MIGRATION AND RELEVANCE OF CHRISTIAN MISSION

Visibility of Invisible Africans

PUBLISHED BY
The Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians
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BY
The Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians
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The upsurge in economic migration (legal and illegal), the flood of refugees and asylum seekers from war-ravaged parts of the world, especially from Africa to Europe and America, may be unparalleled in modern history. Perhaps at no point in the history of the global community has there been so much wealth, so much advance in information technology that facilitate communication, raising hopes of successful commingling of cultures and peoples. Yet, paradoxically, at no point in the history of humanity has the world ever experienced so much poverty, inequity, discrimination and insecurity of life and property. Primary loyalties control the attitude of the wealthy and powerful West—it has turned its borders into fortresses. The impact of global transformations and urban migration in African countries not only leads to expanding numbers of people being squeezed into limited space, creating a situation of profound moral and cultural disorientation, but also fuels emigration from the continent.

The youth of Africa, sometimes described as “the lost generation”, confronted with a very bleak and uncertain future, either resort to violence or take the exit option by emigration. Fascinated by the myth of wealthy Europe and America, beamed onto their world of deprivation thanks to cable network and internet, they throw caution to the winds and take enormous risks to berth in the West. The new information revolution succeeds in creating and nourishing appetites that appear unrealisable in the homeland. Traditional African communalism and relationality, that normally help to absorb the shocks of rapid change, have been weakened; in their place, modern patterns of sociality, sponsored for example by Christian and Islamic groups, provide surrogate families and community ties to contain rapid global transformations.

The opposition mounted against immigrants by nationalist parties all over Europe contaminates like a virus almost every political organisation. The concerted effort to create a fortress against African migrants assumes dramatic and tragic proportions:
Editorial

thousands perish crossing the Mediterranean into Italy; some risk electrocution to leap from Morocco into Spain; and from Mali and Senegal youths dare the Atlantic, challenge the “sting of death”, and board mere dugout canoes to reach the Canary Islands—destination Spain. Negative media portrayal of migrants (particularly those of African origin), the frequent cases of deportation of asylum seekers with children born in Europe, and the pathetic and insensitive breaking up of the families of young children to safeguard the administration of the immigration system, succeed in giving visibility to Africans and other unfortunate migrants. The dominant immigration policy in the West is to relegate all migrants to invisibility.

The paranoia that migration is producing in Europe and America can be illustrated in the fact that the American congress seriously contemplated erecting walls to stop Mexicans entering the USA. The Mexican Bishops’ commission for culture picked up the gauntlet by challenging this fortress mentality. The bishops lent support to the migrants, and proposed accompaniment for those Mexicans seeking better conditions of life elsewhere (USA). They insisted that no one nation can impose its solutions by force to resolve the issue of migration. The church has not only the obligation to cater for the highly vulnerable migrants but also must challenge the ruling or political class to create better conditions in the homelands to stem the tide of migration. Comparable declarations are yet to be made by Nigerian (or even any African) bishops’ conference.

The political, economic and social situation in African countries, influenced no doubt by global transformations, provides meagre alternatives to the youth. They put themselves to frightening danger in order to emigrate. Many perish in the process. Early this year Moroccan immigration and Nigerian embassy officials reported that close to ten thousand Nigerian migrants were stranded in Morocco. Some have been there for over nine years without realising their objective—destination Europe. A Nigerian official, adviser to the President on migration, made the shocking revelation that out of every ten Nigerians that set off on the suicidal
journey from Nigeria, only two may have survived.

The situation is no longer reducible to the attractions of the West. It is clear that the Nigerian government (and perhaps other African governments) has demonstrated gross inability to provide enabling environment for the self-development of the cream of the nation. The situation replays the deterioration, corruption and greed that nourished the transatlantic slavery. This time around the exodus of our youth, forced to move on by inhuman conditions in the homeland, is chosen slavery. Some of them fall prey to traffickers; many become objects of sexual and economic exploitation.

Furthermore, the elite and professionals, doctors, nurses, university professors, have also adopted the exit option in search for a better life in the West. Sometimes the wealthy West goes hunting for talents with seductive propositions—the “hunt for brains”. But the more common scenario is that the professionals do the hunting for jobs in the West. These economic migrants knocking at the doors of Fortress Europe are often the most talented among the African populations. Despite their being highly qualified, they suffer discrimination in the West; while on the other hand the African continent is being drained (“brain drain”) of its generative and creative personnel. Some claim that these highly qualified professionals are good African ambassadors outside the shores of invisible Africa. Instead of a “brain drain” they constitute a “brain gain”. Their hearts are in the homeland, they could not survive in the homeland, the homeland gains by their emigration.

Humour is never in short supply in the continent! One wonders where to find the personnel for reconstructing the continent. If there were more transparent, accountable, and predictable state institutions, these talented people and the energetic, enthusiastic but jobless youths have all it takes to make a difference. The corruption riddled government of the ‘big men’, foreign and local, criminally vandalise the treasury, cause our youth and professionals to emigrate, and fuel the erosion of traditional community values of trust, safety and communion; these are commonly replaced today with suspicion, danger, fear and accusations of witchcraft and
The opinion expressed in certain sectors of the Nigerian media that Nigerians have lost faith in the capacity of government to create enabling environment for productive activities and self-advancement may not be far from the truth. It may not be an exaggeration to observe that the exodus of youths and professionals is not only a vote of no confidence in the Nigerian state and government but also a protest against poor leadership. Islands of good governance and positive developments in Africa like Benin Republic, Senegal and Ghana, Tanzania and South Africa, only confirm the tragic situation of bad government in Nigeria and other African countries. No doubt there are ongoing economic reforms in Nigeria. But economic reforms that are anchored on neo-liberalism are more in tune with the prescriptions of the IMF, World Bank and other Western finance houses, than with the needs of the people. The desperation of the youth and professionals confirms negative perceptions of the reforms; or at least the ambiguity of such reforms. For example, the rhetoric on privatisation ensures that Nigeria’s corporate interests are sold out to a handful of people, local and international. If the economic policies are succeeding, why do so many Nigerians want to flee the country?

This issue of Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology draws attention to the humane virtues and values that are being endangered in the modern experience of internal and external migration – especially hospitality, communality, and relationality. It directs attention particularly to the great contribution migration always made and is actually making to homelands and receiving countries. Migration, as part of the dynamic of an ever-changing world, creatively redefines the host country as it redefines the immigrants. Discrimination against immigrants and the concerted effort to render them invisible (the Bulletin focuses on Africans) are robbing the world of a golden opportunity to improve quality living conditions. Diversity and multiculturalism are a key to quality of human life.

The Jewish and Christian Scriptures, as well as many church documents on migration, view and project migration as a great
advantage; it is a Great Pentecost that enables and realises the assembly of the manifold components of the human family into an ever vaster and more varied society. The preoccupation of the Bible with “hospitality to the stranger”, hospitality by visitation and not merely hospitality by invitation, should help overcome the tendency to see migrants as a threat to the comfort, institutions, culture, and life styles of the host countries. The gain of migration is that peoples, ethnicities embrace one another in an ecclesial fraternity. Indeed migration as lived by African immigrants in Europe today is challenging Christians to greater commitment in constructing the Church as “Family of God”–the theme of the 1994 African Synod.

A great responsibility lies on governments of the homelands and host communities to cater humanely for all citizens and immigrants. The Church in Western countries must continue to challenge the State to assure the same humane living conditions to immigrant families that it guarantees to its own citizens. The Church in countries of Africa must maintain the prophetic pressure on the nation-states and the ruling class to respect the dignity of the human person. This involves creating enabling social, economic and political environment for the human development of our youth. This will not only stem the tide of emigration, but will also release the human, spiritual and material resources for the integral wellbeing of our peoples and all peoples.

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THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN REDEMPTIVE HISTORY: AN ALTERNATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR THE MIGRATION DEBA

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Introduction

Migration is a natural human process and a common occurrence in the history of peoples. It denotes any movement by humans from one locality to another, often over long distances and in large groups. Traditionally, it has been associated with some notion of permanent settlement, or at least long-term sojourn. In reality, it is a sub-category of a more general concept of ‘movement’, embracing a wide variety of types and forms of human mobility.\(^2\)

By definition, a migrant is a “person on the move, either voluntarily or involuntarily, in the person’s own country, internationally, or both. Unlike refugees, migrants are commonly considered free to return home whenever they wish because their lives are not in danger there.”\(^3\)

Migration has become one of the greatest of the global phenomena of our day. It is, in the words of Benedict XVI, “one of the recognizable signs of the times today.”\(^4\) According to the 2002 International Migration Wall Chart of the United Nations Population Division, 175 million persons are currently living in a country different from their land of birth. They make up 3% of the

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1 I am highly indebted to my student, Samuel Uzoukwu for his assistance in the writing of this Essay.


world's population. These numbers are divided among the continents more or less as follows, in order of magnitude: Europe (56.1 million); Asia (49.8 million); North America (40.8 million); Africa (16.3 million); Latin America and the Caribbean (5.9 million); Oceania (5.8 million). Five countries with the largest number of international migrants in their population are the United States (almost 35 million), the Russian Federation (13.3 million), Germany (7.3 million), Ukraine (6.9 million), and France (6.3 million). Today, four years after the UN Migration Wall Chart, the global population for migrants is estimated to have reached 191 million, given the rapidity of the world's migratory flow.

If migration is a natural phenomenon, so also is the politics behind the migration discourse. As I was writing this article, George W. Bush, the President of the USA, released his much anticipated blueprint on immigration. He tried to strike a balance between satisfying his conservative political base and scoring the maximum political gains from the ever-increasing Latino populations of the United States. Almost at the same time, the French Parliament passed the Immigration Bill aimed at curbing the influx of asylum seekers into France and reducing the influence that this is having in the French labour market. These are not mere isolated events. It is today common knowledge that in most parts of continental Europe, all it takes to be politically popular is to flaunt the immigration issue and the dangers that migrants and emigrants constitute to the natives or indigenes.

The reason for the increasing popularity of migration as a political issue can be found in the all too human tendency to protect what one has against encroachment from outsiders. This is a genuine human concern that no reasonable person ought to deny; based as it is on the fact of the limited nature of human/earthly resources. But its effect on contemporary migration debate is that much of the agenda is set not so much by genuine interest in the welfare of the migrants or even out of a serious concern to engage

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with the concept of migration, but by political capital and socio-economic expediency.

This article is an attempt to propose the Judeo-Christian biblical tradition as an alternative framework for the migration discussion. It argues that the Judeo-Christian Bible is filtered with so many migration-related motifs and concerns, the consideration of which will help move forward the migration debate. With particular attention to the theme of flight from and into Egypt in both the Old and the New Testaments, the essay seeks to expose the attitude of the Judeo-Christian God to people in search of places of refuge, and how this affected and ought to affect what the Judeo-Christian religion has to teach about strangers and how to relate with them.

**Migration in the Judeo-Christian Tradition**

The Judeo-Christian tradition tells the tale of a people whose father was a wandering Aramean. He went down into Egypt, sojourned there, and became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. They were treated harshly, afflicted and enslaved. They cried to the Lord their God, and the Lord their God heard their voice, saw their affliction, toil and oppression, and brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm (Deut 26:5-8). The tale climaxes (at least from the Christian perspective) in the activities of the Son of Man who at birth was forced to “flee to Egypt” in order to escape from those “who are about to destroy him” (Matt 2:13); who in the course of his life and ministry “has no where to lay his head” (Matt 8:20); and who in his eventual return to take those who are his own will “stand at the door and knock” waiting for people to hear his voice and open their doors for him (Rev 3:20). For Jews as well as for Christians, migration is then a reality to be understood within the Judeo-Christian economy of salvation and in the light of faith. A consideration of some moments in this economy of salvation will help shed light to this claim.

*Abraham’s Journey to a Foreign Land*

The Judeo-Christian redemptive history started with the call of
Abraham by God to abandon his homeland for a land hitherto unknown (Gen 12:1). Prior to this time, Abraham’s family had already migrated from “Ur of the Chaldeans” to Haran. But on account of this unique encounter, Abraham had to migrate further from there to Canaan, the Land of Promise, thus separating himself from the ‘pagan’ surrounding of their first home. His journey to the Land of Promise was no routine expedition of thousands of miles. In religious perspective, it was “the start of an epic voyage in search of spiritual truths, a quest that was to constitute the central theme of all biblical history.”6 His choice for this journey remains a mystery in the Yahwist story, resting solely on God’s initiative.7 In sociocultural perspective however, Abraham’s journey entails a total break with his immediate environment, a total eradication from the mother soil and a total sacrifice of everything that makes life protected and secure.8 In this Abraham’s experience is not so much different from the thousands of migrants and refugees that we see in the screens of our television or read about in the pages of our newspapers.

But the uncertain nature of the goal was not the only thing that unites Abraham to today’s migrants. By the time Abraham undertook his journey, Canaan already had a settled population; and much of it was Semitic, like Abraham himself. Although only Sarah and Lot are named as companions of his migration, he was the head of a sizable clan (14:14), with extensive flocks of sheep and goats. Abraham, like Isaac and Jacob after him, was a nomad or, more accurately, a semi-nomad. His basic need to have for his flock a source of daily water kept him wandering in search of new pastures. This as well restricted him to the Fertile Crescent, the belt of moderate rainfall between the desert and the settled, cultivated

8 Buhlmann, W., God’s Chosen Peoples, Trans by Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1982), 21.
land. In this too, Abraham became a prototype of all who are forced to leave their homes in search of greener pastures.

There is every indication that Abraham’s migrant experience helped to shape his attitudes to strangers. For as the narrative progressed, we read about the generous hospitality that Abraham and his wife Sarah showed to three strangers at Mamre (Gen 18:1-10), who eventually turned out to be a manifestation of the Lord. This became, for Abraham’s descendants, a paradigm for the response to strangers. Today, Israel not only traces its origins back to Abraham but also sees in him a patriarchal point of reference for the exercise of hospitality and solidarity to aliens.

_Egypt: A Place of Refuge_

The circumstances surrounding the presence of Israel in Egypt form the central theme of the Joseph cycle of the Patriarchal History recorded in Genesis 37-50. Although dependent upon oral tradition, the Joseph story seems to reflect to some degree the historical conditions of the second millennium, when it was not unheard of for a Semite to rise to power in the Egyptian court. It was probably written in the period of Solomon, when relations with Egypt were close, a fact that helps to account for the Egyptian colour of the narrative. Egypt, an already ancient civilization by the time of the biblical patriarchs, was the great granary of the eastern Mediterranean, which attracted many people to its abundant agricultural resources. No wonder it greatly attracted those seeking for survival, including the sons and daughters of Israel.

In its present form, however, the Joseph cycle is embellished

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11 The Pentateuch is usually divided into Primeval History (Gen 1-11), Patriarchal History (Gen 12-50) and People’s History (Exodus-Deuteronomy), although some add Joshua and speak of Hexateuch, since it was in Joshua that the promise of possession of Land was realized.
with various popular motifs blended into a short story and governed by an overarching theological purpose: Human affairs are not governed by the evil designs of human beings, or by the economic stresses that forced Jacob to migrate to Egypt, but by the overruling providence of God, who works for the good in all things (Gen 50:20; cf. 45:5). It serves as a transition from the ancestral period to the Mosaic age, providing an answer to the question: how did our people ever come to be in Egypt in the first place? The narrator, in answering this question, emphasizes the divine purpose which brings the chosen people down into Egypt – from famine and destruction to food and prosperity – and which later will bring them out of slavery into freedom.\(^\text{14}\) These concerns are no less different, in degree and in kind, from those of countless migrants and refugees today.

**Egypt: A Land of Bondage**

Among the mixed significant experiences of Israel as aliens in Egypt were the promotion of Joseph (Gen 41: 37-49), the offering of the best of lands by Pharaoh (Gen 47: 1-12), demographical and human resource increase (Exod 1:9-10), anti-Semitism/xenophobia and hard labour (Exod 1:1-14), heroic sympathy of the two God-fearing Egyptian midwives (Exod 1:15-21), etc. The climax was the systematic oppression of Israel in Egypt, attributed by the hagiographer to the coming to power of a “new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph” (Exod 1:8).

The biblical account does not identify the Pharaoh who introduced the change of political policy that resulted in the oppression of the Semites in the Delta region. Some historical critics associate this with the 19\(^{\text{th}}\) Dynasty, which began toward the end of the 14\(^{\text{th}}\) century BC and with the oppressive regimes of Seti I (c. 1305 to 1290) and his son Rameses II (c. 1290-1224). Although it is impossible to pinpoint a definite date, many scholars

believe that the Exodus took place early in the reign of Rameses II, whose mummy is on display at the Cairo Museum – that is c. 1280 BC or shortly afterwards. This theory is further supported by the specific mention, in Exodus 1:11, of the cities of Pithom and Rameses, constructed around these times with the help of Hebrew slaves. According to Egyptian documents, these pharaohs used 'Apiru' – an old depiction for the Hebrews – in public projects.

These scholarly speculations, as to the cause, nature and manner of the Exodus event, no doubt, shed some light on our subject of study. But as Anderson rightly remarks,

> Historical investigation can help us to understand that the biblical story was intimately tied up with the political and social developments of the time. But it takes religious imagination to go beyond the externals to the inner meaning of the events that Israel proclaimed in the exalted language of worship. In the last analysis, the significance of Exodus is determined not by its date but by its place in the unfolding of the divine purpose in human affairs."

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**Israel’s Lessons from the Years of Oppression**

For all that can be said of the circumstances surrounding the Exodus of the children of Jacob/Israel from Egypt, one thing is clear: Israel has always considered the departure from Egypt as a special moment in its history, an event which puts it on a different footing from everyone else. Of course the people existed with Abraham, but only in promise. The Exodus is really the moment when Israel received its solemn investiture as the ‘People of God.’ As Hooker asserts:
There is no question that the migration out of Egypt around 1250 BC is the single most important event in Hebrew history. More than anything else in history, this event gave the Hebrew an identity, a nation, a founder, and a name, used for the first time in the very first line of Exodus of the biblical account of the migration "bene Yisrael" "the children of Israel."  

The journey through the desert to the Land of Promise initiated by the Exodus event, lasted for 40 years. During these years, Israel came to understand their great and terrible experiences of slavery and oppression as historical events whose remembrance should serve as an education into the ways of God. The key events in the history of Israel's Egyptian bondage and of their deliverance by God not only ask of the Chosen People greater confidence in Yahweh who liberates, it also led to commandments regarding strangers (Exod 23:9; Lev 19:33).

That resident aliens (gerîm) should become the subject of attention in the laws is quite understandable. As sojourners in the land of Egypt, God showed great love to Israel. So Israel is to love sojourners too, remembering that it was once in the same position. The commandment on Israel to love one's neighbour, initially restricted to indigenes and natives in Lev 19:18, was extended to cover foreign residents or strangers in Lev 19:33-34. In this passage, described as an Old Testament theologumenon on divine impartiality, it is stated that the Israelites are to love their brother and the stranger "as yourself;" in imitation of God, who is free of favouritism, accepts no bribes, executes justice for the orphans and widows, and befriends the stranger (cf. Deut 10:17-18).

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Strangers here refer to the non-Israelite, foreigners who settled in an Israelite community, for whatever reason.\textsuperscript{23} The classification was tribal and social, not primarily religious. The word \textit{gērim} indicates a resident who is not indigenous to a place and who is ethnically unrelated to its people; the other distinctions it may occasionally have are derived from this.\textsuperscript{24} Resident aliens (\textit{gērim}) are differentiated from transient foreigners (\textit{nokrim}). But like the \textit{nokrim}, ever assured of hospitality, the Law also provides that the \textit{gērim} deserve similar treatment (Gen 18:2-9; Judg 19:20f; 2 Kings 4:8f). Because they are weak, maximum protection should be guaranteed them; because they could not possess land and had no clan ties, all attitudes of economic superiority against them must be avoided; because they are vulnerable and often poor, solidarity must be shown them and a special legislation which does justice to their financial dealings be made (Exod 21:8; Deut 14:21, 15:13). They must be provided with conditions for economic growth, be assimilated into the social life, and be granted equal rights with the Israelites before the law (Deut 1:16). They must be treated with justice, righteousness and love because like Abraham (Gen 23:4) the Israelites were "clients" in Egypt.\textsuperscript{25}

In fact, Israel's code of conduct constantly reiterates that resident foreigners in Israel must be treated with affection because Yahweh, the God of justice, has special concern for the protection of the unprotected,\textsuperscript{26} watches over the foreigners (Deut 10:18) and establishes for them a juridical position analogous to that of his

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{The Interpreter's Bible}, vol. I, p. 1007. Farmer, W.R. (ed.), \textit{The International Bible Commentary} (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), p.50 points out however that \textit{gēr} [sojourner (RSV) or stranger (KJV)] includes not only a foreigner but also a refugee from other Israelite tribes.
own people (Deut 1:16; Lev 20:2). These, no doubt, sound like a Bill of Rights for migrants and refugees. What a difference it will make if they too are factored into the contemporary migration debate.

