notion of Church came to colour one of the greatest legacies of John Paul II with a remarkable ambivalence. His effort to define the Church as a guarantor of truth and orthodoxy rather than a community of autonomous individuals (united with one another and with God) introduced a pre-Vatican II atmosphere were fear rather than trust and openness were the hallmarks of Church life and theological discussions.

While John Paul II would be remembered for campaigning vigorously for democracy and freedom in the world, he presided over a system that had no soft spots for people who held different theological opinions from him. While he challenged Fidel Castro (Cuba), Sani Abacha (Nigeria) and world leaders to handle opposition with a human heart, his pontificate treated ‘radical’ theologians with iron hands. Some of the best minds in Roman Catholic theology fell victims of his uncompromising sledgehammer. They include Hans Küng, Charles Curran,

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\(^{11}\) This setting introduced a theological confusion and controversy in the understanding of local Churches and their relationships with the universal Church. The public debate between two German Curia Cardinals, Joseph Ratzinger and Walter Kasper, demonstrates this point.
Leonardo Boff, Tisa Balasuriya, Edward Schillebeeckx and many others.

There are two sides to the legacies of John Paul II on the subject of human rights. On one side is his struggle for democracy, human rights and peace in the world (particularly in Eastern Europe). This is the external or political legacy (especially for Europeans and North Americans). On another side is his legacy of not ensuring fairness in the conflict management of theologians and priests who held different theological opinions from him and the Vatican. Two comments by Hans Künig call for consideration here. “In cases of conflicts between the Vatican and a theologian, the same Vatican would act as the accuser, witness and judge.” Furthermore, “any priest, theologian or lay person who is involved in a conflict with a high ecclesiastical authority has almost no chance of receiving justice.”

This image sharply contrasts from the general image of John Paul’s commitment to human rights in the world political order. It therefore becomes confusing how he struggled for human rights in the public order but denied it to his own Church members. It is also difficult to relate his commitment to human rights to his shutting out liberal and progressive theologians. His social progressiveness is also contrasted from his closing the doors of his own Church to the reforms, which his predecessors (Popes John XXIII and Paul VI) had begun. Hence the question arises: how a pope who fought for democracy in the world would rule his own Church as an absolute monarch – not simply rejecting some ideas (like the ordination of women) but ordering that no one should even think about them? It is even more striking that the roles of the laity and women in the decision-making processes within the Church, which John Paul ruled are so minimal when compared to other Christian Churches. These are some paradoxes, which are

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12 H. Künig, Pontifikat der Widersprüche, in Der Spiegel, no. 13, 26th March, 2005. 107-110. p. 108. (The original article appeared in German language. What I present above is a translation).

13 See JOHN PAUL II, Ordinatio sacerdotalis 22 May 1994.
associated with a discussion on John Paul II’s legacies on human rights, democracy and freedom.

**Poland and Eastern Europe as Defining Issues in the Pontificate**

John Paul II’s notions of human rights, democracy and freedom seemed to have been conditioned by communism and his Polish background. His homilies and speeches emphasised the need for human (individual) rights, which communism denied its own people. Freedom seemed to mean (only) liberation from communism. His visit to Poland within the first year of his pontificate helped to rally his people to fight for freedom and emancipation. This visit helped to inspire and fortify the Solidarity Movement of workers in Poland, which engaged in a long struggle with the communist government of Poland. Lech Walesa (who was the leader of the Solidarity Movement and later a president of the country) “attributed essential support to the pontiff that not only inspired Solidarity but encouraged it during the dark days of its apparent demise.”

His special role helped to destroy communism in Eastern and Central Europe, thereby bringing the cold war to a dramatic end and calming the tensions between the East and West blocs in international politics. Without his efforts, communism may not have ended the way (and at the time) it did. The Europeans and North Americans cannot thank him enough for this.

**Between Communism, Apartheid and the Dictatorships in Latin America**

Unfortunately, communism was not the only socio-political evil, which denied freedom, democracy and human rights to human persons in the course of John Paul’s pontificate. Other forms of oppression like the apartheid in South Africa and the dictatorships in Latin America were turning the lives of human persons into hell.

It is worthy of note that at the time communism was oppressing the people of East and Central Europe, apartheid was grinding the lives of black Africans in South Africa to a halt. While he spoke and wrote strongly against communism, scholars are still searching for the writings of Pope John Paul II denouncing apartheid in South Africa. It appeared that the reality of apartheid did not exist for him. When his plane was forced to land in South Africa due to bad weather conditions during one of his visits to some countries in Southern Africa in the 1980s, the apartheid government received him. Granted that he did not visit apartheid South Africa officially, it is not recorded that he criticised the apartheid government during that short hospitality provided by the forced landing.

While he may have simply ignored the pains of black South Africans under apartheid, he was aggressive against the freedom struggles of priests, theologians and lay people against oppressive regimes and poverty in Latin America. The public rebuke (through the wagging of a reproving finger in the face) of the Latin American liberation theologian Ernesto Cardinal (on the tarmac of the Managua Airport) during his visit to Nicaragua in 1983 is one demonstration of this fact.\(^{15}\) Archbishop Oscar Romero’s experiences during his various trips to the Vatican on account of the situation in his country (El Salvador) further illustrate this issue. The rebuke and the cold treatment, which Ernesto Cardinal and Oscar Romero respectively received, became foretastes of the official Vatican policy to attack liberation theologians (and all who sympathise with the ideas of a Church of the poor) with all available weapons. The two instructions from the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1984 and 1987

\(^{15}\) The television image of the priest (Ernesto Cardinal), kneeling on the tarmac to welcome the pope to Nicaragua and the public reprimand which he received from the pope, sent shockwaves to the minds of many people across the world who saw it. This image was replayed in different television stations after the pope’s death.
concerning 'some aspects of liberation theology'\textsuperscript{16} opened up the way for a long and aggressive war against liberation theology. One of the reasons for this may be found in the collaborations between the Vatican and the Roland Reagan administration during this period. Reagan's government was on one side supporting the liberation struggles in Poland, while on the other hand assisting both the apartheid regime in South Africa and the dictatorships in Latin America. This issue would be discussed later.

However one should note at this stage that another reason for John Paul's attacks against liberation theology was his conviction that Marxism is incompatible with Christianity. Liberation theology was accused of using Marxist categories and analyses but Pope John Paul II himself also used Marxist categories and analyses in his writings. Hence one could point out that he fell into his own criticisms. This point could be buttressed especially, if one reads his 1981 encyclical letter \textit{Laborem exercens}. Anyone who is conversant with the writings and vocabularies of Marx would think that \textit{Laborem exercens} was a 20\textsuperscript{th} century edited and Christianised work of Marx. In the first place, the pope's definition of the human person in this document departed from the traditional Greek approach, (from the perspective of rationality) which characterise Church documents. In this document John Paul defined the human person as a working being. Though he made reference to the Bible and God's act of creation, his discussion on how work distinguishes the person from other creatures bore more resemblance to Marx's \textit{The German Ideology} and notion of \textit{Wesen} (species being). In article 33 he referred to the labour question as the 'question of the proletariat.' Articles 34 and 36 continued the use of the 'proletariat' terminology. Another important Marxist terminology, which appeared in \textit{Laborem exercens}, was 'alienation'. Its use and treatment in sections 6, 7, and 8 followed

Marx’s own analyses (alienation from the product of work, alienation from the process of production, and alienation from the worker’s own nature and from other workers). Marx’s view of the conflict between labour and capital was used in part three of the encyclical. R. T. De George is of the view that John Paul’s appropriation of Marx’s vocabularies was his attempt to take back from Communism what Karl Marx and Frederick Feuerbach took away from the Church in the 19th century.¹⁷

The Travels: Teacher Yes, Listener No

Travelling was one major mark of John Paul II’s pontificate. He visited more countries than any other pope. Through these journeys, he propagated the Christian faith to many countries and among many peoples. These journeys helped to popularise the Catholic Church. However they rarely opened him up to the necessity of accepting cultural diversities. He remained within his intellectual confines despite his many travels. In these journeys, he was more of a teacher than a listener. A contrast picture is seen in the image of one of his predecessors – Pope Paul VI.

John Paul II visited more countries than Paul VI. Unlike John Paul II, Paul VI made the resources of his visits very primary in his writings [see the opening paragraphs of Populorum progressio and Octogesima adveniens]. Through these travels he accepted having “seen in a new perspective the grave problems of our time”¹⁸ and also the difficulty of uttering “a unified message and to put forward a solution which has universal validity.”¹⁹ Hence he encouraged “Christian communities to analyse with objectivity the situation


¹⁸ PAUL VI, Octogesima adveniens, in Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 63 (1971) 401-441. no. 3.

¹⁹ Ibid., no. 4.
which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the gospel’s unalterable words and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgement and the directives for action."^{20}

The example of Paul VI (especially as seen in *Octogesima adveniens*) illustrates a pope who was not only a teacher but also a listener.^21^ John Paul II’s journeys were not to listen but to teach a particular truth, which knows no boundaries and cultural uniqueness: which is the same for Europeans, Americans, Asians, the South Pacific and Africans. This truth accepts no diversities. It is just one (which he alone had) and involved “universal truths, permanent principles, absolute norms and a material-spiritual dualism”.^{22} The crises surrounding the nature of this one truth, what it consists of, and processes of its communication or mediation have become a major controversy in contemporary Roman Catholic Moral theology (which is attested to in John Paul II’s encyclical *Veritatis splendor* published in 1993.) For Professor Mary Elsbernd, John Paul’s monolithic conception of truth and his tendency of not listening, were results of his search for objective moral norms, which he felt convinced that phenomenology was incapable of providing. Added to these were his Polish experiences, which made him build the image of a Church in conflict with society. Against phenomenology, which emphasised the uniqueness of individual experiences, John Paul emphasised absolute moral categories. In reference to his perceived conflict between the Church and the wider society, he built an intellectual wall, which would unite the Church and form a united force against all opposing forces. Under this frame of mind therefore, there could

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21 I recognise that Paul VI’s encyclical on birth control (*Humanae vitae*) presents another picture of him as not listening to the voices of people.

only be a "little place for local autonomy or diversity but rather much insistence on a unity of doctrine as a corpus or an organic body of truths of which the Church is the guardian and teacher." 23

Social Ethics: Eastern Europe and the Rest of Us

Within the field of Catholic Social Ethics, there were two moments in the papacy of John Paul II. "In the first period he spoke out very strongly on issues of political oppression, challenging governments quite directly. In the later period his statements on political matters seem rather more muted." 24 A likely interpretation of these two moments is what scholars have identified as the two approaches in his international relations – what I referred in my doctoral dissertation as 'Eastern Europe and the rest of us'. When the problems of communism, Poland and Eastern Europe were in focus he confronted them with an unmitigated passion. His tool in this case was usually justice and urging the people to fight for their rights. When Africa, Latin America and Asia were in focus, the deep passion of the former seemed to disappear. In this case, his tool turned to charity, appealing to the benevolence of the powerful and telling the poor to reject violence and support one another. 25

A good analysis of John Paul's two encyclicals (Laborem exercens and Sollicitudo rei socialis) could help to reflect this dual approach more clearly. Laborem exercens was published in 1981. Though this encyclical was meant to commemorate the 90th anniversary of Rerum novarum, it nevertheless, bore John Paul's endorsement of the struggles of the Solidarity Movement in his home country against the communist government. The encyclical underscored the role of trade unions in the quest for justice and the well being of workers. It recognised strikes as part of a just struggle. He argued that such actions were "recognised in catholic social teaching as legitimate under proper conditions and within

23 M.ELSBERND, ibid., p. 48.
25 JOHN PAUL II, Sollicitudo rei socialis, no. 39.
just limits." To fortify his argument, John Paul referred to the situation of workers in the nineteenth century and remarked that the situation, which confronted workers at that time led to "a justified social antagonism." He maintained that this justified social antagonism accounts for the emergence of workers' solidarity in the nineteenth century, which could be described as "a spontaneous social movement" and "a reaction against the degradation of man." In article 34, he referred to it further as a 'resistance'. We have to note that the use of the words 'justified social antagonism', 'resistance' and 'reaction' rather than 'revolt' in referring to the uprising of workers may be seen as an attempt to give an ethical legitimacy to the Polish workers' movement. Making allusion to the movement of workers at the time of Rerum novarum, and referring to similar conditions in the present, Laborem exercens justified similar movements in contemporary times. In fact, John Paul II maintained that social ethics justifies such resistance. The pope's efforts to justify workers' movements, and his repeated use of the word solidarity in the encyclical to refer to the reaction of workers against an unjust system, linked the encyclical with the situation of Poland at that time. D. Dorr's position therefore can be acknowledged namely, "that the Solidarity union of Lech Walesa and his ten million fellow workers was very much in the mind of this Polish Pope" as he wrote the encyclical. C. Bernstein and M. Politi made a similar conclusion that the pope's principled but careful approach to the problems in Poland between 1980 and 1981

26 Ibid., no. 100.
27 Ibid., no. 33.
28 Ibid.
29 Laborem exercens, no. 34.
30 In Laborem exercens, the word 'solidarity' appears 11 times (ten times in chapter eight and once in chapter twenty).
31 D. DORR, op. cit., p. 303.
found expression on September 14 in his encyclical *Laborem exercens*.\(^3^2\)

One wonders why the Pope did not accept the reaction of the poor in Latin America under the auspices of Liberation Theology as a ‘justified social antagonism’ or a ‘reaction’. Could the pope’s acceptance of the movement of the Polish workers (on one hand) and rejection of a major part of Liberation Theology (on the other) not be interpreted as double standard in the Pope’s (Vatican’s) social teachings?

The forthright and prophetic style of *Laborem Exercens* gave way to an almost compromising position in the *Sollicitudo rei socialis*. The pope’s call in *Laborem exercens* for movements to confront injustice is replaced by an appeal to the powerful people and nations. Here the possibility of social change moved from the struggles of the oppressed to the benevolence of the (powerful) oppressors. One reason for this change of tone was the focus of both documents. While *Laborem exercens* primarily addressed the situation in the pope’s homeland (Poland), *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (though meant to commemorate Paul VI’s *Populorum progressio*) had Latin America in focus. According to the analysis of Robert Suro, a link between the encyclical and Latin America could be identified with one of the reasons that gave rise to the writing of the encyclical. In this analysis, Suro argued that the best starting point for the story of *Sollicitudo rei socialis* was 3 April 1987 during John Paul II’s visit to Chile.\(^3^3\) The incident was the bloody clash between revolutionary groups and government forces during the

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\(^3^2\) C. Bernstein and M. Politi, *op. cit.*, p. 349. Benjamin Fiore sees *Laborem exercens* as being dictated, not just by the workers’ movement but also the general situation of Poland at that time, which he divided into three. They include, the Church’s debate with Marxism, the work question (the indirect employer, the Solidarity Union and the intellectual-worker relationship), and Polish National Messianism. [See, B. Fiore, *Laborem exercens*, in J. M. McDermott (ed.), *The Thought of Pope John Paul II: A Collection of Essays and Studies*, Roma: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993. 231-236. p. 231.]

Pontiff’s Mass in Santiago. While the struggles of workers in Poland were seen as a justified reaction or a confrontation between good and evil (freedom and oppression), the case of Latin America was defined in terms of Marxist inspired class struggle. The controversies between the Vatican and Archbishop Oscar Romero before his assassination by the government of El Salvador could be understood within this general background.

Another good example of John Paul’s two approaches is encountered in article 28 of his encyclical, *Centesimus annus*, which presented us with a vision of his view on international solidarity. Here, two parts of the world came into play. On one part was the case of the countries of Central/Eastern Europe and on the other part, the countries of the Third World. The central point here was the recognition of the economic difficulties, which these countries experience and the need to over-turn this condition. However, what changed was the approach in reference to these two case points.

In the case of Eastern Europe, he argued that their economic difficulties (which he described as a ‘tragic situation’), were imposed on them.

Moreover, their present condition, marked by difficulties and shortages, is the result of a historical process in which the formerly communist countries were often objects and not subjects. Thus they find themselves in the present situation not as a result of free choice or mistakes which were made, but as a consequence of tragic historical events which were violently imposed on them and prevented them from following the path of economic and social development.\(^3^4\)

Consequently he made two submissions. Firstly, that the countries, which were responsible for this tragic situation owe a debt to

Eastern Europe as a matter of justice. Secondly, that these Eastern European countries needed the same kind of Marshal plan, which helped to rebuild the Western European countries after World War II.

Plausible as John Paul’s case for Central/Eastern Europe may be, he did not repeat this same methodology of a historical trace of the economic problems in the case of the Third World countries. He recognised that the economic difficulties of his native Central/Eastern Europe was imposed but he failed to reckon with the effects of the Conquistadores on Latin American socio-economic problems or the effects of the many years of slave trade, colonialism and on-going neo-colonialism on the psyche and entire socio-economic fabrics of Africa. Not only did he fail to make a historical reading of the economic problems of the Third World countries (as he did in the case of Central/Eastern Europe), he merely referred to these problems as if they were secondary to those of Eastern/Central Europe by appealing that the urgent task of re-building Eastern Europe should not diminish the readiness to assist the Third World. He considered the task of rebuilding Eastern/Central Europe as a matter of urgent justice while that of the Third World countries was seen as a matter of charity, placed on the altar of the willing.

These two standards of international relations were further reflected in the support of liberation struggles by the pontiff in Eastern Europe and their condemnation in Latin America. While on the one hand, he encouraged Eastern Europe to fight for the freedom of their land, he denied that support to Liberation theology and the struggles in Latin America against oppressive regimes. While those who died in the struggles against oppression in Eastern Europe were either beatified or canonised as martyrs, those on the contrary, who died in similar struggles in Latin America were described as Marxists. Granted that John Paul could be described as sharing the concern for a better world for all peoples and nations, however there is a remarkable passion, which he displayed particularly in issues concerning Central/Eastern Europe, which did not reflect proportionately in issues concerning the other suffering parts of the world.
Ecumenism and Inter-Religious Dialogue
John Paul II had the credit of inviting world religious leaders to Assisi in Italy to pray for world peace. This was a wonderful gesture. It showed his efforts to achieve world peace through promoting peace and understanding among religions and religious leaders. He was the first pope to visit a Jewish synagogue and a Muslim Mosque. These were unforgettable steps towards repairing the many years of bitter animosity between these various religious groups. These events are unforgettable milestones in any discussion on the pontificate of John Paul II.

On the one hand was this openness and courageous steps towards other religious groups but on the other hand, this same pontificate published the document *Dominus Jesus* which so much wounded ecumenical discussions. It pushed for the suspension of some German Catholic priests who participated in ecumenical Eucharistic celebrations (during the first ever ecumenical assembly of German Christians in Berlin in May 2003).

March 2000 Confession of Guilt
An important event in the pontificate of John Paul II was the event in St Peter’s Square on the First Sunday of Lent, 12th March 2000. It was the public confession of the sins of the (sons and daughters of the) Church ‘in the service of truth’ through the centuries. This ceremony was part of the celebration of the jubilee year (2000). By this act, John Paul turned the Church’s gaze (and even the entire humanity) to the mistakes of the past in order to avoid its repetition in the future. Among the sins mentioned included the crusades, the inquisition and offences against the Jews, women and native peoples in the course of evangelisation. As an African, it struck me very painfully that neither the slave trade nor colonialism, which were specifically sins against the African people (and which the Catholic Church and some previous popes endorsed) received attention during this historic apology.35 The sins which the pope

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35 My history books told me that in 1455, a pope published a proclamation and authority to Prince Henry the Navigator to reduce all heathen (African) people to servitude. My history book also told me that: “The European slave trade began in
Shifts in the Social Teachings of John Paul II

confessed or permitted to be confessed were largely the sins which the Catholic Church committed against the Jews, Europeans and by extension the Spanish Conquistadores against the Amerindians. My question is: when will the sins against black Africa be confessed?

