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Jane E. Soothill, Gender, Social Change and Spiritual Power: Charismatic Christianity in Ghana Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2007 x+261 pp. (Patrick Claffey)
Orthodox Church. In other words, covered by the general norms of the Catholic Church, Spiritan missionaries work directly at the service of the religious and pastoral needs of the Orthodox Church. Needless to say this pioneering work of collaboration, for example, in training of clergy, translating liturgical texts, evangelising of Ethiopian nomads, and so on, generates positive and negative reactions.

The next two contributions deal marginally with ecumenism. Patrick Claffey, in a sociological analysis of the Christian churches across Africa, weighs the social impact of the various churches. His examples are drawn mainly from fieldwork in Benin Republic. Catholicism and “ecumenical Christianity” link social involvement and development very closely with being Church. African Initiated Churches and Pentecostalism craft wellbeing in the language of health, material progress and abundance. Is this a case of religion turning into the Marxian opium of the people? Or is it a cross-fertilisation of symbols that enables religion to borrow from the world of development the discourse and technique of reinventing society?

Kenneth Obiekwe, on his part, uses the insight of the late Mennonite theologian, John Howard Yoder, to argue for presence as the strategy for peacemaking in the world. The quality of the church’s internal life, its active focus on effecting social change through nonviolence is both a prophetic challenge to society and a paradigm for peacemaking. To realise this, the Churches must transcend many obstacles; top on the list is the scandal of denominationalism that constitutes a counter-witness to the Church’s mission in the world.

Finally, Bede Ukwuije presents his new book, *Trinity and Inculturation*. He uses the insight of Evangelical theologian, Erichard Jüngel, to mark out the concerns of new generation African theologians in the theological task. Ukwuije argues that African Christian theology must go beyond apologetics to clearly focus on its object, the Trinitarian God. The issues that Ukwuije raises, his style of “reception” of the contribution of pioneer African theologians call for a major debate that will be the subject matter of the next issue of *Bulletin*.

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Local and Global Exigencies within the Ecumenical Movement: Analysis of the Ecumenical Scene in South African Catholicism

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Introduction
On the global level, Catholic Church documents recognize their insufficiency in providing for all the local needs of the various regions that make up their global communion. The Second Vatican Council decree on ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*\(^2\), and the Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism,\(^3\) which are global norms on ecumenism for Catholics,

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\(^1\) Peter Uzochukwu has handed in his doctoral thesis on Ecumenism; his defence comes up in July, 2008.


\(^3\) On its part, article 18 of the *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* identifies some factors that necessitate the adaptation of the general Catholic policies on ecumenism to regional contexts and situations. Such include: diversity of nations, differences of relations between the Catholic Church and other churches or ecclesial communities. See, Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity (PCPCU), *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (Vatican City: s.n. 1993) #18. Since this is the revised and harmonised version of two previous versions of the ecumenical directory (that were issued separately in 1967 and 1970). I prefer to cite it as *Revised Directory (RD)*. To manage such diverse situations well *RD* urges Bishops in various regions “to issue practical norms for the needs and opportunities presented by diverse circumstances in the light of the prescriptions of the supreme Church authority” (*RD* #39 §2). Diocesan commissions are enjoined to adapt the decisions of their respective Episcopal conferences to their contexts (*RD* #44b and 84); and Catholic centres of formation or educational institutes are also asked to adapt curriculum and programmes of their ecumenical
make provisions for local adaptations and complementation. Acting on these provisions and being fully convinced that the local African context has its peculiar local ecumenical needs various dioceses in Africa have issued their own ecumenical directives. Taking the case of the 2003 local directory on ecumenism issued by the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) under the title *Directory on Ecumenism for Southern Africa (DESA)*, the current study analyzes not only the need for such a vital ecumenical tool in Africa but also correlates its insights with the global norm of the Catholic Church on ecumenism and the prevailing context in African Christianity. After examining the ecumenical features of the local church that issued DESA, there will be a comparative study of the areas of continuity and discontinuity between it (DESA) and the global Catholic document (RD) which it seeks to locally complement. Thereafter, the extent DESA goes in exposing the particular ecumenical needs of the area will be investigated. Next, there will be an analysis of the quality or efficiency of DESA's measures in addressing the local needs. Finally, the imperative of inserting DESA within the larger African Catholic formation to the concrete situations of life of persons and groups undergoing training with them (RD #5, 44, 56 and 84).

4 From the replies to a recent empirical survey conducted from March 2005 to May 2006 by this author on the 546 local churches in Africa (Dioceses, Vicariate Apostolic, Prefectures, and Episcopal conferences), it was discovered that a sizeable number of local churches in Africa have issued documents in the form of ecumenical directory, though the majority have not. One of the earliest among them was issued in June 1965 at the plenary meeting of the Zambia episcopal conference, whose directives to the clergy and laity of the country centred on intercommunion and sacramental or non-sacramental sharing with non-Catholic churches. Adrian Smith, "Ecumenism in Zambia," *AFER* 9 (1967): 101-107, 103. The directory issued by the Southern African Conference of Bishops, which is under analysis here is one of the most express forms of such directories.

and Christian perspectives or realities will form the basis of my appraisal.

The Ecumenical Features and Potentials of the Local Church in Africa: The Case of SACBC

As a case in point for assessing the ecumenical features and potentials of the local church in Africa, a study is made here of the local ecumenical directory issued by the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference. The majority of the inhabitants of the areas within the southern part of Africa are Christians. Possibly as a result of the late arrival of the Catholicism in this area, Catholics find themselves in a minority. Factors like this may tend to diminish the ecumenical importance of the directives from the Catholic Church in this region. Nevertheless, the publication of DESA and the conduct of local ecumenical dialogues, which this local church has successfully accomplished, tend rather to accord it

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6 Out of the total population of Southern Africa (put at 39,820,000 in 1995), close to 70% are Christians among whom Catholics account for 2,880,000 (i.e., 7.2% of Christian population in Southern Africa). While the Reformed, the Anglican and the Free Church traditions were established in this area by the very first Dutch and British settlers, the first resident Catholic bishop only arrived the Cape in 1837. For instance, according to Jonathan N. Gerstner, the first permanent minister of the Reformed Church arrived the Cape of Colony in 1665. Jonathan N. Gerstner, “A Christian Monopoly: The Reformed Church and Colonial society under Dutch Rule,” In Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History, Perspectives on Southern Africa, 55, eds., Richard Elphick & Rodney Davenport (California: University of California Press, 1998) 16-30, 16. Also contributing to the slow spread of Catholicism in this part of the world was the fact that even after their arrival, Catholic priests initially focused their ministry on some isolated segments of the people many of whom were Irish soldiers, DESA #1.1; #1.2; #1.3. Thus the Catholic Church was not only late in coming into Southern African region (when compared with some other churches), it was also slower than they in getting itself well-established. Little wonder then that numerically speaking, it is in a minority position in this area. The surprising thing though is that even as the Catholic Church was also late in getting itself established in some other areas of Africa like Nigeria, it has eventually overtaken most other earlier-arrived churches both in number and in infrastructure. This was not the case in Southern Africa.
a leading position in the ecumenical movement not just within the Southern African region but also in the entire African Catholicism and Christianity.

The fact that it took exactly thirty years, after the enabling decrees of the Second Vatican Council, before this body could become a full member of the already existing South African Council of Churches, shows how slow it could be in applying the teaching of the church. It is also an indication of how effectively this local church can address pressing local ecumenical needs and how willing it is in reciprocating the ecumenical gestures from the other Christian churches.

Furthermore, it needs to be seen how sufficiently this local church can identify with the exigencies of life within its surrounding vicinity namely, Africa South of the Sahara. When one considers the fact that the latter is acclaimed in some Catholic documents to be the domain of the image of the church as the family of God—a region that is also increasingly being recognised as the emerging centre of gravity for global Christianity—some questions tend to arise. How much of the general ecclesial reality in Africa is reflected in DESA and how far is it contributing to the collective search for an African identity within global Catholic ecumenical tradition? DESA needs to make it more evident that it has taken into consideration the situation of life outside its immediate confines. Also, its policies need to explicitly portray the other churches in positive light. Apart from seeking to ecumenically reposition the local churches, its directives need also

\[1\] According to DESA, it was only in 1995 that the Catholic Church in Southern Africa under the auspices of SACBC became a full member of the South African Council of Churches (SACC). The council, according to the statement on its website, has been established since 1968. See “Come Celebrate! 25 Years of the SACC: 1968-1993,” in http://www.sacc.org.za/about/celebrate0.html [Accessed 19.09.2007]. Although the Second Vatican Council, which ended in 1965, has given an express mandate for the Catholic Church to join the ecumenical movement, SACBC rather continued to maintain an observer status in SACC for the thirty years that followed such mandate. DESA #1.7.
to embody the solicitude for fellowship with the other churches in its neighbourhood and in the larger African context.

Nevertheless, for successfully resisting the minority syndrome (i.e., a situation in which a minority group easily succumbs to liberalism in the face of an overwhelming majority group), and for preserving even a strict Catholic stance in their ecumenical endeavours (cf., DESA #6.5.4), SACBC’s efforts need some commendation. This is more the case in the prevailing situations whereby many local churches in Africa would claim to be too preoccupied with some other tasks (e.g., getting their young churches well-established) and thus declare themselves not ready yet for ecumenism. Nonetheless, DESA’s rigorous stance might likely make ecumenical relation with the Catholic Church very cumbersome for the other churches.

Catholic Ecumenical Directories: Correlating Catholicity with Local Diversities

Inside the front-cover page of the booklet containing the Directory on Ecumenism for Southern Africa (DESA), a bold print reads: “approved by the SACBC in consultation and agreement with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.”8 Needless to say, such a consultation and agreement between the Holy See (as the central administrative and magisterial body within the Catholic Church) and regional or national bodies of the church is very important, especially when such is made in a mutually enriching way. In fact, documents produced through such a process are often accorded higher value and respect. Such an approach often aims at a constructive blending of the universal vision or goal (fostered mainly by the Holy See) with legitimate local diversities (which local hierarchies should also be attentive to) in the same Catholic Church.9 Moreover, the drive for the constant renewal of the church

8 See the publication data page of the booklet containing the 2003 version of DESA.
9 Indeed Lumen Gentium #13 enjoins the chair of St Peter to protect “legitimate differences” of local churches while also ensuring that such differences do not
at all levels, especially that of giving it a firm root in various cultures or inculturation\(^1\), stands in need of such a consultation. One thing, however, seems very puzzling. DESA makes no mention of having consulted the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity (PCPCU) under whose domain ecumenism in the Catholic Church squarely falls. It seems strange, all the more, especially when one recalls the clear instructions that RD has made\(^2\) concerning issuance of local directories.

At this juncture, a correlation of the directives and policies in the two documents under examination seems expedient. To start with, there is no questioning whether or not DESA has preserved the universal Catholic policies and practice of ecumenism. This seems obvious. Apart from its profuse references to RD, it also draws insights from a number of Second Vatican Council documents like *Unitatis Redintegratio*, *UR* (see DESA n. 8),


\(^1\) Inculturation, as John Paul II teaches, has two dimensions. It entails both "the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity" and "the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures." John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December, 1990), in AAS 52 (1991): 229.

\(^2\) Explaining the rapport or protocol that should be followed in PCPCU’s execution of its function, especially when these involve national, regional or diocesan ecumenical bodies or structures, RD states that "the coordination of the ecumenical activities of the entire Catholic Church requires that these contacts be reciprocal. It is therefore appropriate that the Council be informed of important initiatives taken at various levels of the life of the Church. This is necessary, in particular, when these initiatives have international implications such as when important dialogues are organized at a national or territorial level with other Churches and ecclesial Communities. The mutual exchange of information and advice will benefit ecumenical activities at the international level as well as those on every other level of the Church’s life. Whatever facilitates a growth of harmony and of coherent ecumenical engagement also reinforces communion within the Catholic Church.” RD #54.
Dignitatis Humanae (see DESA n. 4.1.5) and Lumen Gentium (see DESA n. 4.1.5). It also reflects documents of the Holy See like the 1981 document from John Paul II, On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, Familiaris Consortio (see DESA nn. 7.1; 7.3; 7.9) and the Rite for Christian Initiation for Adults (see DESA nn. 4.1.6.1). From the perspective of regional African Catholicism, however, DESA shows no clear sign of having been enriched with local insights from Ecclesia in Africa12 (correctly described as the most authoritative ecclesiastical document of our time on African Catholicism). Insights from the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) or the other regional Catholic bodies in Africa did not also feature in DESA. As such, one can argue that the central features of the continent’s ecumenical experiences may be lost on the Southern African area if it fails to draw from or plug into the regional ecumenical ideas or insights.

Indeed, adapting universal policies to local contexts is not an easy task. Little wonder then that some of the provisions in DESA betray a dilemma of interests.13 Its author (SACBC) sometimes

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12 John Paul II variously describes the message of Ecclesia in Africa, (a document he issued after drawing from the proposals of Synod of Bishops’ special assembly for Africa) as one with a very far-reaching goal in Africa. According to him, it is of “decisive importance” (Ecclesia in Africa, #1), of “fundamental” relevance (Ibid., #8) and of “profound significance” (Ibid., #19) first for the church in Africa as well as the universal church. Thus, it is difficult to understand why the opportunities offered in such an important document (which surprisingly features only once in DESA namely in at the preamble) could not be fully explored in DESA for the benefit of developing a virile (yet universally authentic) local Catholic ecumenical thrust.