The Flight of the Holy Family to Egypt
As the New Testament opens, the situation of the Jews into which the incarnate Word was born was not all that different from that of the countless millions who are forced to leave their countries and places of birth in search of refuge elsewhere. Following Pompey’s conquest of the Greek forces in 63 BC, the land of Palestine came under Roman imperial control. Imperial Rome, however, administered Palestine – as it does most of its provinces – through the local heads in a quasi indirect rule system. Sometimes these local agents, in the bid to play by the rules of the powers that be so as to continue enjoying their position of power and privilege, did not mind imposing enormous hardship and pain on their own people.

Such was the situation of Palestine by the time of Jesus’ birth around 4 BC during the reign of Herod the Great. Although despised by many as only half Jew, Herod was able, through his uncanny alliances with different Roman Emperors, to manipulate them into recognising him as the undisputed king of the Province of Judea in 31/30 BC. Herod’s distrust of possible rivals led to the construction of inaccessible fortresses and palaces, and the murder of his own sons. The brutal cruelty and virtual insanity of Herod’s last years lie behind Matthew’s account of his willingness to slaughter all the male children at Bethlehem up to the age of 2. And for the second time in the course of the Judeo-Christian redemptive history, Egypt is called upon to play “protective host” to the One around whom the New Israel will come to gather; just as it did centuries before to the progenitors of the Old Israel.

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Matthew 2:13-23: The Storyline

The flight of Jesus, Mary and Joseph to Egypt is only narrated in the Gospel according to Matthew. The setting for the story was the inquiry by the Magi at Herod's palace for the exact locus of birth of the King of the Jews; an inquiry that aroused Herod's attention to a possible rival and his decision to deal with such, should he be found or discovered. To escape the wrath of Herod, Joseph was instructed in a dream to flee with the child and His mother to Egypt; and to remain there until the death of Herod the Great who was determined to kill the infant Jesus.

*Why Egypt, we may ask?* The reason is twofold. In the first place, Herod's power would not reach to Egypt which had been under Roman control since 30 BC. But over and above this, Egypt, in the biblical tradition, was a land of refuge for those fleeing from tyranny in Palestine. The Old Testament abounds in references to individuals and families taking refuge in Egypt, in flight either from persecution or revenge, or in the face of economic pressure. When King Solomon sought to put him to death, Jeroboam "arose and fled to Egypt" (1 Kings 11:40). When King Jehoiakim sought to kill the prophet Uriah, son of Shemaiah, he too "fled and escaped to Egypt (Jer 26:21 [LXX 33:21]). About 172 BC, the high priest Onias IV fled to Egypt to escape from King Antiochus Epiphanes, who had killed Onias' uncle. There is therefore all the likelihood that this refuge-in-Egypt tradition has influenced Matthew in his infancy narrative.

Matthew's unique account of the flight made reference to Hos.11:1 ("Out of Egypt I called my Son"), thus placing this part of the Messiah's itinerary within the framework of God's will. The original context of the Hosea passage is Israel's Exodus from Egypt. It is therefore Israel that is referred to here as the Son of

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God. Such a background for Jesus’ divine sonship stresses the continuity between Jesus and Israel. It not only identifies Jesus as the Son of God and suggests that he is the personification of the people of God,\(^3\) it also indicates that Jesus represents the beginning of the restoration of all Israel.\(^2\)

Commentators have been struck by the peculiar localization of this citation and the fact that it is somewhat foreign to the historical setting of the basic story to which it has been appended. Although the Hosea passage deals with the Exodus or coming “\textit{out of Egypt},” Matthew inserts it as a comment on Joseph’s taking the child and his mother to Egypt. This too is significant for our inquiry. The fact that the child is saved by flight to Egypt implies that Jesus relives not only the Exodus of Israel from Egypt but also the departure of the children of Jacob/Israel from Canaan into Egypt. Joseph, Jesus’ legal father here plays the role of Joseph the patriarch bringing Jacob/Israel down to Egypt.\(^3\)

The account of the massacre of the male children in Bethlehem and in the surrounding regions echoes faithfully Pharaoh’s slaughter of the male infants of the Hebrews (Matt 2:16). Speculations on the number of children massacred by Herod have always remained prominent in Christian tradition. The Byzantine Liturgy sets the number of the “Holy Children” (or “Holy Innocents” in Western hagiography) at 14,000; Syrian menologies or calendar of saints set it at 64,000; and by accommodation with Rev 14:1-5 the number has reached even 144,000 (equalling the number of “those who have not defiled themselves with women” – a safely attributed virtue at the age of two). However, given the high infant mortality rate and a total population of Bethlehem at the time (around 1000 some argue) with an annual birth-rate of 30, the male children under two years of age would scarcely have numbered more than twenty.\(^4\) Even this would have been significant enough

\(^{33}\) Brown, \textit{Birth of the Messiah}, 216.
\(^{34}\) Brown, \textit{Birth of the Messiah}, 205.
to cause some stir among the natives.

By comparing the wailing in Judea after the great massacre on account of Jesus to the wailing of Rachel for her children in Jeremiah 31, Matthew connects the event in Egypt with another major tragedy in Israelite history, the Exile of the tribes to Assyria and Babylon. The citation of Jeremiah here is also somewhat not in line with the exact story line. Whereas in the Old Testament tradition, Rachel was told to stop weeping because her children are coming back from exile, the quotation is used in the Matthean text in a context of unrelieved suffering. Matthew’s ingenuity, however, lies, not so much in connecting the two events, as in relating them to what happened at Bethlehem. In the theology of Israel, the persecution in Egypt and the Exile were the two greatest trials to which God’s people had been subjected; and the Exodus and return from Exile were the two greatest manifestations of Yahweh’s protective power. By connecting both to Jesus, Matthew presents Jesus as reliving “both great past moments of divine salvation.”

The Holy family remained in Egypt as long as necessary; i.e. “until those who are seeking the child’s life are dead” (Matt 2:20). Matthew here cites (almost verbatim) the LXX of the Lord’s word to Moses in Exod 4:19 (“for all those who were seeking your life are dead”). This too is for obvious theological reasons. Just as the death of Pharaoh freed Moses to begin his mission of return to the Promised Land, so the death of Herod enables a return from Egypt that will lead Jesus to the starting place of his mission.

The Holy Family did not return directly to their native land. Rather, “when he heard that Archelaus was king over Judea in place of his father Herod, Joseph was afraid to return there. And being warned in a dream, he went off to the district of Galilee... to dwell in a city called Nazareth” (Matt 2:22-23). That Matthew got his facts correctly here is evidently clear. Following Herod’s death in 4 BC, his kingdom was split into three parts which were accorded to his sons. The full brothers Archelaus and Herod Antipas got Judea-Samaria-Idumea and Galilee-Perea respectively;

35 Brown, Birth of the Messiah, 217.
and their half brother Philip got the regions East and North of the Lake of Galilee. Archelaus was the least liked of the three because of his dictatorial tendencies. Not only did he usher in his reign with a massacre of three thousand people,\(^{36}\) his brutality became so intolerable that at the request of his subjects, the Roman imperial authorities had to depose him in 6 AD.\(^{37}\) Compared to Judea, Galilee-Perea (then ruled by Herod Antipas cf. Luke 23:6-11) would have been more peaceful and secure. So by having Joseph avoid a Judea ruled by Archelaus and go to a Galilee ruled by Herod Antipas, Matthew is reflecting correctly the situation of a greater political tranquillity in Galilee.

The question of the historical character of the Flight into Egypt narrative is a complicated issue.\(^{38}\) Only Celsius, an opponent of the early Christian theologian Origen (early 3\(^{rd}\) century) testified, albeit indirectly, to a Jewish tradition that Jesus had worked in Egypt, had there learned the magic arts, and had used them to further a claim to divinity when he returned to Palestine.\(^{39}\) The Jewish historian, Josephus, who documents thoroughly the final years of the reign of Herod the Great, concentrating on his brutal deeds, never mentions a massacre of children at Bethlehem. On this account, some historical critics claim that the narrative is a "midrash" in the sense of being elaborations built upon biblical texts rather than real events.\(^{40}\)

However, one can point to many features that are compatible with what is known from other sources. Apart from the traditional role of Egypt as a place of refuge for Jews, a story of massacre based on Pharaoh's massacre of the male children in Egypt, could plausibly be attributed to Herod, especially amid the horrors of the last years of his life. To ensure mourning at his funeral, Herod instructed his soldiers to kill notable political prisoners upon the

\(^{36}\) Josephus, *Wars*, 2.4.2. #89.


\(^{38}\) Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, pp. 225 -227 offers some of the reasons.

\(^{39}\) Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 1.28.38.

news of his death. His goal was "so shall all Judea and every household weep for me, whether they wish it or not."\(^{41}\) Plausible too is the Matthean story’s insistence that the massacre at Bethlehem came out of Herod’s fear of the birth of a rival king. Josephus tell us that Herod had put to death all the Pharisees who had predicted that Herod’s throne would be taken from him and his descendants, and that power would go to Pheroras (his brother) and his wife and any children to be born to them.\(^{42}\)

Whatever position one adopts on the historicity of the narrative, what cannot be denied is its theological import. With the various stories in chapter 2 Matthew sought to express continuity between Moses and Jesus: in both cases wicked kings (Pharaoh and Herod) tried to do away with them as infants; their escape was accompanied by a slaughter of the innocent; and return became possible only after those who sought the child’s life had died.\(^{43}\) For Matthew and to his community, therefore, the Moses-typology is intended to root Jesus in the history of Israel.

*Lessons learnt from the migratory experience of the Holy Family into Egypt, no doubt spilled over into the rest of the Christian story.* In sending his disciples out on mission, the Matthean Jesus makes the hospitality they will enjoy an act that concerns him personally (Matt 10:40).\(^{44}\) After his resurrection, Christ commanded his apostles to go to all nations to preach the Good News (Matt 28:16-20). Through this mandate, which offers, officially, the world of migration a great potential for evangelization, the apostles were to become itinerant missionaries who are to disseminate the message of the Gospel to various cultures, languages and races of the world. Christ sealed this command through the sending of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-21), which marked the day of Pentecost, the day of a real and symbolic meeting of peoples of different tongues, and, indeed, the day the Church was born as a fulfilment of the Paschal mystery.

\(^{41}\) Josephus, *War* 1.23.6.#660.

\(^{42}\) Josephus, *Antiquities*, 17.2.4.#43.

\(^{43}\) Harrington, *Matthew*, 49.

\(^{44}\) John Paul II, Message for 2000 World Day of Migration.
In the light of the Pentecost event, the Church sees migration, which brings together the manifold components of the human family into an ever vaster and more varied society, “as almost a prolongation of the meeting of people and ethnic groups that, through the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, became ecclesial fraternity.” Thus, it approaches the challenge of migration “not from a sociological understanding of society, but rather from a theological understanding of itself as the new Pentecost.

Christian Tradition and the Flight to Egypt Narrative
From the migratory experience and account of the Holy Family, Christians also have attempted to derive some lessons on how to relate with strangers and aliens. Thanks to the Flight to Egypt narrative, Christians see in the foreigner, “not simply a neighbour, but the face of Christ Himself who was born in a manger and fled into Egypt, where he was a foreigner summing up and repeating in His own life the basic experience of His people (cf. Matt 2:13ff).” The Holy Family has become “a figure with whom Christian migrants and refugees throughout the ages can identify, giving them hope and courage in hard times;” and in their search for freedom, security, and better living conditions for themselves and their families, migrants follow in the footstep of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, has also come to be acknowledged and contemplated as a living symbol of the woman emigrant. She gave birth to her Son away from home (cf. Luke 2:1-7) and was compelled to flee to Egypt (cf. Matt 2:13-14). In this way she stands for all, especially all women and mothers who are forced to leave the security of their home with their children in search of safety and refuge elsewhere. Popular devotion is right to consider

45 A Pastoral Letter Concerning Migration...n.12.
47 Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi, n.15
her as “the Madonna of the way,”

The Why of Migration Then and Today
Our review of these few moments in the Judeo-Christian Redemptive history reveals that not so much has changed in the reason(s) why people leave the security of their native land in search of refuge elsewhere. Just like Abraham, the wandering Aramean and the father of the Judeo-Christian tradition, many still undertake this journey as a response to a divine summon. Here comes to mind the countless missionaries who, for religious and missionary reasons, freely accepted being uprooted from their homes to serve as harbingers of the Good News of Salvation to their brothers and sisters. We also have those who, like Israel and his children, leave their places of residence in search of greener pastures. Included here are those who seek new homes in distant lands because of economic pressures, social and political tensions, etc; as well as those who migrate for reasons of tourism and techno-scientific exploration. Then we have those who are forced, as were the Israelites in Egypt, to flee the security of their initial places of residence because of oppressions, wars and their aftermath; those who are uprooted by natural disasters and famine; those who become refugees because of religious discrimination, disputes, persecution and civil disturbances.

While the reasons that cause people to migrate may vary, migration from the time of Abraham until now, “always implies an uprooting from the original environment, often translated into an experience of marked solicitude accompanied by the risk of fading into anonymity.”

It involves a total eradication from the mother soil, a total sacrifice of everything that makes life protected and secure, and a wandering into the insecurity of the uncertain. Its enduring existence testifies to an anxiety, which, however

49 Ibid.
50 John Paul II, Message for the 87th World Day of Migration (2001), n. 2.
51 Bühlmann, W., God’s Chosen Peoples, Trans by Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1982), 21.
indirectly, refers to God, in whom alone man can find the full satisfaction of all his expectations.\textsuperscript{52} Seen in this light, migration then is not merely a real social phenomenon, but a phenomenon that touches the religious dimension of men and women. As such, the Church not only considers it as an inclusive area of its ecclesial outreach but also approaches it as an indispensable intercultural sphere of its pastoral work, since welcoming the stranger has been "intrinsic to the nature of the Church itself and bears witness to its fidelity to the gospel."\textsuperscript{53} It is a continuation of the mission of Jesus the Good Pastor, that of forming the People of God, the Pilgrim Church, moving slowly and painfully, but steadfastly, towards the fullness of the Kingdom.\textsuperscript{54}

**Migration and the Social Doctrine of the Church**

The heritage, which the Church received from the migratory accounts of the Bible, has enriched its existential and eschatological views about the age-old reality of migration. From these, the Church has developed a body of social doctrine, which proposes principles for reflection, provides criteria for judgment, and gives guidelines for action.\textsuperscript{55} Based primarily on the dignity of the human person from which all rights flow, and anchored on the pillars of solidarity and concern for the common good, the Church desires to profess the truth about human mobility and to inscribe in people's hearts right attitudes toward men and women on the move. Among other things, she insists on the recognition of the natural right of the individual to remain at home, in one's own country and cultural ambience; as well as his/her right to be unhampered in immigration or emigration into any country in which the individual hopes to be able to provide more fittingly for him/herself and

\textsuperscript{52} John Paul II, Message for the World Migration Day 2000, n.1.

\textsuperscript{53} John Paul II, Message for 1993 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, n.6; \emph{L'Osservatore Romano} English language edition, August 2, 1992, p.5.


\textsuperscript{55} \emph{Catechism of the Catholic Church}, n.2423.
his/her dependants (cf. CCC, 2241). To protect this right, the Church asserts the obligation, on the part of the State, to assure to immigrant families what it guarantees to its own citizens. She regards as injustice any attempt to deny the human rights of the migrants, or to block or impede emigration or immigration except where grave requirements of the common good, considered objectively, demand it. As the Chancellor of the Holy See Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Orondo recently remarked,

Every human being is not born attached to a land; s/he is born with two legs to walk. All men and women have always walked; all peoples have been migrants. The doors cannot be closed to them. It is against the natural order, against the Christian order and all the more so for those who work, as we all have the right to work.  

**Facing the Contemporary Challenges of Migration**

It has been the main thesis of this essay that the complex problems and challenges of migration can better and more properly be addressed with recourse to the Scriptural heritage and the social doctrine of the Church. In the light of the scriptural heritage and the social doctrine of the Church, we would like to end with an examination of three crucial migratory problems prevalent in our world today.

*Deteriorating Culture of Welcome:*

The ever-growing anti-immigrant sentiment, exaggerated nationalism, racism, and terrorism, all in no small measure, have amputated the culture of welcome. There is therefore an urgent need, drawing strength and inspiration from the testimonies of the Sacred Scripture, to reaffirm the values of openness, attention, sharing, solidarity and communion in diversity, in order to re-awaken in people’s hearts authentic care towards foreigners, foster

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solid gestures and concrete attitudes of fraternity and re-establish the culture of hospitality as the affirmation of the person of the migrant. In the words of the US Bishops’ Conference:

The biblical injunction to extend hospitality to the stranger overcomes the tendency to see newcomers as a threat to our comfort, institutions, culture, and life styles. It allows newcomers to adapt in such a way that they will not lose their identity in the process of incorporation. It helps the imagination to devise and adopt initiatives and structures which empower immigrants to be themselves and which make it possible for their presence to enrich all with a pluralism of gifts in celebration of diversity.\(^{57}\)

The culture of migratory hospitality, which re-echoes the biblical notion of God’s justice towards aliens and manifests the universality of God’s love, demands not only social assistance but also the self-sufficiency and the progressive integration of immigrants through commitment towards their family unification, education of children, indiscriminate participation in public life, equality and respect, adequate housing, job availability and economic desegregation, etc. Real integration, on its part, requires a firm determination to eradicate hostile attitudes, prejudices, and xenophobia, gender, religious or tribal marginalization, and stereotypes, which promote the anti-culture of inhospitality. It requires “the building of a society that can acknowledge differences without absolutizing them and foster a generation of citizens formed in the culture of dialogue.”\(^{58}\)

Here, the Church and the Christian community are the most challenged. As ambassadors of Christ, Christians are called to a greater and active commitment to welcome. We are called to see in

\(^{57}\) “Together, A New People:” Pastoral Statement on Migration and Refugees, by the Administrative Committee of the National Conference of US Catholic Bishops, November 8, 1986, n.16.

\(^{58}\) John Paul II, Address to the Missionaries of St. Charles, February 9, 2001, n.2.
the “foreigner” Christ who “pitches His tent among us” (cf. John 1:14) and who “knocks at our door” (cf. Rev 3:20). Such an attitude of hospitality educates, forms, and enlightens us in the mission of the pilgrim Church, enabling us to perceive clearer, with a sense of faith, the nature of our Christian life as “a journey, a sublime migration towards total Communion of the Kingdom of God.”

Fortunately, our Christian tradition is full of stories of uncountable heroes and “patron saints of migrants” that can serve as models for our emulation. Worthy of mention is the early 20th century Frances Xavier Cabrini (1850-1917), who devoted her activities among the emigrants and was consequently canonized in 1946 by Pope Pius XII who proclaimed her, in 1950, the “Celestial Patron of All Emigrants by God’s side”. There is also the good example of Saint John Baptist Scalabrini (1839-1905), who, as the Bishop of Piacenza, lived the drama of the exodus of migrants out of Europe, gave immense pastoral attention to migrants through a suitable network of spiritual assistance and supported legislative measures against the exploitation of migrants. These are heroes of the faith who took the biblical injunction of welcoming aliens seriously and worked to influence hospitable living together between natives and migrants. They remain till date concrete witnesses to Christ’s love for migrants, a love that we too are called upon to live.

Illegal Migration and Immigration Law
Illegal, irregular or undocumented migration, whose subjects as defined by John Paul II are “clandestine’ men and women in illegal situations,” remains a frequent occurrence in the field of human mobility. While insisting that illegal migration should be prevented, the Church condemns and vigorously combats the criminal activities of those bent on exploiting illegal immigrants.

59 “Together, A New People”, n.29.
60 “The Church and Human Mobility” (Chiesa e Mobilita Umana), Pontifical Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migration and Tourism, n.10.
Over and against this, she argues that the most appropriate alternative and the one which will yield consistent and long-term results is that of international cooperation which aims to foster political stability and to eliminate underdevelopment.  

Similarly, the Church respects civil law, including migration law, provided that it is just. She is however wary of anti-immigrant propaganda that infects the Christian community. She insists that even the so-called “illegal immigrants” need to be listened to, to be provided with the necessary means of sustenance and, when possible, they should be helped to regularize their status. When no solution is foreseen, they should be helped to move into another country; and should this fail, they need to be assisted to return in dignity and safety to their country of origin.

The church also encourages the Christian community to give shelter to migrants, even those in irregular situations. She entrusts to various Dioceses and Christian communities the task of ensuring that these people, who are obliged to live outside the safety net of civil society, should find a sense of brotherhood in the Christian community. This is not advocating “civil disobedience.” Rather, by so doing, the Christian community is being true to her root and to her mission: the Church is and ought to be the place where these immigrants are recognized and accepted as brothers and sisters.