New Relationship: Washington

Granted that John Paul and Roland Reagan shared the same concerns on communism, the survival of both men from assassination attempts on their lives in 1981 helped to bring them even much closer. They believed that among the reasons for their surviving the attempts on their lives was God’s intention that they fulfil a mission. This mission was simply seen as a joint fight against communism. Thus a deep new channel of relationship and trust was created between the Vatican and Washington. This newfound relationship helped to dilute the old distrust and suspicion which the mainstream of American politics had (for many years) nursed against the Catholic Church.

It is worthy of note that the Vatican and Washington severed relationships in 1887 over issues of religious freedom and the role of religion in public life. One who follows US politics would note the problems which John F. Kennedy had in the 1960s in convincing his country that his being a Catholic would not mean that the pope would influence his decisions and political judgements (if elected as president). The headaches of Kennedy

the year 1441 when a little Portuguese ship commanded by young Goncalvez captured 12 blacks in a raid on the Atlantic coast of Africa. The prisoners were carried to Lisbon as gifts for Prince Henry the Navigator (1394-1460). Delighted with his new slaves, Prince Henry sent word to the pope, seeking his approval for more raids. The pope’s reply granted, ‘to all those who shall be engaged in the said war, complete forgiveness of all their sins.” [Milton Meltzer, Slavery: A World History, New York, Da Capo Press, 1993. Vol. 2, p.1.] For more discussions on this theme see T. OKERE, The Saving Grace of Reason. Philosophy and Theology in Service of Religion and Society. Unpublished Lecture at the Forum of Liberation Theology, K.U. Leuven, April 6 2000. See also S. KAMANZI, Memory and Reconciliation. What Remains to be Done After the Church has asked Forgiveness, in Inter Sectiones, 2 (2000) 15-25.
pinpoint the level of distrust, which existed at that time. It was the newfound relationship between Reagan and John Paul that helped to create a new image for the Catholic Church in mainstream American politics and the re-establishment of diplomatic relationships between the Vatican and Washington in 1984. John F. Kerry who campaigned unsuccessfully to be president of the US in 2004, who is also a Catholic, had less headaches than Kennedy concerning his Catholic identity.

The newfound relationship circled around the common interest in the demolition of communism from Eastern Europe. The pope’s homeland (Poland) served as a good entry point. While Washington supported the struggles in Poland and Eastern Europe through the Vatican, John Paul reciprocated by not criticising the policies of the Reagan administration: some of which included the Star Wars, the supports for the oppressive regimes in Latin America and the apartheid regime in South Africa.

The depth of the relationship between the Vatican and Washington showed itself also when Cardinal Angelo Sondano attended the State funeral for President Reagan (in Washington) as a personal representative of the pope. The funeral of Pope John Paul II was attended for the first time by a serving American president with two former presidents and a secretary of state.

**Conclusion**

Like people and issues, the legacies of John Paul II have two sides. On the one side he supported the struggles against oppression in Eastern and Central Europe on another side he denied that support to similar struggles in Latin America. On one side he fought for democracy, freedom and human rights in the world on another side he withheld fairness in conflict managements within his own Church and blocked reforms and discussions on particular issues. On one side he reached out to other religious groups, on another side his pontificate published *Dominus Jesus*. On the one side he made the Church to apologise for past sins (like the inquisition), on another side the Vatican continues to maltreat and humiliate theologians who hold different opinions from official Vatican standpoints. On the one hand he declared that Africa is the future of
the Church, on the other hand, the sins of slavery and colonialism (in which the Church played a role) were not considered worth acknowledging. On one side he spoke forcefully against oppression (in Eastern Europe), on another side he relatively kept quiet against the atrocities of apartheid against black Africans. On one side he visited many countries; on another side he closed his eyes to the diversities in the world’s problems and the need to empower local Churches (as Paul VI argued in Octogesima adveniens). On the one hand he participated in the Second Vatican Council; on the other hand he blocked further renewals initiated by that council. On one side he warned priests to desist from politics but on the other hand, his activities had enormous political consequences. On one side he popularised the Church, on the other side he polarised it.

These different sides must be taken seriously in studying John Paul II and assessing his legacies. It is however necessary to recognise that although he did not recognise the unique experiences of other people and their validity, his own Polish experience was at the centre of the visions and actions of his pontificate. This could be a critical point of discussion. The role which John Paul’s Polish experience played in his pontificate could strengthen our local church (laity, clergy and hierarchy) to be real to their own local experiences and see in them the vehicles through which they can uplift their local Churches and make contributions to the universal Church. From this perspective, the pontificate of John Paul II challenges religious leaders to be part of the living experiences of their people. This would include experiencing their pains and joys, their frustrations and hopes, and identifying with them in their problems and searches for solution. This is one of the unmistakable legacies of Pope John Paul II.

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ETHNICITY AND A NEW IMAGE OF NIGERIA
EXPLORATIONS IN CREATION THEOLOGY

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Introduction
This article will explore ethnicity and a new image of Nigeria within the framework of the economy of creation and the Church. Its aim is to discover a new image for new generations of Nigerians; an image that recognizes the rights and dignity of all ethnic nationalities of Nigeria. The image carries with it theological and cultural nuances that make special demands on dialogue. The theology used for our understanding of ethnicity within the framework of the economy of creation is the human person as image of God. The image of God becomes a countersign to our disunity, division and distrust. Equally, the theology calls for a full recognition of the gifts of creation embedded in each ethnic group and for making use of these gifts to build a united Nigeria or a new Nigeria through collaborative effort.

Two points will determine the mode of our reflection. The first one is properly theological. Ethnicity must be transformed by the image of God. The second point is missiological and cultural. Ethnicity must be unceasingly evangelised by the Church, so as not to degenerate into ethnocentrism or ‘ethnicism.’ The Church can fulfil this task through authentic education. The Church is an invitation to each individual to a life of community and is thereby the proclamation of the victory of God taking place in the entire creation.

Nigeria and the Ethnic Conundrum
Nigeria is a complex and multi-ethnic nation. The divisive and corroborative images of multiethnicity are manifested both in her internal and external structures. What stands as Nigeria today was a conglomeration of distinctive sovereign states which existed as autonomous kingdoms, ethnic nationalities, empires and emirates before British colonial rule. Some of these states and empires were
monoe­thnic in their structures with a particular system of
government, and rulers who wielded great power and exercised
control over religion, trade, politics, education, law and order.
There existed such kingdoms as Ijaw, Opobo, Bonny, Urhobo, Calabar, Itsekiri, Bini and Oyo to the south. To the north there were Kanem Borno and Sokoto empires as well as Kano, Katsina and Zaria emirates. There were many ethnic nationalities as the Igbo, Efik, Ibibio, Igala, Jukun, Tiv, Nupe and Idoma. Instigated by political chauvinism and economic domination of human and material resources, the British colonial authority packed all these ethnic groups together under the one umbrella, Nigeria, irrespective of natural and geographical boundaries. But the amalgamation refused to take into consideration the heterogeneity of Nigeria.

Nigeria is a pluralistic society. A diversity of ethnic groups, cultures, customs, languages and religions exists in the vast landmass of about 923,768 square kilometres. This plurality would have been a source of pride for the country if a unity in diversity is maintained, but unfortunately, this plurality has failed in uniting the people of Nigeria and in shaping them as a single nation. Now, this plurality is always prone to social problems and conflicts, characterized by frictions and inter-ethnic wars. Ethnicity is the most sensitive issue behind our social problems. Ethnicity is sometimes used to incite conflicts and at other times it is deployed as a medium to divide adherents of different religions. Ethnicity is used in Nigeria to sharpen primordial prejudices and divisions. A series of violent clashes since 1966 has been closely related to the problem of ethnicity. This ugly situation has destroyed our socio-political-economic systems, structures and human conscience and dignity.

Ethnicity creates the problem of stigmatisation that leads to marginalization, harassment and discrimination. This is expressly indicated in (a) Personal terms: a person or an individual is given a bad name because he/she comes from a particular group or belongs to a particular ethnic origin. (b) Territorial terms: a section of the country is neglected and given a negative mark because it is located in a particular place. (a) Identity: a person or group of people lose
their rights and privileges because of their ethnic origin. Sometimes it leads to loss of job opportunities, unemployment, and denial of promotions in ecclesiastical institutions. The image of Nigeria is certainly burdened by ethnic structures and mind-sets. Nigeria contains about 126 million people, and consists of more than 250 ethnic groups that appear as obstacles to the unity of the nation, and potentially harmful to human co-existence.

**Ethnicity and Identity**
The origin of ethnicity can be attributed in part, at least, to socialization process of a group or a community. Individuals are not viewed as solitary creatures in artificial relationships with a physical world or with a group.

Ethnicity is a socio-cultural reality that has bearing on an individual’s psychological and spiritual growth. Thus, the impact of one’s socialization process, education and personality development, peer group and family background are necessary for interpreting the experience of ethnicity in any given context. On that primary assumption ethnologists trace the origin of ethnicity to shared behavioural pattern, identical mentality, similar ideologies, conventional religious beliefs and lifestyle peculiar to a group of people or community. Basically, succeeding generations are negatively or positively influenced by these ideologies, lifestyle, tenets and behaviours, which invariably build the personality traits of members of a community.

Ethnicity is not something absolutely negative, it is to be recognized as something positive. Anthropologists see in it a cultural treasure of inestimable worth accumulated by a people in the course of their history and human development. Ethnicity has roots which go deep down into the souls of individuals and of whole nations and offers real help for discovering identity and for coping with the world around us. However, ethnicity professed by many Nigerians is being experienced as something, negative, as an art of *original sin*. Ethnicity is to be cleared from debilitating accretions in order to lay bare anew the essentials of humanity.
Created in the Image of God:
My aim of analysing ethnicity is to assess its strengths and weaknesses and to present it more meaningfully in the ensuing theological reflection. In the light of the variety of meanings assigned to ethnicity, I suggest that we broaden the meaning within the context of theology of image of God. Ethnicity is to be pruned away from what is regarded as morbid growth and then embraced under the eagle eyes of image of God.

The theology of image of God possesses a normative character for all peoples and all times. In our context, it describes the basic principles of life and how we can cope with ethnicity and make it acceptable to Nigerians. The doctrine is rooted in the very nature of God. Nations, cultures and religions have won new self-awareness and new identity through its theological flavour. Given these presuppositions, we can make some basic observations on the relationship between the image of God and likeness of God.

There are a number of interpretations within which the image and likeness of God can be defined. In recent years, theologians have differed over whether image and likeness should be considered as separate concepts or identical realities. Majority argues that the terms are different nuances of one reality, while others maintain that both terms connote different levels of ideas. Others have differed over the meaning of the two terms – image of God and likeness of God. In the final analysis, it seems best, however, to think of the two terms as synonyms.

Some scholars cling to the term image of God and posit that it enables us to relate to each other and to complement the role of one another in the society. Others adduce that image of God has more to do with personality, spirituality, or rationality of a human person. We are going to combine the two positions by understanding that because human persons are created in the image of God, they possess rationality, spirituality, personality and dignity and, therefore can relate to God and to one another.

The definition of image of God involves its inseparability from the identity of a human person. The image of God in a human person is linked to his or her identity. The image of God in a human
person is not extrinsic, that is, historical and contingent, but intrinsic, flowing from the very nature of the Creator. God created human beings in His own image and likeness (Gen 1:26-27). Prima facie, this statement may seem to reflect that we resemble God in our physical outfits, that we take after God physically, as a son takes physically after his father. On the contrary, this is not theologically what is implied here when we use the term image of God. Theologically speaking, what is involved is a vital participation in God without being God; a deep sense of relationship. The expression of the image of God is an expression of relationship and not subjection, and a key building block of complementarity and not compartmentalization.

Theologically, the image of God is a relation of implication. God alone, and not human beings, is the measure of the relationship, and its fecundity depends on the human subjects, inasmuch as they are beneficiaries that spread in their turn the grace of this image around them. Fundamentally and essentially, image of God is one of divine and human relationship. This relationship is complementary and mutually enriching. This implies that each human person in the image of God must always be seen in relationship with the others. A proper understanding of this relationship can be of immense advantage to the very equilibrium of our lives, and a means of resolving ethnic conflicts in day-to-day free and rational interaction in our country.

The theology of image of God places justice at the centre of human relationship. The relationship shows itself in the actual life in human society, and is accomplished in any economy of justice. In articulating the import of relationship, it is very important to root it in the framework of justice, "every possible relation between God and human persons – redemption, revelation, creation – is subordinated to the institution of a society where Justice, rather being a hope of individual piety, is forceful enough to be extended to all in its realization."¹ Justice demands that there be a community, which is capable of providing justice – a community which can make justice effective. An adequate theology of justice

¹ E. Levinas, Difficile Liberte (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p.36,
reposes in the communal life of the society. According to Plato in his *Republic Book IV*, a good and healthy community is a community of justice. The possibility of building this community can be expressed in theological terms.

Theologically speaking, human beings are connected with each other, through the image of God in them, and in turn, the image of God in each human person is connected with the Life of God breathed by the Spirit on creation. Each individual person carries the image of God in him or her and because we are created in the image of God, we are linked with each and build one family of God through the law of connection. By its nature, "connection is a creation experience." The law of connection helps to create a community of justice where each ethnic group, each individual person and people are given what is due to them in justice and respect. It is a common picture in Nigerian society to observe that some ethnic groups dominate others and refuse them the full enjoyments of their rights and dignity as human persons created in the image of God.

The expression *in the image of God* gives human beings the right of sacredness and inviolability which no other form of life possesses. Human life is distinguished from other animal life because of its particular relation to God. In creating human persons in His own image and likeness, God gives them their dignity, in order to help them fulfil their human destiny. When the rights of minority groups or voiceless individuals are not respected or heard, antagonisms arise in the form of ethnic conflicts and violence. The primary and fundamental right of a human person is right to life and basic existence. No reason can induce any ethnic segment in Nigeria to terminate the life of the other groups in the form of ethnic cleansing. This truth leads to the search of what Africans or Nigerians understand as life. According to Bujo, in Sub-Saharan Africa, life is so central as to be considered somewhat sacred, and it is the task of "religious and political leaders to preserve and

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transmit life.” They understand life as a gift of God, “life ultimately is God’s gift.”

All sovereignty belongs to God. God is supreme, but God had endowed human beings with a natural inclination towards leadership, and invested in people the sovereignty that is prior to that accorded by an institutional government or constitutional rights of a country. Leadership takes its origin in a beyond. Human beings are endowed with the image of God, and this is reflected in the relationship between leaders and the people, in terms of social justice. In the context of this present reflection, a civil or religious leader is not a person who has an official function alone, but a person who breaks into the enclosed walls of ethnicity, and challenges attitudes and actions opposed to social justice, and invites all to travel along the road of social justice. The nature of this relationship demands that a national leader is to free himself or herself from the contingent ethnic structures that are oppressive to human life and to be “open to the universal in the experience of life.”

The Trinity as a divine community that combines unity and diversity reflects a model of community life which can be fruitful for the ethnic diversity of Nigeria. In the Trinitarian perspective of Christian theology, “it is as Father that the First Person creates, as the Father’s eternal Word that the Second Person mediates the creative act of God, and as the Spirit of the Father that the Third Person guides the life that is elicited from matter in the creative process.” The divine communitas is a sphere where diversity is recognized and promoted without it resulting to a division and confusion. The experience of the divine community is related to the experience of the human community. God is a community of Persons who live in solidarity of grace. The three Persons in God –

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Father, Son and Holy Spirit – are distinct Persons. The Father is neither the Son nor the Spirit, but the three are related to each other in a communion of life or in a Triune community.

The people of Nigeria are strongly urged to see themselves as community of persons who are created in the image of God. Just as in the nature of God, we have distinction of Persons, and differences in roles, nonetheless, these distinctions and differences do not destroy their substantial unity or community life. In a similar manner, despite our differences in culture, language, religion, and history, we share a life of communitas – we are one family of God – we build one family of God, and are sons and daughters of the one God, who created us to share His divine life of grace. The action of grace in the daily activities of people is a matter of becoming like God, having been made in the divine image and likeness.

Creation in Image of God – Implications for Ethnicity

The theology of image of God has implications for ethnicity. This means experiencing the other as a transcendence; a liberating experience which frees one from one’s own closed circle. It is an experience which frees one at least partially from ethnic mimesis, violence, and victimisation of those who do not belong to one’s ethnic group.

Two points are of interest in implications of creation theology for ethnicity. First, ethnicity must be transformed by the image of God. The image of God reveals itself primarily where, “goodness is promoted and evil is fought against for the healing of the society.”

The image of God constitutes us to be agents of God in our troubled societies. Second, ethnicity must be unceasingly evangelised. The cultural diversity in which we are living compels us to produce the new from the old – a new Nigeria from the old. The result is a theology that unites us to a Nigeria and does not separate us from it.

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New image of Nigeria in the economy of creation and the Church

The theology of image of God is an opening experience which invites one into the divine community and introduces one into the dimension of transcendence in one’s existence. In Nigerian context, what is most appropriate is the development of a culture of dialogue, where God and the person of Jesus Christ remain the essential focal points. The African idea of God and of our relationship to Him have been firmly maintained by Africans in the experience of creation as a gift of the Creator. Among the Igbo of Nigeria, just like other ethnic segments of Nigerian society, God is regarded as the creator of all things that exists – visible and invisible. This concept of God is the fruit of existential experience, and not of speculation or intellectual exercise. To summarize their experience of God’s universal act of creation, God is Chineke – that is God who creates. In this name, God is conceived as source and sustainer of all things. He created all geographical boundaries – all things were made through Him and He preserves and supports them. There is immanence and transcendence of God embedded in this conception. God is conceived outside and beyond His creation (transcendent) and simultaneously God personally and directly is involved in His creation, so that His creation does not exist outside Him or out of His reach (immanent).

From the perspective of Christian theology the experience or reality of God is crucial: “in theology, the concept of God can never be simply one issue among others.” It is the central issue. God’s creation is part of what men and women can experience, or see or hear. It is a fact of human life that human beings can experience God through what is heard, and seen. Seeing and hearing are metaphors which explain our traditional concept of God as creator of the universe in concrete ways which are not difficult to understand. These words invite us to reconsider ethnicity as a God-given reality which should be respected and nurtured. God created the world and His powers and sovereignty are manifested in nature. This understanding “is closely bound up with the fact that

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God reveals Himself in created reality.”

Ethnicity is part of identity of every created human being.

Ethnicity as Gift of God
Ethnicity is a gift of God, it is the design of God who creates the world and human beings in it and assigns them their respective homes among the nations. We belong to an ethnic group by grace.

In reality, “we do not make or design ourselves or position ourselves historically and geographically. The context of our life knows a before and after, to which we stand in relation and from which we cannot separate ourselves without harm. Ontologically we are not alone. There is, we must believe, a unity to the world, a wholeness, a goal.”

Ethnicity is a special gift of God which has been given to every human, and it is a general possession. Our being born does not lie in our hands, it is not under our control. It is under God’s creative design. “To regard the world as a creation means to regard it as willed, as planned, as good.”