13 In its article 5, RD did actually state that it “does not intend to deal with the relationship of the Catholic Church with sects or new religious movements.” So, it is possible that ten years after such a stern declaration, there has been better understanding of the phenomenon of sects and new religious movements in the Catholic Church. This may have encouraged the authors of DESA (published in 2003), who actually come from the African cultural milieu (where numerous groups of new indigenous churches and religious movements operate), to boldly
finds itself oscillating between being faithful to the global Catholic vision and being relevant to the local context. For instance, in its choice of local dialogue partners, it apparently prefers to deal with the local branches of globally more popular churches (like those in the Anglican and Reformed traditions) instead of the Ethiopian independent churches and the Zion Christian Churches), which the same SACBC says boasts of a very significant local Christian presence in South Africa.\textsuperscript{14}

On another note, having \textit{RD} as its anchor text,\textsuperscript{15} should in no way exonerate \textit{DESA} from incorporating relevant local insights. In fact, it is only natural to expect in \textit{DESA} a substantial measure of local insights. Of course, local ecumenical needs and universal ecumenical policies of the church are not two irreconcilable opposites. Indeed, it is very possible and desirable to pay equitable loyalty to the demands of both. What is unacceptable is a situation where universal policies are made to suppress genuine local needs or, on the other hand, efforts are so concentrated on local needs that the universal goal of ecumenism is forgotten. Either way can deprive the whole system of its legitimate source of rich diversity and growth. The relationship between \textit{RD} and \textit{DESA} should be that of a universal anchor-document and its local adaptation; each complementing the other. This is clear from the perspective of the

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{14} See the list of existing dialogue (\textit{DESA} \#1.7) and the statement on the Ethiopian churches (\textit{DESA} \#1.5).
\item \textsuperscript{15} Indeed \textit{DESA}, which draws about 97\% of its references from \textit{RD} alone, has neither footnotes nor endnotes. Even documents of the Holy See, including \textit{RD}, bear eloquent testimony of the versatility and coherence of their insights by always posting very rich and vast references to fundamental and ancillary works at their endnotes. That \textit{DESA} was drafted “in consultation and agreement” with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, does not foreclose any possible constructive effort to enrich \textit{RD} with local imageries, insights or concepts and apply it to the local context. Such an effort would have ensured that the local directory embellishes its originality all the more, with familiar and evocative African symbols that stimulate its audience into action and make them identify with the cause of ecumenism as their own as well.
\end{enumerate}
one purpose they serve, namely, the ecumenical regeneration of the one Catholic Church.

There is no need to restate here that RD is a universally-generated document embodying global Catholic ecumenical vision and policy just as DESA is a locally-generated text with sensitivity to local ecumenical needs. The seemingly overwhelming anchorage on RD\(^6\) rather tends to present DESA as unduly focusing more on global Catholic interest or ideal with little attention to increasing calls to blend global visions with local realities. With regard to approach, emphasis or orientation, however, they seem to differ. While RD presents a global picture with an inductive approach, DESA on its part, deductively pursues the local ecumenical regeneration of the Catholic Church in Southern Africa. Over all, the current effort remains not only a useful means of exposing the interplay between local and universal demands in the same church. It is also a way of exploring the church’s rich diversity while promoting its global catholicity.

The Local Directory, DESA: A Textual and Critical Analysis

The seven-sectioned directory, presumably meant for the whole membership\(^7\) of the Southern African local church, follows

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\(^{16}\) Making references to a total of 107 different articles in RD, DESA was able to raise its 80 paragraphs of directives and recommendations. A thorough elucidation and local adaptation of RD, which DESA hopes to achieve by so doing, entails more than a recapitulation of RD. It also involves a creative re-reading and application of RD, in such a way that can even enrich the general Catholic ecumenical tradition.

\(^{17}\) Though one can argue that DESA is meant for the clergy and laity in the local churches within the jurisdiction of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference, it is not easy to determine its immediate audience or legitimate executors. This is unlike in RD where the Pastors of the Catholic Church and even all the faithful are clearly identified as the target audience. RD #4. A clear indication of those for whom DESA directives are meant (like pastors, leaders, ecumenists or the generality of the faithful in Southern Africa) is very necessary bearing in mind that the area designated as “Southern Africa,” refers to other countries together with the highly popular South Africa. For instance, the UN scheme of geographic regions groups five countries, namely, Botswana, Lesotho,
sequentially the same order that is found in the outline of RD.\textsuperscript{18} However, judging some of the items in RD to be more appropriate for the task of addressing their local needs, the authors of DESA had to focus on some issues\textsuperscript{19} leaving out the others. Apart from section 1 of DESA, which makes a short historical exposition of church divisions in South Africa,\textsuperscript{20} the approach in the other five Namibian, South Africa and Swaziland, under the area designated as Southern Africa (see http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Southern Africa [Accessed 18:12:2006]) whereas the homepage of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference represent the conference as being made up bishops from three countries (Botswana, South Africa and Swaziland). See Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference, “About Us: Nature” In http://www.sacbc.org.za/Sitelindex.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=106&Itemid=103 [Accessed 08.10.2007]. Knowledge of such complexities could have compelled DESA’s authors to be more precise.

\textsuperscript{18} RD has the following outline in this order: I. The Search for Christian Unity; II. Organization in the Catholic Church at the Service of Christian Unity; III. Ecumenical Formation in the Catholic Church; IV. Communion in Life and Spiritual Activity among the Baptized; and V. Ecumenical Cooperation, Dialogue and Common Witness. On the other hand, DESA has the following outline: section 1. History of divisions in Africa. This can as well be regarded as effort to trace the common journey of Christians in the area. Then, sections 2-7 are arranged as follows: 2. Promoting the Catholic Church’s Contribution to Ecumenism; 3. Ecumenical Formation in the Catholic Church; 4. Promoting Community Life and Spiritual Activity between Baptised Christians; 5. Sharing Spiritual Activities and Resources; 6. Sharing Sacramental Celebrations and 7. Inter-church Marriages. Its section 8 consists of the concluding admonitions. It is not difficult to see the similarity in sub themes as they are presented in both documents.

\textsuperscript{19} Sections 4-7 of DESA are all derived from section IV of RD.

\textsuperscript{20} The historical account given in DESA, offers the reader a glimpse of the level of complexity and diversity obtainable among the numerous Christian communities in the region. What seems to be missing in DESA’s approach to historical exigencies is perhaps a decision outlining the limit of ecclesiological or ecclesial diversities it can regard as locally legitimate. This would have helped the search for an ecclesiological common ground among the African churches or ecclesial communities; especially as it could help to articulate the local African notions of the church and of Christian unity as well as the implication of church communion in Africa. These would have enriched the general notions of church unity and communion which have been given in RD.
Local And Global Exigencies Within Catholic Ecumenism

sections of this thirty-page document remain the same. First, there is always a recapitulation of pertinent policies in *RD* followed by a set of some 'recommendations.' For instance, taking its bearing from *RD* #55-91, section 3 of *DESA* opens by summarising in #3.1 and 3.2 what it considers important regarding ecumenical formation in the local scene. This is followed in #3.3-3.5 by concrete recommendations. The same procedure is maintained in sections 4, 5, 6, and 7. The one exception to this format is section 2 which entirely consists of recommendations drawn from articles 37-54 of *RD* concerning ecumenical structures. In all cases, the basic approach of selecting from *RD* what is considered relevant to local context prevails. This applies also in the somewhat didactic section 2 formulated in a somewhat different style.

Seemingly convinced that the strengthening of local structures is a major way to promote the Catholic Church's contribution to ecumenism in its region, *DESA* devotes its section 2 entirely to the task of establishing efficient ecumenical structures. The eleven recommendations under this section equitably demonstrate that such a contribution to ecumenism has either intra ecclesial (*DESA* #2.1; 2.1.1; 2.2) or inter-ecclesial (*DESA* #2.1.2; #2.4.1; #2.4.2.1; #2.4.2.2; #2.5 and #2.6) dimensions, depicting a give and take situation. This supports our position that efforts towards the internal ecumenical renewal of the Catholic Church should be complemented by those of reaching out to other churches. Only one article under this section (#2.3) has both orientations in itself. It would have been appropriate if *DESA* had endeavoured, through its recommendations, to contextualize the general Catholic principles of ecumenism or at least confront the latter with local needs. What rather seems obvious is that almost all the recommendations in *DESA* have ended up simply rephrasing or recasting the provisions in *RD*. 
Perhaps, taking cognisance of the living conditions and prevailing praxis-oriented worldviews in Africa, DESA endeavours to give a pastoral tone to its injunctions. Hence, issues of practical Christian life dominate its outline, namely, ecumenical formation, promoting community life and spiritual activity between baptised Christians, sharing spiritual activities and resources, and then sharing sacramental celebrations and inter-church marriages. It is, however, difficult to understand how a local church in Africa (in this case, the Southern Africa Episcopal conference) with all the overriding historical needs for social justice and socio-cultural development does not consider the cooperation of Christians in the socio-cultural sphere of human life an important issue. Otherwise, how else can one explain the omission, in this document, of such an important theme which section V of RD did deal extensively with. As it is, the entire section V of RD, which deals with the collaboration of Catholics with other Christians in the socio-economic domain, did not receive explicit treatment in DESA. The decision to leave out such an important aspect of the ecumenical encounter in Africa, where issues of socio-political nature dominate the churches’ concern, begs for questions. Again, one would expect in a church document from such an area that is

21 In Africa, the emphasis is not on formulas or theories but experience. Brian Hearne, The Seeds of Unity, Eldoret: Gaba publications, 1976, 47.

22 DESA itself has earlier acknowledged in #1.7 that “cooperation in the areas of social concerns” especially the fight against apartheid, led the churches in South Africa to establish the South African Council of Church. Also, the Lineamenta for the synod of Bishops’ Special Assembly for Africa rightly points out that the broader field of development, the promotion of justice, peace and defence of human rights, constitute in themselves opportunities, which the churches in Africa need to take full advantage of in forging strong ecumenical collaboration among themselves. General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops’ Special Assembly for Africa, The Church in Africa and her Evangelising Mission towards the Year 2000 “You Shall be my Witness (Acts 1:8)”, Lineamenta, (Vatican City: Libreria Edice, 1990) #61. Henceforth Lineamenta. One is, therefore, right to expect some innovative directives from DESA regarding collaboration of the churches on the socio-economic and cultural domains in Africa.
blessed with a relatively high standard of literary and scholarly tradition, to prize highly such issues like ecumenical dialogues, ecumenical cooperation in Institutes of Higher Studies or in post graduate theological studies more than what one actually sees in DESA #3.5. The only injunction regarding formal theological dialogue is a passing reference to already conducted ecumenical dialogues (cf. DESA #1.7), and the “prayerful reflection,” which it enjoins on catholic lay organisations (cf. DESA #2.5). It must, however, be stated that to have successfully conducted a multi-lateral ecumenical dialogue between the Catholic Church, on the one hand, and the Anglicans, Pentecostals and the Dutch Reformed Churches, on the other, is a rare feat in Africa the fruit of which needed ipso facto to have been made more evident in the insights contained in this document.

A careful reading of DESA does throw up the following questions: first, did it succeed in identifying the genuine needs or the ecumenical concerns of the local churches under its jurisdiction? Secondly, what measures did it take in order to address these needs; and how effective are the measures?

**Issues of Genuine Local Ecumenical Concerns**

Shortage of viable means of bringing the myriad of churches to reach out to one another and the need to evolve appropriate models or at least to integrate some positive local values into the ecumenical enterprise, represent the main forms of local ecumenical concern that every local ecumenical directory in Africa needs to address. The Southern part of Africa, like many other areas of this continent, has witnessed not a few socio-ethnic and geopolitical conflicts, which have brought sad memories of mistrust among the local Christian communities. The obnoxious socio-political structure of Apartheid did provoke in South Africa numerous liberationist as well as sycophant groups (Christians not excluded). As such, local Christian communities still bear some grudges against one another for past complicity or dubious silence
in the face of such oppression.\textsuperscript{23} One of the greatest ecumenical challenges that thus face the churches in this locality has to do with re-establishment of mutual trust and healing of past sad memories among themselves.\textsuperscript{24} This requires more of corporate solution from

\textsuperscript{23} Such complicity includes not only possible acts of accommodating Apartheid practices in their structures but also some gestures of aloofness by which some churches stayed away from the people’s common struggles for liberation. Noel Bruyns, “South Africa’s Churches Confess Their Complicity with Apartheid,” In http://www.wfn.org/1997/12/msg00107.html [Accessed 08:10:2007]. A case of aloofness, can be argued against the Catholic Church, which seemingly distanced itself from the anti-Apartheid body which was formed by some non-Catholics. The latter had rallied themselves together to fight against the Apartheid regime; formed a Council (the Christian Council of South Africa in 1936 that transformed into SACC in 1968); and sustained their common efforts without the Catholic Church which only became a full member in 1995. James N. Amanze, “100 Years of the Ecumenical Movement in Africa,” \textit{Journal of Theology for Southern Africa} 105 (1999): 1-15, 11. Though the Catholic Church may have mounted its own separate anti-Apartheid struggle, such distancing could be misread. The same goes for the other churches which may have done similar things. Hence, any opportunity for the churches to correct such misconceptions and win back each other’s trust and friendship in the current ecumenical dispensation should be grabbed.

the churches’ top leadership structures most of which are yet to imbibe the ecumenical spirit. This introduces us to the allied need for ecumenical formation in local ecumenism, which DESA \#\#3.4 and 3.5 also recognize among especially its lay members and future priests. It seems, however, that DESA is faced with another related problem, namely, training of ecumenical experts and serving clerics whose input do have a defining effect on the ecumenical life of the local church.

Generally, there is a high rate of quarrel-laden proliferation of churches and ecclesial communities in Africa. Together with the above-mentioned minority status of the Catholic Church in Southern Africa, this increases the challenges facing Catholic ecumenical initiative in this region. So, DESA, as a pioneering effort of the Southern African Catholic church hierarchy, needs to institute channels of closer rapport with other Christian groups at least to boost its interdenominational appeal. These measures can

1994, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998, 5. In another area of this work, (Ibid., 80) the scholar also accuses SACC of having refrained from an outright condemnation of the new reformed apartheid constitution. So, one way or the other, Christian communities did not fully meet each other’s expectations which somehow may still remain a barrier to the smooth relationship between them in the post-Apartheid era. This underscores the need for the churches to mutually ask each other for pardon and forgiveness in the new ecumenical dispensation.