The good example of the National Conference of the US Catholic Bishops in this regard is worth mentioning. In a series of publications, this body has time and time again intervened on the issue of undocumented migration and has been actively engaged in helping to fashion legislation that truly reflect the nation’s commitment to social and economic justice for all. Among its primary stand is that any viable programme of immigration reform must be based on legalization as its foundation; a legalization that

63 Ibid. no. 3.
64 Ibid. no. 4.
65 Ibid. no. 5.
is not only free from discrimination and administrative arbitrariness, but one that also makes provision of adequate \textit{appellate} recourse for those disqualified by the US Immigration and Naturalizing Service. In a letter sent to the full US Senate on the eve of their debate on the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act proposed by the Judiciary Committee, Bishop Gerald Barnes, chairman of the U.S. episcopate’s Committee on Migration, made it clear that the U.S. Catholic bishops will only support a comprehensive approach to immigration reform that would improve the U.S. immigration system so that it is humane, secure and reflects the values upon which U.S. as a nation – a nation of immigrants – was built.\footnote{Cf. Zenit.org (April 5, 2006).} Such a concerted effort to exert pressure in favour of an integral migratory reform that respects the human rights of immigrants and their families, no doubt, dovetails with the heritage of biblical tradition. It also holds the key to just immigration law, which alone is capable of discouraging illegal immigration.

\textit{On the Issue of “Brain Drain”}

The “brain drain syndrome” is one of the crucial issues that can hardly be sidetracked in any migration discussion. It arises from the need for high skills in technologically advanced countries: a need that seeks for satisfaction, often unilaterally, from the human resources of developing and poorly developed countries. In its most extreme form, it involves the conscious and constructive recruiting of and even keeping talented and well-trained people away from developing countries. This disturbing phenomenon seems to be more on Africa, whose high proportions of skilled citizens and numerous sons and daughters studying or working in Europe or America have forgotten their native land, thereby depriving it of badly needed human resources for its development. India is also a victim of this anomalous situation.

Commenting on this issue, Michael A. Blume, Undersecretary of the then Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and
Itinerant People,\textsuperscript{68} writes,

The search for foreign talent sometimes even becomes a “hunt for brains”, not a brain drain. That raises questions of justice: Does anyone have the right to buy talent from developing countries simply on the basis of having money to do this? Is it right to attract people who have been educated and raised in their homelands at much cost to their own social and educational services to serve the interests of businesses in other countries? This is a serious moral question that also affects the personal capital available in many countries.\textsuperscript{69}

Tackling this monstrous phenomenon, one can receive insights, albeit indirectly, from the Judeo-Christian tradition and the Church’s social teaching. Here, the skilled migrants themselves should take note. Despite the oppression that the children of Jacob experienced in Egypt, there is no doubt that in the judgment of many of the pilgrims, freedom in the desert was a poor substitute for slavery in Egypt. On many occasion they nostalgically longed for the “fleshpots of Egypt” (Exod 16:3). This situation is not too different from that of countless migrants, asylum seekers and refugees of our time. Not a few today would and do prefer enslavement and hard labour in the so-called “Lands of Promise” to having to eke out a living in hardship and pain in their own native land. It is common knowledge that today countless numbers of seasoned and well bred professionals from the so-called developing countries do not mind abandoning noble and revered professions in their native lands to become the street- and slave-boys and girls of

\textsuperscript{68} With the recent re-organization of offices in Vatican Curia, by Pope Benedict XVI (March 11, 2006), the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People has been merged with the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

Amsterdam, Paris, Rome, New York, Hamburg etc. The lesson for our skilled migrants is that the Lord God did not allow their “wilderness predecessors” such options, but through Moses He guided and guarded them through the hardship of the wilderness. The skilled migrants need to be reminded that running away from situations of hardship has never been ranked among the noblest Christian or patriotic virtues.

Again, if there is anything that we should learn from Israel’s Exile Experience, it is the intransigent allegiance to the Land of Promise and nostalgic longing and Hope of Return. For how can they sing “the Lord’s song in a foreign land” (Ps 137:4)? How the Exile generation could have come to this conviction is both surprising and revealing. In every respect, Babylonian culture at the time that the children of Israel were weeping “by the rivers of Babylon” (Ps 137:1), was superior to the modest way of life the Jews had known in the land of Judah. Like modern visitors from less developed countries to the USA and Europe, they must have been dazzled by what they saw. In contrast to the farming and grazing land of Judah, the rich land of Babylonia was a scene of thriving agriculture and teeming industry. Yet they resisted complete absorption into this domineering and dominating culture; always entertained a nostalgic longing for return, and did actually return when the opportunity offered itself.

The same also could be said of the Flight of the Holy Family into Egypt. Joseph was directed by the angel to flee with the child to Egypt because “Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him” (Matt 2:13). Following, the death of Herod and those who “sought the child’s life,” Joseph was equally told in a dream to “rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel” (Matt 2:20). Even though Egypt at the time had its own attractions, it did not distract the Son of God from his mission, which, though of universal significance, was destined to be accomplished in the land of Israel. Even if the return route still involved a detour to Nazareth, there was this consciousness of the need to return and

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70 Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament, p. 447.
carry out one’s mission in a place where one has greater significance and meaning.

The above should serve as a lesson to our skilled migrants. Whatever may have caused their having to flee from or voluntarily leave their motherland, they should always strive to maintain ties with their homeland in order to stimulate the reciprocal transfer of technology and capital. The developed countries that increasingly welcome these unique crops of migrants and them alone are also challenged in this regard. The endangerment of any nation’s valuable human resources is an offence against economic solidarity, which demands the concrete awareness of the reciprocal relationship between migrants’ countries of origin and countries of immigration. Rather than multiplying the nature and diversities of visa lotteries and targeted immigration to fill up the loopholes in their labour market, they too should help in the ongoing formation of consciences, individuals as well as national and international, on the demands of the universal destination of earthly goods, on international solidarity, and on the priority of persons over work and possession. There is also the need for viable international agreements on migration, to ensure that both the countries of origin and those of destination share the benefits of migration.

Governments and peoples of migrants’ countries are not absolved of responsibilities. Not too infrequently, we hear stories of some genuinely motivated skilled migrants who have attempted to return to the land of their birth with the intention of contributing their own quota to her development and welfare and who were frustrated by the suffocating atmosphere of corruption, dictatorship and irresponsibility. The ruling class of these countries should be encouraged to respond properly to the challenges of human rights protection, economic security, job opportunities, long-term economic planning, healthy market force, etc., so as to facilitate frequent home-coming of their citizens in foreign lands.

Conclusion
Migration is a reality as old as humanity itself. It would be practically undesirable to deprive people of this fundamental right
which enables them to venture into an unknown world and be enriched by new discoveries. As Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Holy See Permanent Observer to the United Nations, insisted, although migration remains “a historic and ubiquitous phenomenon, efforts to shape it and control it by political and legal means have not always led to happy result.” Precisely here, we can learn a lot from the Judeo-Christian redemptive history.

The different biblical stories of migration have offered, in the light of faith, a different meaning to the reality of migration and exile in salvation history. They have spurred better disposition for appreciating the condition of pilgrim people in their variety of languages, cultures, customs, races and beliefs, and have provided richer insights for understanding the dynamics of present day migrations. They have also served the Church’s substantial body of social doctrines, which find in them solid biblical traditions for furthering a culture of hospitality towards foreigners and for evaluating modern challenges confronting the global phenomenon of migration.

No doubt taking these contributions into consideration in our migration debate will help us in our effort to face the challenges confronting us today as a result of the global phenomenon of migration. The Judeo-Christian redemptive history teaches us, among other things, that any blueprint for immigration, any immigration/anti-immigration Bill or legislation will not work unless it is built upon the solid rock of genuine hospitality, just laws, solidarity. Committed ecclesial advocacy for the welfare of migrants and refugees prevents the negative portrait of migrants as threats to be manipulated for short-time political gain at the expense of the most natural rights of the human person – the right to life, to citizenship, to work and to development. A successful blueprint takes seriously the root causes of migration as well as the intolerable abuses done to the subjects of human mobility.

I will like to end with an ideological caveat. Majority of

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71 Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Address to the UN Session of the Commission on Population and Development of the Economic and Social Council, New York, 5 April 2006, [Zenit.org]
contemporary migrants whose presence in foreign lands today instigate fear among the natives of the developed world and against whom the anti-immigration legislations are being fashioned are people of African descent. As such, they have some kinship with the Egypt of biblical times that, at the height of its economic prosperity, twice served as a place of refuge in the two aeons of the Judeo-Christian redemptive history. It was to Egypt that the children of Israel had to flee, to escape the harsh realities of famine and hunger. It was also in Egypt that the Incarnate Word had to seek refuge when He was being pursued by those intent on destroying him. In both circumstances, Egypt was both welcoming and receptive. Is it then justified that today, citizens of those lands that trace their origin and civilization to the Judeo-Christian tradition, shut their borders on the children of Egypt and their kinsmen and women in search of refuge and protection? One would have thought that one good turn deserves another.
MISSION AND MIGRANTS – CONTEMPORARY IRELAND

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The focus of this paper, Mission and Migrants, has presented itself in a particularly vivid form to the conscience of all people of goodwill in Ireland as we saw on our television screens the pictures of hundreds of African people, originating south of the Sahara, storming the ramparts of Fortress Europe in its most far-flung and tenuous outreach: the minuscule Spanish possessions on the North Coast of Morocco.

The Phenomenon of Migration – Historical Perspectives:
I begin by presenting a reflection on an experience which has been redefining as far as my own approach to mission and ministry is concerned. I returned to Ireland in 1995 after 23 years spent in Kenya working within a rather traditional Irish model: mission ministry in the developing world through education. Little did I realise at the time that historical movements were already afoot which would turn my notion of mission on its head. As I returned there was a parallel movement of hundreds of thousands of people from the developing world towards Europe. My notion of mission as being sent to the peoples of the developing world had now to be re-thought. We had always thought of mission as from Ireland to the Developing World, but what happens when the developing

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1 First presented in workshop as part of the Conference to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Publication of Ad Gentes Divinitus of Vatican Council II, Department of Mission Theology and Cultures Milltown in Association with The Irish Missionary Union – Milltown Institute of Theology and Philosophy, 14-15 October 2005. The author holds a doctorate in systematic theology from St. Patrick’s College, Maynooth, Ireland. He has worked as a Spiritan missionary in Kenya for 23 years. He was until July 2006 Head of Department, Department of Mission Theology and Cultures, Milltown Institute, Dublin. e-mail: patrickaroe@eircom.net
world chooses to come to Ireland, or to other European countries? The phenomenon of migrants, whether they be asylum seekers or economic migrants, trying to find their way into fortress Europe in spite of the numerous obstacles erected in their way can be seen from a number of points of view.

First, many of the conflicts from which the asylum seeker (or in some cases the voluntary migrant) is fleeing and seeking refuge have their origin in the experience of colonialism. The economic impoverishment from which the economic migrant is fleeing also has roots in the colonial experience. The African experience, out of which nearly half of our asylum seekers come, is particularly relevant. The carving up of Africa by the colonial powers with borders which suited the colonial agenda, left to postcolonial Africa a series of explosive tensions which have yet to be resolved, and is a major contributory factor to many of the wars and insurgencies which have destabilised postcolonial Africa. The colonial experience also produced a series of economic dependencies with ‘mother countries’ which have prevented the normal evolution of economic relationships with neighbouring countries. As the recent experience of Europe has shown, economic interdependency forms the basis for a healthy political interdependence leading to cohesion.

Second, the colonial experience involved an incalculable shift of economic resources towards the colonising countries of Europe which enriched the economies of these countries. On such foundations the industrial revolution which transformed Europe was built. The economic relationships which developed in the postcolonial era, far from correcting the injustice of the previous situation, simply reinforced it. It is hardly surprising that the labour of the under-capitalised Developing World should follow the flight of capital. Perhaps this is what we are seeing at the borders of Fortress Europe as economic migrants, often the most talented among the populations of the Developing World, queue to gain entry, sometimes with, sometimes without clearly defined persecution. Ireland cannot too easily detach itself from the colonial experience because, in its most decisive phase, Ireland was
an integral part of Britain and shared responsibilities for decisions made in the British parliament.

The postcolonial experience of the Developing World for a quarter of a century was focussed in global politics and economics around the agenda of the Cold War. To survive, many postcolonial countries were forced to choose sides in the cold war and became client pawns in the global chess game. Often this involved further distortions of their economies as resources were diverted into arms races against neighbours who had chosen the opposite loyalty. Some countries superficially benefited from the cold war to the degree that they became show-piece examples to others of the benefits which accrued from such loyalty. Kenya and Cuba were typical examples on opposite sides of the global tug-o’-war. With the sudden economic and political collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of the 1980s and the consequent end of the Cold War a sudden realignment of economic and political relationships took place which resulted in the further marginalisation of many developing countries, especially those no longer needed as showcases for the benefits of various political and economic philosophies. No continent suffered greater marginalisation than Africa. Its interests moved to the outer periphery of world economic relations, where they may be destined to remain until a renewed bi-polar or tri-polar alignment of international/intercontinental relationships makes Africa’s loyalty worth buying again.

The marginalisation, both economic and cultural, of vast areas of the developing world is only increased by the loss, whether in the face of persecution or of economic migration, of those who are often the most gifted and talented, those with the greater sense of initiative and entrepreneurial skills. The paranoia which the arrival of outsiders brings out in a settled population unaccustomed to substantial numbers of foreigners often ignores the fact that those who arrive are on average not the underclass of another society, but usually the more highly educated and skilled. A study around the turn of the millennium demonstrated that the average asylum seeker in Ireland is more highly educated than the average Irish
person. In many cases those who have to flee genuine political persecution do so, not because of their insignificance in their countries of origin, but precisely because their skills, talents and leadership potential make them threats to the present order in their countries.

The moral issues which should be troubling the conscience of the developed world is the degree to which the unprincipled and rapacious policies of colonial and postcolonial eras have caused, or contributed largely to the present impoverishment of the developing world. As asylum seekers and other economic refugees knock insistently on the doors of Fortress Europe perhaps those inside the doors would do well to listen to the troublesome voice from without: ‘we are here, because you were there’.

Refuge and Asylum: A Challenge to the Christian Conscience
Let me begin with a theological outline of why any conscience sensitive to the Christian memory must have a special concern for the stranger in our midst, and this quite independently of any narrow vision of potential conversion or exploitive proselytization. It may help our motivation to consider that the theme of migration, asylum and refuge is woven into the whole tapestry of God’s relationship with human creation as revealed in the Judeo-Christian revelation. With such a foundational memory before us it should not be difficult to empathise with people who for one reason or another have to migrate from the land of their birth.

The Jewish Background
The early history of the Jewish Scriptures, rooted in the memory of captivity in Egypt and the Exodus, sees clearly that the authentic believer is bound to welcome the asylum seeker, precisely as memorial:

When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall do him no wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. (Lev 19:33-34).

The Book of Genesis provides an important narrative to root the religious significance of welcoming the stranger, the narrative of Abraham’s welcome and entertainment of the three strangers at the oaks of Mamre (Gen 18:1-15). The appearance of the three strangers at his tent is seen clearly as his opportunity to welcome a divine visitation. His fidelity in welcoming the visit of the strangers is rewarded by the fruitfulness of Sarah, on which the whole Judeo-Christian tradition is based. The message is unambiguous: welcoming the stranger is a test of fidelity and the occasion of blessing and fruitfulness. The stranger is to be seen, not as burden, but as gift. One is reminded of the striking poster circulated by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, *the asylum seeker brings more than a suitcase: Einstein was an asylum seeker.*

Later, in the 6th century BC the memory of the Jewish people was again forcibly focussed on the theme of asylum as they tried to come to terms with their own exile in Babylon. These events appeared to the people concerned as total national disasters with no redeeming feature whatever. Yet one has only to look to the vibrant Jewish sections of the cities of Europe and the Middle East some centuries later to realise that the exiles were not among the least resourceful sections of the population, but contributed to developments in economics, sciences and philosophy. The contribution of these Jews of the Diaspora is still with us, giving us large sections of the Wisdom literature in the Bible, together with the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, which had such a major impact on the development of early Christianity.

The Babylonian Exile bears remarkable parallels with contemporary cases of asylum. This was not a national Exodus. The Book of Jeremiah tells us that it involved precisely 4600 persons (Jer 52:28-30). But they were well chosen by
circumstances – the intellectual, professional, leadership and priestly classes of Hebrew society. Without them an uprising against the power of Babylon in Palestine was unlikely. Like many exiles, before and since, their first instinct was to rebel against Babylon, the place of their deportation, to hasten their return. But the prophet Jeremiah, who remains behind in Jerusalem sends a letter of advice to the contrary:

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. (Jer 29:4-7).

The parallels are striking. As with contemporary Ireland, the exiles reaching our shores are, by and large, some of the most talented people in the donor population. Many of us who work with the asylum seeking population can testify that they indeed ‘seek the welfare of the city’ (and country) where the forces of history have sent them, if they are given the opportunity to do so. And for us, the indigenous population, our welfare and their welfare are inextricably linked.

*The Christian Scriptures*

The Gospel of Matthew opens with the overwhelming outpouring of the divine generosity in the birth of the Saviour. But the peace of the situation is radically marred with an act of violence and brutality, as a merciless and totally unscrupulous dictator, Herod the Great, pursues his political and dynastic interests with the massacre of the innocent children of Bethlehem (Mt 2:13-18). The sequel is just one among so many incidents in human history where
innocent survivors have been forced to flee and seek asylum in a neighbouring country. The drama of the gospel story is that the very survival of the Saviour depended on the hospitality of a foreign people towards the fleeing asylum seekers Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus. We read the angelic instruction to Joseph:

Rise, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child to destroy him. And he (Joseph) rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. (Mt 2:13-15)

Each generation of history has not lacked reincarnations of Herod the Great. The stories we hear at our own *Spiritan Asylum Services Initiative* (SPIRASI) project in Dublin are the contemporary retelling of the story over and over again, whether its new setting is Iraq, Afghanistan, Congo, Rwanda, Sudan or wherever. Surely many of those we now call asylum seekers reaching our shores can make a claim on our Christian conscience to be reincarnations of the family of Nazareth, even if many of them have never even heard of Nazareth or its most famous family. Later in his public ministry Jesus would use the attitude of the disciple towards the stranger as a criterion for salvation, for Jesus identifies himself with the experience of the stranger at the hands of those claiming to be disciples.

I was a stranger and you welcomed me….. Lord when did we see you a stranger and welcomed you? …. As you did it to one of these the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it to me. (Mat 25:36,39,40)

And of course by contrast, the downside of the question is relevant: ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ (Mat 25:43, 45)

This remains our challenge today as we find ourselves confronted by the movements of history, which have again brought
the alien stranger to our shores. Having ourselves as Irish the national memory of seeking refuge in foreign lands, perhaps we have more reason than most to remember and to welcome.

A Global View
As members of the new global village, whose consciousness has been so influenced by the communications revolution, we are challenged to look at that haunting gospel question, *Who is my neighbour?* (Lk 29:10). The movements towards globalisation, such a feature of modern consciousness, invite us to look to that other great movement with a global horizon: the Christian message of the human family united under the one divine parentage. Too often we reflect on globalisation as affecting trade, industry, defence and communications policy, without adverting to the fact that it also refers to the insecurity and instability which has provoked 22 million people to leave their homelands and seek refuge and asylum wherever it may be found. The evolution of human history is finally catching up with the Christian vision of seeing the human race as one, including its problems and solutions.

Migration as a Matter of Concern for the Irish Christian Community
The influx of migrants into the Irish context in recent years takes many different forms and demands a variety of responses. Migrants may have undertaken migration under force of circumstances or voluntarily. Those under duress may be forced by circumstances of discrimination which fit the definition of "asylum seeker" under the Geneva Convention of 1951. Or the force may be extreme poverty and lack of opportunity in one's home country. These are economic migrants. In the case of economic migrants they may be either temporary or semi-permanent, depending on their intention

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3 The Geneva Convention 1951 which refers to anyone who: owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.
of returning to their home country. The migrants may be coming from a background of varying degrees of Christian commitment, or have no particular Christian affiliation. The missioned response demanded from the Christian community in each case varies.

I venture to suggest that there are three levels of pastoral response to be considered: advocacy, fellowship, and care (whether it be pastoral or humanitarian). I also suggest that the response demanded differs depending on the circumstances of the migrants.

**Advocacy:**
Advocacy in this context refers to ‘speaking on behalf of’ in the public forum. At first sight it might appear to imply that migrants cannot speak on their own behalf; this would appear patronising. However, given the difficult situation of migrants, especially in the early months and years of their migration, advocacy on the side of the host community can be very important. To officialdom, the outsider has little status or need to be heard, and may be dealt with in a dismissive way because they have little political or economic clout. That Christians of the host community undertake advocacy on behalf of migrants can be a most fruitful exercise. As citizens and voters they cannot be ignored, especially when they do so in an organised way, making a voice for justice and peace to be heard.