The third element in the theology of creation relates to the perception that creation is good, “creation is good, and the human person is good; if for no other reason than that God has created and loved us before we were born.” At this point, we name one of the features of ethnicity which belongs to the goodness of creation. Ethnic identity belongs to the goodness of creation, and the richness of God’s gift. Nobody chooses his or her own parents, family, clan or town, and in the same way no one chooses his or her ethnic group. The truth that we are born somewhere, and among a particular community belongs to our personal identity. It is along these lines that the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar decisively says

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11 Ibid, p.31.
Ethnicity in itself does not connote a negative attitude. On the contrary, ethnicity indicates a gift of God which makes us different one from the other for our mutual enrichment. It is God who makes each one what he is. Ethnicity gives us our social and cultural identity as well as our security. The individual finds his roots and values in his ethnic group...What is wrong and must be rectified without delay is the perversion of this God-given gift into an instrument of contempt, rejection and exclusion of others.\(^{13}\)

Ethnicity is founded on the reasonable nature of human beings, which cannot but simply strive for good, but because of subjective interests of human beings the corruption of the human nature is directed against the good purpose of God.

On the sixth day, God saw that everything which He created was good. God calls into existence the things that do not exist (Rom 4:7), and calls them good and intends them for the good of humanity. God’s choice in proclaiming everything good proceeds from life. Life calls us to participate in life in a thankfulness which does not cease (even in the darkness of conflicts) to perceive life as gift and as grace. We cannot experience life in the midst of bombs, poisonous gasses, and dangerous weapons with which we have surrounded ourselves in the name of fighting for our ethnic identity. We are involved with the God of life. It is at the point of life that our experience of God and the contamination of the gift of God in ethnicity are to be duly gauged by a theological hermeneutic. Our theological reflection is concerned with the life of those who are deprived of happiness, joy, dignity, rights, and justice on account of their ethnic origin. We need a language which is empirical to sketch the deterioration of ethnicity as gift of life. There are those who have been deprived of their job and means of livelihood because of their ethnic origin. There are those who have been deprived of their rights because they come from a particular ethnic group. There are those who are denied their promotions in some of our academic

\(^{13}\) Message of the SECAM Bishops to the Churches of the Great Lakes and the rest of Africa and Madagascar (Nairobi, Kenya: 18.4.1997).
institutions and opportunities to serve the wider community because they belong to a definite ethnic group. There are the homeless who need a place, a home to live, but cannot find it, simply because of their ethnic origin. Above all, ethnicity has been inserted into the structures of power and made the instrument of destruction of life and property of innocent citizens.

The relationship between man and woman, old and young, rich and poor, authority and subject, Christian and Muslim, Hausa and Igbo, Yoruba and Efik, Idoma and Igala are established by the act of creation. The creation experience tasks us to see ethnicity as endowment of God’s graciousness and implicitly obliges us to accept one another as richness of God’s gift. Under this experience, ethnicity occupies not only the position of the gift given by God, but also that of the return-gift given by the human subject. Every gift obligates. The significant human action bears the unfolding creative work of God. For us Nigerians it follows that our fundamental attitude before the world and one another is that of respect and reverence.

This follows the law of incarnation. Since God became human, all flesh becomes not just good, but holy and sacred. “We must not think of the Incarnation as an event that occurs two thousand years ago, the effects of which ceased when Christ ascended into heaven. On the contrary, when Christ became man a new relationship was established between man and God, a relationship which is eternal. It is necessary to recall that when Christ came on earth to do something, namely, to reveal the Father to us and to redeem us, He did this by permanently taking up His abode with us.”14 The mystery of incarnation is an extension of the creator-creature relationship, the coming together of God and humans in Jesus of Nazareth, an instance of divine-human dialogue.

The question of creation’s relationship to incarnation is likely to become clearer in the meaning and purpose of the Church. Two theological orientations emerge. First, the work of the incarnation is not opposed to creation, rather creation is restored and elevated,

in accordance with God’s design, “to sum up all things in Christ” (Eph 1:10) and “through Him to reconcile all things for Him” (Col 1:2). In Jesus Christ all humanity is united together, as a new image. There is a radical relationship between the Church and creation. The Church is a part of God’s creation, and just like Christ, the Church stands in the midst of creation as a servant, she came to serve the world and not to be served. The Church, continuing the mission of Christ, serves creation by promoting the sisterhood and brotherhood of all. The servant Church, as sacrament, is the image of Christ, who is the first born of all creation. In essence, the Church is related to creation and to the whole world. By and large, one can agree with Wolfgang Beinert that “in the biblical way of seeing things, the reality of creation is the revelation of God and is made known in history in different phases and in different grades of intensity. This is what man must open himself to.” And, “the doctrine of the Incarnation suggests that the very reality of the only true and transcendent God took the risk of contextualization in a very human, very concrete, very contextual person. And this doctrine is paralleled by the notion that the Church, as the Body of Christ, is the incarnate presence of the living Christ, taking many shapes and forms in the multiple contexts of the world.” The Church takes flesh in the lives of human beings in a community. The Church touches the lives of the people in their social, cultural, economic and political situations, particularly in terms of justice and improvements in the condition of their lives.

The Church in the economy of salvation – Sign of New Creation
The significant place of the Church in the economy of salvation concerns both the spiritual and the practical aspect of human community. The Church is both event and institution, Christ-

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happening and social-happening. The Church with her divine nature rooted in the Trinitarian life of God is involved in social control, for the Church too is religion and religion can “be maintained not as such but only in the framework of a plausibility structure.”\textsuperscript{17} The basic root of the “mission of the Church is that, having accepted a share in the life of the Trinitarian community, she proclaims the new reality it experiences in this life and invites all of humanity to join in the experience.”\textsuperscript{18} The Church presents herself in social contexts and involvement. It is certainly in her social dimension that the Church is sign of the new creation.

The Church needs to understand its existence theologically in the framework of its total life in the midst of creation. The situation of glaring injustice in Nigeria today calls for the action of the Church, that is, a spirituality of involvement in the world rather than separation from it. The Church in Nigeria can provide a framework for dialogue-of-communion between the ethnic groups in the country. Of course, such a dialogue will be problematic and could raise serious questions concerning the unity of Nigeria. It will certainly call for re-evaluation and reformulation of a new agenda for Sovereign National Conference or National Dialogue. The appreciation of the value of dialogue-of-communion between ethnic groups in taking decision on issues both on state and national levels cannot be overestimated. The dialogue itself cannot be avoided if Nigerians have to co-operate in the task of bringing about greater justice and peace among themselves. Dialogue will take up questions concerning “patterns of marriage”\textsuperscript{19} (for instance, marriage between an Edo man and Ibibio woman), exclusion of individuals and groups from working in a particular region or offices, fundamental rights of all Nigerians irrespective of ethnic

group or origin, and other serious issues that divide Nigerians such as politics and religion.

The Church is a framework of engaging all Nigerians in dialogue through a positive education. Dialogue concerns all of us, in our current way of speaking, hearing, judging and seeing and it excludes intolerance and discrimination and helps us to succeed in living together peacefully as new Nigerians. Dialogue as joint participation of individuals and communities is possible only through education. Nigerians need educational journey out of their caves and shadows of ethnicism. For example, seeing as an educational task is the main antidote against illusion and ethnocentrism. To learn to see the goodness, the beauty and value of other ethnic groups is an educational journey and struggle out of illusion. Learning to listen to other ethnic groups strengthens Nigerians against the noise, the violence, the slogans and half-truths of our multi-ethnic nationalities. Speaking, too, like seeing and hearing is an educational process. Education helps one to speak about what one has heard and seen. If education does not take adequate account of the nature of a Nigerian person, the distortion of image of Nigerian society will be inevitable.

Dialogue reveals the most common values of African culture and is essentially important for a meaningful inculturation and evangelization. In a truly African family, joys and sorrows, fears and anguish, difficulties and problems are shared in a trusting dialogue. The image of Nigeria as a family-in-dialogue cuts across and unites our multi-ethnic nation, and expresses our solidarity with each other in the midst of pains and joys, fears and hope, poverty and riches, difficulties and prosperity. Socially, dialogue prevents wounds from recurring, and brings all Nigerians to the awareness and realization that we are children of the same family, made in the image of God.

Dialogue is the essential meaning of evangelization and inculturation. Such a dialogue has to be inspired by love of truth, goodness and beauty in God’s creation and in all human beings, and in all people and ethnic nationalities as image of God. The image of God is not for the sake of individuals or persons, but for
the sake of their relationship together, which gives meaning to the life of the community. In a general sort of way this means that inculturation and evangelization are the framework of the Church through which ethnicity in Nigeria can wear a new image.

The family is the centre from which inculturation and evangelization of ethnicity must begin and from which they must be nurtured. The family is a clearer framework for locating the mission of the Church and for giving a new meaning to ethnicity in Nigeria. This takes place in two ways.

**Education and Training of Future Nigerians**

The family is the first and society’s primary experience of community-in-dialogue. The primary means of assuring that the aims and aspirations of the community are fostered and developed is by the process of education and training in the family. In the process of education of our children to the advantage of the future of the society, the family occupies a central place. In the Nigerian context the human family is the major contributor to the education and formation of children, and for pruning the dead-wood of ethnicity. The family ought to prune ethnicity so that something new can grow in the society.

In the first place, education is gradually exercising power over people, and is becoming a context of conscious critique in which people ask themselves how they can be healed from the poisoning effect of ethnicity. Basically, education designates the formative learning (of an individual) that leads to changes in a person’s attitude, character, belief, emotion, skills, values, and dispositions to act and experience. These changes are usually described as the effects of nurture or formation of an individual.

Education is a process, which enables individuals to attain a certain self-understanding and understanding of the aspirations, goals and objectives of the community. The principal aim of education is to enhance the development of human beings in a holistic and integral way within the context of the values of the human community. Education prepares people for adult life in the society which include the creation of sustainable life support
system of justice, openness to people of other cultures, and sharing of life with those outside one’s ethnic zones.

Parents as leaders and heads of human families occupy the first place within the grades of what social scientists call “our significant others.”20 Parents, usually educate their children by parenting, that is by nurturing meaning and cultivating social, religious, and ethical values in the life of the young ones. The family is the basic instrument and organ of co-creation of citizens who will easily cope with the wider community outside their ethnic circumference. The family must teach the children openness to strangers – the non-family members and the non-kin and non-kindred. In a pluralistic Nigeria in which we live, parents need to educate their children into an awareness of plurality of cultures and ethnic groups, and help them to cope with the vertigo of relativity that such awareness often brings, and to inculcate in them the attitudes, dispositions and skills for mastering difficulties of life. The family is the first instrument of creating a good community – a new Nigeria.

In this approach, it is more functional that the family which is the primary cell of creation of good citizens be strengthened by wider communities, like the Church which possesses some of the characters, features, depths and permanence of the family. The human family needs the complementary role of the Church community to ensure a proper education of children and the youths. Correlatively, “the first family of every Christian is the Church, where we learn fidelity and love in a community that is sustained by a faithful God.”21 The family needs a good Church community to play its role in Christian education and formation.

*Education and Training Programmes for Christian Church Leaders*

The nature of education includes a process which makes one more self-critical of one’s historical origin, cultural heritage, religious experience, attitudes, values, actions and perspectives of looking at life. Many meaningful clerical, ecclesiastical and civil leaders have

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failed to recognize the ways of thinking and the value systems of some particular ethnic groups among whom they are working, and some have even gone to the extent of blocking their developments, progress and promotion. A lot of damage has been done through such experiences, and the spirit of team work has been hindered in those kind of unfortunate situations, which are very common in many ecclesiastical institutions in Nigeria. The fact that ethnicity presents the image of a broken-Nigeria to outsiders and Nigerians are apparently not aware of it, makes the situation even more depressing.

The theology of image of God understood as involving divine and human relationships is the beginning of a new Nigeria or new generation. This implies that whenever we meet people, we meet them not as shocks or threats, but we encounter them as revelation of God’s creation and as ongoing epiphany of God’s grace. This epiphany is communicated to pilgrim men and women and in the horizontal level of human relationship. In this attitude the vertical dimension of God’s revelation becomes thereby visible in the horizontal relationship, in such a way that the vertical finds its experience in the horizontal.

The evil forces of ethnicism that separate us can be killed either by education or training programmes of the Church. Education and training programmes can break down a lot of walls and barriers that separate ethnic groups from one another, and Christians from one another. Education and training programmes in Christian leadership can draw at a deeper level all Christians from different ethnic groups into an experience of oneness as the Body of Christ in a profound experience of fellowship. In the process of education and formation, organizations, activities, and committees play a necessary part in the life of individual. Initiatives might include the following: (1) Opening centres in the Church where people can meet for conscientization and education on the socially prescribed meaning of ethnicity (2) Using the universities and other tertiary institutions as resource avenues for actions and information on the changing role of a human person in the community.
Conclusion

To reflect theologically about Nigeria means to relate the foundation of faith to our own experience and culture. Ethnicity is a shared cultural heritage consisting of distinctiveness and identity peculiar to groups of people or a nation. Ethnicity is to the humanity of Nigeria what weeds are to the fields of the earth. The danger of ethnicity always lies in recognizing and responding only to those who inhabit the same world as I do, and in rejecting those who do not share the same physical world, geographical enclave, language group, inherited conventions, social history and laver of cultural norms as I do. Ethnicity is full of ambivalence. Ethnicity is a gift that rewards, encourages, nurtures and brings a rich harvest to humanity. The reward is twofold: humanity is blessed and stabilized. At the same time, ethnicity embodies prejudice, hatred, delusion and craving for material identity, which like weeds destroy the fertile field of human endeavour, that is, the rich harvest which human nature might yield. The implication of a new image of Nigeria for a future generation is that one should uproot the vices or negative weeds of ethnicity. The image of God in a human person is a tool for shaping Nigeria into a new image, and for weeding all ambiguities of ethnicity out of Nigeria. The theology of image of God gives human beings a special place and prerogative in God’s creation. Through the image of God in human beings they share in the gift of creation, and they have proper task in the world, as co-creators. They should work together with each other in a spirit of collaboration. Finally, the relationship that exists between people and the visions of unity that bind a nation together are given by God alone.
On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the inception of the Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria (CATHAN) and its journal, the Nigerian Journal of Theology, I am proud to be called upon to give the conference keynote address. Even though I was personally involved with those beginnings, I do not quite know what this assignment could signify and what expectations are awaited of me. But I will resist the temptation to presume to assess the work of CATHAN and its journal in the last twenty years. I will also resist the temptation to prescribe for them what proposals or projects or direction they should have for their immediate or long term future.

My subject for this keynote address will just take a cue from the theme of this year’s conference – Cooperative Ministry in the context of inculturation – and take the liberty granted me by the President to range as relevantly as I want the subject. The President indicated that part of the concern pushing this theme into the forefront is the frightening prospect of clergy acting as sole administrators in their various domains and particularly in their relations with lay people. Well then, I would like to argue here that the problem in the clergy/laity relations is only a partial symptom of a more generalized malaise that runs right from the top of the Church’s edifice to the bottom. And it has dogged the Church, assuredly not from its very beginning, but from early in its infancy. A solution to this problem might have been possible if the Church did not continue to deepen the hole it had dug for itself by habitually endowing merely historical facts with divine

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1 Keynote Address at the CATHAN 2005 Conference, held at Blessed Tansi Memorial Seminary Onitsha, Nigeria, March 30th 2005. Original title “Church Organisation as the Root Cause of Anti-clericalism”
constitutional status, turning ecclesial, historical and contingent facts into doctrinaire ecclesiology of the rank of *divine law*. In the process, it often precludes a priori any considerations of change even when this would be clearly for the “up building of the church of God” for the salvation of souls.

**Political Power within the structure of the Christian Church**

If we are to understand our concerns and perhaps get a real cure to our problems, we need to go back to the past and we need to look for remedies within our own reach. I would like to argue that the root of the conundrum which has built up a structural tension within the church resulting in perceptions of class division on a master/slave basis, and in recurrent cycles of anti-clerical outbursts, has come not from the will and command of the founder of Christianity but rather from the example of Caesar.

Our problem may have begun with the introduction of political power in the structure and running of the Christian church. Political power was early put in the place of spiritual power which in itself would need neither structures nor hierarchies or at least such as we have learned to know them and borrow them from the princes of this world. There was no administrative blueprint left by Jesus for what was clearly intended as a church in the sense of a spiritual community leading a spiritual movement in the world.

In a very perceptive study on the fluidity and pluriformity of titles, roles and functions in the New Testament Church, John McKenzie shows convincingly that a lot of claims made about fixed meanings of nomenclature as to Church functions and offices must be regarded as unbiblical. For the governing of the Christian community McKenzie says bluntly “the one thing that the New Testament apostle does not do and has no commission to do is govern the Church”. “The letters of Paul are not fragments of a vast but lost collection of documents of administration by correspondence”. “There is no clear commission given to any one to govern the New Testament Church”. With some sarcasm he writes that “The exegesis which found the power of jurisdiction in the rock and the keys of the kingdom does not even reach the level of midrashic” Further he says that the New Testament does not
think of government as a form of ministry, the word which comes from the Latin ministerium and the Greek diakonia. Finally he says: “The structure of decision in the New Testament is not so much monarchical or democratic as unformed and unsophisticated”. Even the decision of Acts 15 is in no way represented as monarchical and it is certainly an anachronism to speak of a hierarchy at this stage of development. The decision to select the Seven and the selection itself were made by the twelve and “all the disciples” (Acts 6.) As to Paul, “the Pastoral epistles still know no hierarchy and no monarchy. They do not repudiate the democratic feature suggested by the decisions reached in the book of Acts”.  

Only first in Rome after Constantine did church leadership begin the cultivation and exercise of power as political power. Gradually the pope became a sort of spiritual emperor claiming in the name of Christ and religion, full powers over all, over all states, over all peoples. The document “The Donation of Constantine” admittedly later unmasked as an 8th century forgery shows what the reality of papal power had become, and with what devious means claims can be made or justified. Purporting to record a vision in which the Apostles Peter and Paul enjoined Constantine, as an act of gratitude for the cure of leprosy, to endow the then Pope Sylvester and his successors in perpetuity with imperial splendour, powers and dignity. The Emperor Constantine relinquishes Rome to the Popes as he goes to found Constantinople, because “where the chief priest and the head of the Christian religion has been constituted by the heavenly Emperor, it would be unjust for the worldly emperor to exercise jurisdiction”.  

Monarchy and imperial rule had surreptitiously entered the Church.

The local authorities, the patriarchs and bishops patterned their exercise of power from that of the pope. They became the local popes and were therefore endowed with absolute powers and stood

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3 Donation of Constantine Or Constitutum Constantini in Latin http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/donation.html
above the law. The parish priests could also pattern their own local powers after that of the diocesan bishops.

Meanwhile, democracy which, as in our own time becomes all the rage, did not easily shed the bad reputation, really closer to mob rule, which it had acquired since Plato and Aristotle, while today imperial monarchy the obvious and most natural thing in yesteryears is no longer the model of government. We all assume that democracy is the ideal form of government and that if Christ were to establish the church now or give it a constitution today, democracy might have had a great chance of furnishing or underpinning the constitution of Holy Mother the Church. But by the time of Christ both Alexander the Great on the one hand and Julius and Augustus Caesar on the other hand had happened: men of violence, but men whose extraordinary genius for organizing and governing handed them down to posterity as great benefactors of humanity and the world. The pax Alexandrina carried great culture and arts and science to the entire Mediterranean world with repercussions lasting till today. The pax Romana consolidated it and Roman administration and governing genius spread it to the “civilized”, that is, the Romanised world. Both civilizations nourished the infancy of Christianity and bequeathed to it their ambivalence and “Greek gifts” of freedom in fear and of law and order and force in the service of government. The Roman Emperor/Empire set up the blueprint of culture and civilization and the church copied this blueprint. The age of empire in Europe eventually led to the age of feudalism and the church also copied it. With imperialism and feudalism now internalised, the church’s hierarchy, its bureaucracy and administration absorbed the spirit of feudalism in a world now populated by masters and servants, monarchs and subjects, Lords and commons, clergy and laity, in a rigid dualism that also accommodated briefly for us the phenomenon of white and black, rulers and ruled.