Hearne recounts that the emergence of indigenous church hierarchies in Africa did help to douse tensions between local Christian communities. Hearne, The Seeds of Unity, 47. Generally, among small scale communities (as in Africa) the society thrives on mutual encouragement and leadership by example. In such communities, one cannot overestimate the import or influence of ecumenically committed church-leadership on local ecumenism. This goes to illustrate how ecumenically beneficial it could be if church leaders fully embraced the cause of Christian unity in Africa.

Many new churches are springing up almost on weekly basis in Africa. As has been aptly described by Adrian Hastings, the mutual acrimonies witnessed among the churches’ early missionaries in Africa, still feeds the churches’ current biases. Adrian Hastings, “Ecumenical Reflections,” AFER Vol. 9, no. 2 (1967):96-100, 97. For discussion on real essence and models of Christian unity to be successful, these matters need to be addressed.
best be taken corporately, i.e., through official acts or legislations; hence the need for ecumenically motivated and skilled church leaders. Allied to this is the need for ecumenical training of the clergy, which even RD #19 recommends.27

**Intercommunion as Major Local Need and Concern:**

**DESA** did identify some areas of friction28 between the local Christian communities, in reference to which it calls for local dialogue. I will limit my comments here to the issue of intercommunion, which touches on the cultural sensitivity of Africans. A definitive position in **RD #129** (restated in **DESA #6.3.2**) holds that “in general, the Catholic Church permits access to its Eucharistic communion and to the sacraments only to those who share its oneness in faith, worship and ecclesial life.” In general, however, this position constitutes one of the unbending points in Catholic principles of ecumenism which needs improvement. Theologically speaking, Christ’s incarnation, earthly ministry, and paschal mystery are a series of unreserved self-giving that remains unrestrictedly open to all.29 If Jesus Christ were to be physically around today, it is doubtful if he would follow the path of barring anyone from receiving the Eucharist at his hands. This

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27 As if to reemphasize this fact **RD #162** further warns that “the wounded memories and the heritage of a history of separation…, each can set limits to what Christians can do together at this time.”

28 **DESA** calls for local dialogue with other churches on some aspects of baptism like the cases where there is doubt regarding the validity of any church’s baptism or its formula (#4.1.2) or where there is an interchange of official sponsors (#4.1.4). One can easily see that the former is typical of Catholic canonical approach while the latter, though not very new to the general Catholic ecumenical process, is very much in line with African sense of hospitality.

29 The ugliness of depriving someone the opportunity to partake of the Eucharist (especially when one has expressed the requisite belief in it and has also requested for it) becomes glaring when one situates the Eucharist, as John Hadley has done, within the realm of Christ’s universal saving mystery. John Hadley, *Bread of the World: Christ and the Eucharist Today*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1989, 2.
also runs counter to all known African cultural values especially Africans’ exemplary conviviality and commensality. \(^{30}\) At ceremonies in Africa, for instance, no one among the assembled people, not even mad persons strolling by, except one who has been found guilty of heinous crimes against the community, is ever excluded from communal feasts, as it has been done in DESA, even when they entail cultic meals. \(^{31}\) In line with the African values of community, what the local African Catholic ecumenical authorities may need to consider is definitely not such unmitigated public exclusion. Rather, drawing on some theological insights like the guest Christology, \(^{32}\) an option that entails a discrete invitation to

\(^{30}\) Sharing meals together has great significance in African communities. It is one of the most intimate ways of expressing deep cordiality, trust and harmony of existence. See, Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar. *The Church as Family of God, Instrumentum Laboris and Pastoral Letter,* (Accra, Ghana: SECAM publications, 1998) 23 (hereinafter, *Instrumentum Laboris*). Within the general atmosphere of religious inclusivism, wherein the common good of the clan remains their abiding goal, clan members often celebrate and eat together in communal feasts. In most cases, no one is either excluded or allowed to exclude oneself except those who have committed acts that are gravely injurious to the life of the community.

\(^{31}\) Communal worship in Africa is not just an occasion for sacrifice or for partaking in the common cultic meal. It entails, above all, a divine-cosmic assembly. Hence, it has more to do with concrete assemblage, galvanisation, release and appropriation of the community’s vital force, than the permissiveness or orderliness of any rite. Chukwuma J. Okoye, “The Eucharist and the African Culture,” *AFER* 34 (1992): 272–292, 278 and 279. This may have been intended in the church’s teaching on the need for formal ecclesiastical communion before one could share the Eucharist but one should not lose sight of the ultimate universal salvation that the mystery of the Eucharist stands for which transcends immediate ecclesiastical jurisdictions.

\(^{32}\) In African societies, a guest is highly valued by his or her host as a harbinger of good fortune. Thus, African culture makes exceptions for visitors, even strangers. For the Ibibio of southern Nigeria, the less one invests in one’s guests, the lower one’s harvest. This apparently *quid pro quo* conviction may sound superstitious but which religious conviction is entirely free of some utilitarianism? Moreover, following some biblical traditions, which present strangers as source of blessing (as happened when Abram received strangers who turned out to be angels), some African theologians not only defend the salutary
exceptional communion, which seizes the opportunity to invite such visitors to maintain a deeper personal relationship with the church, can be considered a worthier alternative. In order to forestall indifferentism this should go hand-in-hand with an intensified program of catechesis on the Eucharist for members and their guests. These constitute some of the main issues in local ecumenism within Southern African Catholicism and Christianity regarding which DESA urges its constituent dioceses to embark upon dialogue. One is, however, of the view that SACBC stands a better chance in conducting the proposed dialogues more than its

nature of hospitality to guests. Udoh, for instance, propounds a thesis on Guest Christology by which he argues that according Jesus guest status in Africa (whose historical birth-place is not Africa but Nazareth), could be after all very beneficial. Udoh’s argument is that by being so regarded, Jesus can then receive exceptional hospitality and unreserved welcome not excluding full integration into the host community (Udoh, Guest Christology, 228.) From such African background, Catholics would find it theologically sound to waive some rules guiding the Eucharist for the benefit of visitors at their Eucharistic celebrations.  

In America, for instance, apart from few churches like the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, others who follow the ruling of the Missouri Synod, the conservative Churches of Christ like the Lutheran Churches, and some churches of the Reformed tradition, which are known to practise exclusive or closed communion, most Protestant and Independent Christian churches, run a system that keeps the reception of communion open to as many people as possible. Belonging to the latter group are churches like the Reformed Church, the United Methodist Church, Episcopal Church, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Metropolitan Community Church, etc. Some element of flexibility, based on a deeper appreciation of the borderless workings of God’s Spirit, is needed in such matters. Characteristic of their autonomous status, the various local churches within some congregational or other similar church-traditions (e.g., the Baptists) do not adopt any uniform approach. For instance while some of their local churches may decide to practice an open system of communion, others may prefer a closed style. Actually, the Second Vatican Council did authorize the giving of Holy Communion to non-Catholics but only on special occasions, with the explicit permission of the local ordinary. In Africa, such provisions need to be widened to accommodate genuine and positive elements of culture.

The decision of the Conference to urge its constituent dioceses to embark on local dialogues may be a gesture of recognizing the diversities and autonomy that
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constituent dioceses, to which it delegates this task. In all, a more ecumenically out-reaching posture is expected in DESA than the inward-looking tendencies\(^\text{35}\) that are noticeable in some its approaches.

Local Ecumenical Needs: Are DESA’s Measures Effective?

John Paul II’s advice to the church in Africa (given in Malawi) is very relevant for the current study:

are inherent in the constituent dioceses and thus, a way of empowering them. Also, based on the moral principle of subsidiarity, it could also be seen as a noble act of distribution of function or devolution of power. Seen from another perspective, however, it could be interpreted as shying away from duty since RD \#173, from which the DESA derived its instruction, clearly upholds the mandate and authority of Episcopal conferences to conduct dialogues. Again, since the church in southern Africa is still a young one, individual dioceses have definitely got no strong structures and personnel and so may need to depend on the conference (a group of more than 6 dioceses), which obviously has greater and more efficient facilities to conduct local ecumenical dialogues. Yet, the conference still shifts this responsibility to the local churches.

\(^{35}\) Some areas of the document betray the tendency to promote ecumenism through negative or indirect approaches. For instance it calls for “bearing fruitful witness to the sad state of the division” among Christians (DESA \#6.5.4) and tends to induce the ecumenical zeal into Catholics by recalling the “limited form of sharing” with other Christians. This is propagated especially through what DESA terms the general “norm of abstinence from the Eucharist,” by which it hopes to highlight the pain of separations (DESA \#6.5.6). Such promotion of unity by highlighting the sadness of Christian disunity could be described as ecumenism via negativa. Granted that SACBC may have taken this measure in order to overcome the dangers of indifferentism or proselytism, which often beset young churches, nevertheless, there is need for positive engagement in ecumenism by highlighting the goodness of Christian unity and by marshalling out more measures through which churches can positively engage or encounter one another in the process of reconciliation. We term the latter approach an ecumenism via positiva.
I urge you to look inside yourselves. Look to the riches of your own traditions.... Here, you will find genuine freedom — here, you will find Christ who will lead you to the truth.  

So, after pointing out the effectiveness (or not) of some of DESA’s measures, I will briefly examine the “fruitful fields” of ecumenical initiatives, which this document proposes and then discuss some of its recommendations. The aim is to see how best they represent the Catholic tradition and how true they are to the exigencies of life in Africa.

**Eucharistic Communion and Mixed Marriages:** One of the interesting measures taken by DESA relates to what it terms “spiritual communion.” Perhaps motivated by the African sense of the family and values of hospitality, DESA #6.5.3 and #7.12 promote in a somewhat limited sense, a kind of the Eucharistic hospitality for non-Catholic spouses at mixed marriage celebrations. In the sense in which it is used in this document, however, the expression tends to defend a rigid Catholic position on intercommunion, which from the eyes of the affected non-Catholics, could appear haughty. Traditionally, this practice is reserved for Catholics who are barred in conscience (as a result of personal conviction of grave sin) from stepping forward to receive the Holy Eucharist at Holy Mass. Adopting the measure for non-Catholics (who, could even be without serious sin in their hearts at the moment of attending the Eucharistic celebration) could imply that even without any mortal sin in their hearts they are not better than Catholics who are in mortal sin. Instead of serving the spiritual need of non-Catholics, who have tacitly manifested their belief in the Eucharist by stepping forward to receive it, this directive unwittingly frustrates the hope of reconciling the churches. If, on the other hand, the sin of Christian disunity is remorsefully denounced at such occasion of the Holy Mass, the reverence we all

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36 This exhortation, which is contained in John Paul II’s homily given at the conclusion of his sixth pastoral visit to Africa, Lilongwe (6 May, 1989) is also restated in *Ecclesia in Africa*, #48.
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(Catholics and non-Catholics alike) pay to Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist will rather increase. This can deepen the churches’ commitment to Christian unity. Moreover, the Eucharist is not only a sign; it is also a source of unity [DESA #6.3.1(a)]. Such prohibitive directives tend rather to focus on the former and so measures should also be taken to promote the nature of the Eucharist as a source of unity.

DESA rightly delineates some areas of church life as “fruitful fields” of ecumenical collaboration, namely, the general pastoral ministry, the relationship with the AICs, and inter-church marriages. In respect to these, the document either takes some initiatives or recommends further dialogue.

Ecumenical Parish Pastoral Councils: Concerning matters of common pastoral concerns, DESA #2.6 recommends the possibility of restructuring parish pastoral councils in such a way that could open up their membership to Christians from other traditions in the neighbourhood provided that there is a “reciprocal representation” from such non-Catholic communities. Perhaps, the logic behind this measure is that the more Christians from various churches draw together in matters of common concern the better they understand and appreciate each other. Indeed, as Teresa Okure also observes, sharing together the existential or practical issues of life brings Christians of various churches more closely together than theological discussions do.37

Worship with AICs: DESA not only encourages the local Catholic churches of Southern Africa to reach out to the AICs (cf., #1.7), it also urges them to explore the possibility of engaging in

non-sacramental worship with one or more of the latter (cf., #5.3.1). It not only considers the relation between the Catholic Church and the AICs an urgent matter but also urges for ecumenical dialogue between them (cf., n. 2.1.2). Actually in the scale of numerical and theological significance, the AICs are becoming so significant that they can no more be ignored by any well-meaning ecumenical enterprise in Africa. Yet, since the AICs have not fully articulated any coherent academic system of ecclesiology of their own, such a dialogue could best be conducted by exploring their existentialist family-like notion of the church, which ordinarily appeals to Africans and which the local Catholic Churches in Africa are also beginning to appreciate. Thus, in order that DESA’s invitation to dialogue may be welcomed by the AICs, or for the former to successfully stimulate closer communion between the Catholic Church and the AICs, the invitation needs to incorporate in its directives, such tenets of the church as family of God, which is enshrined in ecclesia in Africa.