**Fellowship, friendship and acts of solidarity:**
The migrant inevitably experiences loneliness and alienation in a society, often suspicious, often unwelcoming, sometimes showing elements of racism and xenophobia. Mission in this context will often show itself in attempting to bridge the gap of alienation, to reach across the boundaries of otherness which human prejudice creates, especially following the model of Jesus’ mission as portrayed in the Gospel of Luke.

Some time ago I was in contact with an African Catholic asylum seeker who had arrived in Ireland some weeks previously. She lived with her three children in a hostel in South County Dublin. After her arrival, for four weeks, she attended Sunday Eucharist at the local Catholic parish with her children. In the four
weeks, nobody spoke to her, neither did anyone abuse her. It was just as if she did not exist. She told me she would never go back to the local Catholic parish. She has since joined a Pentecostal Church of indigenous African origin where she was made welcome and made to feel that her presence mattered. Here is the outstanding challenge that the presence of the stranger poses to the professed fellowship (*koinonia*) of our worshipping communities. If the stranger does not receive a welcome in their local worshipping community, where will they receive it? Very few of our Irish churches have welcoming ministries established to ensure that the outsider feels accepted. It appears that other competing, and often sectarian churches, provide such a welcoming ministry. It is hardly a matter of surprise that Catholics, who expect welcome and acceptance from their fellow worshippers, would drift towards churches or sects which purposely reach out towards such people suffering alienation and dislocation.

The mission of solidarity is not limited to Christian or Roman Catholic migrants. There are particular ways in which an appropriate solidarity should express itself for those sharing a common faith tradition, or indeed any or no faith tradition. There is a more basic common tradition which emerges from one’s common humanity, which is a most important part of the Christian vision of universal human solidarity.

**Care:**
Acts of caring overlap in many instances with acts of solidarity. Caring for the needs of migrants is a particular way in which human solidarity expresses itself. Some of the needs of migrants may very well be supplied by state services, but in many cases the information about these services does not reach the migrant until long after they arrive in the country, unless they are fortunate enough to enter a support community of fellow migrants, often of the same ethnic origin. Generally we need to be aware of the fact that official policies for the care of migrants distinguish migrant status. Migrants from within the European Union are the most favoured as are those with work permits granted on the basis of
skills they have to offer to the economy.

The most vulnerable by far is the asylum seeker, in the period while his/her request for asylum is being assessed. Numbers seeking asylum in Ireland peaked around the year 2001 at 12000 applications per annum. It has now dropped to around 4000 per annum; in first eight months of 2005 they averaged 380 per month. The drop is not to be interpreted as a reduction in the needs for asylum, but largely due to improvements in the European security network to prevent potential asylum seekers ever reaching our borders to claim asylum. These asylum seekers are prevented from working legally, and receive a minimum subsistence allowance. For those described as on ‘Direct Provision’, basic healthcare and accommodation is provided by the State in 61 centres spread over 24 counties of Ireland. On 31st August 2005 there were 4860 in these centres.4

There is a particular category of asylum seeker in even greater need of solidarity and care. A substantial percentage (estimates vary between 10% and 30%) experience torture and/or rape, either in their home country before fleeing, or on route. Special services need to be provided for such individuals if they are ever to come to terms with their trauma and play a constructive role in society in the future. The Centre for the Care of Torture Survivors, North Circular Road Dublin, is one such effort from Church initiative to reach out to such special cases.5

Another category of migrants in need of particular attention are the victims of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. This sinister trade has become much more common in recent decades. A great worry is the category of unaccompanied minors who number some hundreds annually. Some find a place of protection within pre-existing immigrant networks, but many seem to disappear from official statistics without trace, and may very

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4 Numbers in this paragraph are taken from the newsletter Sanctuary, produced by the Refugee & Migrant Project of the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference, Columba Centre, Maynooth, no. 37, September 2005.

5 The Centre for the Care of Torture Survivors functions under the management of the SPIRASI Project at 213, North Circular Road, Dublin 7.
well become the objects of sexual and/or economic exploitation.

A totally different category of migrants arriving on our shores are voluntary migrants arriving with work permits (e.g. from Brazil), or not needing work permits (from recent accession states of the European Union). Many of these are coming from a Roman Catholic or other Christian background. Some consider themselves as temporary migrants intending to stay in Ireland to accumulate capital or send remittances home. Others seek to make permanent residence in Ireland. Their needs for care are totally different from the refugee and asylum seeking community. Such migrants will often remain separate from the Irish community for language or cultural reasons, encouraging religious ministers to come from their home country to minister to them. In some cases dioceses and religious congregations have sought to fill these needs for pastoral ministry by releasing personnel for this work or encouraging churches in the countries of origin to provide ministers for their religious needs. The significance of this for the future of Irish society and the Irish Church should not be underestimated. There are roughly 60,000 registered Polish citizens in Ireland, most recently arrived since the accession of Eastern European countries to the European Union. It is hard not to notice the parallel in terms of Church service, with the creation of the Irish Diaspora in the nineteenth century, and the subsequent interest of the Irish Church to service the ministerial needs of their diaspora. Out of this emerged vibrant churches of the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand to name but a few. It does not require a great leap of imagination to see profound changes coming for the Irish Church out of this immigrant phenomenon.

Implications for Pastoral Ministry and Liturgy
The arrival of Christians and Catholics from other cultural backgrounds provides opportunities for enrichment over a wide range of pastoral and liturgical areas. It transposes the issues of inculturation, or more precisely interculturation, from mission theory to application.

A sense of interculturation demands that local churches adopt
a sensitive pastoral approach to the needs of foreigners, especially from Africa. The average African Catholic is horrified at the general apathy and lack of participation to be found in the typical Irish parish liturgy. Those of us who have spent time in Africa can well understand why. In the long run, perhaps the coming of the stranger in our Catholic midst may be the occasion for an element of renewal in the enthusiasm and participation in our liturgical celebrations, but only when these people receive a welcome into our worshipping communities. Here is a way in which we may very well talk of reverse mission. If the European Churches were at one stage in history the medium for bringing the gospel message to the Southern hemisphere, the circle can now reach completion where some of the enthusiasm of a richly appropriated faith can return to enliven a tired and exhausted ecclesial life in the Northern hemisphere.

But to ensure that the real needs of newcomers are adequately catered for, and to guard against a drift towards sectarian churches, it may be necessary to consider the possibility of specialised pastoral ministry towards foreigners in our midst, and even of specialised parishes which would cater to these needs. This would be a ministry most appropriate for expatriate pastoral workers from the churches of the Southern hemisphere, assisted by pastoral workers with experience of mission in that hemisphere.

Absorption, multiculturalism or integration

In the broader context of how we view the future of Irish society we need to answer some very basic questions about how we view the future of these new comers to our shores. The question is not just Irish but European in its implications. There are two poles of possibilities. On one extreme we imagine a society into which all newcomers are expected to conform to the pre-existing forms of Irish society: total absorption. On the other extreme we imagine a truly postmodern societal model where multiculturalism is encouraged to the point where all principle of identity is lost. Between the extremes is a future involving integration where the new elements in our society are eventually blended in an integral
way which will create a new entity better than any of the parts individually.

References:
Begley, Michael G. et al. Asylum in Ireland: A Public Health Perspective. Dublin: Department of Public Health, Medicine and Epidemiology, University College Dublin, 1999;
The Refugee & Migrant Project of the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference. Sanctuary Newsletter, Columba Centre, Maynooth;
In a society like Ireland where globalisation and interdependency have combined to produce continued economic success and increased diversity of people, the question of a cultural mix has remained controversial. Many Irish people, who are baffled at the way Ireland has changed within a few years from a nation of emigration to nation of immigration, always say that they did not ask for it. Often you hear comments from some Irish people, like “we were not consulted” or “no one asked us if we wanted them,” as if nature can be cheated.

Challenges of Inclusion – Ireland and immigrants:
There is no doubt that immigration to Ireland is a new phenomenon. But unlike millions of Irish people forced to leave the shores of Ireland because of famine and starvation, many immigrants to Ireland, at the turn of the Celtic Tiger, were invited here to rescue the economy from sinking. A report, “Voices of Immigrants: The Challenges of Inclusion” observed,

As the Irish economy grew in the 1990s, Ireland was one of the last EU countries to reach its migration turning point, which it did in 1996. At this time, Ireland moved from being a country of emigration to becoming a country of immigration, where immigration was encouraged to fill skill
shortages.³

One of the methods used by Ireland to actively attract workers was by showcasing its great jobs potential through advertising campaigns and job fares held in some foreign countries by FAS, the Department of Trade, Enterprise and Employment and other groups. From a trickle, the number of migrant workers gradually increased. Although the campaign targeted a specific set of people, within a short time news of Ireland’s employment opportunities spread far and wide. The State began to experience different types of inward movement, not least asylum seekers and students. That development culminated in Ireland being currently host to nationals from over 190 countries.

The dominant Irish culture, the long established cultures of the Travelling people, the Jewish community, and those different traditions and cultures brought by men and women who arrived in Ireland seeking a better future, represent the birth of the current Irish multiculturalism. This means the existence of new people, new lifestyles, new languages and new cultures alongside an existing dominant society. In short, as Keith Spiller believes,

The recognition of asylum seekers, refugees, immigrants and other nationalities born in Ireland is directing Ireland towards its first acknowledgements of the country becoming a multicultural society. Indeed people like Samantha Mumba with her Dublin accent or Sean Og O’Halpin with his All-Ireland medals, are shifting the stereotypical image of what makes an Irish woman and man.⁴

However, unlike the USA, England, Sweden, South Africa and Canada, which have witnessed long term immigration, the Irish version of multiculturalism, though still evolving, is seen as a negative development by many Irish people. Also, there has not

been an honest and rational debate on multiculturalism. Currently discussion about the issue has mainly revolved around asylum seekers and racism and it is in no small way contributing to halting the positive development of multiculturalism. Many people are failing to understand that the same “mix of colours and cultures that gives such exuberance to New York and London,\(^5\)” which we all celebrate on trips to such countries, is what many people currently resent here.

Evidence of this resentment abounds. At the eve of the 2004 Cabinet reshuffle Gay Mitchell, TD, Foreign Affairs Spokesperson for Fine Gael – a party that has not itself been proactive in encouraging cross-cultural understanding and cooperation in Ireland – called for the appointment of a Minister of State to coordinate immigrant affairs across all Departments. Although he scored a cheap political point by saying it, his statement nevertheless describes the situation very well:

This Minister could proactively combat racism, ensure that the health, education and other needs of immigrants are addressed and promote integration policies. This would mean having programmes in place to educate both the indigenous and immigrant population on the dangers of racism.

A significant number of people, when they do not receive what they consider are their entitlements, complain to TDs that they would get them 'if they were immigrants'. Most do not distinguish between bogus asylum seekers and real asylum seekers or other immigrants. This bad feeling, if it is allowed to fester, will eventually give rise to conflict and possibly violence.\(^6\)

Such bad feelings emanate from lack of proper programmes and

\(^5\) *The Economist* “Opening the Door”, 2 November, 2002. 11

policies to promote multiculturalism in Ireland. To put it in a different way, it is political or rather Government inaction that has bedevilled real progress being made in creating a multicultural society. This issue will be discussed in detail later.

**Progress towards multiculturalism:**
Like many people who have lived through the changes in Ireland within the last decade, I would say that some progress has been made; though it could be better. As Councillor Rotimi Adebari – one of the two Africans elected in the 2004 local election told me recently:

> We are not doing too badly. We are getting there. If a country that became multicultural not quite 10 years ago can elect two (Black) people this year to the local council then you can say that progress has been made especially in the local level.  

Of course that can be said to be real progress if one considers the fact that only one notable immigrant politician – with no Irish ancestry, Dr Bhamji had previously been elected to public office (the Dail) – in the history of the State. Also if you compare the Irish situation with the history of multiculturalism in the USA or UK, only God knows how long it took those countries to make such political progress.

The implication of this is that many Irish people are receptive to immigrants in Ireland. Apart from the two new Independent Councillors – Rotimi Adebari representing Portlaoise Town Council and Dr Matthew Taiwo representing Ennis Town Council – a few other immigrant candidates who contested the local election, though not elected, made their marks.

I am not saying that the candidates were handed the elections on a golden platter. No! They fought for it and also had to contend with very many problems including racism. Whatever level of

7 Interview with Councillor Rotimi Adebari.
discrimination they faced during that election, the good news is the rejection at the polls of a few Irish candidates who, flying the race card, sought council seats and election into the European parliament. Fortunately, voters also rejected the Immigration Control Platform candidates in the last general election. This has not been the case in most EU countries where “Racism shows us new faces: the far right gains more and more power through elections, neo-nazis are not just unorganised groups of skinheads anymore, but ‘respectable’ persons dressed in suits; racism is present in pop culture and in sports.”

Many immigrants to Ireland have also been received locally with mixed feelings. Where multiculturalism only has to do with food and music, the message of cross-cultural understanding and cooperation has been very well received, maybe because they know no boundaries. When you compare this with Sweden I would like to say that Ireland is gradually forging ahead. Swedes are colder than the Irish in spite of the laudable Swedish integration policies and programmes that encourage diversity. In January 2003 I had the opportunity to visit some migrant-led organisations in Sweden. I was surprised to hear that multicultural events, which are synonymous with bringing communities together in divergent societies, are hardly attended by Swedes. Having said this, it is important to stress here that there has not been enough contact established between minority ethnic groups and the larger Irish society. Apart from children, especially those involved in sports, both new and old communities are not socialising enough and community spirit is not being formed. As I mentioned earlier, the Government is hugely to blame for this.

**Government not doing Enough to encourage diversity:**
Institutional racism, according to Bryan Fanning, is “a term which describes the way Black and ethnic and minorities suffer from discrimination when racism within society becomes reflected in

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organisations and institutions”. "Discrimination may result from the inability of, or unwillingness of, organisations and institutions to take into account societal diversity in the provision of services.”

There have been cases of this. The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism, in its Six-Monthly Racist Incidents Reports for the period November 2003 to April 2004, said that “A Romanian woman with a disability was asked for her ticket on board a train. When she produced her free travel pass the rail worker refused to believe that the pass belonged to her and subsequently removed it from her. The woman was very upset and was forced to apply for a replacement card.” The report also tells of an Irish Muslim who was asked to change her photograph because she was wearing a headscarf when she applied for a new Irish passport.

Continued Government denial of the existence of racism in society is also having a negative impact in the acceptance of diversity. In 2001, at the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia, the former Minister for Justice John O’Donoghue (now Minister for Arts) said that Ireland will deal with racism when it occurs. It seems that being in denial is the norm for the Department of Justice. In a recent interview with the current Minister for Justice, Michael McDowell, he said: “Ireland is not racist.” Minister McDowell in 2003 cut the Know Racism budget because he believed “that there was nothing to fund.” And that the anti-racism campaign was coming to an end. At that time racism was, and is still, a major concern to many immigrants in Ireland. Racist attacks are on the rise and ethnic minority-led organisations are begging for funding to execute anti-racism initiatives. Given that he cut the anti-racism budget, how can racism be properly combated?

Many members of ethnic minorities do not feel confident

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going to the gardai (police) to report crimes (including racist incidents) either against them or against other members of society. Gardai need to recruit ethnic minorities into the force. Such a move is highly likely to engender trust and confidence in multicultural policing which is currently lacking.

I am not saying that all anti-racism campaigns work or that a friendly garda face is enough in enhancing cross-cultural understanding. As Anastasia Crickley emphasised:

> We do not believe either that addressing racism or being clear about what we are against is enough in itself...There is another urgent parallel struggle, not a new one, but one which now more than ever needs debate, discourse and decisions, towards fashioning our inclusive intercultural Europe of the future.”

Therefore, in talking about making real progress towards creating a multicultural society, a number of immigration issues will need to be properly resolved. As of July 2004, over 8,130 applications for citizenship are currently awaiting completion. Of these, more than 6,963 applications are for naturalisation while over 1,167 are declarations of post-nuptial citizenship and include applications “received in the period 1999 to date,” according to a Department of Justice spokesperson. The Justice Department does not know when these applications will be looked into. The Minister said the problem is to do with staffing – that 420 staff out of nearly 650 public servants in the Department are presently involved with the asylum issue. Should this set of people, many of whom have contributed enormously to the growth and development of this country over the years, be continuously made to wait endlessly?

There have been a series of calls from several sectors of the country for the Government to regularise the situation of asylum seekers who either have Irish children or are legally working. The

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12 Metro Eireann, July 2004 “Anti-racism ‘is not enough”
13 Metro Eireann, August 2004, “Naturalisation linked to jobs”
Government response has been that there will not be a general amnesty and that cases will be handled individually. However, to continuously allow several thousands of people to remain in limbo does not augur well for multiethnic Ireland. Many of these people are able-bodied and ready to work, but are not allowed to do so. As such, they are being forced to remain on social welfare and be seen as good-for-nothings by many Irish people.

In 1999, a number of asylum seekers got permission to work. At present, many of them still await decisions largely on their application for humanitarian leave to remain in the State. Because they have no residence permit, some of them who have been able to raise deposits for their mortgages are being denied mortgages because they have no confirmed residency status. Even some non-Irish nationals who are legally resident are being refused mortgages either because they are not citizens or because they only have a one-year residency stamp.

The current deportation of asylum seekers (many of whom have Irish children) should also be handled sensitively and sensibly. In June 2004, when the Citizenship Referendum was held to decide whether children born in Ireland should continue to get automatic citizenship, 80 per cent voted not to make citizenship automatic by birth. I truly respect that decision. However, the result of the referendum runs against the belief of the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, which said that the granting of citizenship automatically to any child born in the State “may play a positive role in facilitating the integration of the immigrant population…” Minister of Justice Michael McDowell does not agree. He thinks that “the rest of Europe doesn’t believe it either. And 80 per cent of Irish people don’t believe in it either.”

It begs an answer; for how can we build a multiethnic society when we forcefully remove Irish children who were born before June 11 2004 by deporting their parents and asking them to either go with or leave their children behind?

Former Labour Party leader Ruairi Quinn, TD, argued before

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14 Metro Eireann, August 2004. “I don’t believe in a homogenous society”
the presentation of the 2004 Irish Nationality and Citizenship Bill to the Dail,

In the interests of these families and their children, I believe they should, subject of course to basic security checks, be permitted to remain. The breaking up of the families of young children is too high a price to pay simply in order to safeguard the orderly administration of our immigration system. We should take this opportunity to regularise the status of the relatively small number of people who are living here at present in a legal limbo.\textsuperscript{15}

The lack of Government provision of adequate programmes and policies and continued lip service to multiethnic Ireland by politicians have made it possible for certain sections of the Irish media to continue to sweep up sentiments against ethnic minorities and also question the need for multiculturalism, thereby making multicultural Ireland more rhetoric than substance.

**Negative Media Portrayal of Ethnic Minorities:**
Many media in Ireland are deepening 'the colour line.' We have an appalling media portrayal of most ethnic minorities in Ireland, especially asylum seekers and refugees. It is not unusual for the group to complain about one headline/article or the other at different seminars and conferences on racism and equality. In 2002, there was an outcry over the Irish Daily Mirror headline on the front page, "Free Cars For Refugees"\textsuperscript{16}. The story is certainly untrue. I have not seen any country that has ever given free cars to anyone, talk less of cars for refugees, irrespective of whatever economic windfall that may be available in such a State. Racist sentiments are also being fuelled by the use of words such as 'floods' and 'soft touch'. There is therefore little doubt as to why

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\textsuperscript{15} Citizenship Bill will not justify mass deportations policy of McDowell Statement by Ruairi Quinn TD, Wednesday 29 September, 2004. Source: www.labour.ie/press/listing/20040929123255.html

\textsuperscript{16} Monday September 16.
ethnic minorities and proponents of multiculturalism accuse some Irish media of being grossly irresponsible in promoting hatred and misrepresentation of non-Irish people who are struggling to survive here. Katrina Goldstone argues:

Travellers and black people are equally misrepresented and negatively portrayed in the Irish media. In particular also various codes and code terms have evolved in the Irish media which are no more that a form of racist shorthand.\(^{17}\)

It is in this regard that Van Dijk “concluded that the press in Europe plays a central role in maintaining (and sometimes aggravating) the 'ethnic status quo,' if not in the reproduction of racism”.\(^{18}\) The implication is that if the media is giving a negative view about people subconsciously, the people reading it are going to have a negative view about those people, including multiculturalism represented in the media.\(^{19}\)

In his book “Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda,” Noam Chomsky questions the usefulness of the media in a democratic society. He states, “The role of the media in contemporary politics forces us to ask: What kind of a world and what kind of a society we want to live in, and in particular, in what sense of democracy do we want this to be a democratic society?”\(^{20}\)

For instance, the media have not been able to fully communicate the interests of immigrants to politicians. Also, as local elections come up, reports about possible immigrant involvement have failed to inform the society why they would want to get involved in Irish politics. This is why Chomsky’s question, judging by the nature of

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\(^{17}\) Katrina Goldstone in Chinedu Onyejelem, How Black People Feel About Media Representation. MPhil in Ethnic and Racial Studies Department of Sociology, University of Dublin, Trinity College. October 2003.