**Regime of Sole Administrator**

All this nursed in all those concerned, a penchant for ruling from on top, the true highway to dictatorship, to totalitarianism, to

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autocracy, to the sole administrator. The expression “sole Administrator” appeared for the first time in Nigeria in the time of military rule and indeed to designate one of the most abominable jobs in Nigerian history – that of Anthony Ukpabi Asika hero to Nigerians but seen by fellow Igbo as a renegade and traitor to his own Igbo people, appointed as a post Biafran war pro consul – as a Pétain of Vichy fame to continue and perfect the defeat and humiliation of his own people on behalf of the Nigerian government.

What Sole Administrator means is this: full powers, with no checks or balances, no helps, no lets, no hindrances, no democratic checks, no accountability, no obligation to consult and indeed total freedom to play God in the governance of the people.

**Playing God and Political Monotheism**

Playing God is an apt description. Theologically monotheism emphasized the idea of a sole power, omnipotent/omniscient, pantocrator. It took the Jews, stiff-necked and uncircumcised of heart as they were, a lot of coaching and thousands of years to be shaped to reluctantly accept monotheism. But the purely religious belief in monotheism could not forever remain politically neutral. Rather it became the reigning, overruling, overriding ideology. Relating the monotheistic God to governance is one easy step to consecrating the ideal of monarchy, autocracy and apex rule. When we imbibe this ideology we can begin to act God, beginning with the adoption of appropriate nomenclatures such as “Vicar of Christ,” “superior”, “supremus pontifex”.

**Impact on Ministry – Participation and Collaboration:**

How does all this affect the ministry? Jesus remains the one mediator and the one high priest. All of us, priest and bishop are his helpers, and co-operators or collaborators. Our work, itself essentially spiritual, is to be done under the spiritual leadership of Jesus following his mind rather using the methods and means of

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worldly power he denounced. All of us participate in Christ’s work. Participation is essentially platonic, that is meant to express how the eternal ideas relate to their material realization. Earthly realities are like shadow to reality itself, they participate vaguely in the fullness of being that is the idea.

We too, as earthly priests, participate in Christ’s priestly ministry. He is the source of our ministry. The great commission, “going therefore teach...” given as Christ ascended into heaven, meant that he wanted that his work, though in a way already accomplished, was to be continued by the disciples. Mission accomplished but also the new beginning of mission! Those now commissioned to continue his work throughout the rest of time, his disciples, were to be his collaborators.

Recent articulation especially since Vatican II emphasizes that it was the bishops, the true successors of apostles, who alone were meant as the “commissioners”, that somehow priests are at the margins, only helpers or collaborators of the bishops as the Jewish elders to Moses (cf. the ordinal). Of course, apostles were the first bishops, though, as we have seen from McKenzie that the distinction and hierarchization between bishop and priest is late and unclear in the New Testament. But at whatever level, whether Episcopal or merely priestly, our job definition is that of collaborating in proclaiming the good news and bringing Christ to the world. It is supplementary to Christ’s but complementary to each other’s – priests’, and bishops’ and pope’s.

Thus the organization of this ministry should model itself not necessarily with monotheism and monarchy in mind but perhaps better with the Trinity and democracy in mind. In the Athanasian Creed, the Quicunque, we read that each of the three persons is equal and is equally coeternal, uncreated, immense, omnipotent etc. In modern terms one would say there is perfect democracy in the Trinity. The only difference is in personality and division of work in total equality of rank and power and in mutual love. This is the Christian and divine prototype of cooperative ministry. Cooperative ministry is not always easy, but it seems to be the way out of our present explosive set up.
In being collaborators of Christ we are collaborators with each other. We are complimentary to each other. Our ministry is only subordinate to Christ not to any others.

**Context of inculturation – Igbo Egalitarianism within Communitarianism**

Culture is more often in flux than we would like to think but a certain stability is necessary for its very identity. If every thing changed then nothing would ever be itself and everything would be everything else and, therefore nothing at all. Certain core elements/ingredients must remain within the flux to guarantee and retain the identity of each culture. I venture to say – for the Igbo – that egalitarianism within communitarianism would be part of the core of Igbo social culture. But both have been eroded by colony and mission, by urbanization and the imposition of hierarchies and rulers by force or the bending of the will by vows and promises of obedience not necessarily to God, but “to me and my successors”. What a difference it could make if we could get our core culture of egalitarianism to impact on our Christian structures of church governance?

We can and we should try to let egalitarianism supersede or at least modify the imported and unchristian feudal spirit that gave us the obsequious “My Lords” and “monsignors” in church structures and attitude and more significantly, the arrogance and insolence of office. Enhanced by the theology and spirituality of “God’s will,” meaning actually the human will of the superior, a tradition was nurtured of appealing to the ultimate in the name and for causes often less than spiritual and blackmailing honest Christians to win obedience and compliance often no more than calling God’s name in vain and not respecting the sacredness of the person whose freedom is being violated.

Inculturation and culture have always tended to call back the past. For us here in Africa it is not only the past of Euro-African history of the tragic interaction – slave trade, colonization, imperialism, imprisonment, dependency and loss of freedom, economic exploitation and underdevelopment, marginalization. More emphatically, the past has tended to be evoked in terms of
our very own pre-white past when we were our authentic selves, naked and unashamed, illiterate, oral, rural, bucolic and ignorant. That was, in the phrase of Umeasiegbe – “the way we lived”.

Inculturation cannot be real today unless we study, criticize and assess some basic religious ideas and practices of our African Traditional Religion (ATR). How was/is prayer conceived and what forms did it take? Will all these continue to remain anathema? Libation, morning prayers, Ofo? Why does current African theology take monotheism more for granted than seriously? Why does it refuse to come to grips with the fact of widespread practice of a certain polytheism in Africa? Why is there no serious critique of Karl Barth’s oracular statements on revelation and religions? Why do we totally ignore the non-canonical books? If they are not inspired, is there nothing to learn from them? Is the pneumatology of the Eastern orthodox tradition, totally useless? Even if only to dilute the overwhelming one-sidedness and silences of traditional western Theology and even if only to find some sanity amidst the “Storm and Stress” of the Holy Ghost Fire Movement that is overwhelming our Christian communities?

Collaborative Ministry and inculturation – dismantling Hierarchy
The term collaborative in the title, refers to the job division and working relations between bishops and priests and between them and lay people in the work of the apostolate. The term, collaborative ministry, represents an effort in remodelling the overly hierarchical mentality that is proving an obstacle to the work of the church. For one thing, people are too shy to criticize much less to demystify, or demythologise hierarchy.

Hierarchy may at times have been useful for administrative convenience but it has given rise to anti-clericalism from without among the laity as well as led to rivalry and inordinate ambition in quest of office from within. It has promoted unprecedented levels of personality cult often akin to the deification of Roman emperors. It has led to sycophancy as people unduly vie for favours from the exalted one (“prelatus” or prelate, the elevated or preferred one). It induces in the people a dependency syndrome as they flatter and
bribe and fawn their way in desperate, shameless obsequiousness towards the seat of power and favour. It has corrupted otherwise good people with power and arrogance leading them to wield power like “the Kings of the Gentiles” and to treat the people of God not as fellow pilgrim Christians but as underlings. It is this hierarchical structure and its spirit that have determined most of the history of the church. It has history on its side. It has also on its side all the ecclesiology of the past. This has been our reality in the pope/bishop, bishop/priest and priest/laity relations. The promise and project of collaborative ministry is to get all the baptized to collaborate rather than have some subjugate others in the name of God. The Igbo sing,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Onye suwa achara, Onye suwa</th>
<th>One cuts grass, another cuts,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Onye akpola ibe ya onye ikoni,</td>
<td>Let none call the other a prisoner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eze suo achara, ikpe ala</td>
<td>When a king cuts grass, palaver ends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Behind the idea of collaborative ministry is the realization that the ministry, the apostolate is a vast vineyard, with more than enough work for all, with a division of labour, with different charisms “for the up-building of the Church of God”. It is the body of Christ, with each representing only a part or fraction of the complex and with each one’s role crucial even if it seems negligible. As the Igbo say, *nwa gwere oso, kwu na nri*, “a little child that only pounds or grinds the pepper is part of the cooking team.” I am suggesting that we consider democratising a little, by finding a place for our republican spirit, our egalitarian and communitarian heritage. The problem now is how can we inject some of this spirit in order to blunt the edge of the ideology of hierarchy, without rocking the boat and without stirring the hornet’s nest in our church? This would need the greatest boldness as well as the greatest tact. Luckily the Pauline analogy of the mystical body can be pressed into service here to calm the anxieties of those who with deeply entrenched interests in a status quo that must be changed for the good of the church.
Democratisation in the Church!

After tracing the genesis and the history of the monarchical, authoritarian spirit that has marked church organization from early in its own history, a spirit that manifests itself today in our own local churches and specifically in our relations – bishop/priests, parish priest/curate and priest/laity relations – we shall go on to explore associated problems and to suggest that the only viable solution is to democratise our structure in line with early church practice and spirit and in line with our own traditional pre-white social organization and also in line with the demands of contemporary democratic aspirations of most of humanity.

One major problem of our traditional church organization is the overemphasis on the power of one of us over the rest of us and overemphasis on the obedience of the rest of us to monarchical authority as of servant to master. Buttressing and underpinning this is the will-of-God theology where it is the superior who assumes the role of God.

This has nursed the corruption of power and dehumanised the victims of power through the abuse of the ideology of obedience as veritable opium. The resentment and revolt resulting from this and the clash with our primordial democratic instincts and often with our consciences is part of the problem. Luckily this is the age of democracy. All over the world the democratic spirit is afoot. It is also the one that best suits an organization that preaches liberty, equality and fraternity, the universal brotherhood/sisterhood of all, the divine sonship/daughtership of all, the universal salvific will of God. Of all the historic options in governance, democracy is the one that seems to better suit the needs and spirit and cultures of Africa, despite a bad reputation the continent has gained recently for sprouting despots and tin-gods.

But the fact remains that only force, often externally induced, has been able to oblige Africa to tolerate despotism. In the really native African tradition, no one was so rich or so powerful as to sustain a despotism over the rest. And the rest were too republican and independent minded to acquiesce to it.

The spirit of Christianity itself is democratic while the main thrust of democracy is Christian. The Demos of democracy is the
laos tou theou, the people for whose welfare, Amos, Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah spoke out in God’s name. They are the majority poor and blind and prisoners whose liberation defined Christ’s mission. It is strange that the Ecclesia regens et regnans is often more eager to applaud democracy in secular rule rather than to apply it to its own internal organization.

Until we see this done we shall continue to see at all levels of church life only the repetition of the model of the monarchy and the sole administrator, the supremus legislator qui a nemine iudicatur (supreme legislator judged by no one). The clergy claim before the laity that they are the new apostles and ordained rulers. Before priests, the bishops claim that they are only responsible to Rome. And Popes claim that they are responsible to God alone, that is, not even responsible to God’s people. In the 1917 Code of Canon Law this was explicit in Canon 1556. The new code does not contain it in so many words but its spirit is clearly still valid and in force. So, with such a legacy, why not for once try justice and love rather than power as our principle of organization.

Power: It says a lot of our preferred characterization of God as omnipotent, almighty and everlasting God, and the concluding refrain “who lives and reigns for ever and ever.” It was in pursuit of the monarchical ideal that the church lost its first and earliest half to orthodoxy at the great schism and arguably the next half at the reformation. Having justice and love as principle of our church organization would at least reduce some of our problems and minimize some of our conflicts and contradictions and the wounds we daily inflict on the spirit of Christ in his name. But the most practical way to realize justice and love is to democratise our administrative institutions and give them a more horizontal thrust.

It is time to abandon the imperial and medieval feudal principles of power and force to embrace the more Christian and theologically more orthodox principles of justice and love, of care and respect for the person of each and embrace persuasion as the means of winning over people and living with them Christianly. Still ringing in our ears from the narrative of St. John’s passion on Good Friday is the, “My kingdom is not from this world” (John 18:
36). But how can we not think it applies to us in the running of God’s own business in the church?

What else could the imitation of Christ mean for the church itself? “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10: 42-45). What a distance and what a contrast from our reality?

To salve our consciences in contravening this attitude of Jesus to power and its assault on human dignity we take refuge behind the claim that monarchy in the church is of divine law based on an interpretation of Mathew 16 on the Petrine office. But without any prejudice to the doctrine of the primacy or to that of infallibility, the office of Peter is not necessarily attached to a monarchical constitution nor necessarily opposed to or threatened by a democratic arrangement in church governance. Christ could not mean to petrify in Peter the contemporary Roman constitutional setup just recently inaugurated by Caesar Augustus. Rome had just ended its constitutional experiments that started with kings, the Republic, the consuls, the triumvirate and the duumvirate of Anthony and Octavius which ended in 31 BCE at the battle of Actium. The coincidence of the imperial monarchy of the Caesars being contemporary with Christ would not of itself guarantee that this form of government was to be the preferred choice of Christ for his church.

This is reason why all our talk of inculturation merely continues to scratch the surface so long as it remains silent on the Christian use of power within the church itself. The structure of governance, because of its strategic position in affecting every aspect of the life and being of a people, must become the dominant issue in any society including the Christian Church. We need to be fair to the Church and the message it brings and of course honest to ourselves in assessing the role of a system that has served well in its day but perhaps today is counterproductive or even
The task is even how to dare to think the impossible, that is, of replacing or modifying hierarchy as a way of doing God's business. But if we had not lived at this period of the history of monarchy in Europe, we might never have thought it possible to have the rather weakened versions – the constitutional monarchies such as now exist in Britain, the Low Countries and in Scandinavia – and theorists, theologians and other advocates of theocracy might still be waxing eloquent singing the praises of Absolutism and of the Divine Right of Kings.

For the collaborative principle to replace the reigning hierarchy principle it cannot be reduced to the rather dubious strategy of now and then demoting the clergy to lay status or promoting the laity to the ministerial priesthood or worse still driving some wedges between them. The tension in-built in hierarchy cannot be made into a duel, a permanent quarrel between priests and lay people with the higher clergy, the real hierarchy, staying out of the fray and saving their special apartness and arbitrating in smug aloofness between those lesser mortals at lower rungs of the hierarchical ladder. Those tensions may never go away. The priest or bishop sole administrator is a son of the hierarchy principle. The layperson enviously eyeing the power of the priest and intriguing with the bishop to put the uppity young priest in his proper place is the boomerang offspring of the hierarchy principle. The principle of hierarchy has become the principle of high tension in the Church and is bound to drive a wedge between the artificial classes it has created in the church. Most of our cultures and peoples of Africa have not learnt to deal with these tensions and we need not try since mercifully we do have the countervailing principles of egalitarianism and communitarianism to tap from and to make the necessary changes and adjustments. They are also Christian, New Testament values, more amenable to the essential values of justice and love, more capable of rallying all God's people to the common pursuit and of helping to focus their attention away from the distractions, ambitions and rivalries as well as the divisions and injustices
programmed into the idea of hierarchy. The business of Christ which is the ministry of Love would be better served.\(^6\)

AUTHORITY AS SERVICE IN THE NIGERIAN-AFRICAN CHURCH

CHALLENGE OF THE TOWFOLD APOSTOLIC HERITAGE

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Introduction

This article proposes to examine and demonstrate two principal and important affirmations. In the first place, I wish to show that the Church received from its apostolic origins a two-fold heritage which is at once complementary and in mutually beneficial tension. This double apostolic heritage of the Church is an apostolic community and apostolic ministry exercised by persons with specific authority and responsibility within this ecclesial community. In the Catholic Church, this apostolic ministry is exercised in the local Churches in the first place by the bishops who in the Catholic tradition are the successors of the apostles. \(^1\) They are aided by their priests and deacons. On the other hand, we intend to show that since the Church is wholly apostolic in its nature and constitution as a community of the faithful, she also stands as a whole basically in the apostolic succession. This apostolicity of the Church as a whole implies that it is within its context (i.e. the apostolic succession of the whole Church) that one has to situate and understand the special apostolic succession of the bishop through his apostolic ministry which he exercises with the collaboration and assistance of the clergy. The main aim of this article is to examine the way the apostolicity of the Church conditions or shapes the understanding of apostolic succession of ministry, and to apply its implications and conclusions to the exercise of ministerial authority in the Nigerian-African Church.

Who are the Apostles?

The Term ‘Apostle’

In classical Greek usage, the word apostolos ‘apostle’ (derived from the Greek root – apostollein, meaning to send away, to send

out) designates a fleet sent out or a naval expedition, a group of colonists, a passport or bill of delivery. It is rarely used in the context of the sending of an individual person or to designate a messenger or an envoy in the sense it has been used in the New Testament (NT). Thus, Hans Küng could say in line with other scholars, that secular Greek does not offer any linguistic parallels to the concept of the word ‘apostle’.

Even the attempt made by some renowned scholars like K.H. Rengstorf and J. B. Lightfoot to derive the concept of the word from the Jewish juridical institution known as Shaliah has been seriously put to question by recent studies. This is because Shaliah, as used in the rabbinical tradition, never had any religious connotation before the NT period.

In the light of the above development, the following conclusions can be drawn on the derivation of the word, apostolos. The origin and precise significance of the term is disputed. However, the idea of apostolos as designating a messenger, an envoy, or ‘one sent’ in the NT was certainly influenced by the Jewish-Hellenistic culture. We have seen that in its derivation from the Greek verb apostellein there is some reference to ‘being sent’. On the other hand, the Jewish book of Chronicles, an Old Testament text, shows that some men were ‘sent’ to teach the Law (cf. 2 Ch 17, 7-9). However, the transformation in the meaning of apostolos from a term which connotes a temporal function of being sent on mission, to a title of a permanent office in the Church is a NT development.

In NT the word ‘apostle’ appears several times, though not always with the same sense. It appears only once in Matthew and Mark, 34 times in Luke (6 times in his gospel, and 28 times in Acts) and not less than 34 times in Paul, including the pastoral

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3 Cf. ibid.
5 Cf. ibid., p. 47-48.
letters. Basically, the word means ‘ambassador’\textsuperscript{7} and its broader usage which includes any Christian missionary (Barnabas in Acts 14: 13; 1 Cor. 9:6) is older than its technical usage as limited to the Twelve and Paul, who ranks himself on a par with them.\textsuperscript{8} It is also used once in reference to Christ himself (Heb 3: 1). Luke even ascribes to Jesus the attribution of this title to the Twelve (Lk 6:13).

**Technical Meaning of ‘Apostle’ in the New Testament**

The word ‘apostle’ is not identical with the term ‘Twelve’ frequently used by the synoptic writers in reference to the special circle of twelve disciples of Jesus even though both are related. The ‘Twelve’ is a symbolical and eschatological concept of pre-Easter origin concretised by Jesus in his institution of twelve special disciples from a longer circle of disciples. The formula: “He made them 12” shows that the group is an institution (cf. Mk 3, 13-19). The number ‘Twelve’ symbolises the twelve tribes of Israel thought of in terms of the old people of God, but in both form and content, it signifies the eschatological Israel or the new people of God already inaugurated by the preaching of the reign of God and by the presence of Jesus.