Affirming Courageous Recommendations of Directory on Ecumenism for Southern Africa (DESA): With regard to some courageous recommendations that DESA has made, one recalls the above-mentioned urge for member-dioceses to engage, as a matter of urgency, in dialogue and in non-Sacramental forms of worship with one or more of the AICs (DESA #2.1.2 and #5.3.1). The courage in this injunction could be better appreciated when one considers the fact that this option (non-sacramental worship) was

38 In the section of the book dealing with “African Independent Churches’ Ecclesiology,” Kärkkäinen argues that the AICs, which according to him, are distinguishable from the “protest movements” within the historical or established churches of Africa, claim 50% of the total Christian population in the rural areas of Zimbabwe. Kärkkäinen, An Introduction to Ecclesiology, 194-201, esp., 195. Such is the increasing status of these churches in many parts of Africa. In view of the proposal for the Catholic-AICs’ dialogue, however, a few obstacles may still lie ahead. One is that the AICs’ mode of theology, which is heavily oral and narrative, is different from that of its counterpart (Catholic theology), which is highly systematized. Secondly, how can the two highly juridical (Catholic) and fluid or less institutional (AICs) models of the church be reconciled?
out-rightly reserved in *RD* #36 only to “the Churches and ecclesial Communities with which the Catholic Church has established ecumenical relations.” Yet, *DESA*’s issuing authority (Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference) does not hesitate to exercise the discretion accorded it in *RD* #130. For instance, *DESA* #6.5.3 and 7.12 did declare that occasions of “special feasts or events” in which one accompanies one’s spouse to Sunday Mass, are legitimate circumstances that can warrant the sharing of Holy Communion between Catholics and other Christians. One other courageous recommendation contained in *DESA* is seen in its broadening of the interpretation of above-mentioned *RD* position regarding intercommunion. This is most evident in *DESA* ## 6.5.3 and 6.3.8. While the former recommends family or marriage feasts as special occasion in which non-Catholics can approach the Eucharist, the latter submits that “in the final analysis, what is required is that the individual requesting admission to the Eucharist must personally manifest Catholic faith in the sacrament.” Such a prizing of personal acceptance of the Eucharistic faith over institutional requirement is ecumenically healthy. It is inspired by pastoral concerns (cf., *DESA* #6.1) and tends to obey the most fundamental missionary maxim—“salvation of Souls” (cf., *DESA* #6.4)—which is a higher value than the full ecclesial communion earlier mentioned in *DESA* #6.1. Furthermore, ##7.10 and 7.12 urge that special consideration be given to couples in mixed marriage who wish to approach the sacraments together.

**DESA Should Integrate African Cultural Strengths:** These few steps are courageous and commendable. Such locally inspired directives can strengthen the drive to incorporate within the ecumenical thrust of African Christianity, typical African communitarian institutions, symbolisms and norms like the extended family and other ties or bonds of social solidarity.39

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39 The *Lineamenta* of the Synod of Bishops’ Special Assembly for Africa acknowledges that as a world-acclaimed leader in “integral human development” and promoter of peace and reconciliation (*Lineamenta*, 45), the church in Africa can enormously promote bonds of communion and fellowship through the
African cultures, according to *Ecclesia in Africa*, are blessed with immense sense of solidarity and community life expressed in extended family-systems etc., which should be preserved as priceless cultural heritage.\(^{40}\) Such should be given far greater attention in the provisions of any African church directory, than they actually do in *DESA*. An articulated set of culturally-raised symbols of unity, needless to say, could also be a unique African contribution to the global ecumenical enterprise. Useful as they are, such explorations are yet to receive the attention of not just *DESA* but also other local churches in Africa.

**Evaluation: Inserting *DESA* within the Larger African Catholicism and Christianity**

Having seen from the foregoing the interplay between the local and universal Catholic dimensions of *DESA*, and the viability or effectiveness of its directives, it is pertinent here to try to ascertain its overall relevance within the larger perspective of the ecumenical movement in Africa. First, I will assess its significance within the pan-African Catholic ecclesiology and ecumenism. Secondly, I consider its place within the larger African Christian equation in terms of its ability to reach out to other African Christian churches and ecclesial communities and how successful it could be in stimulating among them reciprocal or joint ecumenical efforts. Part of this investigation is to determine how true *DESA* is to the general living conditions and basic values in Africa especially by promoting appropriate models of ecumenism that can be culturally sustainable.

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instrumentality of such positive values like “sense of community, the extended family spirit and clan solidarity,” especially if they are freed of the evil of tribalism (*Lineamenta*, 38 and 39). Thus, it is difficult to understand why the experiences gained by the church from such an outstanding role were not heavily drawn from in the formulation of *DESA*. This would have equipped the document further for the task of promoting communion and fellowship among the churches and ecclesial communions in Africa.

\(^{40}\) *Ecclesia in Africa*, #43.
DESA & Pan-African Catholic Ecclesiology and Ecumenism

It must be stated outright that DESA which has the Southern African area as its particular audience and sphere of operation is limited in scope. Moreover, the circumstances in this area, which form its background, are not completely the same as those in other parts of Africa. Yet the emergence of a dominant pan-African ecclesiology through Ecclesia in Africa somehow necessitates that efforts of local Catholic churches in any part of Africa should take a cue from it. Understandably, since the family remains the "most important reality" in the life of Africans, a dominant and all-pervading institution\(^{41}\) which encompasses even the dead\(^{42}\), the said African Catholic ecclesiology is typified by the model of the church as family of God. Hence, one major way to help local ecumenical efforts gain pan-African relevance is to build them on this dominant ecclesiological thrust of modern African Catholicism. The extent this has been achieved in DESA, coming after nine years of the publication of Ecclesia in Africa, will be examined here.

To start with, DESA # 7.10-7.12 did not only urge that "full use" be made of the opportunities offered in mixed marriage situation for promoting local ecumenism. It takes the initiative in this direction by endorsing the occasion of mixed marriage celebration as a legitimate (special) ground for allowing a non-Catholic to partake in the Holy Communion. These recommendations, apparently inspired by the prevailing background of African family values, constitute an expansion of the meaning (or broad interpretation) of the provisions in RD. Such


efforts are as commendable as they also stand in need of some further broadening.

At least, two hallmarks\(^{43}\) of the family institution in Africa tend to qualify it as the most viable platform for the church's ecumenical enterprise in this continent, namely, its high sense of solidarity\(^{44}\) by which each member refrains from regarding himself or herself to be more important than the others but rather feels incomplete without the other. The other is its elastic mechanism for regulating and regularizing diversities within its domain.\(^{45}\) Such a richly endowed natural institution that makes African culture a citadel of human interdependence and solidarity deserves a pride of place in local ecumenical directives. Since it has the capacity to make members cherish and develop one another in their legitimate and enriching differences, the family institution, therefore, deserves a vital role in inculcating ecumenical principles into the individual members of the churches. These features and values of the family institution do witness a multiplier effect through the extended family system, wherein a household can be made up of several nuclear families the young marriageable youths of which are

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\(^{43}\) Other values that are represented in the African family institution, as listed in the *Instrumentum Laboris*, include: Alliance (#4.1.1.); kinship (#4.2); Solidarity (#4.3); Love for and promotion of life (#4.4); Respect for elders and parents (#4.5); Veneration of ancestors (#4.6); Hospitality and reception (#4.7); Dialogue and debate (#4.8). According to the document, these values or characteristics remain the basis on which the church as family of God stands and the foundation on which it can promote Christian unity. #4.1.

\(^{44}\) One of the unique hallmarks of the African family system is a circle of co-belonging, mutuality and solidarity that extends beyond the nuclear or immediate families and stretches kinship through a bunch of extended families to the larger clan or kindred unit. Von David Cheal, *Family: Critical Concepts in Sociology*, London: Routledge, 2003, 130. Africa still preserves solidarity in its cultures. John Paul II urged Africans to uphold positive cultural values; divest them of ill-fitting life styles and forms of human organisation being imposed on them from many centers in the northern hemisphere. *Ecclesia in Africa*, 22.

\(^{45}\) The African family institution possesses mechanisms by which it strives after consensus, control of those in authority and reconciliation among disagreeing parties. *Instrumentum Laboris* n. 2.7.
obliged to marry from outside their own family circles.\textsuperscript{46} This bequeaths the system with an ever-expanding membership profile, which continues to incorporate new members into the fold. So, rather than fuel ethnicism or nepotism, as some fear, enshrining such values in the Christian witness can help the churches overcome obstacles in their way to true reconciliation.\textsuperscript{47}

Ecumenism entails essentially the transformation of members’ ways of thinking and attitude.\textsuperscript{48} This can be achieved through the family approach. Thereafter, church structures and institutions will necessarily follow the same path of ecumenical regeneration. For this reason, promoting the role of Christian family (a strategic form of which is the mixed marriage traditions) as the beacon for ecumenical development in Africa promises great dividends.

It seems evident that DESA failed to meaningfully incorporate in its directives, any substantial local insights or initiatives regarding either the family institution or other cultural values. Indeed, apart from the brief history of the church in Southern Africa and the mentioning of the names of the directory’s issuing authority (SACBC) along with the names of churches within its area of jurisdiction, and some references to the AICs, most of DESA’s directives can pass for any regional Catholic ecumenical directory from any part of the world. Thus, it makes sense to argue that DESA lacks a distinctively African character. It rather seems that its aim was to preserve the global Catholic ecumenical tradition thereby limiting its obligation to raise local initiatives. So, considered from the perspective of its attention to the prevailing needs of African Catholicism, namely, inculturation, human

\textsuperscript{46} Oduyoye, “The African Family as a Symbol of Ecumenism, 239 and 240.
\textsuperscript{47} Instrumentum Laboris, #4.2.4.
\textsuperscript{48} Through its structure and mode of life, the family institution enhances not only an inter-dependent form of living; it also promotes a co-contributory and all-engaging approach to conflict resolution. Such is an asset in the inter-church or mixed family context that offers great opportunity for moulding the lives of members in line with the principles of ecumenism. Theo Sundermeier, The Individual and Community in African Traditional Religions, Hamburg: LIT Verlag, 1998, 17 and 18.
development and especially the family values, one can say that DESA has not fully lived up to its expectations both in the Southern African region and the whole of Africa.

Since, as already stated, social and religious life in Africa revolves around the family institution, it is only natural to expect in local African ecumenical directives, policies that draw from and strengthen this background. Focusing on family values, therefore, I have tried in this section to examine how congruent DESA’s directives are to pan-African Catholic exigencies. Indeed, much still needs to be done in this direction. Obviously, it is only such efforts that assign more substantial ecumenical roles to elements of the family institution and values, incorporating the same into local ecumenical frameworks that can be said to represent the true nature of the emerging ecumenical tradition in African Catholicism. One cannot but urge local ecumenical efforts in Africa like DESA to try to maximize the gains of the existing ecumenical provisions on the family institution and to integrate insights derived from the ecumenical potentials of the family.

DESA and the Larger African Christianity

The Catholic Church’s concern for her internal ecumenical growth is inseparable from her desire for reconciliation with other churches and ecclesial communities. From the perspective of the wider and more complex inter-church reconciliation in Africa, the current study tries to assess how appealing are DESA’s approaches and policies to non-Catholic churches and ecclesial communities where it operates. This entails evaluating DESA’s effort in line with issues that are considered basic and common to the essence of African

49 RD 57e. The basic conviction here is that at least from the perspective of their missionary and evangelical traditions, no church now exists simply to cater for its members alone. Rather, the spirit of aggiornamento demands that each church should also serve its host and larger human community. Needless then to restate that from the ecumenical standpoint, the Catholic ecumenical principles should aim to facilitate both the internal ecumenical growth of the Catholic Church as well as inter church ecumenical needs.
culture and Christianity in general. Generally speaking, two paradigms, namely, inculturation (the church’s local identity) and human development (an overriding need in Africa) hold the key for all church movements and thinking in Africa. The paradigms serve as yardstick for assessing the efficiency and relevance of DESA’s policies and even the entire Catholic principles of ecumenism. This evaluation of DESA is limited to how reckons with inculturation.

At the basis of inculturation is the issue of Christian identity, which is very essential both for the establishment of authentic local churches and the process of church reconciliation. Indeed, nothing helps the process of ecumenism in the young African Christianity more than a balanced process of inculturation, through which the churches collectively seek to give Christianity an authentic local identity. The need for such is clear since

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50 Such conviction runs through many of the replies to the questionnaire which this author sent to all the Catholic dioceses in Africa in the course of an empirical survey he conducted concerning the state of ecumenism in the local Catholic Churches of Africa. For instance, the respondent from a Diocese in the Republic of Benin categorically states: “notre première préoccupation est cela d'enracinement de la foi catholique; plus tard, nous pouvons dialoguer” (our primary concern is to enable the Catholic faith take root, after which we may engage in dialogue—Questionnaire de recherche doctorale, Republic of Benin: 2005, 11.) The question remains, however, that such a disposition misses out on the opportunity to instil the spirit of ecumenism early in the foundation of the church being established. Moreover, cultures are never static and inculturation is an on-going process, which requires constant updating. What is needed is that Christians be reasonably acquainted, as soon as possible, with the specifics of their own denominations with the disposition of appreciating the good in other traditions and the tendency to open up to one another.

51 See “Relatio ante disceptationem (11 April 1994),” in L’Osservatore Romano, 13 April, 1994, 4. The achievement of African identity involves the erection of indigenous modes of expressing the faith and being a church as well as a local system of Christian values and meaning that is distinctively African in character.

52 John Paul II and the Synod Fathers at the special Assembly for Africa recognize the great need for the church in Africa to delineate “as clearly as possible what it is and what it must fully carry out in order that its message may be relevant and credible.” Ecclesia in Africa, #21. The missionary enterprise in Africa, which not only introduced the people to a new religion (Christianity),
African Christianity, the emerging new centre of gravity for global Christianity, still lacks cohesion due to the incessant proliferation of churches and lack of concerted effort to indigenize the faith. The major way any Christian venture in Africa (e.g., evangelisation or the ecumenical movement) can be meaningful and credible is by first dealing with the issue of identity through inculturation. Where a clear self-knowledge and self identity is lacking, confusion and alienation will likely take over. This does not help dialogue. It is high time African church-authorities and theologians gave priority to an integral and genuine appropriation of the Christian faith in Africa. This enables the young churches to find voice and rhythm in the networks of inter-church ecumenical endeavours. Regardless of the general mutual scepticism, distrust and prejudice among the churches, one way Catholics and non-Catholics can understand also gave them the impression that being a Christian and taking up a European way of life were somewhat inseparable. This, in Setri Nyomi’s view, has led to a double alienation of the people; first from their traditional religious community and then from their cultural identity. Setri Nyomi, “Conversion in Integrity: An African Approach.” Bekehrung und Identität: Ökumene als Spanung zwischen Fremden und Vertrauten, Beiheft zur Ökumenischen Rundschau, 73, ed. Dagmar Heller. (Frankfurt am Main: Otto Lernbeck Verlag, 2003) 201-207, 202.