\(^{18}\) Van Dijk (www.discourse-in-society.org/beliar-e.htm)

\(^{19}\) Chinedu Onyejelem, How Black People Feel About Media Representation. MPhil in Ethnic and Racial Studies Department of Sociology, University of Dublin, Trinity College. October 2003.

modern media and especially its agenda setting role, will never go away. What the Irish media should rather be doing in its agenda-setting role is communicating balanced ideas about ethnic groups in Ireland.

A good example of how the mainstream media organisations can proactively encourage multiculturalism is by employing ethnic media workers, several of whom are currently unemployed. Radio is particularly strong in creating and supporting a multiethnic society. This is why it is regrettable that the much-awaited ethnic radio station advertised by the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland, BCI, failed to materialise. On the closing date for receipt of applications on 9 July 2004, two applications Failte FM and Global94.9fm, had been submitted, but none were deemed to be suitable. The BCI can still help by recognising evolving multiculturalism in Ireland and boost ethnic minorities' presence on screen and behind the scenes by making it a condition of every licensed visual media that ethnic minorities be adequately represented.

Contributions of Ethnic Minorities to Diversity:
Members of the ethnic minorities do have their own contribution to make if diversity is to be strongly valued and celebrated. I am against the call in the past for minorities to show loyalty to Ireland so that life will be better for them. As an American journalist and lecturer Harry Browne said in defence of immigrants: No ‘loyalty’ should be required of them. According to him, “In Ireland, as in America, the notion that there is some stable, pre-existing “host culture”, to which immigrants owe respect and loyalty, is simply a form of mythology. Migration, as Irish people know all too well, is part of the dynamic of an ever-changing world. “Ireland” is already defined partly by what its latest immigrants make of it.”21 I totally agree with him. There are rules and regulations that govern lives in Ireland and ethnic minorities need to obey the law, which is the main institution of the State.

21 Harry Browne, Metro Eireann, October 2002.
AFRICAN COMMUNALISM: FROM A CULTURAL MODEL TO A CULTURE IN CRISIS

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Abstract
Communalism is central in African social consciousness. It is a cultural model, which shapes the individual’s self vision, relationship with the ‘other’ and the entire cosmos. This paper argues that African communalism is steadily moving from a cultural model to a culture in crisis. It is of the opinion that this movement ought to be understood within the context of the effects of Africa’s contact with the outside world through the slave trade, colonialism, Christian missionary enterprises, Islamization and the ongoing processes of globalisation. These historical events are recreating African social landscapes and consciousness. They are reshaping ideals of living and relationships, dressing codes and body management, diets and architecture. Coupled with these is a particular theology of some popular Christian religious movements who portray traditional African life, communities, and practices as brewing houses of divine curses, which eventuate to poverty and suffering. These various new forms of social and religious visions are inventing new living conditions and thought patterns, which have set in motion chains of conflicts, which confront communal living in present day Africa.

Introduction
Igbo communities (as an example of African communities) have always experienced internal tensions. Among many such examples include: the divides between the Ogaranya (the rich) and Ogbenyenye (the poor), the Osu (outcast) and diala (worthy citizen), Ohu (slave/servant) and Di (master), OfekelEfulefu (social misfit) and ‘nwoke’ (titled and initiated). However, historical and social developments (more intensely) since the 19th century have introduced new twists into these conflicts. Religious divisions
between Christians and ‘heathens’, Catholics and Protestants, Born-agains and Non Born-agains (Christians and Muslims, Believers and Infidels) are examples of such new dimensions of problems in a social evolution within an African community. Another illustration is the distinctions among the Yoruba between the Aje-bota and Aje-pako. The former designate children of the affluent, educated, Westernised and presumed polished, while the latter are impoverished, traditional and un-Westernised.

The first set of conflicts was managed within the community itself while the second is consistently taking scary dimensions, even threatening to rip the entire system apart. The second not only heats up the system but also questions its existence and continued relevance. My concentration in this paper is on the new forms of conflicts, which have been so vividly captured in different home video productions in Nigeria since the first half of the 1990s. The traditional community is gradually moving from a domain of trust, safety and communion to suspicion, danger and fear. African traditional communalism thus stands on a precipice of unprecedented crises. This essay springs from my Igbo (Nigerian) background and may or may not apply to all African communities with the same intensity.

A Moral and Cultural Model
In its essence, African communalism goes beyond the mere congregating of people to involve a deeper sense of relationality and communal existence. It is a way of living in which the lives of people are profoundly interpenetrated by others, with mutual influences and corresponding rights and obligations. “The community is therefore an integrated entity that is undergirded and kept alive by extended relationships, the purpose of which is to enhance unity and promote greater and greater friendly cooperation.”¹ It has “a religious foundation and goes beyond the limits of its visible members to include God, often regarded as the

first grand ancestor of the community, or the overlord or chief; the ancestors who are forebears of the community and who uphold community unity and cooperation as well as those yet to be born. The divinities who sustain social institutions as part of their assigned responsibilities from the creator, also form part of the community.”

Members of a society therefore see themselves as not only descendants of common ancestors, but are bound together under their spiritual presence, which in turn “wield an immensely sacred influence in setting every living person on the path of righteousness and justice.” On the one hand, the African participates in a community life in which he/she shares in a “common familyhood with others – those who are dead and those who are to be born.” On the other hand he/she participates in a community and communion not just with fellow human beings but with spiritual realities that permeate the entire societal fabric, making existence unthinkable without this communion.

The entire social life is therefore pervaded by this sense of community and communion. Bénézet Bujo describes African social life as deeply rooted in the community, with each member bestowed with the “inalienable responsibility for protecting and prolonging the life of the community in all its aspects.” This manifests itself in various involvements for community harmony and individual well-being, stretching from the cradle to the grave. It manifests itself as much in mutual work as in celebrations. “It is unthinkable to celebrate a feast without the participation of the

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2 Ibid., pp. 488-489.
3 Ibid. p. 489.
5 C. C. AGU, Secularization in Igoland. Socio-Religious Change and its Challenges to the Church Among the Igbo, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1989. p. 228.
whole village.”

The African could say, “I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.” What underlies this sense of communion is that no individual, whether man or spirit is self-sufficient. Each needs others for a balanced existence. The spirits need human beings for sacrifices while the human beings need the spirits for protection, increased harvests, good health, etc. The adult men protect their wives and children. The adult women feed the family. The children go for errands at home, keep the home clean, fetch water and firewood, etc. It will almost amount to a taboo for any group to take over the roles of another group. Hence, the ethical maxim of social life in Africa is that of beneficial reciprocity (aka nri kwo aka ikpa, aka ikpa akwo aka nri – It is only proper that the right and left hands wash each other clean).

Within this system, every person is recognised as such and his/her role, respected. Within this society, the wrong done to a member of the same society is viewed with great consternation. In this type of community everyone is brother/sister to another. Each person has something to contribute or is expected to contribute to the well being of the society. Joys and sorrows are shared by all.

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7 JOHN PAUL II, Ecclesia in Africa, AAS, 88 (1996) 5-82. no. 43.
10 In Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart, Okonkwo (the major character of the book) had to pay a great price – he was sent into exile for manslaughter (unknowingly killing a member of the community through a stray bullet). Okonkwo’s status in the community and the involuntary nature of the crime did not spare him the punishment, which tradition had prescribed. [See C. ACHEBE, Things Fall Apart, London: Heinemann, 1958. pp. 86-87.
11 Many African societies do not have vocabularies for uncle, aunt, niece, nephew and cousin. Nwanne or nwanna is a word among the Igbo people, which qualifies all these relationships. Nelson Mandela shares a similar view in his autobiography. “In African culture, the sons and daughters of one’s aunts or uncles are considered brothers and sisters, not cousins. We do not make the same distinctions among relations practised by whites. We have no half-brothers or half-sisters. My mother’s sister is my mother; my uncle’s son is my brother; my brother’s child is my son, my daughter.” [N. MANDELA, Long Walk to Freedom. The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela, London: Abacus 2004. p. 10.]
Basic Theses
Bernard E. Meland argues, “the thinking of a people moves within a set of images that illuminate the meaning of terms and set limits to their understanding. This imagery is bound up with their life experience, the sensibilities of the age, and scientific constructs”\(^\text{12}\). Meland’s argument moves our thoughts from the more general tendency of approaching culture from a predominantly anthropological perspective to a sociological reading. The anthropological approach leads one to describe a people’s way of life (culture) exclusively as a given reality. The sociological goes beyond description to recognise that a people’s way of life could be understood within the dynamics of social change. It emphasises that culture is not just a given but is created through historical forces and the processes of cross-cultural interaction.

From this context, this essay argues that Africa’s contact with the outside world and the ongoing processes of globalisation are recreating the African continent in unimaginable proportions. They are transforming patterns of thought, preferences in diet, dressing, housing, etiquettes, appetites and fancies. They are reengineering visions and ideals of living, perceptions of self, of others and of entire societies. They are rearranging social, political and economic landscapes, creating new winners and losers. They are inventing new living conditions, which have set in motion the chains of conflicts, which confront communal living in present day Africa.

This essay has two basic theses. First, it argues that the crises of communalism in African societies could be located within the effects of the new historical and social circumstances of living. They include the consequences of colonialism with its effects of urbanisation, the arbitrary nature of modern African states, and the complications of globalisation. Second, it relates the crises of African communality to the emergence of religious interpretations (especially in the activities of the new and popular Christian religious movements). These religious thoughts portray traditional

African life, communities, and practices as brewing houses of divine curses, which eventuate to poverty and suffering. Within these contexts (social and religious), African communal living confronts new questions and problems, which could best be described as crises. These crises could lead to new definitions of community and communality, fortification of present models of communality or a transition from communalism to individualism.

**European Biases and the Seeds of Disintegration**

*Ekpere maka ntogha nke Afrika* (prayer formulated by European missionaries\(^\text{13}\) for the conversion of Africa which was recited in many Igbo Roman Catholic Churches in Nigeria) mirrors the depth of European prejudice and misconception of Africa. Of significance is the German philosopher Emmanuel Kant (who, already in 1764) divided humanity between “the peoples of our part of the world” and “other parts of the world”.\(^\text{14}\) The first group included Italians, French, Germans, English, Spaniards, and Dutch. These are people who (according to Kant) have distinguished themselves in their appreciation and taste for the beautiful and the sublime. He further divided the second group into two. On the one hand are the Arabs, Persians, Japanese, Indians and Chinese. On the other are those he referred to as savages – “the Negroes of Africa”\(^\text{15}\) and the Native American communities. He fine-tuned his distinction by adding: “So fundamental is the difference between these two races of man, and it appears to be as great in regard to

\(^\text{13}\) My concentrating on Europeans and Christian missionaries does not mean that the Islamic and Arabic incursions into Africa did not have negative imports for traditional communal living. I am avoiding discussing this angle firstly because I do not have the competence and materials to explore the issue in a greater detail. Secondly, my Igbo culture (which forms the background of this discussion) has relatively no Islamic influence.


\(^\text{15}\) For Kant, “the Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling....The blacks are very vain but in the Negro’s way, and so talkative that they must be driven apart from each other with trashings.” [*Ibid.*., pp. 110-111].
mental capacities as in colour."\textsuperscript{16} Kant's unfair distinction points to the predominant mindset of the European colonialists and missionaries and it helps us to understand partly why they attacked African cultural life and aimed to turn Africans away from it, to transform them from 'natives' to 'civilised' persons. The European way of life was for them the standard of civilisation. Africans were therefore to be trained to reject their traditional ways of life in order to move away from 'savagery' and 'stagnation'.

The new cultural model and its promises of paradise would begin a long process of transforming modes of thought and appreciation of African culture, community and relationality. The European campaigns began to yield fruits when Africans started turning against their own people and culture. Chinua Achebe's \textit{Things Fall Apart} narrates the story of a man called Enoch. He was suspected of killing and eating the sacred python. He went further to desecrate and unmask \textit{egwugwu} (masquerade) in public.\textsuperscript{17} The story of Enoch is one instance of how the effects of either adherence to the missionaries or colonialists led Africans to turn against their own people and ways of life. The sense of community became also a victim of this unfolding drama. Those who were converted to Christianity began to look down on those who remained faithful to the religion of their ancestors. Missionaries established 'Christian Villages' in some localities in order to separate the Christian converts from other members of the community.\textsuperscript{18} They called them heathens and tagged them as those

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 111.

\textsuperscript{17} In the legendary Umuofia community (of \textit{Things Fall Apart}), Egwugwu was believed to be "the ancestors of the clan who had been committed to Mother-Earth at their death" but who emerge, "as \textit{egwugwu} through tiny ant-holes" during the celebrations of great ancestral feasts or when invoked by the community. "One of the greatest crimes a man could commit was to unmask an \textit{egwugwu} in public, or to say or to do anything which might reduce its immortal prestige in the eyes of the uninitiated. And this was what Enoch did." [See C. ACHEBE, \textit{Things Fall Apart}, p. 131.]

\textsuperscript{18} By way of description, "Christian villages were a Roman Catholic device made famous by the works of Jesuits fathers in Paraguay, where the Fathers made mass conversions of Indians and established them in little theocratic states
destined to burn in hell.\textsuperscript{19} The seeds of conflict were thus sown. A community became divided between Christians and 'heathens', Catholics and Protestants, Born-agains and non-born-agains. Michael Echeruo once wrote that the use of "brothers and sisters" by Christian preachers in African communities is not as friendly and inclusive as it appears. Rather it is meant for a specific group of people (the believers). It splits an African community instead of uniting it. "Non-believers are not brothers and sisters in this construction of the family".\textsuperscript{20}

\textbf{The Effects of the Urban Culture}

The establishment of trading posts and administrative centres by European merchants and colonial officers and the introduction of money as a means of providing one's needs led to the growth of urban centres in Africa. Furthermore, the rise of industries, (for instance in Nigeria the Plateau tin mines, the Coal fields in Enugu, the rubber and the timber industries in Benin and Sapelle respectively, and the plantations in Cameroon), required a higher labour force which could not be provided solely by the indigenous peoples in whose locality these industries were located. These two factors and the development of rail and road transportations, helped in the growth of mobility and urbanisation in various parts of

\begin{itemize}
\item [\textsuperscript{19}] The story of how Chief Eugene (Kambili’s father) excluded his kinsmen and his own father from his house, cut off all relationships with them and even forbade his children from communicating with them illustrates how Christianity started to split African families and sense of communality. [See C. N. Adichie, \textit{Purple Hibiscus}, London: Fourth Estate, 2004.]
\end{itemize}
The movement from the villages to the urban centres entailed, to some extent, a movement to another logic and living situation. It was a movement from a life defined from the point of relationships to a life defined by the acquisition of capital. Since the acquisition of money was the only way to guarantee one’s needs, and since one of the only ways to acquire money was either to trade with the Europeans or to work in their service, Africans moved from the villages to the cities simply to make money.

With the rise in mobility and the surge to the urban centres, people started facing new lifestyles and influences. Those who worked with the colonial administration had to live in the administrative centres away from their kit and kin and away from the cultural models of traditional communalism. Life in the cities followed different sets of rules – being based more on productivity and accumulation of capital rather than on traditional relationships. The businessperson must have to work hard and employ some tricks to outwit others in order to remain in business. Both the government worker and private entrepreneur may have to pay house rents, electricity and water bills where they live. These and more of the realities of city life helped to create their own parallels and rules beyond traditional communitarian logic.

22 Ali Mazrui differentiates between the growth of European and African urban centres. “In the history of the Western world the growth of cities occurred partly in response to fundamental changes in production. Urbanisation followed in the wake of either an agrarian transformation or an industrial revolution. But in the history of Africa urbanisation has been under way without accompanying growth of productive capacity. In some African countries there is indeed a kind of revolution – but it is a revolution in urbanisation rather than in industrialisation, a revolution in expanding numbers of people squeezed into limited space, rather than a transformation in method and skill of economic output.” [A. A. MAZRUI, The Africans. A Triple Heritage, Boston: Little Brown & Co. 1986, p. 15].
However, it is worthy to note that in spite of these new elements, which the early African urban residents had to face, they still struggled to maintain the bonds of fraternity between both themselves in the urban centres and their home communities. One expression of this bond of fraternity is manifested through the town and clan meetings, which sprang up in the various urban centres. This feature is noted especially with people from Southern Nigeria. For Coleman, three reasons could help to explain the evolution of these clan meetings in the urban centres. First, the African spirit of communality: this helped to propel them to form these associations in order to maintain contact with one another and with their homelands. Second, there was the feeling of obligation among these people to transport the good things of the city (in terms of development projects) to their homelands in the villages. Third, the steady income at their disposal constituted the enabling factor in fulfilling the dream of embarking on the development projects. Granted that many African peoples who migrated to the urban centre have tried to maintain their cultural identity through clan meetings, one notes that the level of attachment to this cultural identity wanes with time, especially among the subsequent generations of urban dwellers. The patterns of city life create their own dynamics, ideals and orientations, which differ from the lifestyles in African villages (the seedbeds of communalism).

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24 James S. Coleman prefers to refer to these meetings as tribal associations. He describes them as “an organisational expression of the persistence of the strong feeling of loyalty and obligation to the kinship group and the town or village where the lineage is localised. These associations are known by a variety of names: e.g, Naze Family Meeting, Ngwa Clan Union, Owerri Divisional Union, Calabar Improvement League, Igibirra Progressive Union, Urhobo Renascent Convention, etc. Although based mainly on kinship groups indigenous to Southern Nigeria, branches of tribal associations exist in every multiracial urban centre, including Muslim areas of the Northern Region, Fernando Po, and the Gold Coast.” [J. S. COLEMAN, Op. cit., p. 15]. Coleman further notes that some of these associations became the stepping stones for political activities at the dawn of independence struggles. [Ibid., p. 19].

25 Ibid., p. 16.
Wole Soyinka presents a dilemma which confronts the African urban dweller. His/her success in the city is often at the great price of rejecting traditional roots; but his/her failure confines him/her to the swamps, wastelands and ghettos of the cities.\(^{26}\) Though Aylward Shorter describes Soyinka’s presentation as pessimistic, he however accepts that urbanisation is a tragic reality in Africa.\(^{27}\) Aylward Shorter outlined four elements of the tragedy of urbanisation in Africa, pollution, impoverishment, disorientation and secularisation. Of the four, disorientation appears more significant to our present discussion.\(^{28}\) He argues that urban migration in Africa has led to a situation of moral and cultural disorientation, and ultimately undermines the traditional community.\(^{29}\) The city lifestyle, being different from the village life, threatens and increasingly pushes the traditional lifestyles and mores into a negligible corner. This leads to disorientation and crisis. Since “human beings need the framework of ideas, images and behavioural norms that culture provides in order to develop, to communicate and to interact with one another,”\(^{30}\) the erosion of this cultural terrain has led to one of the greatest problems of African communalism.\(^{31}\) It has led to a crisis in the creation of meanings, significance of relationships and community interactions.

The Negative Effects of Economic Globalisation on African Communalism
There is a reasonable ambivalence which has characterised globalisation. On one side, globalisation designates a process of


\(^{30}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{31}\) The Ghanaian playwright Ama Ata Aidoo presents this problem in the story of the dilemma of a Ghost, trapped at a crossroad - ‘should I go left or should I go right’. [See A. A. AIDOO, *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, Essex, England: Longman, 1965.]
placing human progress and the opportunities of human ingenuity at the doorsteps of all peoples. From this angle, it evokes a sense of a worldwide cooperation, solidarity, interdependence, global prosperity and world peace.\textsuperscript{32} From another perspective however, globalisation, is also leading to the fears of a worldwide social Darwinism and the spread of a uniform world culture. This perspective sees globalisation as a suspect movement that acts as a vehicle of Western cultural and economic imperialism. This perspective evokes the sense of fear, threat and worry.\textsuperscript{33}

As a concept, globalisation “describes an intensification and acceleration of cross-border interaction which actually or potentially links all individuals, institutions and states into a complex structure of mutual but frequently imbalanced dependencies. The primary point of reference for this development is no longer the nation-state, whose scope of action is becoming limited, but the world as a whole, or at least larger regions with, in some cases, all-embracing institutions.”\textsuperscript{34} This complex relational structure of globalisation has come to manifest itself through economic, ecological, political and sociocultural features. From the economic angle of globalisation, the liberalisation of world trade

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\item \textsuperscript{32}David Held and others have pointed out that there exists some inconsistencies between linking the concept of globalisation with that of interdependence and integration. See D. HELD, A. MCGREW, D. GOLDBLATT & J. PERRATON, \textit{Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture}, Cambridge: Polity, 1999, p. 28.
\item \textsuperscript{34}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 12. For David Held et. al. globalisation is “a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organisation of social relations and transactions - assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact - generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power.” [D. HELD, \textit{et al. Op. cit., ibid.}, p. 16]. For Les Rowntree et.al, globalisation reflects “the increasing interconnectedness of people and places through converging processes of economic, political and cultural change.” [L. ROWNTREE, et. al., \textit{Diversity Amid Globalization. World Regions, Environment, Development}, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2000. p. 1].
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
and the increasing roles of the transnational corporations become more pivotal. Ecologically, issues like global warming, the depletion of the ozone layer and pollution become of international concern. Politically, issues of democracy and human rights are becoming worldwide catchphrases. Socio-culturally, the modern mass media and means of communication have aided an increasing dissemination of Western values and models of life as a standard for all peoples and cultures.