On other hand, the word ‘apostle’ expresses a concept whose milieu of origin was the primitive Apostolic Church and thus, was a post-Easter development. It is, therefore, not historically exact that Jesus might have during his life time given the title ‘Apostles’ to the Twelve as Luke says (cf. Lk 6:13). It was much later in the development of the concept of apostleship in the apostolic Church that the term was identified with the Twelve. We must not forget that the Gospels were also coloured by theology.

In technical theological usage, the word ‘apostle’ applies to those to whom the risen Lord manifested himself as living and whom He commissioned directly for missionary preaching.\textsuperscript{9} It was Paul who founded, developed, and saved this technical theological concept of apostleship from decay and disuse, and he applied it to

\textsuperscript{7} H. KÜNG, The Church, p. 346.

\textsuperscript{8} F. KLOSTERMANN, Apostle, p. 679.

himself. For instance, he bases his apostleship on the appearance of the risen Lord to him and refers to the Corinthians as the seal of this apostleship (cf. 1 Cor 9:1). Paul also justified his apostolic vocation by a personal commission he received directly from the risen Lord (cf. Gal 1:2). His constant preoccupation to found his apostleship on a vision and a mandate of the risen Lord, shows that the apostolic Church before whom he had to justify his claims, did not recognise any apostleship other than one derived from the express will of Christ. It is most likely that the word 'apostle' was used before and during the time of Paul in a broad sense without any special theological implication for missionaries, in which case Paul would have been the first person to associate it strictly with the notion of authorised representative.\footnote{H. KÜNG, \textit{The Church}, p. 351.} Through him the Church became conscious of what is meant when individuals like himself and Peter are spoken of as 'apostles'.\footnote{Cf. \textit{ibid}.} This special and strict theological usage of the word 'apostle' in reference to the Twelve, and with the inclusion of Paul, is the sense in which we are going to use it subsequently. Their qualification as apostles in this strict theological sense is based on the fact that they are the only persons who the NT established as having seen the risen Lord and at the same time as having directly received from him a commission for missionary preaching.

\textbf{Apostolic Succession and the Twofold Apostolic Heritage of the Church}

In terms of the ministry of first witnesses of the resurrection and of those who received direct commission from the risen Lord himself for missionary preaching, the apostles are unique and irreplaceable. In this sense, they can have no successors, and the vocation to apostleship ended with the death of the last apostle. But in another sense, it is possible and legitimate to speak of apostolic succession. Even though, their ministry as first witnesses of the resurrection has ended, the apostles have left for the Church a legacy of their witness and this has come down to us fundamentally in the form of
the NT writings. Although, there were no further direct divine commissions after the apostles (as what remained was only the ministry of those commissioned by them or by the Church), the mission of the apostles remains as it is a universal one and by this fact surpasses the person of the apostles. As this mission is meant to endure until the end of time, so also the apostolic mandate and ministry endure.

Thus, it is possible to speak of succession in apostolic Tradition (which links the Church to its apostolic origins) and thus of the apostolic succession of the whole Church since it is the Church as a whole that hands on this Tradition. This primary sense of apostolic succession precedes all succession in apostolic ministry. This is well articulated in the ecumenical Report of the Joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic Study Commission on ‘The Gospel and the Church’:

In the New Testament and the early fathers, the emphasis was obviously placed more on the substance of apostolicity, i.e., on succession in apostolic teaching. In this sense the entire Church as the ecclesia apostolica stands in the apostolic succession. Within this general sense of succession, there is a more specific meaning: the succession of the uninterrupted line of the transmission of office. In the early Church, primarily in connection with defence against heresies, it was a sign of the unimpaired transmission of the gospel and a sign of unity in the faith.

Succession in the Apostolic Tradition: Apostolic Succession of the Whole Church
The Church is prior to and precedes every individual or ministry that is in it. In the Credo, we confess the apostolicity of the Church.

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This means that the whole Church is apostolic in all her members and thus lives in continuity of faith, life, and mission with the apostles. The Church is the successor of the apostles in the sense that through baptism all her members have received the charge to participate in the handing on of the original apostolic Tradition expressed in a fundamental way in the Scriptures. This handing on is expressed in the life, faith, and witness of the whole Church and of each one of her children. Thus, it is the entire people of God that bear the living Tradition as the following statement of Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission notes:

The people of God as a whole is the bearer of the living Tradition. In changing situations producing fresh challenges to the gospel, the discernment, actualisation, and communication of the Word is the responsibility of the whole people of God. The Holy Spirit works through all members of the community, using the gifts he gives to each for the good of all. Theologians in particular serve the communion of the whole Church by exploring whether and how new insights should be integrated into the ongoing stream of Tradition. In each community there is an exchange, a mutual give-and-take, in which bishops, clergy and lay people receive from as well as give to others within the whole body.14

Apostolic succession of the whole Church is thus, essentially succession in discipleship, faith, witness, unity and communion in continuity with the apostolic Church. As the whole Church is apostolic, as all have been called to hand on the living Tradition, it is every one of her members who is first to be considered a successor of the apostles before any particular or special succession. However, this apostolic or living Tradition is also handed on in a special sense through succession in the apostolic ministry or by the regular transmission of the ordained ministry.

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Succession in Apostolic Ministry: Succession in the Strict Sense

By apostolic succession in the strict sense, we mean the way that the ministry of the Church is said to be derived from the apostles by a continuous succession. This is the special ministry exercised by the bishop in his particular Church in collaboration with his clergy. The continuation of the apostolic ministry in the Church through the regular transmission of ministerial responsibilities is part of the apostolic heritage of the Church. The apostles have left behind not only a Church which is entirely apostolic but also a special ministry which is exercised in the service of the unity and continuity of the apostolic Tradition of the Church, or of the fidelity of the Church to her apostolic origins in Christ. In other words, the succession of apostolic ministry through the existence of the ordained ministry has, as its particular task in the Church, the preservation and the actualisation of the apostolic faith. The fullness of the apostolic succession in the ministry of the Church implies three inseparable elements: the continuity in the transmission of the ministerial charge, the fidelity of proclamation to the teaching of the apostles and the conformity of life to the Gospel and to the demands of mission.

Thus, the bishops may be considered as the successors of the apostles in the strict sense of the term by virtue of their pastoral office and membership of the episcopal college as well as the necessary communion that this implies. But this fact alone is not enough as faith and fidelity to the apostolic life are essential to the succession. One can therefore, say with Pope John Paul II that “bishops are successors of the Apostles not only in authority and sacred power but also in the form of apostolic life, in apostolic sufferings endured for the proclamation and spread of the Gospel, in their gentle and merciful care of the faithful entrusted to them, in

their defence of the weak, and in their unremitting concern for the People of God”. 17

There is therefore no room for a mere juridical understanding of the ministerial office in the Church. Legitimate occupation of the apostolic office by the bishop through valid episcopal ordination must equally be matched with the fidelity of his preaching to the teaching of the apostles and the conformity of his life to the Gospel. This is because a function or an office cannot be separated from the moral and spiritual qualities linked up with its reality and which form part of its truth. 18 St. Augustine was aware of this truth when he wrote: “Catholic bishops are not to be followed if they mislead by expressing sentiments contrary to the Scriptures”. 19

Apostolic Succession of the whole Church: implications for ordained ministry
As we have seen, the apostolic succession of the whole Church corresponds to succession in apostolic Tradition which involves the handing on of the teaching or witness of the apostles by the members of the Church as a whole in their faith, life and worship. The regular transmission of ordained ministry which corresponds to the apostolic succession of the bishops is also a part of the one apostolic Tradition of the Church. Consequently, it is within the context of the apostolic succession of the whole Church that the ministry exercised by the bishop in his particular Church with the assistance of his clergy is to be understood and situated. The ministry of the bishops, although derived from a particular kind of apostolic succession proper to them, is linked up with the ministry of the entire community of the faithful, as the whole Church is also the successor to the apostles; all are called to witness to and confess the apostolic faith. There is no opposition between the two kinds of

19 AUGUSTINUS, De Unitate Ecclesiae, 11, 28 (PL 43, 401-411).
ministry as both are born from the same apostolic roots and serve the same people with the same finality. They are thus complementary as none can exist without the other. The 1967 Synod of Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church spoke of the inseparability of the apostles and the Church: "It is clear from the New Testament writings that an apostle and a community of faithful united with one another by a mutual link under Christ as head and the influence of his Spirit belong to the original inalienable structure of the Church".  

Therefore, in addition to an apostolic community, we have a distinct apostolic ministry with distinct authority and responsibility that is exercised only with the participation and collaboration of the entire Church. These two principles are in tension, but they are not really in conflict. They are two fundamental axioms of a theology of ministry. The implication of the apostolic succession of the whole Church is that what is said of the bishops (shared by other ministers) as successors of the apostles in a particular sense, with regard to their mission, authority and the assistance of the Spirit, must also be predicated generally to the whole Church because of her apostolicity. This is because it is to the whole Church that is first given these gifts. According to P.P. Avis:

Unless the commission and the gift of the Spirit were given to the whole Church, the apostles and their successors would be detached from the community of early disciples which included the women and Jesus' brothers, and the ordained ministry thereafter would be isolated from the body of Christ. This would mean an apostolic ministry ministering to a non-apostolic community. In other words, there could be no representative ministry, because the distinctive ministry would not be embodying, focusing and reflecting back the nature of the Church. But on the other hand, if there were no distinct authoritative ministry, stemming from the apostles, the whole Church could not be

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called to realise its nature as apostolic. How else can the Church be enabled to realise its apostolic nature if not through a distinct ministry that calls the Church, from the position of recognised authority, to become what it is by focusing, reflecting and embodying that apostolicity for the benefit of the whole body.  

The ministry of the bishops is necessarily linked to and supported by the effective participation and contribution of the other members of the community: clergy, religious and laity.

**Authority as Service in the Nigerian-African Church**

**Authority as Service**

Etymologically, the term 'authority' comes from the Latin word *auctoritas*, which in itself is derived from *auctor* (cause, sponsor, guardian, promoter, surety). The term *auctor* is linked to the Latin verb *augere* which means to increase, to enrich, or to augment.  

The etymology implies that authority is a reality which when exercised increases well-being (*augere*) and as well empowers (*auctor*). It is thus not only the right to determine something in the life of others (juridical authority), but it is first and foremost the rightful freedom to do what is genuinely right and to communicate this to others (moral authority). It is this latter sense which is the first sense which authority carries in the New Testament as evident in the life of Jesus Christ who "came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt 20, 28). His was an authority exercised primarily by virtue of moral character. He lives as he teaches and teaches as he lives. His proclamation of the Gospel and his actions manifest coherently the nearness of the

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kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{24} Nowhere is his authority or power something which he wields over others. \textit{True authority can never be imposed}; it only works when it is offered, chosen and freely accepted.\textsuperscript{25}

However, Jesus does not reject the need of authority of office. What he demands is that such authority be joined with a moral authority. He demonstrates his position in the passage of Matthew's Gospel where he acknowledges the legitimacy of the official authority of the Scribes and Pharisees while criticizing their double standard or lack of moral authority (cf. Mt 23, 1-7). No doubt authority of office is often a necessity. But its legitimacy depends on its subordination to moral authority and thus, its reconfiguration before the demands of the Gospel.\textsuperscript{26} Part of these demands of the Gospel is that the exercise of authority in the Church respect the apostolic nature of the Church which as we saw involves a two-fold heritage namely, (a) an apostolic community which implies the basic apostolic succession of the whole Church, and (b) a special apostolic ministry which implies the special apostolic succession of bishops in the ordained ministry which they exercise together with the clergy. The exercise of ecclesial authority must respect the reality of the Church as an apostolic community. In other words, the apostolicity of the whole Church must condition or shape the understanding of apostolic succession of ministry. The understanding and exercise of the authority of ordained ministry must be linked to fidelity to the Gospel and apostolic life on the part of office holders or pastoral ministers in the Church. How far has the Nigerian-African bishops and clergy responded to the above call?

\textit{Tendency Towards Clericalism}

Although there are some few exceptions, the general notion of authority prevalent in the Nigerian-African Church is that

Authority as Service in the Nigerian-African Church

represented by the Code of Canon Law. It is a juridical and institutional notion of authority, which lays emphasis on power and on the bearers of power. The ecclesiology behind this conception of authority is one which deals with the Church as if it is only a hierarchical society and a visible institution. Although, it accepts in principle that the Church is also a spiritual community and a mystery, this ecclesiology is primarily concerned with order, conformism, submission and the visible structure of the Church. What matters in its conception of authority is not so much the way authority is exercised as to the juridical qualification of the one who exercises it. What counts is not so much what is said as to the one who said it. The pre-eminent thing is not so much the fact of things as to the authority behind a decision. The model of leadership evident in this way of seeing the Church is clericalism. According to a publication of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, "there is clericalism when priests feel they have a monopoly of knowledge, attention and power in the Church, and ignore or downgrade the role and contribution of the laity".27 This publication does not say categorically that there is clericalism in the Nigerian Church, but it presumes it.

The danger in this way of seeing the Church and authority primarily in terms of jurisdiction and the powers of the clergy is that it can lay the foundation of many attitudes which may not be in line with the evangelical demands of the Gospel and kingdom of God. Elochukwu E. Uzukwu calls our attention to a popular case well known about one Nigerian bishop who made the following statement some years ago while addressing senior seminarians: "We are the Church, you are not the Church, the Church speaks, you listen; we talk, you do the listening; we give directives, you obey; you are there, we are here; we send you, you go".28 Uzukwu concludes with reference to the above statement by saying that the "language and practice are not different from the tyrannies which

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are called governments in Africa". Furthermore, he goes on to unmask the sacral mentality which enshrouds this authoritarian understanding of authority. He quotes from Leonardo Boff to show how this mentality owes its origin to the Roman and feudal style of authority which the Church adopted from the era of Constantine but has since abandoned at least in principle with Vatican II:

Its legitimacy comes not from below but from above, from the will of God. The higher someone is in this hierarchy the closer one is to God and so has a greater share in God’s divine power. To obey one’s superior is to obey God (...) This style of authority is untouchable and not subject to any internal criticism. Criticism from within any of the orders is only possible from a higher authority. A questioning from below would be equal to a revolution in the universe. Thus, any thought of transformation is the same as an attack on God who is author of both the order and structure of sacred power.

Clericalism has been described as the dominant model of leadership and authority in African Churches. Thus, while addressing the 1975 plenary assembly of SECAM, Bishop Mwoleka of the diocese of Rulenge in western Tanzania identified clericalism as the stumbling block of African ecclesiology: “The root of the trouble is that we have a fixed idea of the Church. At meetings like this everybody seems to agree that the Church, of course, means all the faithful. But at the back of our minds and in our imagination, almost instinctively, the Church is always the Church of the clergy”.

On the other hand, the Congolese theologian, Bénézet Bujo sees clericalism as prevalent and pervasive in the African Churches.

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29 Ibid.
30 L. BOFF, Church, Charism and Power, p. 40-41; cf. E. E. UZUKWU, A Listening Church, p. 122.
32 Cited in E. E. UZUKWU, A Listening Church, p. 120.
and does not hesitate to condemn it in unmistakable terms. He shows that many African bishops behave like tyrants at the level of the diocese, a situation which is equally the case in the parishes with regard to the attitude of many priests. Thus, while the clergy mount a one man rule in their respective areas of jurisdiction, the laity are condemned to a mere passive role. Bujo sees this situation as dangerous for African Christianity: “A priest or a bishop can turn into a lifelong oppressor of the ecclesial community, effectively dechristianizing it”.33 He therefore, pleads for “the destruction of all clericalism and all episcopalism” wherever their traces can be found in the Church. In his turn, Adrian Hastings advocates declericalization as the way forward for the African Church: “To save the Church in Africa today we have, more than anything else, to declericalize her. We have to declericalize the liturgy (...) We have to declericalize Scripture (...) We have to declericalize parish organization (...) We have to declericalize the apostolate (...) Finally, and most difficult of all, we have to declericalize the ministry”.

The Way forward for the Nigerian-African Church
The major fault of clericalism is that it creates a priestly caste detached from the community of the faithful and an ordained ministry isolated from the body of Christ. It behaves as if the ordained ministry has a monopoly of apostolicity and as if what we have is an apostolic ministry ministering to a non-apostolic community. The Nigerian-African Church must thus fully recover the two-fold apostolic heritage of the Church in her mission, life and organisation. What we have now is to a large extent one aspect of this heritage, namely, the ordained-apostolic ministry dominating the other, that is the apostolic-ecclesial community. We must not forget that it is to the whole Church that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given and not only to the bishops and clergy. The whole Church should therefore be involved in the search for the

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truth and the will of God. There should be mutual exchange of gifts or give and take attitude between the bishop and the clergy, and between the ordained and non-ordained members of the Christian community. The fact that the laity themselves are not happy with the existing situation is shown by a one time chairperson of the Nigerian Laity Council, D. D. Dodo in a paper he presented in 1994:

Here is the problem. For the layman, the new dispensation brought about by Vatican II and the 1983 Code of Canon Law in terms of his definition and role in the Church are welcome development and he is eager to be given the opportunity to perform; but for the priest, it is an intrusion, an invasion of his traditional power, and he is not ready and willing to allow the layman play his new role. This results in conflict of interest, confusion and suspicion.35

The situation against which Dodo complained about in 1994 still rears its ugly head today in the Nigeria-African Church.

The Church in Nigeria and in fact in the whole African continent should recover the close link between an apostolic community and an apostolic ministry. This means that in the Christian community (dioceses and parishes), there is no room for isolated ministry. There is no place in the Church for personal authority of the type which the entire community would not be entitled to participate as authority is never held alone but always with and in communion with others.

There are no set apart, ordained, apostolic, charismatic, and sacrificial ministers within a people which would not share all these attributes and functions. There are only set apart ministers within a set apart people, specially ordained ministers within the people which has received the general ‘ordination’ of baptism, special apostolic and charismatic

ministries within the apostolic-charismatic church and special sacrificial functions within the sacrificial people.\textsuperscript{36}

Ministry and mission in the Church is first basically that of the whole Christian community (as the whole Church is ministerial) before being the responsibilities of particular individuals or Church officials. Having seen the way forward for the Nigerian-African Church, what concrete measures can be put into practice for the realisation of a Church conscious of its two-fold apostolic heritage and a Church willing to allow the laity to play adult role as co-responsible members as a matter of their baptismal right and duty in the Church? \textsuperscript{37}

\textit{Programme for Concrete Action}

A. Promotion of Synodality on the Basis of African Palaver Model of Leadership  
In the face of the clericalism of the Nigerian-African Church as we have shown, what model of leadership do African theologians propose as a corrective alternative? They generally propose the African ‘palaver’ model of leadership and authority. The palaver model of exercising authority is to a large extent characteristic of traditional African society in its political organisations. This model involves the consultation of the people on a wide scale and deliberation at many levels with the aim of arriving at a consensus. The decisions arrived at in this process usually reflect the opinion of the people governed such that it can be correctly affirmed that power lies with the people. M. Masango was, therefore, right when he said that “in Africa, leadership was traditionally a function to be shared by all villagers or community members, rather than invested in one person”. \textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{36} ENCOUNTER, Christ's Ministry through His Whole Church in Theological Foundation for Ministry, ed. R. S. Anderson, Scotland, T T Clark Ltd., 1979, p. 437.  
\textsuperscript{37} Vatican II, Apostolicam Actuositatem, n° 2.  
Furthermore, Uzukwu illustrates the system of mass consultation of the people implied in the African palaver model of leadership with the symbol or totem of the Manja chief in Central African Republic: “The chief’s symbol is the rabbit, because it has large ears. He has the last word. But his ears are open to the opinion of all – humans as well as spirits. That is the source of his power; and that also is the limit of his power”. The quality of patient listening is thus, one of the characteristics of the African palaver. Continues Uzukwu: “For the chief to be fair, he must be a patient listener. And this listening takes plenty of time. This is what is generally called African ‘palaver’: the liberation of speech at all levels of the community to come close to that Word which is too large for an individual mouth, the Word which saves and heals”.