53 Africa is the continent with one of the largest concentrations of Christians in the world today. Proffering reasons for such some scholars hold that church expansion makes spectacular progress among people of “basic” (John B. Taylor’s preferred meaning for primal) world-view or lifestyle. Taylor’s remarkable assertion may have been vindicated by current statistics depicting the so-called Third World, namely, Latin America, Africa and Asia (where the majority of such communities exist) as having become the demographic centre for global Christianity. David B. Barret & Todd M. Johnson, World Christian Trends AD 30 – AD 2200: Interpreting the Annual Christian Megacensus, (California: William Carey Library, 2001), 3.

54 This is because all aspects of ecumenism are interrelated. According to the Catholic response to BEM, no aspect of ecumenism e.g., theological dialogue or sharing in Christian heritage should be isolated from other ecumenical efforts. Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, “Roman Catholic Response.” in Churches Respond to BEM: Official Responses to the ‘Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry.’ Vol. VI, Faith and Order Paper 144, ed., Max Thurian (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1988) 1-40, 36.
each other better, and thus promote ecumenism, is by listening to the Spirit speaking to them through each other rather than each side merely repeating its own official church teaching or document\textsuperscript{55} as DESA tends to do.

It is my contention that considering its strategic presence in Africa, the Catholic Church not only has a vital role to play in African ecumenism, it is also well-equipped to evolve a generally acceptable local model for promoting Christian unity. By employing more African concepts, values and sensitivities,\textsuperscript{56} DESA can successfully serve the dual purpose of ecumenically regenerating the local Catholic Church while at the same time promoting reconciliation within the other churches in the African Christianity.

Ecumenism is, without doubt, a common Christian project, which no single church can achieve alone. The true value of a church’s ecumenical efforts is, therefore, ascertained by viewing them from the other churches’ lenses. So, for local Catholic directives and initiatives like DESA to convince the other churches and Christian communities in Africa of the genuineness of the interests and advances of the Catholic Church towards them, their contents and expressions must show sufficient respect for the sensitivities of the other communities. Without speaking a language understandable to other churches and without promoting visions or

\textsuperscript{55} See Jeffrey, Vanderwilt, \textit{A Church without Borders: the Eucharist and the Church in Ecumenical Perspective}, Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998, 112. This does not necessarily mean compromising one’s own tradition. Indeed, being abreast with one’s own tradition is a credible starting point for dialogue. More than that, however, each church should always show its openness to possible reviews and thus should always try to re-engage its existing positions in the light of the fundamental issues of faith. This not only removes deadlocks, it also sustains the interest of the dialoguing parties that are open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

\textsuperscript{56} One way to achieve this in the current local African ecclesial context is to evolve a home-grown Catholic model of ecumenical reconciliation in Africa, which can be drawn from the local African cultural resources on reconciliation and sharing.
ideals they can identify with, no Catholic directive can move them to engage with it in the reconciliation project. Measured against the aforementioned prevailing background of African Christianity, therefore, DESA seems to have some shortcomings. Apart from apparently containing no clear indication of pursuing such wider goals, it also presents little or nothing that can positively engage non-Catholics in or attract them to its ecumenical drives. This substantially limits its capacity to seek or receive the support of the other Christian communities in the task of resolving denominational differences in Africa. It is, therefore, hoped that whenever DESA may be reviewed, it would widen the perspectives of its contents and approaches to attend to the wider reality of African Catholicism and Christianity. DESA, however, constitutes a good start with regard to internal ecumenical regeneration.

Conclusion
The main goal of DESA remains the internal ecumenical regeneration of the Catholic Church in Southern Africa. Allied to this is the task of repositioning the Catholic Church towards reconciliation with the other churches and Christian communities. As it is, DESA’s success on the inter-denominational level is determined by its intra-ecclesial viability. Considering the dynamics of Catholicism and Christianity in Africa, which we have examined above, and the ecumenical commitment of the Catholic Church, any revision of DESA in the future, would need to widen its perspectives in both content and approach.
Ecumenical Commitment as Mission: Spiritan Collaboration with Ethiopian Orthodox Church

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“Ethiopia will stretch out her hands to God.” (Ps 68: 31).

Introduction
In this article I will share the ecumenical experiences and reflections of a group of Spiritans who have been struggling to live out their missionary calling in Ethiopia, a country which has had a Christian presence since the time of St. Athanasius of Alexandria. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has taken root in African soil, developed its own character and traditions and flourished over a period of 1,600 years! It is astonishing that so few missionaries have heard about this ancient Ethiopian church, and that they show so little interest in getting to know it when they live alongside it in Ethiopia. Pope John Paul II in Orientale Lumen 7b emphasized that the experience of the individual Churches of the east are offered to us as an authoritative example of successful inculturation. I will illustrate the issues involved through some personal and group experiences and will give their historical background.

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1 Brendan Cogavin completed M.A. Missiology at the Institut Catholique de Paris and has been working in Ethiopia since 1995. He has taught in the major seminary in Addis Ababa and in the programmes of the Conference of Major Religious Superiors. He participated in a number of symposia organized by the Ethiopian Review of Cultures and published in that review. Currently he is working on the English translation of the new Ethiopian-rité missal, the Rite of Holy Week and a Daily Prayer of the Ethiopian tradition; and is also preparing an outline of a catechetical programme which is based on the Ethiopian tradition for the eparchy of Adigrat.

The history of Spiritan involvement in ecumenism in Ethiopia is linked to the general ecclesiological context of Ethiopia and needs to be understood in that context. This historical background is essential in order to understand the very practical difficulties which a commitment to ecumenical dialogue and action entails in the Ethiopian context.

Experience leading to reflection and in turn leading to further experience and theological reflection is at the heart of the Spiritan missionary approach in Ethiopia, where we have been for over thirty years.

**Personal Experience**

I had had some previous experience of encountering Christians from other traditions. Christians from eastern churches used to study theology with us in the Spiritan Missionary College in Dublin. They also shared our daily lives since they lived in our community and took part in all community activities. This was the ecumenism of daily life and took place in an Irish Catholic context. My encounter with the Christian east at that stage was superficial.

When I arrived in Ethiopia thirteen years ago, the context changed. I found myself in a country which had different cultures, languages and of course Christian tradition and as such I had to prepare myself for this new and exciting context. To this end, the first year was dedicated to full-time learning of culture, language and religious tradition.

During the course of my language learning I realized that I could kill "two birds with one stone" so to speak. I began to attend the local Ethiopian Orthodox Church\(^3\) (EOC) services and daily catechetical programmes and did this on a regular basis — as a means to improve my linguistic skills and also to get to know the

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\(^3\) It needs to be pointed out that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is not Coptic. It was under the Patriarchate of Alexandria until 1959, when its first Ethiopian Patriarch was elected, but its title even before then did not include Coptic. This is a common misunderstanding.
spirituality and the mechanics of the Ethiopian Orthodox liturgies. These activities were also supplemented with preparatory studies and debriefing sessions with my more experienced confreres.

Although at the beginning I was a bit passive in my learning and reticent in character and being a stranger, after some time people took the initiative to engage me in conversation because they were curious about this foreigner who was in their midst. My neighbours knew who I was because I used to try out my limited Amharic skills on them, much to their delight and amusement. However, the clergy of the Orthodox parish took more time to become acquainted with me and I with them.

My regular appearance at church on Saturdays and Sundays and my efforts to follow the liturgy in the traditional Ge'ez language (which I had studied for a year prior to coming to Ethiopia) overcame any reluctance on their part, when on one memorable Ascension Thursday I was invited by the parish priest to join him and the other clergy in the choir area. A space was found for me, I was handed the traditional prayer stick and sistrum and was shown how to use them. This experience remains a defining moment for me in my ecumenical journey. It encouraged me to participate more fully in the life of the local Orthodox Christians and make a deeper study of their traditions. The personal relationships and friendships which developed with the clergy of the local parish even developed to the extent that I was invited to join them in the sanctuary and take communion. Unfortunately, since our two churches are not in communion I was not able to accept this invitation. It would also have been dangerous for them. These positive experiences encouraged me to continue down the road of building up mutual understanding between our two ancient apostolic churches.

When I finished my year of language and culture studies, I was appointed to a small village in the far south of Ethiopia where Spiritans had been working for a number of years. There things were not so easy on the ecumenical front. The Orthodox clergy
were welcoming but some of the local Orthodox parish council members were not and it was made clear that I wasn’t really welcome to even enter the church compound. It also happened that on another occasion in another town I was not allowed to participate in the ceremony of the washing of the feet on Holy Thursday. Needless to say, this was a great disappointment for me, in the light of my previous positive experiences in Addis Ababa.

My commitment to ecumenism was not diminished, but rather it was enhanced. I realized that a very important component of any fruitful ecumenical endeavour involves personal contact on the grass-roots level. Also a commitment to study and appreciate the spiritual riches of the ancient Ethiopian Church is another essential component for any reconciliation and return to communion between our two sister churches. Despite the vicissitudes I am determined to continue down this path. But this is not just a personal commitment. It is a Spiritan commitment and it is part of our Christian calling to be one Church. The Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Africa called “for the intensification of dialogue and ecumenical collaboration with our brethren of the two great African Churches of Egypt and Ethiopia [...] We wish together to bear witness to Christ and to proclaim the Gospel in all the languages of Africa.”

However, there are opponents and critics of the Spiritan commitment to ecumenism in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Catholic Church. The history of their relationship will give some indication as to their respective attitudes toward each other and the Spiritans.

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4 Reconciliation took place later, initiated by the diocesan administrator.
Historical Roots and Factors in the Separation of the Churches Chalcedon

At this point it is opportune to delve into the historical roots of the antagonism that exists in the relationships between Catholics and Orthodox in Ethiopia and which interfere in ecumenical activities and prevent a coming together of the two churches. We may also find ways of healing the wounds and the memories of them which we have inherited from our ancestors in the faith.

One point which needs to be cleared up before we can progress any further is that the EOC, while not in communion with the Church of Rome, never formally separated from the Roman communion on the occasion of the Council of Chalcedon is sometimes popularly assumed. It is one of the family of churches, called Oriental Orthodox, which did not accept the Chalcedonian formula of the two natures in Christ. I do not intend to go into the details surrounding the historical background and reasons for their rejection of the formula. Suffice it to mention that the Church of Rome since Vatican II has concluded a series of formal Christological agreements with most of the Oriental Orthodox Churches which, although they are autonomous, are in communion with each other. The agreements clarify the reasons for which Catholic Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonian Orientals

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6 Abba Ayala Takla-Haymanot, OFM Cap., reiterates that the faith received by Ethiopia predated the Council of Chalcedon and there is no evidence that the Ethiopian Church either formally or officially separated from the Catholic Church. Cf. The Ethiopian Church and its Christological Doctrine, Addis Ababa, revised English Edition 1981, p.51.


8 The earliest was signed by Pope Paul VI and the Pope of Alexandria Shenouda III, in Rome on 10 May 1973. The most recent was signed by Pope John Paul II and the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians (Etchmiadzin) Karekin II, in Rome on 10 November 2000.
emphasize different aspects of the same mystery, and what they mean when they use a different vocabulary. But still a lot remains to be done to bring the churches closer to each other. Official declarations are not enough but they are a start and leave the door open for further initiatives.

16th to 17th Century Catholic Contacts

The aforementioned dialogues took place in a time and religious climate vastly different from the one we will now consider. Portuguese maritime power was beginning to assert itself and it began to compete with the Ottoman Empire for the control of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean trade routes. Because of its strategic position in the Horn of the Africa region, the Christian kingdom of the Solomonic dynasty was a natural ally of Portugal, at least that was what the Portuguese thought.

Christians in medieval Europe had long been captivated by the story of the legendary priest-king, Prester John. He was supposed to live somewhere in the East and could be relied on to support Western Christians in their battles against the various Muslim forces. Prester John came to be associated with the Christian kingdom in Ethiopia.

In 1520, the Portuguese king sent a diplomatic mission to the court of the Christian kingdom to explore the possibilities of

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9 In the case of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, a statement made by Pope John Paul II in his address to the Patriarch of Ethiopia H.H. Abuna Paulos, in Rome on 11 June 1993 was understood in Ut unum sint 62 as a joint understanding. Also cf. José L. Bandrè and Ugo Zanetti, “Christology,” in the Encyclopaedia Aethiopica, edited by Siegbert Uhlig, Volume 1, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003, pp. 728-732.


cooperation between their two kingdoms. This mission lasted for six years and was accompanied by a chaplain Fr. Francisco Alvares who has provided us with a wealth of information about medieval Ethiopia. His observations and attitudes are recounted in his *The Prester John of the Indies*. It is an important description of the Christian kingdom before the ravages of the Muslim jihad initiated by Imam Ahmed Grañ, the 'left-handed', in 1529. Of particular note to us are Alvares’s remarks about the religious culture he observed and his own reactions to differences from Roman Catholicism. What is remarkable is that in his account he doesn't indicate any major antagonism between the beliefs of the Portuguese Catholics and the Ethiopian Orthodox. Ethiopians did not regard the Portuguese as being religious opponents and vice versa. When there were discussions about the early councils of the Church, it seems that both Alvares and the Ethiopians were not well versed in the theological niceties which more educated clergy might become embroiled in! This theological innocence was not to last.