Globalisation, which is also referred to as the ‘free market economy’ can as well be understood as the world-wide extension of capitalism beyond its West European and North American frontiers. It therefore becomes imperative to relate one of Karl Marx’s critiques of capitalism (alienation) to the current crises of African communalism. He referred to alienation as a defect, which “displays the devastating effect of capitalist production on human beings, on their physical and mental states and on the social process of which they are part.” In Louis Dupré’s interpretation of Marx, alienation implies the estrangement of the human being from nature or his/her inhuman relation to it. Alienation takes three dimensions. First, the human being is alienated from the product of his/her work. Second, he/she is alienated from the act of production; and third, he/she is alienated from his/her own nature and from other human beings. The third dimension of Marx’s concept of alienation – the estrangement of human beings from themselves and from others – is precisely at the crux of communalism’s problem in contemporary African social life. It is necessary to incorporate this notion of alienation to the discussion on the increasing rupture of communalism in Africa.

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38 Ibid.
Today African societies witness almost helplessly the erosion of values by excessive individualism, consumerism and the prioritising of wealth over persons. The rearrangement of social landscapes through powerful Western institutions, the Structural Adjustment Programmes encouraged by the World Bank, the pressure on governments to remove subsidies meant to protect the poor and the weak, the spread of Western lifestyles through mass media, creating appetites without the means of satisfying them, and the lack of economic alternatives have all combined to create various terrible living conditions across Africa. This new socio-economic order is intensifying many crises in the traditional systems of family and communalism. Acute individualism has replaced the sense of community. Mutual antagonism and suspicion have replaced unity of purpose. There is despair, frustration and confusion.

The new logic of economic liberalisation, which emphasises international competition among businesses, has greatly put local efforts at a great disadvantage. Smaller local businesses are being jeopardised. The different effects of this new dynamics are turning people against themselves, accusing one another of using evil spiritual forces against others. They invoke ancestors and deities. They conduct praying and fasting and countless days of night vigil in prayer groups or spiritual churches. They bury holy water, crucifixes, rosaries or charms in their farmlands. They hang miracle handkerchiefs in their market stalls with the hope that these ‘sacred’ objects could bring about a change of fortune. They are told that someone in their family or village is using witchcraft to hinder their success. These poor people are told by pastors and priests to pay ten percent of their almost nonexistent income as a spiritual insurance for prosperity. They are told that their past sins, the sins of their family or the sins of their forebears are responsible for their poor business.\[39\] Innocent people suddenly become

\[39\] The problems arising from the global free market economy have given rise to what Edmund Arens describes as a highly problematic appeal to either aestheticised or reified fundamentalist religion. [See E. ARENS, Interruptions. Critical Theory and Political Theology. Between Modernity and Postmodernity,
enemies to one another in what they cannot explain. The ‘look of
the other’ becomes a threat (J. P. Sartre), leading to Thomas
Hobbes’ ‘war of all against all.’

It is necessary to see this development or situation as a
consequence of the globalisation of capitalism. It is creating a
situation of ‘all to oneself’ and an increasing ‘jungle mentality’
where the only governing principle is to ‘survive by all means’.
Survival in this case, is not seen as a community phenomenon but
within the context of the ‘I’ in exclusion of others. The scenario is
indicative that ‘the grounds have been pulled from under one’s
feet.’ Under this emergent situation, survival replaces relationality
and desperation replaces reason.40

Economic difficulties and alienation of people from one
another, which are the off-shoots of globalisation, are shaking
African communalism today in unprecedented ways. For example,
it is leading to a situation whereby people are re-examining the size
and essence of extended families. For some people, the large size
of the extended families appears as a huge burden that ought to be
shed off in order to manage the meagre available resources.41
Hence one notices the attempts of some families to gradually close

in D. BATSTONE, et. al. (eds.), Liberation Theologies, Postmodernity, and the
40 The biblical story of the circumstances surrounding Esau’s sale of his
birthright to his brother Jacob becomes worth considering at this juncture. Esau
was very hungry. He begged for some food from his brother (Jacob). Jacob
placed a condition – “First, give me your birthright in exchange.” Esau’s reply
showed the level of his desperation. “Esau said, ‘Here I am, at death’s door; what
use is a birthright to me?”’ [Gen 25, 30-33]. This story demonstrates that
situations can so much transform human persons that they do the unthinkable.
Under such situations, human persons tend to trample on what they hold as
sacred and discard all values.
41 B. Bujo remarks that the modern era and its economic forces increasingly cut
off the individual from the other members of the community, making the nuclear
family to close upon itself against other members of the extended family. (See B.
BUJO, The Ethical Dimension of Community. The African Model and the
p. 181.)
in on themselves – the well-to-do families tend to see the poorer families as parasites and disturbances.

Recreation of Traditional Communities
Surrogate Families of New Popular Christian Movements
Africans’ migration to the cities created new social climates. New urban socio-economic system and superstructures displaced the traditional framework of care and mutual support, which characterise village life. This new order became predominantly defined from the perspective of the accumulation of capital and the struggles for survival. It created its winners and an uncountable number of losers. The latter became abandoned to the ghettos and margins of society – where disillusionment, desperation and frustration are the order of the day.

Religious surrogate families have emerged in various forms in order to give some hope and succour to people who have become victims of African urban culture. This could be understood, as attempts of religious ministers to give meaning to their members and provide the care and support which contemporary social realities seem to have denied them. Pentecostal Churches and Catholic Priests involved in Healing ministries are among its prominent religious champions. They establish informal and non-institutional environment, which attempt to create family feelings and render assistance in various forms. They can undertake paying school fees for needy students and hospital bills for sick poor members. Sometimes they provide accommodations and job opportunities. These groups actually offer alternative to natural and traditional families while maintaining family and community involvement. Although their patterns vary, they involve similarly minded people and through series of processes and programmes, they become integrated into family spirit, developing trust, security and fraternity for one another. Their various roles in helping some people discover meaning and fulfilment in life are creating situations whereby religious surrogate families are gaining higher relevance and significance for some people more than their natural
communities.\textsuperscript{42}

\textit{Committees of Friends and Emerging New Forms of Communities}

While a shared faith in God forms basis for the efforts of religious surrogate families in providing care, support and security to its members, social factors have aided the rise of another form of sociality – the committees of friends. It is a social attempt to reconstruct traditional communities while preserving the sense of relationality in living among its members. They create new forms of communities, new orientations and new bonds of relationships. They are usually a bond between people who belong to the same social and economic status, cutting across clans, villages and ethnic groups. They could range from business associates to political comrades. They do not live together but they meet regularly.

While an individual (the pastor or priest) may be central to the formation of religious surrogate families, the committees of friends are largely products of the decision of two or more people, or a group of people. Social, political or economic interests may constitute the foundation of their relationships. They create some sense of loyalty and commitment to one another and to the group. They give their members some level of support similar to natural communities.

\textbf{Popular Religion's interpretation of Poverty and its Consequences for Communalism}

While the social dimension of the economic problems and effects of urbanisation are redesigning the sense of community (recreating new forms of community such as the 'committees of friends' and religious surrogate families), a religious interpretation of these problems – inspired by Pentecostal spirituality – is further helping

\textsuperscript{42} Jacob Olupona had actually argued that identifications with religious communities in some African countries like Nigeria is creating a third peg of identity, which is increasingly constituting itself into a competitive feature with ethnic and national identities. (See J. OLUPONA, \textit{Religion, Law and Order. State Regulation of Religious Affairs}, in \textit{Social Compass}, 37/1, (1990) 127-135. p. 128.
to invent a new outlook about African communities (presenting them as spheres of evil and divine curses). The foundational mindset in this religious school of thought is that riches and prosperity are signs of God’s blessings, while poverty, sickness and suffering carry divine curses. It moves from a simplistic and uncritical use of biblical passages to impress upon people that the causes of their poverty, economic difficulties or other misfortunes arise from divine curses as consequences of personal or generational sins. Traditional families, communities and villages are portrayed as highly dangerous entities, cursed from past generations due to the evil deeds of forebears or unbroken covenants with the gods of the ancient times. This pattern of interpretation squarely sees the past as bearing the roots of suffering, poverty and failures without recognising the interplay of other factors like the side effects of globalisation, the general worsening socio-economic situations, the unjust distribution of resources and bad government.

Apart from harping on the factor of generational curses, this model of interpretation capitalises on an age-old saying that *o bu onye ma mmadu na-ata ya amusu* – it is a close relative or associate who can attack one through witchcraft. Witchcraft in this sense is characterised as “the dark side of kinship” and “epitomises the frightening realisation that there is jealousy and aggression within the intimate circle of the family where only solidarity and trust should reign.”

This religious analysis leads to the prescription of such solutions as family deliverance, purification, cleansing, breaking of generational curses and healing of the family tree through

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exorcisms, praying and fasting. After these, the admonitions include the avoidance of sin, praying/fasting and the paying of tithes as the gateway to prosperity and protection. They impress it upon their adherents that the natural family, village and community are dangerous and anti-progress. They are therefore encouraged to beware of their relationships with family members and kinsmen (sọọọ nnadi). In place of the traditional communities, these religious groups consequently create new communities based ‘not on flesh and blood but on the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.’ The ‘brother or sister in Christ’ becomes a closer person, evokes a greater trust and security than the natural brother or sister or close relative.

Healing in families and communities (as prescribed by Pentecostal spirituality) could be a way of dealing with the past and providing tools to confront the present and the future. However, its use in popular ministry has remarkably put series of question marks over traditional African families and communities.

**Nigerian Home Videos, the Culture of Fear and Distrust, and Abhorrence of the Community**

While economic difficulties have led some people to create new social and religious communities, there are nevertheless, some people whose reaction to the economic problems is to abhor any type of community life. This type of reaction arises from a particular mishmash interpretation of traditional thoughts by new religious movements. This interpretation of social relationships has been captured vividly by the various home video productions, which are viewed in Nigeria (and beyond) since the 1990s. The

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47 There are uncountable cases of people who have written to their villages and communities, age-grades and other groups in their localities, declaring that they no longer wish to belong to these groups. They now belong to a new assembly of the redeemed children of God.
impression which these films create is that the 'other' is dangerous and ought to be avoided. This trend of interpretation makes a person to see others as sources of his or her misfortunes. Close association with people could lead to bewitchment. Handshakes, sharing food, kola nuts or drinks with other people could pose the danger either of being poisoned or initiated into evil spiritual cults. The reactions to these perceptions of interaction with others, range from mutual and constant suspicion, to aversion, demonising others and total withdrawal. Since the public scene (either in the village or in the city) is perceived as the source of misfortunes, people gradually tend to rethink their various communal relationships. This brand of interpreting social relationships reflects Thomas Hobbes' view of human beings in the state of nature namely, a state of war of all against all, where human beings are wolves to others, seeking to eat and devour one another.

One could start a discussion on whether the many Nigerian Home Video presentations of community and interpersonal relationships in horrifying images are new reflections of reality or excessive exaggerations. The fact however, remains that many of these videos have become vehicles of a new culture and reference points (both to Nigerians and other Africans), which often place community, interpersonal relationships and the public forum under serious interrogation.

Conclusion
James F. Downs argues that culture springs up through an interplay between people and their environment. Different situations and historical moments produce different cultures because of the different challenges involved.\textsuperscript{48} Bernard E. Meland in turn argues that "the thinking of any people or generation within a historical culture moves within a circumscribing imagery"\textsuperscript{49}

Western philosophy and its inspired cultural studies have largely categorised the period after 1945 as post-modernity.\(^\text{50}\) Its characteristic feature is best captured in J. L. Lyotard’s phrase ‘the end of the grand narratives’. He used this term to designate that post-modernity signifies “the dissolution of those universal principles that the organic intellectuals of modernity had advanced as authoritative rules for insuring the rational improvement of social organization and individual conduct under the leadership of the modern, centralized state.”\(^\text{51}\) The postmodern period could therefore be said to signify the absence of “grand meta-narratives, no total explanations, no overall structures of meaning, no universal foundation of knowledge.”\(^\text{52}\) It heralds deconstruction, calls everything into question, breaks up assumptions and collapses the barriers between space and time. Hence Georges De Schrijver sees an intricate relationship between post-modernity and globalisation.\(^\text{53}\) The crises of communal living in contemporary Africa mirror some elements of the deconstructivist features of post-modernity.

Granted that the spirit of African communalism has not been completely swept off, it is necessary to note that very profound crises are confronting it in the face of new living conditions. Its relevance is shrinking with each passing day. New forms of communities based on different logics are struggling to take its place and in some cases, there is the march towards individualism. The strength of African communalism seems to have been so

\(^{51}\) Ibid., p. 37.
terribly weakened that it tends daily to be more artificial than it used to be – operating more during feasts, marriages and funeral rites.

Both post-modernity and globalisation are producing new ideals of living, new patterns of thought and new dispositions. They are redesigning our intellectual horizons and socio-political landscapes. They are creating new possibilities, paradoxes and problems. They are raising such questions as: What does a fulfilled life mean for the African person of today? To what extent does he or she need others to realise this? Who should these ‘others’ consist of? Should they be his natural family and community or a freely chosen community such as friends, colleagues and religious fraternities? Should these communities be permanent or temporal, obligatory or voluntary? Could the old forms of traditional African communalism survive the contemporary crises? Could new definitions of community replace the traditional understandings? Could individualism replace communalism?

African understanding of communal living is fighting a formidable battle to justify its relevance and sustain its own arguments. Whether it wins or loses this battle is only a matter, which the unfolding history of time will determine.
IMMIGRATION FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF
THE CHURCH AS FAMILY OF GOD
THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

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Ecclesia in Africa defines the Church as “God’s family on earth (...) the living sign and efficacious instrument of universal solidarity for building a world-wide community of justice and peace”\(^1\). This is in line with the sacramentality of the Church. According to Lumen Gentium, “By her relationship with Christ, the Church is a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of all mankind”\(^2\). Consequently, Ecclesia in Africa understands the aim of the new evangelisation as “building up the Church as Family, avoiding ethnocentrism and excessive particularism, trying instead to encourage reconciliation and true communion between different ethnic groups, favouring solidarity and the sharing of personnel and resources among the particular churches without ethnic consideration”\(^3\).

What role can or does immigration play in this new understanding of the Church as Family of God? Going through the allusions of Ecclesia in Africa to the issue of immigration, it is surprising that the document has difficulties in attributing a positive role to immigration in the construction of the Church as Family of God. Rather, immigration receives a negative presentation. Ecclesia in Africa talks of the exile of the youth to foreign countries because of the situation of poverty (n° 115). It decries the situation of refugees forced out of their homes due to conflicts and wars (EA n° 119). When the document addresses the participation of young churches in the “universal missionary work of the Church”, it lays emphasis on the official sending of African priests and missionaries to other continents (EA 129 and 130). Later in EA

\(^1\) Ecclesia in Africa, n° 114.
\(^2\) Lumen Gentium 1
\(^3\) Ecclesia in Africa n° 63.
the solidarity among Churches takes a precise official name, “organic solidarity”, and is placed under the umbrella of the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies.

Drawing from experience of the African Migrants’ Pastoral in France, this article wants to show, over and against the negative perception of immigration, that migrants have been playing a major role in the renewal of the missionary projects of the Christian Church in Europe. It contends further that immigration has theological implications for the construction of the Church as family of God.

**African Migrants’ Pastoral: communities on mission**

African Migrants’ Pastoral in France has been a laboratory for the experimentation of the Church as Family of God. This pastoral ministry forms part of a larger ensemble called *La Pastoral des Migrants* which is a trust of the French Episcopal Conference to help migrants become part and parcel of the Church in France. This National ministry is directly under the care of the *Comité Episcopal des Migrations et des Gens du Voyage* which coordinates the pastoral for migrants under the French Episcopal Conference.

I had the privilege of being a chaplain of African Migrants Pastoral in Rennes from 1993 to 1998 and in the Diocese of Nanterre from 1999 to 2005. The principle is that small African Christian communities are set up in different parishes. It has to be said from the word go that though the ministry is called African Migrants’ Pastoral, meetings in several places gather people from different cultures – African, Haitian, French Antille, and indigenous French citizens themselves. These groups are signs of fraternity in the Church.

Through these communities Africans contribute to the animation of the parishes in liturgy, catechumenate, and parish council. In most of the communities, Africans have formed African intercultural choirs that revitalise the Eucharistic celebrations.

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4 The whole contribution of African missionaries officially sent to Europe is left out because they are not migrants in the true sense of the world.
Because of their presence, many parishes have formed the habit of organising inter-peoples’ celebrations. At the end of every celebration, they share a meal together. This sharing is done in the African way, in that everyone cooks and brings the food to the common table. Many women come with full pots of various African dishes and put them together.

One must not hide the difficulties African Migrants’ Communities meet, namely, resistance from some conservative French parishioners and priests, xenophobia from extreme right wings of the society. It must be said also that some Africans complicate issues for themselves by mutual suspicion. Some of them indulge in fraudulent practices that tarnish the image of the African continent. Nevertheless, it is no exaggeration to recognize that in these communities Africans no longer consider themselves as simple migrants, they understand themselves to be missionaries called to participate in the construction of the mission of the Church in which they find themselves.

The mission of the members of African Migrants’ Communities does not end in the animation of parishes. One major concern of these communities is solidarity. Solidarity is expressed in many concrete ways: care for the sick, presence to the bereaved, reconciliation of divided families and ethnic groups, support to illegal aliens and asylum seekers.

**Care for the Sick**

African Migrants’ communities try to provide room for listening to and assisting the sick and the depressed. Many migrants in France develop one kind of sickness or the other because of the situations in which they live. The competitive society produces dislocated people. Having left their homes and traditions, they cannot rely on solid traditions in the context of modernity. They are then obliged to draw resources from themselves to face the competition in the society, unemployment and sometimes failure. This is why some go into depression. Often there emerges accusations of witchcraft and sorcery which in most cases help to explain away the existential dislocation the person is going through.
African migrants communities try to address these issues by providing “lieux d’écoute”, that is, places where people can be listened to. By so doing, they make it possible for people to voice out their frustrations and sufferings. They organise visits to the sick and try to console them as much as possible. The prayer sessions and sharing of the word of God in homes or Churches are always powerful moments of personal healing.

**Presence to the Bereaved**

Accompanying the bereaved is no less a vital mission accomplished by the African Migrants’ Pastoral. Many Africans are disarmed when they lose one of their own. Being far from their country, they cannot accomplish rituals of purification and widowhood according to their traditions. Most of the time, the first worry is how to get the money to take the corpse home. When this is not possible, the problem is how to explain the situation to those at home. Those who live in apartments in the big cities cannot even cry for fear of disturbing their neighbours. So the tears are suppressed and one knows the psychological consequences of the repression of tears.

African communities organise Christian wake-keepings in the parishes and when the there is no space in a Parish they rent a hall. They then pull out the bereaved family from the small apartments and cry together with them in a Christian way, through songs and prayers.

**Ministry of Reconciliation**

Many people’s hearts are blocked by wounds and hatred. Many couples are facing communication problems between themselves or with their children. It is a known fact that African couples divorce more easily in Europe than in their home countries.

Sometimes, it is the problem of communication among ethnic groups. Any conflict in one African country has immediate repercussions on the relationship between different ethnic groups coming from that country. The civil strife in Côte d’Ivoire has created confusion and even hatred among those from the North and
those from the South. The war in the Democratic Republic of Congo has sowed enmity between the Congolese and the Rwandans. The quarrel over the Bakassi peninsular has created suspicion between Nigerians and Cameroonians.

One must not hide the problem of racism that Africans face in Europe. The increasing exploitation of the issue of immigration in political campaigns in France does not help the situation. France woke up on 23 April 2002 to see the leader of the Front National, the extreme right party, Jean-Marie Le Pen, in the second round of the presidential elections. This makes African migrants feel threatened and ill at ease. It influences their interaction with indigenous French citizens.