While stressing the palaver model of leadership which involves consultation of the people, open dialogue, patient listening and the exercise of authority in concert with the community, Bujo applies this model to the Church, thus:

According to the Black African palaver model, the word cannot be interpreted by some central authority but only by a community, that is, in the process of listening to one another. For in speaking and listening with and to each other, it is possible to repulse a fatal word and to confirm a life-promoting one, and to receive it into the service of the ecclesial community. Concretely this would mean that it is not a solitary authority but this authority (is exercised) in concert with the community of all believers (...) This African palaver model even completes and corrects to some extent the individualistic view of Roman and Western ecclesiology that tends to ascribe the competence for decision-making and interpretation in many areas solely to the teaching magisterium of the Church.

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39 E.E. UZUKWU, A Listening Church, p. 18.
40 Ibid., p.128.
Authority as Service in the Nigerian-African Church

The palaver model of leadership is, therefore, the pattern of leadership best suited to the Church in Africa because it is truly African and as well reflects the reality of the Church as a community of disciples. Inculturation for the sake of the Gospel demands that this model be transposed into a new African ecclesiology with the abandonment of the stifling clericalism which is a dominant dimension of the present African ecclesiology. But how can these principles of African palaver model of leadership be given concrete institutional form? How can the principles be translated into practice structurally in the exercise of authority and mode of pastoral government of the diocese? This can be done by giving priority to synodal system of government. The Second Vatican Council opened the way to this development by the creation of some synodal structures, notably, the pastoral council and the presbyteral council. Other synodal structures that followed in the wake of Vatican II include the diocesan synod and the episcopal council.

However, these synodal institutions cannot function effectively on the basis of the principles of African palaver unless efforts are taken to ensure that they do so. This implies that priority should be given to the process of formation of consensus and that decisions in the African churches become the fruit of critical discussion, exchange of ideas and patient listening in a process in which there is equal distribution of speech acts among all those involved in the palaver event. It is the personal calling and responsibility of the bishop as the successor of the apostles to watch over the palaver of the successors of the apostolic Church, the people of God by facilitating it and ensuring that it is not politicised or ridiculed by manoeuvres. In this light he has always the last word which should normally reflect the authentic consensus of the African ecclesial palaver. It is thus, his responsibility to convoke the palaver of the people of God in his diocese, to preside over it and to confirm its decisions.

But he must exercise this office in a responsible and credible way by having large ears in order to be able to hear what the Spirit is saying through other members of the Church, and by avoiding all authoritarianism as it is Jesus Christ and not himself who is the
head and Lord of the Church. Thus, he should conform himself to the apostolic way of life, and model his conduct on the Gospel. His ordination and official appointment is not enough for the fruitful exercise of his office. He should also be a morally credible person after the example of Christ.

The same demand also applies to the clergy. Here it would be necessary to observe again that many African bishops and clergy behave like tyrants. They take themselves in their respective areas of jurisdiction as the Lord and head of the Church. This is unfortunate because they rob Christ of the position which is due to him as the Son of God. It is necessary to remind ourselves that the exercise of authority in the Church is valid only when it manifests the sovereignty of Jesus Christ, openness to the gifts of the Holy Spirit and filial adoration of God.

**Theological Training for the Laity**

The highest places of theological formation in the Nigerian Church at present are the major seminaries and the Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA). Up to the present, this training is dominated by Nigerian seminarians and priests. There is the important need to have side by side with the clergy, a theologically qualified and competent laity. This theological training will lead to the growth and emergence of a mature, critical and responsible laity. Knowledge according to Francis Bacon is power. A theologically informed laity would lead to a laity aware of its rights and duties in the Church; a laity capable of trained reflection on the theological options behind the pastoral positions and decisions of the Church; a laity capable of articulating and making critical contributions to the life and growth of the Church from the lay person’s perspective. This situation can lead to healthy tension and necessary equilibrium in the Church. It can lead to balancing of the relation between the hierarchy and the laity, as it would also lead to the diffusion of the power which comes from knowledge.

Since it would be practically impossible for every member of the laity to have access to such theological formation, more provision can be made in CIWA for some strategic and qualified lay-Church workers to benefit from this training. More provision of
theological formation can also be made for lay individuals who would like to pursue a career in the ecclesiastical sciences.

*Catholic Press for the Laity*

The Nigerian Catholic Laity Council, at least at the national level, could establish and run a Catholic press with the support of the Episcopal Conference, which will serve as organ of public opinion in the Church. Through this medium, the laity can make their voice heard, their thoughts and feelings known, their problems and difficulties revealed, so that the leaders of the Nigerian Church can take account of them in their own action and programme. Karl Rahner drives home this point in a work he devoted to public opinion in the Church. According to him:

Public opinion is (...) one of the means whereby Church's official leaders, who need human aid as well as divine, get to know something about the actual situation within which, and taking account of which, they are to lead and guide the people. They need to know how people are thinking and feeling, what their problems are, what they find difficult, in what respects their feelings have changed, where they find the traditional answers or rulings insufficient, what they would like to see changed.

As a matter of fact, the lay person's right to free and responsible speech in the Church has anthropological and theological foundations. Anthropologically, he has the inalienable right as a person to freedom of speech and of conscience; theologically, as a full, active and co-responsible member of the Nigerian Church, he has the inalienable right rooted in his baptism to make his opinion on Church matters responsibly heard in the Church. Public opinion is an organic functional factor of any living human society according to the following words of Pius XII to an International Catholic Press Congress:

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42 Meanwhile all Catholic presses in Nigeria today are run by the clergy.
43 K. RAHNER, *Free Speech in the Church*, p. 11.
Public opinion plays a part in every normal society of human beings... wherever there is no expression of public opinion, above all, where it has been ascertained that no public opinion exists, then one is obliged to say that there is a fault, a weakness, a sickness, in the social life of that area (....) Finally, I should like to add a word about public opinion within the fold of the Church – about things that can be left open to discussions, of course. Only people who know little or nothing about the Catholic Church will be surprised to hear this. For she too is a living body, and there would be something missing from her life if there were no public opinion within her, a defect for which pastors as well as the faithful would be responsible (...).44

If Church leaders do not encourage or tolerate free speech in the Nigerian Church, "they run the risk of directing her from a soundproof ivory tower, instead of straining their ears to catch the voice of God, which can also be audible within the clamour of the times".45

Ongoing Theological Updating for the Bishop
The bishop is a very important and indispensable person in his particular Church. His ministry is a constitutive part of this community. It is both pastoral and administrative. He is the visible principle of unity and visible 'foundation' of the Church. His ministry makes him the first responsible person of the life and mission of his particular Church. His responsibilities do not begin and end in his particular community. He is also a member of the episcopal college and thus, he has responsibility towards the universal Church and towards other Churches. It is evident from the above analysis that the task of the bishop is demanding and challenging. It can hardly permit the bishop enough time to read

44 Osservatore Romano of 18 February, 1950; cited in K. RAHNER, Free Speech in the Church, p. 5.
45 K. RAHNER, Free Speech in the Church, p. 15.
current theological journals and publications. In view of this, he may be deprived of latest insights and developments in the field of theology and human sciences. This vacuum in knowledge can lead the bishop to excessive and dangerous conservatism and traditionalism with the authoritarian style of authority that these may involve.

The way out of this is for the bishop to engage himself in an ongoing theological update through periodic consultations and exchanges with the active and professional theologians in his diocese. This is rooted in the fact that theology and Magisterium are partners in the service of the Church. Each has different functions and different gifts. The task of the Magisterium is to give authentic interpretation to the faith of the Church with authority and in the name of Jesus Christ and the Church. He does this in the first place through proclamation before any academic sense of it. But he cannot do this properly without the assistance of professional theologians. Pope Paul VI notes that “without the help of theology (...) the teaching office of bishops could certainly guard and teach the faith, but that it would have great difficulty in reaching the deep and full understanding of faith which it needs for the adequate fulfilment of its own function”.

The theologian seeks “to discover how the Christian community might translate its faith into practice”. S/he tries “to grasp the truths, opinions, questions and trends which the Holy Spirit stirs up in the People of God”. These discoveries will be helpful to the bishop for the purpose of a re-appreciation of the existing interpretation of the faith and the living tradition of the Church. Pope John XXIII highlighted the importance of renewed interpretation of the faith at the opening of the first session of Vatican II, when he said, “The deposit of faith is one thing, the way

that it is presented is another; for the truth preserved in our sacred doctrine can retain the same substance and meaning under different forms of expression(...).\textsuperscript{50}

The relationship between the deposit of faith and its changing modes of expression is rooted in the relationship between revelation and the historicity of humans. This is because we do not possess the absolute in an absolute sense. Our access to the absolute is always from a limited, finite, and historically determined point of view. According to Edward Schillebeeckx,

The mistake of many is to believe that because we really reach the absolute, that we possess it in an absolute way. Such an opinion is the result of an unjustifiable epistemology and moreover it goes directly against the mystery of salvation. Revelation in fact remains an inexhaustible mystery. Even dogmatic definitions can only but orient us to this mystery. Certainly, they have a sense for us, but we should not forget that they depend always on a determined historical point of view, using the concepts borrowed from a particular culture.\textsuperscript{51}

In view of this historical character of the Christian Revelation, the office of the theologian is indispensable in the Church.

Decentralization and Sharing of Authority

There is need for decentralization and sharing of authority in the Nigerian Church. So much authority and control is still concentrated at the centre. In many of our dioceses the bishops are still everything to their dioceses. The priests still have to consult directly with the bishop on practically almost ‘everything’. In some dioceses, many commissions or committees set up for specific tasks or projects to be accomplished are not functional for the simple reason that the bishop himself does the work that is assigned to


them. There is need for the bishops to be willing to share their authority and to have enough confidence in their collaborators. It is in this light that pope John Paul II advised African bishops to leave some administrative functions in the hands of competent priests and laymen in order that they can devote themselves to the duties proper to their episcopal office which are primarily pastoral in nature. For instance, the bishops should be able to entrust to their Vicars General and Deans of Deaneries some considerable administrative responsibilities so that they can have enough time to devote themselves to their pastoral duties. The actual situation does not commend itself a lot. Thus, Ojiako could say of Vicars General and Deans of Deaneries in Nigeria, “they are bearers of empty canonical titles that confer no administrative or extra pastoral responsibility”.

Conclusion
From what has been said so far, we reaffirm that if authority is to be exercised as truly a service of salvation of the People of God in the Nigerian-African Church, then those with this ministerial authority, namely, bishops and members of the clergy must be completely faithful to the two-fold apostolic heritage of the Church. For now this is to a large extent not so. The apostolic legacy of the Church as we saw implies that the Church’s ministry and the exercise of authority must recover not only the place and responsibility of the special apostolic ministers of the Church or the hierarchy, but also the place and co-responsibility of the entire community of the faithful which is in the majority the laity.

As we noted, there was always a close bond between an apostle and a community of the faithful in the New Testament. In other words, the Church of the apostles lived as one organic and coherent whole that does not know any separation into two different classes of superior and inferior disciples. There was always the co-responsibility of the whole community of the faithful in the

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53 Cited in J. S. OKWOR, The Priesthood from an Igbo Perspective, p. 188.
ministry and authority exercised by the leaders of the apostolic Church. This can be seen for instance in the case of Paul in the communities he founded and the place of the Twelve in the early Jerusalem community. Contrary to this apostolic heritage, the Nigerian-African Church seems to be moving in the direction of a separation of the Church into two unequal classes, the clergy on the one hand, the rest of the faithful on the other hand. The exercise of authority in the Nigerian-African Church should therefore recover the principle of communion by encouraging participation and co-responsibility at all the levels of the Church’s existence. In the light of this direction, we have proposed a programme of concrete action which includes recourse to the palaver model of African traditional leadership and the empowerment of the laity through theological training and the creation of organs of public opinion in the Church.
FEATURES

"CLASH OF IGNORANCE" OR "CLASH OF CIVILISATIONS": EDWARD SAID’S CRITIQUE OF BERNARD LEWIS AND SAMUEL P. HUNTINGTON

Patrick Claffey, SVD
[Milltown Institute of Theology and Philosophy, Dublin]

Ever since its publication in 1978 Edward Said's *Orientalism* has been an important background for postcolonial studies. Essentially a work of critical theory it seeks to highlight the inaccuracies of a wide variety of assumptions as it questions various paradigms of thought which are accepted on individual, academic, and political levels. It applies specifically to the Orient and was later expanded and developed in its application in *Culture and Imperialism*. For our purposes, however, we shall confine ourselves to *Orientalism* and more specifically Said’s view of how the world looks at Islam and his critique of scholars such as Lewis and Huntington.

Edward Said (1935-2003) has become something of an iconic figure for many in the years since the publication of his best known work *Orientalism*. A Palestinian born in Jerusalem into the Anglican faith, he was brought up in Cairo where he went to an Anglican school. He completed his university education in the USA, eventually becoming Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbus University, while also lecturing in other higher institutions. A secular humanist, he writes of the importance of "continuing to have faith in the ongoing and literally unending process of emancipation and enlightenment that [...] frames and gives direction to the intellectual vocation."¹ In the Preface to the most recent edition of Orientalism, written shortly before his death, he makes a statement of this faith:

¹ Said, *Orientalism*, xi
My idea in Orientalism is to use humanistic critique to open up the fields of struggle, to introduce a longer sequence of thought and analysis to replace the short burst of polemical, thought-stopping fury that so imprison us in labels and antagonistic debate whose goal is a belligerent collective identity rather than understanding and intellectual exchange. I have called what I try to do "humanism," a word I continue to use stubbornly despite the scornful dismissal of the term by dismissive post-modern critics. By humanism I mean first of all attempting to dissolve Blake’s mind-forg’d manacles so as to be able to use one’s mind historically and rationally for the purposes of reflective understanding and genuine disclosure. Moreover, humanism is sustained by a sense of community with other interpreters and other societies and periods: strictly speaking, therefore, there is no such thing as an isolated humanist.

Christians, of course, would also claim that there is no such thing as an isolated Christian and ecumenical Christians would wish to make common cause with Said in his attempt to break with labels and antagonistic debate. Whatever criticisms have been made of the papacy of John Paul II, lack of openness to other religions is not one of them. In fact dialogue between the religions, and most notably with Islam, was one of the major hallmarks of his long pontificate.

The Origins of Orientalism

Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in 1798 is seen as the historical starting point of what was to become the orientalist project. There was evidence here of a great civilisation which continues to fascinate the West down to today. This was the first major encounter between the West and the Orient, and clearly Napoleon was fascinated by what he saw. Of course it also coincided with the

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2 Ibid., xvii

beginnings of a new European expansionism that was to lead to the creation of the great colonial empires. If Europe was to subjugate the world it needed to have a vision of it and a way of representing it; and Orientalism was to be an important part of this.

Said’s book is a wide-ranging investigation of the whole orientalist project. He starts with the philologists who set out to study the literature and language as used in literature, as well as historical and comparative linguistics as a field of study that sheds light on cultural history. He also looks at anthropologists, sociologists and historians who attempted to make the Orient accessible to Western audiences and Western administration and domination.

Said acknowledges the structuralist Michel Foucault (1926-84) who wrote extensive historical studies, most notably *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), in order to demonstrate that *all concepts are historically conditioned and that many of the most important ones serve the political function of controlling people rather than any purely cognitive purpose*. He notes particularly Foucault’s concept of *discourse*. Discourse is present in every society constructing restraints and imperatives, the rules, norms and maxims that guide our thinking on specific topics. These rules equally determine both who has the right to speak and what can be legitimately said. They also determine what are reasonable, sane and proper actions and what are not.

Based on this Said provides a precise definition of Orientalism when he writes in his Introduction that it is “a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western Experience.” This need to “come to terms” with the Orient is, in his view, based on the special place the Orient holds not only geographically, as “adjacent to Europe”, but economically and politically as “the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies”. Culturally, the Orient is “the source of its civilisations and languages”, and, although Said does not say it, also its religion. The Orient, he concludes, is “[Europe’s] cultural
contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other.\(^4\)

This sense of Otherness is central to the whole question. Said notes that “the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience…. The Orient is an integral part of European material civilisation and culture.” Orientalism as an approach “expresses and represents that part [of European material civilisation and culture] culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles. . . .” In other terms it is a wide and pervasive ideology or discourse which marks all Europe’s dealings with this part of the world and, in variants, with other parts of the world as part of a cultural imperialism.

Orientalism, means several interdependent things. Most obviously, however, it is applied to the academic, and indeed, he adds, the label still serves in a number of academic institutions. The School of Oriental and Africa Studies provides a useful example as it aspires to specialise in matters Oriental and African, describing itself as “the world’s leading centre for the study of a highly diverse range of subjects concerned with Asia, Africa and the Middle East.”\(^5\) “Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient--and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist--either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she says or does is Orientalism....” And this can be broadened to speak of Africanists, Indologists, Sinologists, Islamologists etc., all taking a specialised interest in area studies or civilisations.

This could appear to be innocuous enough. Said brings it a bit further, however, and states that: “Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident." Thus a

\(^{4}\) Note, emphases in this text are usually mine.

\(^{5}\) SOAS, a college of the University of London It was the school where Bernard Lewis launched his career.
very large mass of writers, among who are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, 'mind,' destiny, and so on." The starting point is, in fact, the otherness of the Orient, which requires study and explanation in terms accessible to the Western mind.

Taking the lead from Foucault, he notes that the academic project of Orientalism "can be discussed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorising views of it, by describing it, settling it, ruling over it: in short Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient." For Said it is this discourse, created by the West, which created "the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period." This Orientalist discourse, he would claim, determined what could and could not be said about the Orient. How this happened is what he sets out to investigate. He also sets out to demonstrate how "European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.”

Said’s views are illustrated to some extent by Richard Burton’s Secret Pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina.6 From the outset

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6 Sir Richard Francis Burton (1821-1890) English scholar-explorer and Orientalist. Disguising himself as a Pathan, an Afghanistani Muslim, in 1853 he went to Cairo, Suez, and Medina, then travelled the bandit-ridden route to the sacred city of Mecca, where at great risk he measured and sketched the mosque and holy Muslim shrine, the Ka'bah. Though not the first non-Muslim to penetrate and describe the "mother of cities," Burton was the most sophisticated and the most accurate. His Pilgrimage to El-Medinah and Mecca (1855-56) was not only a great adventure narrative but also a classic commentary on Muslim life and manners, especially on the annual pilgrimage. Instead of returning to London to enjoy his sudden fame, however, he organized a new expedition in 1854 to the equally forbidden East African city of Harar and became the first European to enter this Muslim citadel without being executed.
Burton makes the comparison between the Orient and Europe, and the Oriental and the European. The Arab is possessed of "a lively, irrepressible, excitable nature, and exquisite sensibility of nerve" which explains a "voluptuousness unknown to northern regions, where happiness is placed in the exertion of mental and physical powers." Where the Arab is inclined towards an easy life, climate and natural conditions make the European different as he "demands perpetual excitement, exercise or change, or adventure, or dissipation." On the other hand, in the East, Burton seems to say, concupiscence is in the very nature of the people: "man requires but rest and shade; upon the bank of a bubbling stream, or under the cool shelter of the perfumed tree, he is perfectly happy, smoking a pipe, or sipping a cup of coffee, or drinking a glass of sherbet". This explains a certain intellectual indifference to be contrasted with a Western spirit of inquiry since the Oriental is concerned with "above all things deranging the mind as little as possible... the vanity of thought being the most unpleasant interruptions to his Kayf."