Internal and external forces came together in the period following the departure of the Portuguese mission in 1526. Internally, the Christian kingdom faced a major crisis. The centuries-long conflicts between the Christian emperors and the Muslim sultans over control of the long-distance trade routes usually ended in a victory for the Christian forces. Because the Muslim forces were never able to unite effectively, they eventually lost. However, a new Muslim leader, Imam Ahmad ibn Ibrahim, more popularly known as Ahmad Grañ took control of the Sultanate of Adal. He succeeded in uniting a major Muslim force whose goal was to gain salvation through jihad and material benefits through war booty. In 1529 his forces inflicted a major

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12 It was first printed in Lisbon in 1540 and in a revised English edition in two volumes with additional material by C. F. Beckingham and G. W. B. Huntingford, Cambridge University Press, 1961, published for the Hakluyt Society.

defeat on the Christian army which forced the retreat of Emperor Lebne Dengil. When Emperor Lebne Dengil died in 1540, his son Galawdewos (Claudius) succeeded him.

During the early part of Galawdewos’ reign there was a more international dimension to the conflict. Portugal and the Ottoman Empire were vying with each other for control of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean trade routes. The romantic spiritual quest for Prester John now had a more secular dimension. The Portuguese sought an ally in their conflict with the Ottomans and the Ottomans sought an ally in their conflict with the Portuguese. The Portuguese sided with the Christian kingdom and the Ottomans with Imam Ahmad ibn Ibrahim. Both powers sent armed men and the imam was eventually defeated in 1543. Galawdewos was extremely grateful to King John III of Portugal for his military assistance and the soldiers became his trusted advisors.

There was, however, one sticking-point. A certain Bermudes claimed that he had been appointed patriarch of Ethiopia. Galawdewos had his doubts. By way of a series of machinations Bermudes tried to make the Portuguese soldiers mutiny against the emperor but he did not succeed. But the emperor, although he wished to punish Bermudes who was a Portuguese citizen, didn’t want to offend King John III of Portugal. He complained to King John, who said he had no knowledge of Bermudes’ consecration as patriarch. In his reply to Galawdewos, King John believed that Galawdewos was in favour of Catholicism.\footnote{Cf. G. Beshah, op. cit. pp. 53-56.}
It was in this context that the Jesuits become involved. King John pressed for the appointment of a Jesuit as patriarch. Eventually, in 1554 Barreto was appointed with Oviedo as his successor. Barreto never reached Ethiopia and when he died in 1562, Oviedo became patriarch. But Oviedo’s character was not conducive to good relations between Orthodox and Catholics. He became embroiled in the succession rebellions following the accession of Galawdewos’ grandson Sarsa Dengel to the imperial throne in 1563. Oviedo wanted the Portuguese to send a military force to force the emperor to become Catholic but the Portuguese authorities did not acquiesce. Oviedo was ordered to go to China instead but he refused and eventually died of natural causes in 1577. A small Catholic community remained in Ethiopia, made up of some Portuguese soldiers, who remained behind in the service of the emperor, and their offspring. The first phase of the Jesuit presence in Ethiopia ended with the death of Oviedo’s last companion in 1597.

In 1603, Fr. Pedro Paez came to Ethiopia with the purpose of looking after the spiritual welfare of the remaining Catholics. Soon, however, he became concerned with the salvation from hell of those who were living in error and heresy, beginning with the emperor. Paez succeeded in converting Emperor Ze-Dengel and his successor Susenyos to Catholicism. He died soon afterwards and was succeeded by Mendez. In 1626 Susenyos declared Catholicism as the state religion and the Jesuits insisted on the re-baptism of the people, the re-ordination of the clergy and re-consecration of the

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churches. This did not go without protest. In fact, in his efforts to impose the new faith, the emperor provoked a widespread rebellion and responded with repression. Eventually, faced with so much bloodshed and opposition, he abdicated in favour of his son, Fasilades, in 1632. Fasilides expelled the Jesuits and any Ethiopians who continued to be Catholic were to be executed. Ethiopia severed all links with Western Europe and this persisted until the early 19th century.\(^\text{16}\) Thus was created a spirit of resentment, antagonism and misunderstanding between the two churches which has lasted up to today. A pre-Reformation Catholic Church might have been reconciled with Ethiopia a great deal more easily than could a post-Tridentine one.

\textit{19th Century—Lazarists and Capuchins}

Although there were a number of sporadic contacts between Catholic missionaries and northern Ethiopia during the 18th century, their impact was negligible.\(^\text{17}\) Various Franciscan missions attempted to establish a new foothold, but they were unsuccessful. The basic approach taken by the Jesuits in Ethiopia in the 17th century with its focus on the royal court and the non-acceptance of indigenous forms of Christianity had not changed.

It wasn’t until the 19th century that prolonged contacts between Ethiopia and Western Europe started again. This took place in the context of the colonial expansion into Africa. Europeans were searching for commercial, diplomatic and missionary opportunities in Africa and Ethiopia was no exception.

Whilst in the 16th and 17th centuries Catholics took the lead, in the 19th century it was the Protestants, in particular the Church


Missionary Society of London. The Catholic Church soon followed, led by St. Justin de Jacobis (1839), founder of the Lazarist (Vincentian) mission, and the future Cardinal Massaja (1846), founder of the Capuchin mission in Ethiopia. While the missionaries were interested in religious matters, the Ethiopian rulers were more interested in commerce and Western technological advances which could be beneficial to their kingdom. The renewed interest of Ethiopians in European contacts came at a time when Ethiopia was still in the throes of a period of anarchy called the Zemene Mesafint, the ‘era of the princes’. During this period, which stretched from the late 17th century to the middle of the 19th century, there was no strong central ruler. The real rulers of the kingdom were the local warlords who vied for control of the king. Chaos reigned until a powerful lord, Kassa Hailu, managed to seize power taking as throne name, Tewodros II. During his reign and that of his successors, Ethiopia once again was united under a powerful single ruler who founded the Ethiopia that we know today. It was into this context that Western missionaries appeared.

The “success” of the work of the two afore-mentioned missionaries was based on the fact that in contrast to previous missionaries, they were more willing to adapt to or adopt the local Christian practices. Although St. Justin de Jacobis is seen as the apostle of the Ethiopian Rite Catholic Church, it still remains that he was a man of his time and ecclesiology. His mission was to bring the Church of Ethiopia back into what was thought of as being the one true Church. That was the ecclesiology of his time and the motivation behind his apostolate in Ethiopia.

Pope John Paul II in his Orientale Lumen (OL) 20b points out that: “Attempts [at unity] in the past had their limits, deriving from the mentality of the times and the very limited understanding of the

18 Cf. the various articles in Getachew Haile, Aasulv Lande and Samuel Rubenson (eds.), op.cit.
19 Crummey, op. cit. p. 61.
truths about the Church.” Also OL 21a refers to the Eastern Churches which entered into full communion with Rome and how this process reflected “the degree of maturity of the ecclesial awareness of the time.” Roberson points out that “Roman Catholic theology of the Church vigorously emphasized the necessity of the direct jurisdiction of the Pope over all the local churches. This implied that churches not under the Pope’s jurisdiction could be considered objects of missionary activity for the purpose of bringing them into communion with the Catholic Church.”

Thus, we conclude the brief historical survey which forms the essential background to the discussion which is to follow. We will be able to understand the options taken and methodology followed plus the attitudes displayed by both the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Catholic Church.

Ecumenical Challenges in a New Missionary Era

Preconceptions overturned

In 1972 members of the Irish Province of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Spiritans) were sent to do evangelization in the Gamo Gofa province in south-west Ethiopia. Following on from an initial survey undertaken by others, the Spiritans came with the intention of establishing the Catholic Church in that region. It was understood that there was no other church presence there and so the ‘traditional’ missionary activities would be pursued, just as had been done in every other African country where the Spiritans were present. As recommended by their missionary tradition, they started learning the language and the culture. They did research. They listened to the people. Doing this can lead to surprises and can result in initial preconceptions and plans being called into question. This is in fact what happened.

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20 Roberson, op. cit., p. 139.
Let us consider the words of Fr. Owen Lambert CSSp, one of the early Spiritans, who witnessed and was a participant in the Spiritan rethink:

A most significant experience for me was December 29th 1974, the feast of the Archangel Gabriel. I joined the thousands of Ethiopian Orthodox pilgrims from the Chencha area, where I had been stationed since September, to walk deep into the mountains to the church of St. Gabriel, some 30 kms away. I estimated the number of pilgrims to be some 50,000 people. The objective of first evangelization for which I had arrived only four months before was being shaken and the mandate of our mission challenged to the point of being shattered. How can our mission here have relevance, I reflected, if it does not take into account this Ethiopian Christian tradition and presence into account?

This new and unexpected situation in Gamo Gofa and the challenges it gave rise to were agonized over by the Spiritan group during the following years. They had not initially understood well the hostility and fears which decades of unecumenical attitudes and mission practices had laid in Ethiopia.

**New Orientations Sought**

So what can be done? How can we be sure that we are on the right track? The Spiritans sought inspiration in the documents of Vatican II\(^\text{21}\) and other publications of the magisterium which deal with the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Eastern

Churches. The renewed vision of church expressed in the documents of Vatican II energized the Spiritans to learn more about the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, both intellectually and experientially.

The foundational theological principles and practical orientations which governed and continue to govern the Spiritan commitment to ecumenism are expressed very clearly in the Church documents (emphasis added).

In *Ut Unum Sint* (*UtUS*) 40 Pope John Paul II insists that:

> Relations between Christians are not aimed merely at mutual knowledge, common prayer and dialogue. They presuppose and from now on call for *every possible form of practical cooperation at all levels: pastoral, cultural and social, as well as that of witnessing to the Gospel message.*

In a discourse to Abuna Paulos, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church on 11 June 1993, Pope John Paul II indicated that because of the deep communion that exists between the two Churches, this should: “*spur us on to seek new and suitable ways of fostering the rediscovery of our communion in the concrete daily life of the faithful of our two Churches.*”

Instead of the building of “parallel structures of evangelization” (*Pro Russia* II, 2) there are other alternatives. *Pro Russia* continues in II, 4:

> Should circumstances permit, the pastors of the Catholic Church, out of missionary zeal and concern for the

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evangelization of millions of people who do not yet know Christ, should endeavour to cooperate with the Orthodox bishops in developing pastoral initiatives of the Orthodox Church. They should be pleased if by their contribution they can help train good Christians.

In the Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism §§ 205-209 there is a discussion of ecumenical collaboration in missionary activity. It highlights in §207 that:

Catholics can join with other Churches and ecclesial Communities—provided there is nothing sectarian or deliberately anti-Catholic about their work of evangelization—in organizations and programs that give common support to the missionary activities of all the participating Churches. A special subject of such cooperation will be to insure that the human, cultural and political factors that were involved in the original divisions between the Churches, and have marked the historical tradition of separation, will not be transplanted into areas where the Gospel is being preached and Churches are being founded. Those who have been sent by missionary institutes to help in the foundation and growth of new Churches, will be especially sensitive to this need. [...]

In a letter of Cardinals Willebrands and Paul Philippe to the Coptic Catholic Patriarch Stephanos I Sidarouss, March 29th 1977, we read:

None of its [the Catholic Church’s] activities should be used to create confusion among Orthodox faithful, nor open the way to the expansion of the Catholic Church at the expense of the Coptic Orthodox. [...] we think it possible for members of religious congregations to work directly at the service of the
religious and pastoral needs of the Orthodox Church. They could work according to the pastoral instructions of the Orthodox authorities in a manner analogous to that in which they already follow the pastoral instructions of the Catholic authorities. 23

Practical Application of Theological Principles

As has been mentioned already, the Spiritans found themselves in a situation which they had not expected. They found that there had been a Christian presence since the 15th century in the area to which they were assigned. Even though there had been a long-lasting presence, in many places the religious formation and pastoral care of the local Christian population were neglected. Also, in the more remote areas, many nomadic populations had not yet heard the Gospel message. These two areas were identified as being the major priorities.

Having thought long and hard, in 1977 the Spiritans opted to collaborate with the local Ethiopian Orthodox Church. This was done with the agreement of then Catholic Apostolic Administrator of the Vicariate of Jimma. And so they launched themselves into the 'unknown'. After many discussions and visits with the various Orthodox Church leaders, it was decided to collaborate in a number of different fields. The underlying idea was to support the EOC in its own God-given mandate to bring the Good News to the peoples of Gamo Gofa. The strengthening and renewal of the EOC was the aim and motivation of the Spiritan apostolate from that time forward. This orientation was and continues to be supported by the various General Chapters of the congregation. Let us now go on to explore some of the common activities of the Spiritans and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Gamo Gofa.

Clergy Training Centre

Priests and deacons in the EOC do not go through a formal seminary training prior to ordination. It is an apprenticeship system. Additionally, there is no formal curriculum and the training may be haphazard. For the celebration of the Eucharist five ministers are necessary – two priests and three deacons. Since non-ordained people are not allowed into the sanctuary, young boys are often ordained as deacons so that they can serve in the sanctuary. The liturgical ministry exercised by the priests and deacons is usually learned by heart. So the formation required is the memorization of the chants and prayers.

The diaconate is not a transitory stage on the way to priestly ordination. Some deacons may, after marriage, be called to be priests, others may decide to enter a monastery and the others remain as deacons. The role of deacon in a parish can be an important one, especially if the deacons concerned have had a good theological education and can serve as preachers in the Sunday schools. The deacons are a good resource for a parish if they are properly trained.

From experience and after numerous discussions with the local Orthodox archbishop, it was realized that there was an urgent need for a more systematic training and on-going formation for priests and deacons in the countryside parishes. This would ensure that the service given to the parishes would be improved. In 1978, it was decided to open a Clergy Training Centre (CTC) in the town of Chencha. Various types of courses of different durations have been offered by the centre. It is quite flexible in structure since the priests who attend it are mostly married with wives and children to take care of. The deacons are of school-going age and attend it after the normal classes in state schools. The church is rooted in the lives of the people and the clergy are not on a pedestal. They are on the same economic level as their neighbours. They earn most of their living from farming.
Since the archdiocese of Arba Minch is in a quite remote and poor part of Ethiopia, it has not had access to the same sources of funds available in a large city like Addis Ababa. For this reason, up to now the CTC has been supported financially by various foreign donors. But it is hoped that when the self-sufficiency level of the archdiocese increases it will become less and less dependent on outside aid.