However, African communities in France succeed in bringing different African ethnic groups together. These communities act as catalysts for reconciliation. They reconcile Africans with Europeans and with European cultures. I remember the story of a Sudanese. We had to intervene several times on his behalf so that the social security agents could process his papers. Every time he came to meet me, he would tell me, “My brother, you are one of us you should understand that this people do not want to help us”. On the other hand, when I call the social security assistant in charge of him, she would tell me, “Please tell your friend to be patient. He should understand that we have procedures to follow and laws to respect”. The work of the migrants’ pastoral is thus to bridge the gap between these two worlds. Today this Sudanese friend still writes to thank me for helping him understand the French mentality and system. Now, he is doing the same work of intercession for others.

Support to Migrants in illegal Situations
The greatest challenge facing the African Migrants’ Pastoral is the situation of many brothers and sisters that have come to be known as « sans papiers », i.e. those who have no papers or simply illegal aliens. This is a very complex situation. Without denying the fact that some Africans in this situation contributed to it in one way or the other, we must recognize that the series of laws passed by
different governments in Europe are simply unjust.

What is more alarming is that these people do not have access to the basic amenities necessary for life. Many live in hiding for fear of the police. The African Migrants’ Pastoral works with different associations, Amnesty International, Secours Catholique, etc, to help these brothers and sisters have access to the basic amenities necessary for their daily living. They are also helped to have access to lawyers and social assistants so as to organise their files and channel them to the right structures. This is done in accordance with the directives from the French Episcopal Committee for migrants, which itself toes the line indicated by Pope John Paul II: “Today, the migrant in an irregular situation presents him/herself to us as a stranger in whom Jesus asks to be recognised. Welcoming and expressing solidarity with him/her is an obligation of hospitality and a way to show our fidelity to our identity as Christians”\(^5\).

We have tried so far to show that despite the shortcomings of the Africans in Diaspora, African Migrant communities participate in the mission of the Church in France. They not only take an active part in the animation of their parishes but they venture into the delicate mission of solidarity with the poor, the sick, the afflicted and the outlawed who are normally marginalised in an increasingly globalized world. Mostly they help in reconciling individuals and families.

In that sense they accomplish the mission that the African Synod and Vatican II assign to the Church as Family of God. The activities of migrant communities contributed to the positive understanding of the mission of migrants by official documents of the Church which in turn challenge the Church to rediscover her true identity.

**Immigration Challenges the Church to Rediscover her Identity**

The reality is that the contribution of African migrants in different

\(^5\) See Comité Episcopal des Migrations et des Gens du Voyage, « Quand l’étranger frappe à nos portes »
levels of the Church especially in the Parishes has led the Church in Europe to really rediscover her prophetic voice and question her fidelity to her identity as Church of Christ, Family of God. It suffices to examine two documents, namely, "Les étrangers en situation illégale en Europe"\(^6\), issued by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral of Migrants, after the meeting convened in Munich, from September 29 to October 1, 1994, and Un people en devenir, emanating from the French Comité Episcopal des Migrations, 1995\(^7\).

Almost concomitantly with the African Synod, the Pontifical Council for Migrants' Pastoral issued a text addressing the situation of illegal aliens in Europe. While recognizing the right of nations to regulate immigration in their respective territories, the document takes a clear stand against xenophobia, the exclusion of illegal aliens from the societies and the deprivation of their rights. It also condemned the use of foreigners as scapegoats to explain away the socioeconomic crises facing contemporary European countries:

The Church for whom every human person has an inalienable dignity for the fact that he/she is constituted of the image of God cannot accept this exclusion and affirms that even in an illegal situation every human being is a subject of the rights ("sujet de droits").

This declaration is in tune with Jean XXIII Pacem in terrris 1963, n° 25 which affirms the inalienable right to immigrate and emigrate, the fact that every human being belongs to the universal community. This right is also recognized in the catechism of the catholic Church, n° 2241.

The text states clearly that the Church is called to continue


\(^7\) Comité Episcopal des Migrations, Un people en devenir, 1995.
Christ’s mission which is “to gather in unity the scattered children of God” (Jn 11, 52). Christ came to inaugurate a new communion in the Father’s love, a communion open to all human beings8. It reaffirmed that the criterion of membership to this communion is the observance of the word over and against social and religious affiliations.

In the light of this reflection the document declares the primacy of human life over every legislation. The principal reference remains Jesus’ declaration that “The Sabbath is made for man and not man for the Sabbath” (Marc 2, 27). In that sense human beings cannot be scarified in the name of law.

In 1995, a document, *Un people en devenir*, emanating from the French Comité Episcopal des Migrations, toed the same line with the Munich document. The difference is that it brings out clearly the position of the Church in France and it recognizes the positive contribution of migrants to the progressive constitution of the French society as well as the Church in France. The boldness with which this document recalls the memory of the gradual composition of the French society throughout its migration history is amazing. First there was the migration history of the Picardians, the Provencals, the Britons, the Lorains and the Alsatians. Then came the time of workers from other countries – Belgians, Italians, Polish, North Africans, Black Africans. These workers were brought officially into France to reconstruct the country after the Second World War and to develop her industry. France owes to this stage of migration her large population today and the plurality of her identity as well as her success in many fields, economic, sports, culture9.

Borrowing from Paul VI (*Pastoralis Migratorum Cura*, n° 2), the French bishops affirmed that from the mobility of peoples emerges a new and more vast surge for the unification of the whole universe. It states clearly that migration favours and promotes reciprocal knowledge of one another and strengthens the fraternal

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8 "Les étrangers en situation illégale en Europe », p. 4.
9 *Un peuple en devenir*, p. 18
rapport among peoples. Following this, the bishops reaffirmed that the Church in France is “the Church of all those who live in France without distinction of the colour of their skin, origins, customs or culture”\textsuperscript{10}

The bishops perceived clearly that the challenge is to become together the Church of Christ. That is why they encourage the Migrants’ Pastoral to refuse two extremes. The first is total assimilation which leads to the neglect of the originality of different cultures that compose the French society. The second is juxtaposition which celebrates the differences to the extent that people form ghettos and refuse the necessary communication among communities. The Migrants’ Pastoral is expected to be a sign of catholicity: “that is, to let the communion that gathers its members draw its strength from the faith in the same Lord and from the gift of the same love”\textsuperscript{11}.

\textbf{The Migrants’ Church as Family of God}

From the above analysis of the experiences of African Communities in France and the two official Church documents whose writing was influenced by their experiences, it can be inferred that these communities bring the Church back to her true identity as Family of God.

The ecclesiology of the Church as Family of God insists on the fact that all are children of God. As stated by Nigerian theologian, Elochukwu Uzukwu:

“The Church-family in which we live is not an association of clans and ethnic groups, but a brotherhood and sisterhood beyond the frontiers of blood relationship, clan, ethnic group, or race. A primordial uprooting is needed in order to be admitted to membership in this new family (...) all those who are born into this Church-family through water and the Spirit, coming

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid. p. 16.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid. p. 50. This position was recently reaffirmed in another document of the Comité Episcopal des Migrations et des Gens du Voyage ». \textit{Quand l’étranger frappe à nos portes}, 2004.
from whatever race or nation, are bonded together through the victory of the Lamb"\textsuperscript{12}.

This truth tends to be masked by nationalism and cultural pride especially in areas where the Church is deeply rooted in the local culture. The benefit of immigration then is that migrants interrupt this cultural domestication of the Church and force the local Church to rethink her identity.

Obviously the Church is drawn back to the biblical efforts to point towards the community of destiny of all peoples in the economy of salvation. It was during the exile that the Hebrews reaffirmed the brotherhood of all men and women and their filiation to Abraham. It was also from the exile experience that they developed the perspective of the universal gathering of all peoples and nations in the land promised by God himself (Isaiah 60, 3).

This community of destiny for all peoples was realised in the event of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This event, as the Church confesses, opened the universal love of the Father for all human beings without distinction of race. Jesus’ mission consisted in going from place to place searching for the excluded and communicating to them the communion to which they are called.

Meditating on Jesus’ death and resurrection Paul celebrates the universal love poured out for all,

But now in Christ you who used to be so far apart from us have been brought very close, by the blood of Christ. For he is the peace between us, and has made the two into one and broken down the barrier which used to keep them apart, actually destroying in his own person the hostility caused by the rules

and decrees of the Law. This was to create one single New Man in himself out of the two of them and by restoring peace through the cross, to unite both in a single Body and reconcile them with God. In his own person he killed the hostility. Later he came to bring the good news of peace, *peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near at hand.* Through him, both of us have in the one Spirit our way to come to the Father (Eph 2, 13-17).

Paul expressed this communion inaugurated by Christ in other places, “you are no longer aliens or foreign visitors; you are citizens like all the saints and part of God’s household” (Eph 2, 19). He says again, “there is no more distinction between Jew and Greek, slave or free, male or female” (Gal 3, 28).

The Church as Family of God is thus called to become the sign of the destiny of all peoples, namely, the communion with God and with each other. Nourished constantly by the body and blood of Christ, the Church confesses that all human beings have God as Father and that this Father wants to gather all together as his family, in his Son through the Holy Spirit. Maintaining this identity is a great challenge to today’s Church.

**Conclusion**

This article has argued all along for a positive appreciation of the contribution of immigration to the construction of the Church as family of God. It focused only on the experiences of Catholic African Migrants’ communities in France. A similar study could be done on the side of other Christian communities, like the Pentecostal Churches which spring up everyday in France and are championed by Nigerians and Congolese. They all participate in one way or the other in the mission of the Church.

In the present globalized context of divisions caused by conflicts, fratricidal wars, racial quarrels and nationalism, the Church needs a more eloquent language than communiqués and official declarations. If the Church wants to contribute to the construction of the unity of humanity, she must question herself on
her capacity to construct this unity *ad intra*. If Christians want to help reconcile the world, they must show that they are capable of living together as Family of God. By facing this task boldly African Migrants’ communities in France are contributing to the construction of the Church as Family of God, sacrament of the unity of humankind in God.
THE BLACK SUBJECT AND POSTMODERNISM
“What Did I Do To Be So Black and Blue”¹

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While there are important differences, African diasporic theologies in the United States, black theologies, committed to radical, that is, the graced, theoretic, and praxial achievement of humanity share, at least, these basic assumptions.² First, that life is a gift, a precious signification, embodied transcendence; and that the flourishing of this gift, this life depends upon a relationality grounded in justice and beauty and hope. Second, that the advent of modernity precipitated a racialization of ‘the known and unknown worlds’ and discredited the humanity of the indigenous peoples.³ To confuse the protest of African-descended persons against denials of their

¹ First presented at Black Catholic Theology Group Seminar “The Black Subject in the Post Modern World: Africana Theologies in Dialogue”, as part of the 2006 Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA) Convention, June 8 - 11, 2006 at the San Antonio Hyatt Regency, San Antonio, TX, USA.

² These black theologies emerge from perspectives constituted through critical reflection on the religious, cultural, social (i.e., political, economic, technological), historical experiences of Africans on the Continent and in the Diaspora—first, captured and handed over involuntarily into the Middle Passage; then, forced out by colonialism and neo-colonialism; now, driven out by the force of the global hegemon—the imperial disorder carved out by the pax americana. That these theologies are committed to the graced, theoretic, and praxial achievement of humanity signifies their radical openness to Transcendence, history, and an unclosed future; to knowledge, custom, and tradition; to psychic, spiritual, and social (i.e., political, economic, technological) healing, creativity, and improvisation.

humanity as Enlightenment inspired, liberal self-assertion ignores the crucial and dangerous nature of their protest. For black women and men, living and being are risky matters, or to put it quite bluntly, being black is a matter of life and death. Analysis and critique of racism and the nexus of motivations, fears, and privileges that maintain and fuel that vicious ideology is characteristic of African diasporic theologies even as race is grasped as a socially constructed, complex, and contested category. Third, that white racist supremacy as waged against African-descended people has its origin in the acquisitive materialist encounter (the Atlantic slave trade) between Europeans and Africans. White racist supremacy instrumentalized the enslaved Africans: it rendered some women and men as means and objects to be subordinated, controlled, and manipulated by other women and men for their particular ends and desires (e.g., labour and production, mortgage capital and real estate, erotic fantasy and escape.). Fourth, that the results of this objectification continue to permeate and distort the whole of religious, cultural, historical, and social (i.e., political, economic, technological) relations, practices, and traditions so thoroughly that ‘black’ inferiority and submission to white racist supremacist power are understood as natural or as the result of (inferior) cultural difference. Yet, African diasporic theologies recognize that the very dominance of white racist supremacy cannot be reduced to a singular, monolithic, transhistorical conception of the people who enact this dominance. The assumption that all whites form an already constituted and coherent group with identical interests and desires disregards gender, ethnicity, religion, ethics, and social location even as it skews analyses of power relations in the new imperial order. Fifth, that the experience of African-descended persons furnishes a central analytic category and proper source for theological reflection and that critical reflection on the specificities and

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particularities of this experience gives rise to perspectives. At the same time, these perspectives are nuanced by grappling with the density and contradictions of real peoples’ real multiple identities (i.e., racial, gender, cultural-ethnic, social class status, sexual orientation, etc.). These theologies resist any homogenous categorization of ‘the oppressed’ and engage the critical task of self-interrogation. Sixth, that differences of faith, culture, language, social location, history, class, ethnicity, race, and sexual orientation among African-descended persons as well as the sources of those differences are to be investigated and valued, rather than repressed and discounted. Seventh, that ideology critique can expose the bias that shapes and undergirds religious, cultural, and social structures along with their damaging depictions of African-descended persons and faulty empiricist apprehension of reality. These theologies seek not only to replace false or biased depictions of African-descended persons and reality with critical apprehensions, but also to situate those depictions in the lived relations of the society as a whole.

These commonalities call into question theological anthropology’s conventional (dogmatic) focus on the putatively ‘universal’ understanding of being human. The Enlightenment “turn to the subject” coincided with the dynamics of domination, and from that period human-being-in-the-world literally has been identical with white male bourgeois European being-in-the-world.

5 The notion of experience is exceedingly general and can be clarified by the notion of ‘patterns of experience,’ including, the dramatic, i.e., the pattern or trajectory of a life, the biological, the psychological, the social, the aesthetic, the mystical, the intellectual.
6 I use the term ‘bias’ in a technical way, one that corresponds to Bernard Lonergan’s usage [Lonergan, Insight: A Study of Human Understanding (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1957), 218-242]. In this form, bias is to be distinguished from commonsense reference to particular or inordinate preferences or tendencies and from psychological connotations such as inclination or temperament. Bias denotes a more or less conscious refusal or exclusion of insight (false consciousness and intentionality). Bias is ideology: it distorts and inhibits conscious performance in everyday living by blinding our understanding.
But, African diasporic theologies subvert this paradigm by attending to the humanity of those repressed and pushed to modernity's periphery. These theologies cherish embodied particularities of race, gender, religion, culture, history, sexual orientation.

Yet, an admission is necessary. African diasporic theologies share in the inheritance of the Enlightenment even as they contest its disruptive brutality. These theologies repudiate the aleatory and punishing distanciations of modernity—secular from sacred, private from public, objectivity from subjectivity, thought from feeling, theory from praxis. Moreover, these theologies reject the levelling values of modernity's liberalism—"the primacy of the individual, the value of individual autonomy and choice, a state limited to the function of protecting the rights and freedoms of individuals, and neutral posture toward any account of the good in order to protect a plurality of views."9

African diasporic theologies are quite complex theoretic, ecclesial, moral (i.e., intellectual integrity) and praxial endeavours: Diasporic theologies excavate, critique, and deploy fragmentary, but persistent West African intellectual, rhetorical, and aesthetic forms, values, questions, and concerns even as they improvise critically on these as well as on Western European and American traits, which, after all, are but human traits—regard for reason, respect for the individual in community, and a grasp of foundations as rooted in human cognitive, moral, and religious performance and rather than in a priori principles.10 Above all, African diasporic theologies embrace and ground themselves in the narrative of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God. These theologies seek to stand intelligently before his cross.

8 African American novelist James Baldwin referred to the black intellectual as "a kind of bastard of the West."
Cultural critic Peter Brooker distinguishes the uses of the terms postmodernity, postmodernism, postmodern theory: Postmodernity refers to the “historical dimensions of postmodernism as something which emerges following the Second World War, that is, after or post-modern.” Postmodernity highlights the shift from Fordism (the efficiency and monotony of the assembly line that Frederick Winslow Taylor developed for Henry Ford) to post-Fordism or the new high-tech industries. Postmodernism denotes “the cultural condition” linked to this industrial and social change and manifests itself in “eclectic” styles of art and architecture, of media-saturation, and everyday living. Postmodern theory refers to the philosophical debates of French ex-Marxist intellectuals Jean-François Lyotard (rejection of grand narratives in history or religion), Jean Baudrillard (the *simulacra*, the hyper-real), and the North American Marxist Fredric Jameson (the dominance of image and consumption) as well as the French thinkers Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Lacan.\(^{11}\)

Postmodernism sprawls; it stretches and retracts, eludes and elides; it resists descriptive and explanatory boundaries. Postmodernism argues for the collapse of grand or metanarrative and foundations and affirms situated knowledges or narratives of local knowledge, pluralities of discourse, intertextuality, and interdisciplinarity. Postmodernism, at once, insinuates rupture and closure, novelty and nostalgia. Postmodernism evokes multiple and open identities, locations or positionalities, and “reject[s] the notion that the person is an autonomous individual with a rational

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consciousness that transcends one’s particular place in culture, language, history, and a gendered body.”

But, Stuart Hall, one of the founders of cultural studies, observes: that just when European and Western intellectuals have come to “feel dispersed, [his own subjectivity] has become centered.” A Jamaican migrant, Hall already has been decentered through diaspora. And African American cultural critic bell hooks reiterates this point:

Radical postmodernist practice, most powerfully conceptualized as a ‘politics of difference,’ should incorporate the voices of displaced, marginalized, exploited, and oppressed black people. It is sadly ironic that the contemporary discourse which talks the most about heterogeneity, the decentered subject, declaring breakthroughs that allow recognition of Otherness, still directs its critical voice primarily to a specialized audience that shares a common language rooted in the very master narratives it claims to challenge. ...Should we not be suspicious of postmodern critiques of the ‘subject’ when they surface at a historical moment when many subjugated people feel themselves coming to voice for the first time.

And Daryl Harris asserts, “[W]hat remains intact in the postmodern imagination, among other things, is the core European ethos of individualism.”

Hall further questions the postmodernist insistence on the collapse of ‘the real:’ “Three-quarters of the human race,” he stated

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in an interview, “have not yet entered the era of what we are pleased to call ‘the real.’” And, further: “Postmodernism attempts to close off the past by saying that history is finished, therefore you needn’t go back to it. There is only the present, and all you can do is be with it, immersed in it.”\(^{16}\) Cornel West, Alain Locke (before him) and Emmanuel Eze join in Hall’s critique. To postmodernism’s relativist, fragmented, and serial conceptualization of the present, these thinkers pose a “stronger commitment to history.”\(^{17}\)

African diasporic theologians are wise to maintain an open and inquiring attitude toward postmodernism and its strategies in the mediation of the Christian soteriological message.

III

In the remainder of this presentation, I should like to reflect on the black subject and postmodernism, with a sidelong glance toward the post-postmodern. Post-postmodern refers to grounding foundations in the cognitional, moral, and religious performance of persons who are attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible; to the importance of questioning, of inquiry; to a critical grasp that reality is “given in experiencing, organized and extrapolated by understanding, posited by judgment and belief.”\(^{18}\) These proposals, as you so well recognize, come from the work of Bernard Lonergan.\(^{19}\) I do not want raise here the ‘silver bullet’


\(^{19}\) Lonergan, Method in Theology, 240.

On Lonergan’s account, human knowing as a transcultural operation in no way reduces rich, dense, distinct cultures to examples of some general paradigm; nor
The Black Subject and Postmodernism

(Lonergan/Lone Ranger), but postmodernism breaks the isomorphism of the knower and the known. Moreover, Lonergan’s proposals further Hall’s charge that the American appropriation of postmodernism allows the term to be “deployed in an essentialist and uncritical way…. [a]nd is irrevocably Euro-or western-centric in its whole episteme.”

The question I should like to examine is this, ‘How do I construct an identity for myself in a society which prefers to behave as if I did not exist?’ Jazz offers one way of puzzling out an answer to this question, one way of moving toward a post-postmodernism. After all, what could be more post-postmodern than jazz! Another way of framing the question, an improvisation on the question is this: ‘What did I do to be so black and blue?’

What did I do to be so black and blue?

Verse: Out in the street, shufflin’ feet,
Couples passin’ two by two,
While here am I, left high and dry,
Black, and ‘cause I’m black I’m blue.
Browns and yellers, all have fellers,
Gentlemen prefer them light,
Wish I could fade, can’t make the grade,
Nothing but dark days in sight:

does it propose some abstruse system by which to measure or compare cultures one with another. Rather, Lonergan’s account of human knowing implies something very important and very basic about humanity – that humanity is one. While humankind is multiple and varied in its concrete presence, humankind is one intelligible reality. We human beings are intrinsically, naturally connected one to another; we are more than some aggregate of autonomous, atomized, isolated monads.