The whole purpose of this text appears to be that of putting the Westerner in a position of domination in relation to the Oriental. The dynamism of the Westerner is compared with the passive nature of the Oriental and his penchant for the voluptuous. His lack of intellectual interest is really a kind of laziness. The subtext in all of this is that the Westerner is really made for domination; he is supposed to be in charge. One can easily see how this discourse is being mimicked today as the West strives to export "freedom and democracy to these folks."

Said has high admiration for Burton both as a traveller/adventurer and as a scholar. Burton had tremendous knowledge of the Arabic language and culture as well as a definite sympathy for his subject. He acquired this knowledge by living there and "truly trying to see Oriental life from the viewpoint of a person immersed in it." But this did not prevent him from falling into the trap of Orientalism. Said notes: "what is never far from the surface of Burton's prose is another sense it radiates, a sense of assertion and domination over all the complexities of Oriental life."
Every one of Burton's footnotes, whether in the Pilgrimage or in his translation of the Arabian Nights [...] was meant to be a testimony to his victory over the sometimes scandalous system of Oriental knowledge, a system he had mastered by himself. For even in Burton's prose we are never directly given the Orient; everything about it is present by way of Burton's knowledgeable (and often prurient) interventions which remind us repeatedly how he had taken over the management of Oriental life for the purposes of his narrative.

Burton effectively takes over the Orient for his own purposes.

In that position his individuality perforce encounters, and indeed merges with, the voice of Empire, which is itself a system of rules, codes, and concrete epistemological habits. Thus when Burton tells in the Pilgrimage that "Egypt is a treasure to be won," that it is "the most tempting prize which the East holds out to the ambition of Europe, not excepted even the Golden horn," we must recognise how the voice of the highly idiosyncratic master of Oriental knowledge informs, feeds into the voice of European ambition for rule over the Orient."

As we have seen in our analysis of the text above, European domination is somehow in the nature of things, it is meant to be. And this last point is central to all of Said's argument. Travel and discovery, scholarship and research whatever their intrinsic value, were all essentially part of a larger imperial project that was one of domination. Europe effectively produced the Orient it wished to dominate. "To be a European in the Orient, and to be one knowledgeable, one must see and know the Orient as a domain ruled over by Europe. Orientalism, which is the system of European or Western knowledge about the Orient, thus becomes

7 Orientalism, p. 196
synonymous with European domination of the Orient...” Having produced it, it owned it.

Let me give examples of just two titles indicating the kind of thing Said means here: Charis Waddy’s *The Muslim Mind* or a book by the French administrator/ethnologist Maurice Delafosse entitled *L’ame nègre*. The titles in themselves appear pretentious, the idea of an outsider aspiring to essentialize ‘the mind’ (in the singular) or even more ‘the soul’ of a whole people or civilisation. Such titles were written from an entirely Eurocentric perspective and, Said would claim, essentially as part of a European imperial project.

Perhaps the most notorious example I have come across, from an Africanist perspective, was a book by a certain J.A. Skertchly, a Victorian vicar-entomologist entitled *Dahomey As It Is*. The title in itself is of interest, as *Dahomey as it is...* seeks to affirm Skertchly’s empirical objectivity as a kind of social Darwinist. In his preface he states that Dahomey has been “effectually ‘tabooed’ to Europeans” who rarely visit it. He is critical of the “exaggerated accounts [which] have been published” and his own intention therefore is to portray Dahomey “as it is” and “the negro

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10 J.A. Skertchly, *Dahomey as it is; being a narrative of eight months residence in that country, with a full account of the notorious annual customs, and the social and religious institutions of the Fons: also an appendix on the Ashantee, and a glossary of Dahomean words and titles*, London: Chapman & Hall 1875.

11 Following the publication of Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859) a new debate was opened. The study of human biology developed. Physical anthropology became a topic in the comparative study of primates and hominids. This was accompanied by an evolutionary approach to social anthropology and the propagation of racial myths. (Max Jarret, Racial Myths, BBC World Service, 12/08/01).

12 Skertchly, *Dahomey*, viii.
as he is”. Skertchly has little time for liberal whimpering on the plight of black people. “The civilisation and education of the Negro is all very well...”, he notes acerbically, but he is intent on portraying the country as it really is, in the hope that at “the conclusion of the campaign the eyes of our countrymen will be opened to the fallacy of attempting to make ‘silk purses from sows ears’”. One commentator notes that “his posture is that of a disaffected, objective observer, yet his prose belies him” and the book is in fact an ugly little pamphlet. While this is a particularly crude example, others were more subtle and graceful to the readers’ eyes but essentially served the same purpose. It is interesting to note a Methodist missionary borrowing Skertchley’s title. Both the missionaries and the colonial powers used such descriptions to justify what was to become known as “the civilising mission”.

Orientalism – Critical Responses
Said’s work has been subject to a fairly sustained critique, although it can be argued that in the main these critiques have simply offered critical adjustments to his theories rather than served to dismantle them entirely. Most of the critiques so far mainly concern Said’s contention that the ‘Orient’ is a product of the western imagination and that it is a category that is an effect of a specific formation of power, i.e. post-Enlightenment ideology crossed with colonialist expansionist discourse. Some theorists have claimed that Said is suggesting that the Orient did not have a material reality apart from its discursive production/representation in the literature of empire. It is certainly true that he does seem to argue this when he says ‘It is not the thesis of this book to suggest that there is such a thing as a real or true Orient (Islam, Arab, or whatever)’ (p. 322). His aim instead is ‘to look at styles, figures of speech, setting, narrative

13 Ibid., xi-xii.
devices, historical and social circumstances, not the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original’ (p. 21).

However, while on the one hand he argues that Orientalism ‘creates’ the Orient, on the other hand Said warns us not to conclude that ‘the Orient was essentially an idea, or a creation with no corresponding reality’ (p. 5). James Clifford, one of the main critics of Said, has suggested that this statement contains one of the key contradictions in Said’s work, arguing that the reason for such a contradiction can be found in the theory of language that Said uses. For example, Said states, uncritically in Clifford’s view, that ‘the Orient was a word which later accrued to it a wide field of meanings, associations, and connotations, and that these did not necessarily refer to the real Orient but to the field surrounding the word’ (p. 203). However, if Said really does accept such a theory of language, then he moves away from the Foucauldian notion of discourse as an operation which constitutes the very object it represents. In other words, it implies that language is simply a cluster of statements and associations and is a straightforward, unambiguous representational tool, a device in the service of image making. Such a notion of discourse, for Clifford, is clearly limited to linguistic activity and endorses a bifurcation between the real/material (assumed to be extra-discursive) and the discursive, that is, between words and ideas, and material reality, and it is this that constitutes the major contradiction which Said leaves unresolved.

Robert Young, another critic of Said, offers a similar criticism. He maintains that on the one hand, Said rejects any correspondence between material reality and the representation of the Orient while on the other, he (Said) argues that the knowledge produced in and by Orientalism provided colonialism with its material ground. These two arguments, according to Young,
contradict each other because if Said wants to claim that Orientalist discourse became effective at a material level as a form of colonial power and control, then these representations must have confronted an ‘actual’ Orient: ‘this means that at a certain moment Orientalism as representation did have to encounter the “actual” conditions of what was there, and that it showed itself effective at a material level as a form of power and control’ (129). Said, for Young, denies that there is any actual Orient which could provide a true account against Orientalist representations, and so he asks ‘how then can Said argue that the “Orient” is just a representation, if he also wants to claim that “Orientalism” provided the necessary knowledge for the actual colonial conquest’ (ibid.).

In my view, Young’s critique is rather specious, because in his attempt to overcome Said’s dualistic account, he himself relies on another dualism, that of reality and representation. Young’s concept of an ‘actual’ material reality does not seem to be sufficiently developed to allow a thorough engagement with the ‘representation’ versus ‘real’ problem that Said’s text poses. It is rather disingenuous to simply claim that Said is asserting that there is no ‘actual’ geographical place called the Orient, or there are no ‘actual’ Oriental people living on these geographical spaces, or the ‘actual’ colonial conquest did not happen. It is after all, Said who in the first place establishes the incontrovertible link between the colonial expansion and Orientalist knowledge production (a fact that has been confirmed by postcolonial scholarship) so Young’s criticism simply reiterates what Said’s critique demonstrates. I do agree that there is a pressing epistemological conundrum that needs to be disentangled in Said’s work but it is certainly more complex than Young proposes. It is not enough to claim that there is an ‘actual’ Orient and that this can be proved by pointing to the ‘fact’ of colonial conquest. Young takes for granted that if Said does not sufficiently amplify the intricate relationship between representation and reality, then he is facilely ignoring the material referentiality of the Orient. Undoubtedly the theoretical status of representation or discourse in Said is obscure, but the problem is not resolved by simply positing the ‘reality’ of the Orient. I would
suggest rather, that if we take Said’s critique seriously—and I think we must, at the very least because of its influence on intellectual history—and, if we concur with Foucault’s argument, as I do, that any understanding of discourse must go beyond a naïve linguisticism, then we should acknowledge the possibility that the material reality of the Orient is indistinct from the essentialism of Orientalism. That is, the power of Orientalism should instead be sought in its ability to produce the phenomena it enunciates.

A further critique of Said, found again in Clifford, is that Said’s method is based on the assumption that it is sufficient for a critic of representational practices to focus exclusively on the activities of the economic and political elite while ignoring the complicity of those within colonial regimes who Said understands as simply the victims of colonialism. David Pollack and Ernest Gellner make a similar point. While Pollack acknowledges that Said is right, and in fact successful, in demonstrating the way that western scholars ‘first “produce” and then “manage” [their] alien culture’ (1992: 20), he argues that Said fails to understand that representation is not unidirectional but is in fact dialectical. In other words, Said’s criticism of Orientalist discourse presents an overly simplistic view of European scholars as monolithic imperial oppressors and the colonised Muslim people as powerless, lacking in agency, and wholly misrepresented, primarily because he neglects the dialectical nature of the encounter between ‘East’ and ‘West’.

Gellner is much harsher than either Clifford or Pollack when he labels Said’s method as an ‘unsustained, facile inverse colonialism’ (p. 3), but then he is keen to assert that there are objective standards by which to judge truth (for example, in his review he writes that ‘truth is not linked to political virtue’ [1993: 4]). Gellner insists on the transparency of western scholarship as almost wholly removed from any pre-determined situatedness in

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political or social contexts, and so I’m afraid his critique is misplaced and unreflexive. He is in fact, like Young, confirming Said’s suspicion that western knowledge production is complicit in the maintenance of privilege through an elision of its deep imbrication in hegemonic forms of power, a view simply not tenable post-Derrida, Foucault and de Certeau amongst others.

Clifford does agree (pre-emptively!) with Gellner when he suggests that Said’s method ‘sometimes appears to mimic the essentialising discourse it attacks’ (1988:262), and argues that while Said’s critique is concerned with how such categories as ‘the Orient’ and ‘Asia’ are constructed and who benefits from these constructions, ‘it is unclear why [he] does not also convict Marx of subsuming individuals under the “artificial entities” “class” and “history”’ (p. 270). Both Pollack and Clifford agree, however, that Said’s study has a lot of merit in that it suggests that all forms of cultural description involve individuals in an inescapable web of power and knowledge. What they find lacking in Said though, is any attention to the interrelated natures of power, knowledge, and the construction of self- and social identity.

**Said and the Clash of Civilisations**

Edward Said’s landmark work *Orientalism* was already judged to be somewhat *passé* as critical theory moved on, but the events following September 11 2001 provoked the publication of a plethora of books looking at the Middle East Islam etc. In 2003 *Orientalism* was reissued with a new preface by Said in which he noted the ongoing relevance of his work in the light of events in the Middle East since the first Gulf War but more particularly in the past four years. He writes:

As I write these lines, the illegal and unsanctioned imperial invasion and occupation of Iraq by Britain and the United States proceeds, with a prospect of physical ravagement, political unrest and more invasions that is truly awful to contemplate. This is part of what is supposed to be the *clash*
of civilisations, unending, implacable, irremediable. Nevertheless, I think not.  

In the penultimate sentence of this short quotation he refers somewhat obliquely to Samuel Huntington’s celebrated paper and eventual book The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of the World Order which was also being reread in the light of contemporary events, not only by Westerners but also by Muslims. Was it to be a self-fulfilling prophecy? Said is savage in his attack on scholars who contributed to this thesis:

It is surely one of the intellectual catastrophes of history that an imperialist war confected by a small group of unelected US officials (they have been called chickenhawks, since none of them ever served in the military) was waged against a devastated Third World dictatorship on thoroughly ideological grounds having to do with world dominance, security, and scarce resources, but disguised for its true intent, hastened and reasoned for by Orientalists who betrayed their calling as scholars.

Said dismisses Huntington’ thesis as a “clash of ignorance”. He writes: “The Clash of Civilisations thesis is a gimmick like the “The War of the Worlds,” better for reinforcing defensive self-pride than for critical understanding of the bewildering interdependence of our time.” Said damned both Lewis and Huntington as academics that have prostituted themselves to

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politics by becoming the "intellectual valets" of political leaders bent on war.\textsuperscript{22}

In \textit{The Clash of Civilisations} Huntington articulates his theory of a multi-civilizational world that is almost inevitably fated to conflict. He is almost equally critical of both the West and the non-West (the Rest) accusing both of being closed in on their own civilisation, civilisation-centric, and attempting to impose it upon others. He is almost scary in his warning to the West about the danger of it losing its dominance if it does not recognise the threats coming from an increasingly assertive non-West buoyed by increased economic means and cultural confidence. It is Huntington's hypothesis "that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic."

\textit{The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural.} Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. \textit{The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.}\textsuperscript{23}

Bernard Lewis actually coined the expression \textit{the clash of civilisations}, as Huntington acknowledged. In 1964 he declared: "The crisis in the Middle East...does not arise from a quarrel between states, but from a clash of civilisations."\textsuperscript{24} The expression passed unnoticed in 1964 but he took it up again in 1990 in an article written under what must certainly be his most inflammatory


\textsuperscript{23} Huntington \textit{Clash} (Foreign Policy p. 22). My emphasis.

\textsuperscript{24} Bernard Lewis, \textit{The Middle East and the West}, University of Indiana Press, 1964, p. 135.
"Clash of Ignorance" or "Clash of Civilisations"?

One can almost hear the question of middle America today as it asks "Why do they hate us?" before Lewis sets out to answer the question. Looking at the Islamic world he concludes:

It should by now be clear that we are facing a mood and a movement far transcending the level of issues and policies and the governments that pursue them. This is no less than a clash of civilisation – the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both. It is crucially important that we on our side should not be provoked into an equally historic but also equally irrational reaction against that rival.

In a series of articles published in the popular press, notably The Atlantic Monthly and The New Yorker, Lewis sought to explain the Islamic world and the problems it poses. This type of popular essentializing of Islam and the Arab world that appeared to feed American prejudices and preconceptions earned him the opprobrium of Said. Noting Lewis' "ideological colours" he says "the personification of enormous entities called 'the West' and 'Islam' is recklessly affirmed, as if hugely complicated matters like identity and culture existed in a cartoon-like world where Popeye and Bluto bash each other mercilessly, with one always more virtuous pugilist getting the upper hand over his adversary."

25 'The Roots of Muslim rage: Why so many Muslims deeply resent the West, and why their bitterness will not be easily mollified, Policy, 17, 4, 2001-2 (originally The Atlantic Monthly, Sep 1990)

26 Ibid. 26 (My emphasis)


28 Edward Said, 'Adrift in similarity', Al-Ahram, 555, 11-17 October 2001
Said criticises Huntington’s “vague notion...of something called civilisation identity. He pours scorn on the idea of “seven or eight major civilisations”. And, of course, he notes that “the conflict between two of them, Islam and the West, gets the lions share” of Huntington’s attention. He describes that concept as “belligerent”. Said lumps both Lewis and Huntington together, damning both in the same sentence:

Certainly neither Huntington or Lewis has much time to spare for the internal dynamics and plurality of every civilisation, or for the fact that the major contest in most modern cultures concerns the definition or interpretation of each culture, or for the unattractive possibility that a great deal of demagogy and downright ignorance is involved in presuming to speak for a whole religion or civilisation. No, the West is the West and Islam Islam. The challenge for Western policy makers, says Huntington, is to make sure that the West gets stronger and fends off all others, Islam in particular.  

The perception of Islam as a religion prone to wild fanaticism and fundamentalism has increased, thus diminishing the space for dialogue of any kind. All of this seems both to rise out of, and feed into, the idea that we are involved, as both Lewis and Huntington would claim, in a clash of civilisations. According to this argument we are in the present time in a clash between the West and Islam. For Said it is if anything a monumental clash of ignorance fed by second-rate academics that sold their soul to a neo-imperialist, geopolitical project. Said notes bitterly: “I have not been able to discover any period in European and American history since the Middle Ages in which Islam was generally discussed or thought about outside a framework created by passion, prejudice and

29 Said, ‘Adrift in similarity’
political interests.”

It would certainly be difficult to contradict this statement today. This explains why he is particularly dismissive of both Lewis and Huntington, seeing them as heirs to this long tradition.

Said accuses Huntington of surveying “the entire world from a perch outside all ordinary attachments and hidden loyalties...as if everyone else were scurrying round looking for the answers he has already found.” He claims that Huntington is essentially trying to reify or even essentialize both “civilisations” and “identities” “into what they are not: shut-down, sealed-off entities that have been purged of myriad contents and countercurrents that animate human history, and that over the centuries have made it possible for that history not only to contain wars of religion and imperial conquest but also to be one of exchange, cross-fertilisation and sharing. This far less visible history is ignored in the rush to highlight the ludicrously compressed and constricted warfare that ‘the clash of civilisations’ argues is the reality.”