As well as the financial aid channelled by the Spiritans, over the years some Spiritans were invited to give some informal input. This was not on a regular basis. However, there were regular meetings between the director of the CTC and the Spiritans with the aim of sharing ideas, following up the programmes offered and evaluating their impact. The CTC has had a marked effect on the life of the clergy and the parishes of the archdiocese of Arba Minch. The clergy and parishes are more dynamic.

As well as the well-established CTC in Chencha, a new training centre operates on a more modest scale in the town of Jinka in the region now called South Omo (part of the former region of Gamo Gofa). What is special about this centre is that it trains youngdeacons who come from some of the nomadic populations. The young deacons live in the training centre and study in the state schools during the day. The plan is that when they have completed their education they will be able to return to their homes and be agents of evangelization. Already we are seeing the fruits of this initiative. Also worthy of note is the fact that this centre is a true partnership between the Spiritans and the local Orthodox bishop of Jinka. It is 50% funded by the Spiritans and 50% by the local Orthodox diocese. The centre will soon be upgraded to a full clergy training centre.

**Catechetical Programmes and Parish Renewal**

As mentioned in the previous section, the regular Sunday school programmes in the parishes are being animated and led by the priests and deacons who have been trained. This has had the effect
of many Christians returning to the church on a regular basis. An active clergy stimulates the faithful to take part fully in parish life and build up a self-sufficient and self-sustaining community.

Part of the Spiritan support to the parishes is the financing of training seminars and workshops for the travelling preachers who are based in the archdiocesan offices. This training is necessary in order to present the Gospel message in a systematic and relevant way to the various ethnic groups in the archdiocese. This is because some of the preachers are not local to the area.

The preachers have had a marked impact on the Christian life in Gamo Gofa. Many new parishes have been established and older ones renewed as a result of the work of the preachers. In the past, the Spiritans helped the new churches with some building materials, but now this is rare because the local people manage to be largely self-sufficient. It has happened that some visitors to the Spiritan mission in Gamo Gofa have asked 'how many Christians are there in Gamo Gofa?' Of course in the back of their mind they meant how many Catholics. Rather mischievously, the Spiritans told them 1.5 million and naturally they were taken aback. The question illustrates how Catholics understand themselves and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The success of the Orthodox Church is not really seen as a Christian success!

**Translation Work**

A very important tool in parish renewal and evangelization is to have religious materials and literature available in local languages. Since there had been little work done in this area, the Spiritans along with their local Orthodox collaborators encouraged the Orthodox Church authorities to prepare materials for translation into the various local languages of Gamo Gofa—there are an estimated 15 different languages.
The list of translated texts is quite long. Some of the translation work in the past, has included the Bible into the Dorze, Gamo, Gofa and Hamar languages. Other works included the translation of prayer and liturgy books. Even though the languages are widely spoken, very little if any had been committed to paper and made available to local people. In some cases, the languages had never been written down before. The training of outside preachers in the use of local languages in the rural areas where Amharic, the working language of Ethiopia, is not widely used avails of the translations that have been done. This has had a positive effect on the pastoral outreach programmes.

_Orthodox Nuns’ Monastery_

While Ethiopia is well endowed with monasteries for men, monasteries for women are few in number. In the popular mind old widows become nuns, so monastic life is not really an option for young women. However, over the past few decades this attitude has started to change. A number of monasteries have been built where young women can dedicate their lives to following Christ and doing some practical activities. In Sebata, a small town outside Addis Ababa, the monastery has a wide variety of income-generating activities as well as a school and orphanage. Some nuns from this monastery wished to establish a new foundation in Gamo Gofa and the Spiritans have actively encouraged them. The small group of four pioneers was housed in the vacant sisters’ house in the Catholic mission compound while they were waiting for their monastery to be approved by the Holy Synod of the EOC. In the meantime, one senior nun worked as a health assistant in the health programme of the Catholic Church. The other younger nuns were given the opportunity of furthering their education to prepare them for the task of running their own monastery in a self-sufficient and self-sustainable way. They have trained as kindergarten teachers, sewing school trainers and in financial administration. This training was financed by the Catholic mission. The Spiritans were also
instrumental in finding the finances necessary to build the monastery. The monastery was officially blessed and opened this year by members of the Holy Synod. It is hoped that this new foundation will flourish because many young women in the Gamo Gofa area have expressed a wish to participate in monastic life.

**Evangelization of Nomads**

In the previous paragraphs we have encountered a variety of activities which have involved the inner life of the EOC. Another important aspect is the outreach programme to the nomadic populations in the South Omo zone. Some background is important here in order to understand its significance. Traditionally, the EOC has not been known for evangelization work in the remote areas where the local population is looked down upon by the settled urban dwellers, who come from the northern ‘civilized’ highlands. The urban based EOC tended to cater only for the urban dwellers and saw the nomadic ‘uncivilized’ population as not being worthy of any attention. In the nineteenth century many of these nomadic populations were utilized as slaves. So, both they and the urban outsiders didn’t look on one another favourably.

In this context, the Spiritans tried and continue to try to act as stimulants to the EOC hierarchy to turn their attention to evangelization amongst the nomadic populations. This was a slow process of advocacy. Eventually, Abune Zekarias, the EOC archbishop of Arba Minch, appointed an Orthodox priest to work in Dimeka amongst the Hamar population. He invited the Catholic Church to send a priest also and so the joint evangelization programme began. It was an historical moment.

Three EOC parishes were established as a result of the outreach programme and young deacons have been ordained from the nomadic populations. Others are being trained in Jinka as was mentioned in the section on CTCs. Progress is slow because of the lack of available personnel both on the Spiritan side and the EOC, but those who are involved are very committed. Still around 300
nomads have been baptized and a church is in the process of being built in the countryside, far away from the normal urban centres.

The willingness of the EOC to be flexible in its approach to the nomads is exemplified by the exemption from certain types of fasting which has been granted to them by a decision of the Holy Synod. This decision was taken as a result of many conversations with different Orthodox bishops. The diet of the nomadic peoples depends a lot on cattle—drinking blood and milk. These are normally forbidden during fasting time, but in the case of nomadic pastoralists they are the main diet. Nomads from the Hamar tribe are accepted into the church compound when they are wearing their own cultural clothes. This would not have happened a few years ago.

**Reactions to the Spiritan Apostolate**

As can be imagined, the approach taken by the Spiritans has had its supporters and its detractors. Positive and negative reactions have come from both the EOC and the Catholic Church, so let us take them in turn.

**Ethiopian Orthodox Church**

We have already outlined a brief history of the relations between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church in Ethiopia. Quite a number of Orthodox believe that the Catholic Church has not really changed its idea of converting Ethiopian Orthodox Christians into Catholics. They do not believe that the Catholic Church is really serious about respecting them as a sister church. All they have to do is point out the number of Catholic dioceses and vicariates where the majority of Catholics were originally Orthodox. Some Catholic missionaries, even in the 21st century, regard Orthodox Christians especially in the rural areas as being ‘pagans’. Is it any wonder therefore, that the Orthodox look at the Spiritans with suspicion? The Spiritans, in their view, are no
different from the other Catholic missionaries; they are only a bit more subtle in their approach. They warn others not to be fooled by the apparent altruism as they consider that Catholic missionaries want everybody to renounce their Orthodox faith.

This atmosphere of suspicion has ebbed and flowed over the years of the Spiritan presence in Gamo Gofa. It is not the only reaction. Suspicion is tempered by very warm collaborative relations between many faithful, deacons, priests and some bishops. Unfortunately, at the moment, it is a low point. But we are here for the long run. The healing of memories will take many generations and more consistency on the part of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia.

Ethiopian Catholic Church – tragic wounds

From the point of view of Catholic reactions, things are far more complicated. Spiritans in Gamo Gofa have been the objects of both hostility and praise, both in official church circles and unofficial circles. There are emotions involved as well as differing ecclesiologies and missiologies.

On the local Ethiopian level, many Ethiopian Catholics who were or their families were originally Orthodox see the Spiritans as being traitors to their church. It is a question of identity. How can you support a church which is not your own? Why are you not giving your resources and energy to support your own church? You are denying your Catholic identity. You are Orthodox. What is ‘amusing’ when you hear these types of remarks is that the Orthodox have no problem in identifying the Spiritans as Catholics! The Spiritans understand that precisely as Catholics they are engaged in ecumenism which is at the heart of evangelization.\(^\text{24}\)

Over the years Spiritans working in Gamo Gofa have not been encouraged to speak or write about their experiences because of the hostilities that could be provoked. Some religious support the

\(^\text{24}\) Cf. Redemptoris Missio 50a.
Spiritans and others are very strongly against. The hostility is born out of emotion and has never been supported by a cool, reasoned argument. When efforts are made to engage in an open debate these generally descend into acrimony. The Spiritans are accused of intransigence when they present the Church principles which they are following and how they are supported by the official teaching of the Catholic Church.

Pope John Paul II reminds us in Orientale Lumen that the reality of the history of relations between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches cannot be ignored (OL 21a). However, there can be no room for “a prejudicial opposition or a defeatism which tends to see everything in negative terms.”25 This is part of the reality of the search for Christian unity. The difficulties are manifested in “…certain exclusions... certain refusals to forgive... a certain pride... of an unevangelical insistence on condemning the ‘other side’ ... of a distain...” 26

We are dealing with human weakness, which seems to be resisting the Spirit of unity. John Paul II even goes as far to say that “Sometimes one even has the impression that there are forces ready to do anything in order to slow down, and even put an end to, the movement towards Christian unity.”27

The only solution to this is “a change of heart” (UR 7). “Each one therefore ought to be more radically converted to the Gospel [...] change his or her way of looking at things” (UtUS 15c and UR 7). In order to bring about the new beginning which is required we have to be aware of “the fundamental need for evangelization at every stage of the Church’s journey of salvation” (UtUS 15a).

The Church context in which the Spiritans are working has to take into account the reality that the wider Ethiopian Catholic Church, which bears “a tragic wound, for they are still kept from

26 Ibid., 15c.
full communion with the Eastern Orthodox Churches despite sharing in the heritage of their fathers.” Spiritans are trying to bridge the gap between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Catholic Church but are constantly aware of their precarious position because of the feelings on both sides. Shared conversion is necessary, which can only be promoted by removing the obstacles which in the past have caused bitterness and even violence.

The history of the relations between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Catholic Churches has been marked by persecutions and sufferings. Whatever may have been these sufferings and their causes, they do not justify any triumphalism; no-one can glorify in them or draw an argument from them to accuse or disparage the other Church [...] Whatever may have been the past, it must be left to the mercy of God, and all the energies of the Churches should be directed towards obtaining that the present and the future conform better to the will of Christ for his own.

One possible way of advancing the course of unity is in the area of pastoral cooperation—“the intensification of dialogue and ecumenical collaboration” in order “to bear witness to Christ and to proclaim the Gospel in all the languages of Africa.” In a discourse to His Holiness Abuna Paulos, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church on 11 June 1993, Pope John Paul II indicated that because

28 Cf. OL 21b.
29 Cf. “Uniatism and the Present Search for Full Communion.” (also known as the Balamand Document) resulting from the seventh plenary session of the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. Catholic International Vol. 4, No. 9, September 1993, pp.441-444.
of the deep communion that exists between the two Churches, this should “spur us on to seek new and suitable ways of fostering the rediscovery of our communion in the concrete daily life of the faithful of our two Churches.”

Because of the present-day circumstances we are required to “work together in the pastoral domain [...] the liturgy [...] the evangelization of the young.” On the occasion of the visit to Rome (ad limina Apostolorum) of the Bishops of Ethiopia and Eritrea Pope John Paul II pointed out that the advancement of ecumenical relations is a “matter of particular urgency [...] The success of the dialogue of charity [...] requires an improvement in fraternal relationships on all levels.”

The joint evangelization programme carried out by the Spiritans in Gamo Gofa is opposed by many because it favours the building up of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. They are Catholic missionaries who should be building up the Catholic Church. Any ecumenical activities, while good in themselves, should not get in the way of building up the Catholic Church. This is the crux of the tensions between the Ethiopian Catholic bishops and the Spiritans.

Even amongst Spiritans themselves, the issue of Catholic evangelization in Gamo Gofa has provoked much heated debate. Not all Spiritans have supported their approach. Nevertheless, successive Spiritan general chapters have sent messages of support. Parties to the debate have also included the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

One Church—Two Rites?

The complex self-identity of the Ethiopian Catholic Church plays a role in these tensions. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the result of the work of the Lazarists and Capuchins was the

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32 Ibid., 3f., p. 5.
33 Cf. Oss. Rom., No. 41, 13 October 1993, 7a-b, p. 5.
establishment of two Catholic Churches—Latin and Ethiopian. The division of the Ethiopian Catholic Church into two rites is an added complication in the cause of ecumenism.

The reality is that, even within the Ethiopian Catholic Church itself, there is no consensus as to what it means to be an Ethiopian Catholic. Whenever the question of rites comes up emotions come into play. Those who follow the Ethiopian rite\(^{34}\) may regard those who follow the Latin rite as following something imported. The Latin rite supporters condemn the Ethiopian rite as being the rite of the Amhara colonizers. Politics and ethnicity come into the dispute and foreign missionaries have played a role in this, especially as they are more comfortable with importing their own Christian tradition and not learning about the Ethiopian one. As a result, there is no clear definition of what it means to be an Ethiopian Catholic. The only consensus is that they are not Orthodox! A negative definition of oneself is not very conducive to ecumenism. In fact, there needs to be ecumenism practiced within the Catholic Church in Ethiopia!

The Spiritans in Gamo Gofa opted for the Ethiopian rite as the preferred vehicle of evangelization and pastoral work. This option was chosen since the vast majority of Catholics there were from an Orthodox background and they must be taken care of in their own rite. But an added complication is that Gamo Gofa is in a Latin vicariate which is allergic to the Ethiopian rite.