22 Words by Andy Razaf and Music by Thomas ‘Fats’ Waller and Harry Brooks, Copyright ©1929 Santly Brothers, Inc. and renewed by Chappell & Co., Inc.
Chorus 1: Cold, empty bed, Springs hard as lead,
Pains in my head, Feel like old Ned.
What did I do, to be so Black and Blue?
No joys for me, No company,
Even the mouse ran from my house,
All my life through, I’ve been so Black and Blue.

I’m white inside, It don’t help my case
‘Cause I can’t hide, what is on my face, oh!
I’m so forlorn, Life’s just a thorn,
My heart is torn, Why was I born?
What did I do, to be so Black and Blue?

‘Cause you’re black, Folks think you lack
They laugh at you, And scorn you too,
What did I do, to be so Black And Blue?
When you are near, they laugh and sneer,
Set you aside and you’re denied,
What did I do, to be so Black and Blue?

How sad I am, each day I feel worse,
My mark of Ham seems to be a curse!
How will it end? Ain’t got a friend,
My only sin is my skin.
What did I do, to be so Black and Blue?

These lyrics and music have been made famous by Louis Armstrong’s virtuosity and Andy Razaf’s compositional irony. This is jazz at the highest level of cognitional irony: moral inquiry, and religio-cultural spiritual protest and lament. Ralph Ellison uses this music to explore the appropriation of blackness, the significance and signification of race in his demanding and audacious masterwork, Invisible Man.23 The novel opens with a meditative

"Prologue" in which the unnamed narrator, the invisible man, puzzles the question, "What did I do to be so black and blue?" (14).

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me.

Nor is my invisibility exactly a matter of a biochemical accident to my epidermis. That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of their inner eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality. I am not complaining, nor am I protesting either. It is sometimes advantageous to be unseen, although it is most often rather wearing on the nerves. Then too, you’re constantly being bumped against by those of poor vision. Or again, you often doubt if you really exist. You wonder whether you aren’t simply a phantom in other people’s minds. Say, a figure in a nightmare which the sleeper tries with all his strength to destroy. It’s when you feel like this that, out of resentment, you begin to bump people back (3-4).

The unnamed narrator concretizes this existential interrogation of blackness by recounting his own resentment and response to being bumped. Out walking one night, accidentally, he bumps into a man, "and perhaps because of the near darkness he saw me and called me an insulting name. I sprang at him, seized his coat lapels
and demanded that he apologize.” The tall blond, blue-eyed man refuses to apologize and the invisible man kicks him repeatedly; in rage and fury he pulls out a knife, when he realizes, “the man had not seen me, actually; that he, as far as he know, was in the midst of a walking nightmare!” (4) “Unnerved, disgusted and ashamed,” (4) the invisible man leaves the blond, blue-eyed man moaning in the street. “Most of the time,” the invisible man muses, “I am not so overtly violent. I remember that I am invisible and walk softly so as not to awaken the sleeping ones. Sometimes it is best not to awaken them; there are few things in the world as dangerous as sleepwalkers” (5).

The narrator continues his reflection by recalling his experience of Louis Armstrong’s recording of “What did I do to be so black and blue.” Some friends, as a joke, slip him a marijuana cigarette. He smokes, he feels, and he watches himself enter into the music. He descends like Dante, into its depths. Armstrong is his Virgil, leading him into a cave, where he hears an old woman singing a spiritual “as full of Weltschmerz as flamenco;” on a lower level, he sees “a beautiful girl the color of ivory pleading in a voice like my mother’s before a group of slaveowners who bid for her naked body;” on a still level lower, he finds a “more rapid tempo,” and hears this sermon (9). 24

“Brothers and sisters, my text this morning is the ‘Blackness of Blackness.’”

“And a congregation of voices answered: ‘That blackness is most black, brother, most black...’

“In the beginning...there was blackness.”

24 Ellison heaps up allusions—a Dantean descent; Plato’s allegory of the cave in which those who are daring escape toward the light to achieve knowledge of fact, of value, and of self; the old woman who sings a spiritual as oracle; and the positive use of music, while Socrates remains suspicious of it in Republic.
This is not a gesture toward an originary, essentialized blackness; and, before ‘the blackness of blackness’ can be essentialized, Ellison shifts the rhythm and language in order to radically disrupt racial ontology.

“Now black is...”...
“...and black ain’t...”...
“Black will git you...”...
“...an’ black won’t...”...
“It do...”...
“...an’ it don’t.”
“Black will make you...”
“...or black will un-make you” (9-10).

This juxtaposition of couplets drives toward a climax, that Ellison the jazz man refuses. The narrator is thrust from his dream by “a voice of trombone timbre” screaming,

‘Git out of here, you fool! Is you ready to commit treason?’”

“And I tore myself away, hearing the old singer of spirituals moaning, ‘Go curse your God, boy, and die.’”

Here Ellison plays race and religion in the key of ambivalence. He seeks to destabilize meanings of black and white, to unhinge these racial labels from their moorings, to dismiss simplistic racial essentialisms and identity constructions. For Ellison relishes ambiguity in construing race and seeks to undermine it permanently.

Ellison’s treason lies in a two-fold refusal: to ontologize race and to tolerate religion’s endorsement of scapegoating and
redemptive suffering. Ellison knows the human cost of racism and the human cost of cheap religion. Armstrong and Razaf know something of the meanings of being black; they render that knowledge in and as blues. What did I do to be so black and blue? Razaf’s lyrics expose the very real social and economic condition of being black in the United States, of being (what Henry Highland Garnet called) “a nation within a nation.” But the interrogative refrain, What did I do to be so black and blue, postmetaphysical context notwithstanding, carries a sharp metaphysical edge. What did I do to be so black and blue? Merely exist? How did I come to exist, and why? Why is my skin a sin? What is my end? Ellison’s disruption of race and God-talk riffs on two lines resonant in blues black religious consciousness: The first, Ellison places in the mouth of the old woman and is found in the Book of Job. In defence of his integrity, Job’s wife urges him, “Curse God, and die” (Job 2:9). Here Ellison honours courage in the face of divine abandonment, where religion offers little certainty and less meaning. The second comes from an old folk aphorism, “Ain’t but two things I got to do—Be black and die.” Blaspheme? Do? Be? Exist? Die? Here, a possibility of metaphysics critically derived from experience rises, with all the difficulties of being.

IV
So, how do I construct an identity for myself in a society which prefers to behave as if I did not exist? Let me begin with the simple declarative statement, “I am a black woman.” If I indicate this to someone with whom I am communicating through a letter or facsimile or telephone or the Internet, I disclose what is hidden and not immediately known through the data of sense. Depending on the circumstances, my interlocutor may feel pleasantly surprised or

comforted, dismayed or annoyed, or may feel nothing at all. In any case, she or he can disguise the response—after all, I am not present.

Now, suppose that someone has come to the airport to collect me. We are to meet for the first time, so the person stands in the baggage claim and holds a sheet of paper with my name on it. There is little need for me to say, “I am a black woman;” after all, the person literally sees me, my gender and race are quite obvious. But, when I say, “I am Shawn Copeland,” depending on the circumstances, the person holding the sign may or may not feel forced to dissemble, to screen raw and immediate reaction to the presence of an unexpected blackwoman.

Drawing on postmodern strategies, bell hooks and African American religious and cultural critic Victor Anderson, in particular, have been bold in exposing the crippling limitations of arguing racial identity as essentialist. This argument challenges African diasporic scholars in the United States to move beyond ontological blackness—that is, experiencing black life as bound by truncated, “unresolved binary dialectics of slavery and freedom, Negro and citizen, insider and outsider, black and white, struggle and survival,” with no possibility of transcending or mediating these fruitfully.

In several ways, postmodernism allows black women and men to move away from congested notions of black identity. First, postmodernism is patient of the notion of ‘race as ideology’ and

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27 Anderson, Beyond Ontological Blackness, 14.
insists that the concept of race lacks scientific and intrinsic merit; race is a social construction. Because postmodern approaches resist the limitations of binary (black-white) racial formations, they challenge us to reframe the racial problematic. Doing so, not only exposes the toxic in current social and cultural arrangements, but also demands that we re-image, reimage, and reconstruct the social and cultural matrix differently. Second, postmodern approaches invite multicultural analysis. Given the legacy of involuntary as well as voluntary migrations involving the United States (the African continent, Brazil, the Caribbean, Europe, Mexico, and, possibly Australia), multiraciality and cultural diversity form new possibilities for self-identity. This insinuates a new ‘other’ identity, perhaps, hybridity, something more than creolization. Further, in the critique of race essentialism, postmodern approaches encourage us to recognize, to experiment with, even to appropriate multiple experiences of being black-human-being, multiple expressions of black identity. Thus, bipolar identifications of (black) nationalist or black-identified or (white) assimilationist or white-identified are differentiated and complexified. Tasks or pleasures or desires or tastes reserved to one race or culture can come to characterize individuals of other races or cultures. Finally, even in the critique of essentialism, postmodern approaches affirm a connection between identity and political practice in which the black human subject is apprehended as non-essentialized and committed to historical experience.

But all this may well be only cold comfort. In everyday black life the experience of race or, better, of racialization and racial formation, of racism is impossible to overlook. The raw and

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28 "Whatever else the notion of identity means, it reveals the self-affirmation of consciousness that is at once empirical, intellectual, and rational. Personal identity denotes the condition of me being myself and not another and remaining myself under varying conditions and circumstances. Thus, identity implies a unity, a whole, stability, while never precluding development and loss, growth and transformation, limitation and transcendence expressed as what Bernard Lonergan called "the concrete unity-in-tension that is [the person]," *Insight*, 385.

29 For some accounts, see Ellis Cose, *Rage of a Privileged Class* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993); bell hooks, *Killing Rage, Ending Racism* (New York:
immediate reactions to me as I walk through that airport and toward the person holding the sheet of paper with my name on it will vary certainly. But both the person holding the sign (whether female or male, of African or Asian or European or Hispanic/Latino/a or Native American descent) and I have been shaped by a society that is "so thoroughly racialized that to be without racial identity is to be in danger of having no identity. To be raceless is akin to being genderless. Indeed, when one cannot identify another's race, a microsociological 'crisis of interpretation' results."

The struggle against invisibility and for presence, against individual and state indifference to black life and for respect remains a common, if not chronic, feature of black life. Indeed, since Emancipation, black absence from the white-dominated public domain has been regulated (contained), first through disciplines of sexual intimidation, abuse, and rape; lynching and castration; then,peonage and discrimination; then segregation; then welfare; incarceration and relentless resegregation; now, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, displacement, gross and vicious neglect and economic manipulation.

Integration shaped the strategic practice of the modern civil rights movement in its struggle for free and untrammeled black participation in the public sphere. But that practice neither intended, nor subscribed to a logic of thoroughgoing assimilation (to 'white' norms and values) and renunciation (of 'black' norms and values). We "welcome the transgression of segregatory logic." But, in redressing the visual absence of blacks from the white-dominated public (political, economic, and cultural) domain, we


have come to understand that concern for "representational integration" in popular and literary culture has displaced concern for the political and economic condition of black peoples, even as a "vapid fetishization of the visible has emerged to take its place."\textsuperscript{31} Moreover, as multiraciality becomes an attractive and destabilizing identity option, in so negrophobic a society as our own, black identity is compromised. Then, blackness mutates as negation, non-being, nothingness; it insinuates an other so radically different that the very humanity of the black is (re)called into question. Black identity is no longer a proper subject of authentic human self-transcendence, but bitter bondage.

V

The metaphor Ellison employs for the unnamed narrator's self-interrogation of invisible blackness in the "Prologue" turns on withdrawal—hibernation (sleeping), "a warm hole in the ground," the "darkness of light" (6). Any grasp of the meaning of blackness depends upon the critical and sustained scrutiny of the "the lessons of [one's] own life" (572). And over the novel's more than five-hundred pages, the invisible man pursues his identity, his place in the social configuration that is the United States. To be ignorant of self is dangerous, and the unnamed narrator has had his share of narrow escapes.\textsuperscript{32} The "Epilogue" makes an appeal to the wisdom and memory of the ancestors, the narrator's grandfather, who insists upon claiming his black humanity as common humanity (580). The narrator has learned that neither blacks nor whites, neither communists nor capitalists, neither nationalists nor assimilationists, neither lovers nor acquaintances see the humanity of black people. But, in the power of his grandfather's memories, the narrator "shake[s] off the old skin and come[s] up for breath . . .

\textsuperscript{32} Lonergan, \textit{The Subject} (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette Univ. Press, 1968): "The neglected subject does not know himself. The truncated subject not only does not know himself but also is unaware of his ignorance and so, in one way or another, concludes that what he does not know does not exist," 8.
leav[ing that skin] in the hole” (580, 581). The narrator’s emergence carries with it the “possibility of [a black] socially responsible role” in creating a new pattern of human living. In other words, even shifting or multiple identity politics in post-postmodern context requires an ethics of responsibility and of community, of personal agency and action. The unnamed narrator knows what it means to be black and blue, but many of us have experienced this angular positioning. There is something to learn. “Who knows,” the narrator concludes, “but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?” (581)
THE BLACK SUBJECT AND POSTMODERNISM – RESPONSE TO M. SHAWN COPELAND¹

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Shawn gives a fascinating presentation of the “Black Subject” in the postmodern era. This paper that I read over and over again convinces me of the need for Africans in the home continent to engage in dialogue with African Americans, to share experiences and adopt strategies for survival in the postmodern world. Shawn lucidly presents the challenge of the racialization of identity (black identity) precipitated by modernity (Enlightenment logic). Racialization dominates the American view of humans in the world. Shawn has a good grasp of the subject matter. She makes you stop, affirm, reflect, challenge and agree or disagree.

I may not do justice to the paper in a few minutes response, but I draw attention to three issues I find interesting for the ongoing dialogue in Africana theologies: [1] the close link between diasporic theologies and the African resources – precisely diverse West African resources; [2] the dimensions of creativity that Jazz provides to enable one situate Black Subjectivity, and also to open optimistic window for reinvention – the post-postmodern; and [3] the challenge of creating a new pattern of human living – an Africana project of creativity and reinvention.

Diasporic theologies and the African resources:
There is a connection naturally between Africans living in the homeland and the African diaspora. As Shawn says “Diasporic theologies excavate, critique, and deploy fragmentary, but persistent West African intellectual, rhetorical, and aesthetic forms, values, questions, and concerns even as they improvise critically on

¹ First presented at Black Catholic Theology Group Seminar “The Black Subject in the Post Modern World: Africana Theologies in Dialogue”, as part of the 2006 Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA) Convention, June 8 - 11, 2006 at the San Antonio Hyatt Regency, San Antonio, TX, USA.
these as well as on Western European and American traits, which, after all, are but human traits.”

One aesthetic and intellectual value/trait that we share in our conversations is relationality – the principle that for reality to be real it must be related. West Africans capture it in a way that disturbs those groomed within the Enlightenment logic. They insist on the fundamental duality (or multiplicity) of all things. In Igbo *ife kwulu ife akwudebe ya* – “Whenever Something stands, Something Else will stand beside it.” Chinua Achebe expands this in one of his essays: “Whenever Something stands, Something Else will stand beside it. Nothing is absolute. *I am the truth, the way and the life* would be called blasphemous or simply absurd for is it not well known that a man may worship Ogwugwu to perfection and yet be killed by Udo.”

This appears to me a creative response to modernity – a postmodern principle that casts suspicion on all grand narratives. Again I refer to Achebe. As an artist in search of identity both for himself and his people in a world profoundly destabilised since the experience of slavery and colonialism, Achebe updates Igbo wisdom tradition to respond to the modern/postmodern challenge. His resort to the Igbo wisdom tradition becomes enabler of creating “a space of imagining a different universe, of organising ourselves in a world which holds many perils for black people”. For, “We are in a period so different from anything else that has happened that everything that is presented to us has to be looked at twice”. The perception of reality as multiple enables one always to search for a “second point of view” or to practice “looking at everything twice”. Shawn shows that this hermeneutic of creative suspicion,

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3 See the study of this aspect of Achebe in Gikandi, *Reading Chinua Achebe - Language & Ideology in Fiction.*, 3-4.

4 Achebe in Interview with Bill Moyers, cited by Ibid., p. 1.
especially of postmodern strategies that continue to exclude or make invisible voices of the marginalised, is a liberating methodology to reinvent black subjectivity. It is illustrated in the cognitional irony contained in Jazz.

What did I do to be so black and blue?
The inspiration comes from Jazz ("jazz at the highest level of cognitional irony"); with it Shawn analyses the African American experience of "invisibility". It reveals the creative areas of our own identity. Shawn, as academic, is also an artist that evokes other artists. I read the abridged edition of Invisible Man of Ralph Ellison in High School; Shawn has made it touch the guts; I never saw it in that light.

Africans on the continent can share with African Americans similar struggles with "invisibility" that more or less transformed into African Initiatives in Christianity. The emergence of the "galaxy" of African prophets and founders, to use Kä Mana's expression, is a response to Western Christianity that transmitted Western modernity. They are prophets overwhelmed with the dominating vision of the fulfilment of the biblical promises on African lands. William Wade Harris (from Liberia), Simon Kimbangu (from Democratic Republic of the Congo), Samuel Oschoffa (from Benin Republic), Simao Gonçalvês Toko (from Angola), are only a few of these colourful founder; "the galaxy of prophets and founders of churches". Ethiopianism in Africa rejected racism and the marginalization (invisibility) in worship and administration of the African experience, needs and demands; it also included dimensions of pan-Africanism. 'Zionist' Church founders received the Holy Spirit to preach fearlessly in the face of racism and tyranny; to bear witness even unto death, etc. The revivalism of Simon Kimbangu in the Congo was against colonial and missionary project.6

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5 See Kä Mana, La Nouvelle Évangélisation En Afrique, Chrétiens En Liberté (Paris; Yaoundé: Karthala ; Clé, 2000)., p. 122ff.
6 Important literature in this area includes Bengt Sundkler, Bantu Prophets in South Africa, 2d ed. (London, New York,: Published for the International
African philosophers and theologians acknowledge that these founders of Churches creatively combined critical approach to their religious cultures (the struggle against fetishism, witchcraft and sorcery) and reception of Western modernity through missionary Christianity, colonialism, and globalisation. Some argue that in so far as African modernity subjected the grand narratives of Western modernity to local criticism and scrutiny, it is indeed a combination of the modern and postmodern in the African experience.7

Creating a new pattern of Humane living – a Challenge:
Absent from Shawn’s presentation but presupposed in Jazz that Shawn used to illustrate her thesis of black subjectivity, is “humour”. However, humour is not totally absent in the presentation; for, I find Shawn’s imagining an airport experience as black woman full of irony and humour. African slaves, as revealed by slave literature especially the Brer Rabbit stories, created territories of laughter in the midst of their suffering.8 It was a “necessary psychological distance from the mental stress caused by oppression”. Earl draws the conclusion, “Slaves’ ability to create their own laughter-evoking resources gave them the last word, so to speak, in the master and slave relationship model.”9

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8 Riggins R. Earl provides many texts of laughter among the slaves in the Brer Rabbit stories – see Dark Symbols, Obscure Signs, chapter 6, especially pp. 155-158.
9 Ibid, 155.
In imagining a post-postmodern world that we live in West Africa today, different but not totally unrelated to the African American experience, I ponder on humanistic properties that keep all of us, especially the youth, alive. The basis of creativity and reinvention is humour. Humour is based on an optimistic anthropology that contains the potentials for reinventing a ‘better world’. The search for a better world is inspired by optimism. Africans survive today because of their sense of humour (“joie de vivre”) – an incorrigible faith in life even in the face of unbearable natural disasters, violent conflicts and wars, the tragedies of Rwanda, Congo, Sierra-Leone, Somalia, Sudan, and the list continues. In the African context social analysis tends towards afropessimism. However, note is being taken today of the optimistic ethos that keeps Africans alive in spite of evils that bestride the continent. Bibaki Nzuzi identified humour as first of four elements structural to African culture (i.e. joie de vivre or optimistic view of life or humour, solidarity-hospitality, palaver-dialogue, and a religious view of the world.) For Cheikh Anta Diop gaiety, optimism, social sense, etc., are dimensions of the African psychic identity; they encourage optimistic communitarian ethos (in contradistinction from individualistic social structures that communicate insecurity and pessimism). There is nothing absolute about these psychic reactions or cultural traits; they are in permanent flux. They may change; and they are changing following the radical transformations of the continent. Optimism as well as lucidity needs to accompany narratives of our past failures or weaknesses, narratives of the ordeals powerless Africans are


passing through today.

Diasporic and continental African renewal and renovation are therefore based on the inspirational heart of the cultural matrix, re-imaged, reimagined, and reconstructed. Shawn’s presentation gives us a taste of how to go about this.

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