Noting that while Huntington’s argument has “a little more subtlety, and many more footnotes” than Lewis’ earlier efforts, “all he did was confuse himself and demonstrate what a clumsy and inelegant writer and thinker he was” – and inelangance in any form is something Said cannot tolerate. He notes that 9/11, this “carefully planned and horrendous, pathologically motivated suicide attack and mass slaughter by a small group of deranged militants has been turned into proof of Huntington’s thesis.” This is certainly a sad fact, as anyone who followed the commentaries following the event can testify. In Said’s view, however, 9/11 was the responsibility of a fanatical fringe groups more comparable to a cult like the Branch Dravids. As I have pointed out already 9/11 brought Huntington back to the bookshops and into respectable theorising and political commentary. Said notes The

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32 The group at the centre of the violent incidents at Waco, Texas in 1994.
Economist’s apparent acceptance of Huntington’s depiction of the Islamic world as “cruel, sweeping, but none the less acute.”33

Needless to say Huntington’s theory has brought a vociferous reaction in the more liberal press. Ian Burama, writing in The Guardian states:

Samuel P Huntington's The Clash of Civilisations – enjoying fresh popularity since September 11 – is by a long chalk the most successful bad idea of our time. One reason for its fame is that so many intellectuals have felt the urge to attack it. Few ideas have enjoyed such bad publicity. But as Oscar Wilde, who had a surprising number of rather good ideas, told us, enough bad publicity becomes good publicity. Huntington's notion that future wars will be fought between civilisations, not nation-states, may be wrong, but it is not stupid. The merit of a clever bad idea is that it provokes thought, if only to contradict it.34

At its worst the clash hypothesis is seen as creating a bunker mentality in the USA. As a Manichean logic takes over, it is no longer “Us” and “Them”, the “West” and the “Rest” but “Good and Evil” or when put in the hands of Christian fundamentalists, “God and Satan.” The victims of globalisation who react against it, as well as their liberal allies in the West, are seen as “the enemies of America”. Theories’ such as this “mislead and confuse the mind, which is trying to make sense of a disorderly reality that won’t be pigeon-holed or strapped down as easily as all that.” This kind of reification and essentialization are hopelessly inadequate as explanations and can indeed the deeply dangerous. Said notes that at some level


34 Ian Buruma, The notion that future wars will be fought between civilisations, not states, may be clever but it is wrong, *The Guardian*, October 2, 2001.
[P]rimitive passions and sophisticated know-how converge in ways that give the lie to fortified boundary not only between ‘West’ and ‘Islam’ but also between past and present, us and them, to say nothing of the very concepts of identity and nationality about which there is unending disagreement and debate. A unilateral decision made to draw lines in the sand, to undertake crusades, to oppose their evil with our good, to extirpate terrorism, and in Paul Wolfowitz’s nihilistic rhetoric, to end nations entirely, doesn’t make the supposed entities any easier to see; rather, it speaks of how much simpler it is to make bellicose statements on the purpose of mobilising collective passions than to reflect, examine, sort out what it is we are dealing with in reality, the interconnectedness of innumerable lives ‘ours’ as well as ‘theirs’.

Huntington’s theory is not so much describing a political situation as it is driving policy – and in a particularly conflictual and dangerous direction. It has become what one commentator describes as “an explanatory and mobilising discourse.” It is saying that this is essentially how “they” are and this is how “we” should act.

**Said’s Secular Humanist Solution:**
As a humanist, Said believes “there are closer ties between apparently warring civilisations than most of us would like to believe. Both, Freud and Nietzsche showed how the traffic across carefully maintained and even policed boundaries moves with often terrifying ease.” But, of course, fluidity, scepticism and ambiguity are tricky for policy makers and especially ignorant policy-makers. It is easier if things can be tied down to their essentials to the world “as it is” – or as we like to see it. “Hence the altogether more assuring battle order (a crusade, good versus evil, freedom against

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fear, etc.) drawn out of Huntington’s alleged opposition between Islam and the West, from which official discourse drew its vocabulary in the first days after the September 11 attacks.” This was of course exacerbated in the months leading up to the second Iraq War, when the “demon” Saddam was placed in the centre of the picture, allegedly armed with “weapons of mass destruction”, ready “to strike in forty-five minutes”, the greatest threat imaginable to “civilisation as we know it”. The paradigm has become even more developed. It is now being exacerbated by the increased presence of Muslims all over Europe and of course the EU accession debate. “Islam is no longer on the fringes of the West but at its centre. But what is so threatening about that presence.”[?] And yet that is how it is presented as we refer back to the siege of Vienna as a justification for keeping Turkey out of the EU.36

Adding to this is the history of often violent rivalry between the Abrahamic religions. Each appears to be in some way haunted by the other despite what can be seen as their common origins. In the prayers of Good Friday we pray for both the Jewish people and those who do not believe in Christ but moving beyond that seems more difficult. Said notes that “there is sill no decent history or demystification of the many-sided contest among these three followers – not one of them by any means a monolithic, unified camp, - of the most jealous of all gods...Not surprisingly, then, both Muslims and Christians speak readily of crusades and jihads, both of them eliding the Judaic presence with often sublime insouciance. Such an agenda, says Eqbal Ahmad, is “very reassuring to the men and women who are stranded in the middle of the ford, between the deep waters of tradition and modernity.”

As a humanist Said refuses to be drawn into essentialisation. All humanity is swimming in the same waters, “and since the waters are part of the ocean of history, trying to plough or divide them with barriers is futile. These are tense times, but it is better to think in terms of powerful and powerless communities, the secular

politics of reason and ignorance, the universal principles of justice and injustice, than to wander off in search of vast abstractions that may give momentary satisfaction but little self-knowledge or informed analysis.” In a piece in *Le Monde Diplomatique* in 2003, Said proclaims his belief that “humanism is the last rampart against barbarism.” His attempt to break free of “the mind forg’d manacles” is an attempt to widen the field of battle “and to replace with a deeper reflection and analysis, in the long term, the outbursts of irrational anger that are poisoning us.” He claims that in humanism there is also “a feeling of community with other researchers, other societies and other epochs” which offers hope.

There is no humanism that lives separated from the world. Every area is connected to all the others, and nothing that happens in the world can remain isolated and pure from other outside influences. We must deal with injustice and suffering, but in the context of history, culture, and socio-economic realities. Our role is to widen the terms of the debate.

Clearly he feels that this is what scholars such as Huntington and Lewis have failed to do. Not only have they failed to do so, they have reduced the debate to its narrowest confines. He sees deep similarities, “common roots”, between modern anti-Semitism and Orientalism and notes that independent intellectuals have a great need “to develop new models to replace the narrow, simplistic doctrines founded upon the mutual hostility which has dominated the Middle East for too long.” Clash is clearly not such a discourse.

Let me finish with a long extract from this same piece, which somehow epitomises Said’s opposition to clash and its negative logic. It is in some ways his declaration of faith, his fundamental credo. The terrible conflicts we have been living through and continue to live through “falsely unite populations under banners such as “America”, “the West”, or “Islam” and invent collective

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37 Said ‘L’humanisme."
identities for individuals who are in fact very different cannot continue their ravages”.

They must be opposed. In the face of these, we dispose of our capacity for rational interpretation, the heritage of humanist education. This is not a sentimental piety that enjoins us to come back to traditional values and to the classics, but to take up again a practice of secular and rational discourse. The critical spirit does not obey the injunction to enter the ranks to go to war against an official enemy or any other enemy. Far from the prefabricated clash of civilisations, we must concentrate on a slow collective task of cultures which cross, borrow ideas from one another in a manner much more profound than reductive and inauthentic modes of thought would have us believe. But this form of perception, which is wider, demands time, patient and every-critical research, nourished by faith in an intellectual community which is difficult to conserve in a world founded upon the immediacy of action and reaction.

Humanism is nourished by individual initiative and personal intuition, and not from received ideas or the respect of authority. Texts must be read as productions which live concretely in history. Finally and above all, humanism is the only, I would say the last, rampart against human practices and injustices which disfigure the history of humanity. Now we dispose of the very encouraging field of democracy known as cyberspace, open to all, on a scale that neither previous generations nor any tyrant, nor any orthodoxy could have imagined. The world-wide demonstrations that preceded the war in Iraq could never have become a reality without the existence of communications present throughout the entire world, irrigated by different information, conscious of the environmental factors, of human rights as well as aspirations to freedom which unite us all on this planet.

Thomas Grenham undertook in this book the ambitious project of tying together dominant approaches to missiological studies – inculturation, liberation and interreligious dialogue. In *The Unknown God* Grenham tries to demonstrate in seven chapters that interculturation enables first the missionary and then the local theologian to link up, accommodate, dialogue or converse with values as well as shrive or liberate peoples from non-values of cultures, religions, political and economic systems in a globalized and interdependent world.

Interculturation is not presented in this book as a panacea for resolving all the aporia around missiology or evangelisation. First, I think it is a genuine and commendable attempt to draw from the age-old Patristic notion of “seeds of the word”, which Grenham enthusiastically and insistently refers to as seeds of the Gospel that must be acknowledged, discovered or uncovered as real Gospel values. Second point of interest, interculturation attempts to draw from the theological insight of accommodation championed by Matteo Ricci in China. Grenham appropriates these two missiological insights – Justin’s or the Patristic “seeds of the word” and Ricci’s accommodation. He projects and prolongs these insights into his own personal experience among the Turkana of Kenya. To sharpen his thinking and analysis, he employs the methodology of Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as well as the principles of religious education enunciated in many works of Thomas H. Groome. Our author appears also to be enamoured by the Chicago school of missiology as shown in the persistent recourse to works of Robert Schreiter and Anthony Gittins.

Grenham ranged adaptation, indigenisation, incarnation and inculturation as patterns of external imposition of evangelisation that does not respect mutuality, dialogue, religious and cultural difference. He adopts interculturation, possibly used for the first time by Bishop Joseph Blomjous in the 1980s. Interculturation is
argued to be better than inculturation because it overcomes the limitations of inculturation that the author negatively describes as merely transferring faith from one culture to another or “inserting the gospel” within a particular cultural and religious context. Interculturation, he claims, enables deeper conversation between diverse cultures and religions. Though Grenham does not raise the issue, his discussion resembles the old debate among African theologians about continuity and discontinuity between African traditional religious cultures and the biblical and historical Christian tradition.

In a subtle way Grenham illustrates from Jesus’ life the experience of what he claims to be interculturation: Jesus’ conversations with two women – the Samaritan woman and the Syrophoenician woman. Subtle because this includes encounter with another culture, another image of God, and with women who are normally culturally, religiously, politically and economically oppressed. It illustrates dialogue, shifting of positions, mutual evangelisation, and mutual liberation. This enables Grenham to refer frequently throughout the book to the oppression of women in Turkana world; an oppression strengthened by Turkana worldview and myths. He contrasts this with the liberative paradigms of the Gospel or of the reign of God.

The focus of this book, its underlying inspiration and the claims of the author are daring. Reading through the seven chapters, agreeing and disagreeing with the author, one feels that the project moves beyond inculturation, beyond liberation, and beyond interreligious dialogue. It is about intercultural conversation or communication; and also it is about the liberation of Turkana womenfolk prevented from participating in an otherwise commendable Turkana boys’ initiation. Furthermore, it is about encounter with another religious tradition; and therefore the missionary must be firmly grounded in the Christian tradition while acknowledging God in other religions in order to discover the intercultural and transcultural face of the transcendent God. Finally, it is about re-imaging life in a globalized world where relationship must be based on the fundamental ethic of compassion to feel beyond one’s religious, economic, political and civil belonging etc.
It is not just one or the other, but all of the above wrapped together. Tall order! But nevertheless a captivating and challenging project!

As expected in such an ambitious project there are many gaps. The desire to engage many interlocutors creates difficulties in crafting the language to express interculturation. Sometimes interculturation should read acculturation (used perhaps interchangeably with interculturation). At other times accommodation could best sum up what is being described. One feels the struggle by the author to digest sources being used in the book, sometimes successful but also at times befogged and lacking clarity almost bordering on the esoteric. For example, I paused to make sense of the following and similar statements: “The pluralism of religious world views and the diversity of cultures form constitutive components for Gospel evangelisation toward transcendent realities” (p. 264).

Nevertheless, the challenge that Grenham persistently poses for the missionary is what to do with the Gospel values already present within each living cultural matrix. In my view, Grenham’s contribution is weighted more on the side of missionary methodology of evangelisation and less on the side of the development of local theology. Following Ricci’s insight he insists that the missionary should through friendship, lifestyle, translation of ideas, identifying common ground, and accepting rites approach the host community. But Grenham insists that accommodation should go beyond Ricci to embrace all popular culture. Consequently one adopts the wisdom properties embedded in the Turkana tradition: the notion of a relational God, high value placed on animals, their dance, sacrifices, rituals of initiation, naming of God (Akuj), dominant image of personalities like the emuron (diviner-healer.) These and more constitute the fundamental pre­text for proclamation that ensures mutuality in the encounter of the Christian Gospel of Jesus Christ. This ensures that a particular historical experience (or Western Christianity) would not be allowed to set itself up as judge of further revelation of this Gospel. From this dialogical encounter one discovers a new reality, new Gospel, God’s reign, and the new image of God. Grenham speaks
frequently of "the intercultural face of God" (p. 69) or "the transcendent face of an intercultural God." (p. 260 et passim)

There are many interesting and illuminating flashes and comments drawn from the Turkana, like the dimension of reconciliation and especially the boys' initiation rites. No aspects of these or other wisdom and cultural experiences are presented in any great detail to enable the reader assess how far accommodation should go to qualify as interculturation. The interaction or intercommunication between "diverse cultures with plural religious perspectives" for "the betterment of humankind locally and globally", has to be shown in one way or the other as realised or realisable in Turkana Christian practice. Suggestions about animal sacrifices scattered all over the work is not treated in a systematic way. The author is aware of the sensitivity of blood sacrifices and cleverly leaves the final decision to Turkana Christians.

Grenham is passionate about the value of interculturation. He raises many questions that I am sure will enable him to write many more books. For example, he warned right at the beginning of his work that he was not engaging issues of systematic theology. Nevertheless, the title of his book "the Unknown God" challenges systematics. Times without number he talked about the intercultural, transcultural and interreligious face of the transcendent God. Defining systematically this emerging face of God could require another book; I am sure Grenham will take it up in the near future.

Second, Grenham is dissatisfied with inculturation – the theological model popularly used in addressing issues of the encounter between Gospel and religious cultures of a given people. He has very good arguments to support the neologism interculturation. However, I fear that he limits the description of inculturation to the negative perception of "insertion" of the Gospel within a culture. If inculturation is limited to such negative perception, Grenham will have many disciples. However, I dare to point out that when Grenham embarks on the actual task of interculturation the scenario described and the conclusions drawn appear not to go beyond adaptation or accommodation. Sometimes one gets the impression of juxtaposition. For example, the term
emuron (diviner/healer) is employed not only as pastoral explanation of healing and miracles of Jesus but also as christological title – a christological title that is not systematically argued. Is that supposed to be intercultural, accommodation, adaptation, dynamic equivalence of symbols or inculturation? Juxtapositions that abound in the area of liturgy appear to be simple adaptations (‘concordism’). This includes, connecting the Eucharist and bloody sacrifice; the asapam symbolic ritual of breaking the bone in initiation as passage into adulthood is said to accord with the “sacrament of confirmation”; Turkana birthing ritual of lighting a fire to celebrate new life accords with the Easter fire symbolising new life of resurrection, the list continues. These symbols could be indicators of where energy should be directed for deeper intercultural conversation. One could begin with hesitant adaptations before adoption into Christian practice.

Whatever gaps one may identify in The Unknown God, there are great merits in this work. Every missionary should be very attentive to the pedagogical principles enunciated by Grenham that enables authentic exchange between Christian symbols (Jesus Christ, the sacraments, the cross) and, for example, Turkana symbols (divination, initiation rites, animal sacrifices, cult of ancestors) so as to maintain “the integrity of the Gospel”. Thus, conviction within Christian tradition, mutual respect and collaborative partnerships, listening and providing compassionate advocacy, kenosis or emptying out prejudice, dealing with or managing conflict appropriately, and learning to understand diversity are capital for evangelisation anywhere. Equally important is the curriculum of intercultural that evolves in six phases for developing local theology. The six phases of evolution revolve around the base Christian community that will ultimately make decision through critical reflection for lived Gospel faith inside and outside community.

My comments instead of taking away from a valuable work only highlight further questions that arise from the work. I felt challenged reading through Grenham’s book. I think it is a major contribution to missiological studies; and it provides a major argument to reconsider the theological models being used in missiological studies. I recommend the book for both those in the mission field and the classroom.

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Church alive draws a sharp contrast between a church of the People of God and a church preoccupied with structures; a church that found its life around base Christian communities where the People have a voice and a church that is highly clericalised where women in particular and laypeople in general have no voice. The subtitle, “pilgrimage”, captures the missionary journey of Teresa Mee documented in profuse notes. It is a missionary journey of an Irish nun, a member of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, which shifted from teaching science and mathematics to running renewal centres and finally living in and loving the experience of shantytowns in Brazil.

Teresa Mee started her missionary story as a young science teacher in Ogoja Nigeria; a country that was later plunged into civil war. During the war the detached foreign missionary was quickly saved from the dilemma of taking sides by the quick overrun of Ogoja and environs by the federal forces. But the foreign missionary did not escape the contradictions of the security problems occasioned by the war. Early in her narrative it became clear that doubt over church structures and revolt against such structures were uppermost in the mind of Teresa. The narrative is flowing, interesting, passionate and also detached; taking note of details like the colour of dress and varieties of vegetables and colourful characters. There is strong focus on women, whether market women in Nigeria or women in shantytowns of Brazil.

Teresa’s memoirs reveal a committed and questioning missionary who would not allow doubts to linger without searching for solutions. A sabbatical leave enabled her to sort things out or to sort herself out in a male dominated and clerical church that revolted her. During the time of preparation (San Antonio USA) when she was already gravitating towards the type of church developing in Latin America, we encounter a restless Teresa searching for her place; her heart/person filled up to bursting point word/speech that must be uttered (the image of Jeremiah).
Her apprenticeship in Brazil is full of enthusiasm despite the normal frustrations of the learner. In Brazil laypeople in general and women in particular are part of the church despite intrusive clericalism. Here the encounter and discipling in the company of lay, religious and clerical missionaries, with volunteers and lawyers involved in land rights issues and street children are narrated in simple but breathtaking fashion. Here listening and simple bishops, there lay missionaries and volunteers, priests and nuns in shantytowns! Then base community meetings or congresses reveal Brazil of many colours. The highpoint in the initiation experience appears to be narrated in chapter 9 with title “inspired missionaries”. The development and pastoral projects of a diocese are scored high. Listen to Teresa “I had been able to contribute to the church’s ministry as a sounding board for pastoral agents, but above all, I had been through an enlightening and intensive learning experience of church, of education, of community and of mission”. [p.195] At the end of her initiation experience her options are foreclosed: “my whole being longed to return to Brazil, where I had acquired a new perspective on life, on human development, on Church and on mission, and had begun to opt for a new set of values, freed from the shackles of structures in which I no longer believed”. [p.196] She finally got the consent of her congregation to live and work among the poorest of the poor in Brazil. Joining other missionaries, like those who follow the “suffering servant”, she was glad to labour among those who scavenge from dumps with vultures, those who live in shantytowns. But she was not to leave Brazil until some African members of her congregation joined her. They not only bridged the gap between her experiences in Nigeria and Brazil, but also between Africans and Afro-Brazilians. The memoirs of Teresa are a must for any missionary.

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| CONTENTS |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| Editorial       | 1                             |
| **Paulinus Ikechukwu Odozor** | The challenge of Africa to the Western Conscience: US Bishops and Solidarity with Africa | 3 |
| **Valentin Dedji** | Human Poverty: A Scandal in God's Project for the World | 29 |
| **Uzochukwu J. Njoku** | Solidarity and Collaboration without Boundaries: Shifts in the Social Teachings of Pope John Paul II | 49 |
| **Ferdinand Nwaigbo** | Ethnicity and a New Image of Nigeria: Explorations in Creation Theology | 70 |
| **Theophilus Okere** | Collaborative Ministry and Renewal in the Church: Comments on the Nigerian context | 89 |
| **Peter Okafor** | Authority as Service in the Nigerian-African Church: Challenge of the Twofold Apostolic Heritage | 103 |
| **FEATURES**    |                               |
| **Patrick Claffey** | “Clash of Ignorance” or “Clash of Civilisations”: Edward Said’s Critique of Bernard Lewis and Samuel P. Huntington | 128 |
| **BOOK REVIEW:** | 151                           |