The option taken by the Spiritans has the support and encouragement of the Ethiopian-rite Catholic bishops but is opposed by the Latin-rite vicars apostolic. Much scholarly

\(^{34}\) We must not forget that rite is not confined to 'how we say mass.' Canon 28 §1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO) reminds us that 'A rite is the liturgical, theological, spiritual and disciplinary patrimony, culture and circumstances of history of a distinct people, by which its own manner of living the faith is manifested in each Church sui iuris.'
research\textsuperscript{35}, study and publication of liturgical texts on the part of the Spiritans in partnership with the archdiocese of Addis Ababa\textsuperscript{36} and the Episcopal Committee for the Liturgy on the national level has taken place and continues to take place.\textsuperscript{37} This option was taken to facilitate the Ethiopian-rite Catholics to return to the ancient roots of their faith\textsuperscript{38} and thus help build some foundations for an authentic Catholic identity based on the Ethiopian tradition. After all, Pope John Paul II pointed out to the Catholic bishops of Ethiopia and Eritrea that:

Efforts to gain a deeper understanding of the history and development of the Alexandrian rite should continue, so that the common Christian tradition of the region can contribute to the journey to unity, both within the Catholic community and with the other Churches.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{35} Cf. Fr. Emmanuel Fritsch CSSp., \textit{The Liturgical Year of the Ethiopian Church}, published under the auspices of the Ethiopian Review of Cultures, Addis Ababa, 2001.

\textsuperscript{36} Frs. Emmanuel Fritsch and Brendan Cogavin, CSSp., \textit{The Ethiopian-rite Missal in English for Weekday celebrations of the Eucharist}, Addis Ababa, 2002.

\textsuperscript{37} A new Catholic Ethiopian-rite missal is in preparation for the use of Catholics in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Three-fold rites of Christian Initiation are also being prepared for publication.

\textsuperscript{38} The benefits for the Roman Church from the encounter with the Christian East were mentioned in \textit{Unitatis Redintegratio} 17: “What has just been said about the lawful variety that can exist in the Church must also be taken to apply to the differences in theological expression of doctrine. In the study of revelation East and West have followed different methods, and have developed differently their understanding and confession of God's truth. It is hardly surprising, then, if from time to time one tradition has come nearer to a full appreciation of some aspects of a mystery of revelation than the other, or has expressed it to better advantage. In such cases, these various theological expressions are to be considered often as mutually complementary rather than conflicting.”

\textsuperscript{39} Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Ethiopia and Eritrea, June 12th 1997, cf. no. 5. Booklet p.22. Note that the Alexandrian-rite is the mother rite of Ethiopia and Eritrea.
A key element in tackling present day issues and planning for the future is a study and revitalization of one’s tradition. To find out where we are going we need to look at where we have come from in an honest and holistic way. As EO 2 says, “it is the mind of the Catholic Church that each individual Church or rite retain its traditions whole and entire, while adjusting its way of life to the various needs of time and space.”

John Paul II points out in SA 31b:

It is essential to go back to the past in order to understand, in the light of the past, the present reality and in order to discern tomorrow. For the mission of the Church is always oriented and directed with unfailing hope towards the future.

In the case of the Oriental-rite Catholic Churches this is not a luxury. It is not something simple. It is fraught with difficulty due to their origin and their history of relations with their Mother Churches. But it cannot be avoided.

All members of the Eastern Rite should know and be convinced that they can and should always preserve their legitimate liturgical rite and their established way of life, and that these may not be altered except to obtain for themselves an organic improvement. All these, then, must be observed by the members of the Eastern rites themselves. Besides, they should attain to on ever greater knowledge and a more exact use of them, and, if in their regard they have fallen short owing to contingencies of times and persons, they should take steps to return to their ancestral traditions. (OE 6a)

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40 The Encyclical Slavorum Apostoli of Pope John Paul II in commemoration of the eleventh centenary of the evangelizing work of Saints Cyril and Methodius, 2 June 1985.
Part of the return to one's "ancestral traditions" involves the reform of a liturgy which because of its exposure to the Latin-rite has the appearance of a mixture of the two. There is the tacit belief that the Ethiopian Catholics, in order to be Catholic, must have some things that look Roman. They cannot be too Ethiopian because they will be "like the Orthodox." Again identity is split between Rome and Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{41}

Speaking of the ancient Churches in Ethiopia and Eritrea, Cardinal Silvestrini said: "There were and are significant models of the incarnation of the Church in the local culture: the Alexandrian tradition, in its spreading to Ethiopia, took on its own features, ever more deeply African."\textsuperscript{42} But even more importantly he continued:

For this reason one must look back at this liturgical and disciplinary tradition which more naturally can form even today those people who in neighbouring areas choose to embrace the Christian faith.\textsuperscript{43}

These ancient traditions, of which the Catholic Church is an heir, would seem to be the more natural way of evangelization, due to their deeply African character. The promotion of the authentic Ethiopian tradition is therefore essential for a fruitful work of evangelization—the Church is after all, missionary by its very nature. A revitalized and confident Ethiopian Catholic Church would be much more effective in its missionary nature.

Conclusions

\textsuperscript{41} Abba Ayele Teklehaymanot, "The Struggle for the 'Ethiopianization' of the Roman Catholic Tradition", in Getachew Haile, Aasulv Lande and Samuel Rubenson (eds.) \textit{The Missionary Factor in Ethiopia}, pp.135-154.

\textsuperscript{42} Cardinal Silvestrini was the then Prefect of the Congregation for Eastern Churches. Cf. the Eighth General Congregation of the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, \textit{L'Oss. Rom.}, No. 18, 4 May 1994, p.6.

\textsuperscript{43} Art. cit., p. 6.
As can be seen from our presentation, the ecclesial situation in Ethiopia is quite complex. Its very complexity means that there are no simplistic solutions to the disunity amongst Christians and especially between Orthodox and Catholics.

After the quick historical overview of the relationship between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, we observed that time is needed to bring about healing and reconciliation. Time is not the only thing that is needed – the will is needed also. We seem to have the time but not really the will! The leadership of the various dioceses and vicariates are much too preoccupied with their own internal difficulties to devote any time or effort to the commitment to ecumenism. This may sound pessimistic, but in fact there are signs of hope. Through the auspices of the Conference for Major Religious Superiors (CMRS), a number of seminars, workshops and study groups have been set up with the aim of reflecting on the identity of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia and its relationship with the ancient Ethiopian Orthodox Church. These are meant to stimulate members of religious congregations to action for ecumenism.

There is a need for more education about the Catholic Church’s teaching on ecumenism on a number of different levels. An important factor in the disseminating of this teaching is a good formation of the clergy. Ecumenical studies, missiology, ecclesiology and church history should be given due attention in the seminaries. The laity practice an ecumenism of life on a daily basis with their neighbours. This needs to be supplemented by a corresponding ecumenical activity between Catholic clergy, Ethiopian and expatriate, and the local Ethiopian Orthodox Church. It seems logical but we cannot forget the emotions. We pray that the Holy Spirit will bring healing and that all Christians in Ethiopia will be able to stretch out their hands to God—together.
Hope or Dope: Christian Churches and Socio-Political Development in Africa

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When I dey sick, my mother go cry, cry, cry,
she go say instead when I go die make she die.
O, she go beg God,
"God help me, God help, my pikin oh."  

Personal and historical perspectives
Let me introduce this with a little personal detail and a few brief historical notes. To paraphrase Isak Dikensen “I once had a house in Africa…”, in fact I had several spread over the twenty five years I lived there, as a missionary, from 1977 until 2002, at which time I came back to University to research and write on aspects of that very interesting and most enjoyable period of my life. My fundamental research interest was the socio-political role of Christian Churches in Africa, focusing on the Republic of Benin as a case study.  

In the terms of Guy Arnold’s Africa a Modern History, I arrived well after the African 1960s “decade of hope” had faded, in the middle of the 1970s “decade of realism” and lived through the “basket case” stage of the 1980s and into the 1990s, which Arnold describes as a decade of “new directions and new perceptions”.  

Ghana, the beacon under Nkrumah, where I first arrived in 1977, spent a few weeks and have visited regularly since, was

1 Patrick Claffey, Head, Department of Mission Theology and Cultures, at Milltown Institute, presented this paper under series, Africa Lecture: Centre for the Study of Religion and Politics, St. Mary’s College University of St. Andrews, Thursday 26 April 2007.
2 From song lyrics by Prince Nico Mbarga, 1976.
3 See Patrick Claffey Christian Churches in Dahoemy-Bénin: A Study of their socio-political role, Leiden: Brill 2007
already being described as a failed state and certainly looked like one then, even to a newcomer. It is only fair to add that it has since recovered from that difficult period, but I still date Flight Lt. Rawlings arrival in power in 1979/1981 as the beginning of a spiral of instability and violence that swept through a large part of West Africa over the following two decades culminating in the present crisis in Ivory Coast. The situation in much of the rest of Africa was no less grim. 1994 saw the Rwanda and Burundi genocides leading to catastrophe in the whole of the Great Lakes region. Less dramatically but no less definitely countries like Somalia and Sudan slid inexorably into the “basket case” category.

It was during that period that I began to look at Africa in a different way, something that ultimately led me back to research. What was happening? It appeared that Chinua Achebe’s phrase could well be applied to much of a continent, things were surely falling apart with states being variously described as collapsed, inverted, failed, criminalised, kleptocratic and even predatory. Why? I really didn’t know then and all I know now is that the reasons were a complex mix of the socio-economic, political and cultural. The evidence, in any case, was alarming. At that time twenty-six states of the more than fifty on the continent were in a state of war or extreme civil conflict.

The Congolese theologian, Ká Mana, like many others, was wondering if Africa was not “going to die”. He pleaded for a reconstruction of the continent, with the Christian myth as a starting point for the imagining of a new utopia. He was seeking “a coherent schema in which the ‘images of the world’ might constitute a force, a breath, a dynamic of pregnant symbols and

6 See Jean-François Bayart, Stephen Ellis, Béatrice Hibou *The criminalization of the state in Africa*, London: James Currey, 1999
vital representations capable of mobilising the energies of the peoples of Africa in order to invent the future”\textsuperscript{9} In Christian theology several theologians were already looking at ideas of contestation and liberation and the need to conquer “[anthropological] pauperisation through a new cultural foundation of Africa as a cultural entity”\textsuperscript{10} With a certain sad irony in the year of the Rwanda and Burundi genocide a Special Synod of the Catholic Church for Africa spoke of itself as “an ecclesial event of fundamental importance for Africa, a kairos, a moment of grace, in which God manifests his salvation.”\textsuperscript{11} It cannot have seemed like that in either Rwanda or Burundi at this time, both countries with Christian majorities; Burundi is 62% Catholic, while Rwanda is 56.5%, Roman Catholic 26% Protestant and 11.1%, Adventist. While religious identities and sectarianism did not apparently contribute to the genocide, neither were the churches able to do very much to prevent it. Indeed the direct involvement of priests and religious (Sisters) both in developing the ideology behind the genocide and in carrying it out made it all the more traumatic for the churches of all denominations.

**Situating Christianity in postcolonial Africa**

There may have been an assumption in some postcolonial thinking, particularly amongst Marxists, that the branch of Christianity would wither and die once the colonial tree had been felled. This, of course, has not been the case and in fact the growth across the denominational spectrum over the past forty years has been extraordinary by any standards. In the twentieth century, the Christian population in Africa exploded from an estimated eight or nine million in 1900 (8% to 9%) to some 335 million in 2000 (45%). As Phillip Jenkins has pointed out, the centre of gravity of


Christianity has moved from the West to Latin America, parts of Asia and Africa. \(^{12}\) Examined in historical terms this is hardly surprising given the strategies adopted. This is well illustrated by a statement by Pius XI in the 1926 encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae*:

> Both history and experience teach that when once the rulers of a people have been converted to Christianity, the common people follow closely in the footsteps of their leaders. \(^{13}\)

Writing of religion and politics in Africa, Jean-François Bayart notes that it is “because the religious field is a locus of social change that it is simultaneously a field of political recomposition”. Whatever their relationship to the colonial enterprise, the Churches were agents for social change if only through their involvement in education and their role in the formation of what was to become a postcolonial African elite. Religion, Bayart asserts, “can contribute to the invention of modernity”, pointing to the role of both the Catholic and Protestant Churches “in the inculcation of new economic values and in the expansion of the capitalist world economy in the 19th and early 20th”. \(^{14}\)

Ali Mazrui points to the role of the Christian Churches in education and the provision of a particular humanitarian and universalist political discourse that favoured the birth of nationalism. \(^{15}\) In any case by the end of the colonial period mainstream churches had insinuated themselves into a modernizing African society.

Adrian Hastings observed that “the coming of independence to most of black Africa brought a far slighter shift in Church-State

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\(^{13}\) Pius XI, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, #31


relations than might have been anticipated”. In Dahomey for instance, the historian P. Métinhouë remarks that the period after independence was one of “almost perfect understanding” between the Catholic Church and the State, while M.A. Glélé concluded: “The Catholic Church represents an incontestable political force in Dahomey... [and] apart from the army, the clergy constitutes the only organised body, capable and very influential”. And this was not just the case in Dahomey.

Governments with limited resources and often lacking capacity in the field of education and health were happy to be assisted by the contributions of the churches. In other cases the relationship was even closer; the bishop’s ‘brother’ was a government minister leading to a cosy if less than healthy relationship for both sides. In some cases bishops provided theological legitimation for political developments. Separation of church and state was all very fine in France but this was not what was going on here. As Gambetta noted “L’anticléricalisme n’est pas un article d’exportation” (anticlericalism is not a product for exportation); and whatever else the French left in Africa, a secular state in the modern sense was not one of them. As a result, in many cases, there occurred between many of the mainline churches and the political powers in place what Bayart has described as a “reciprocal assimilation of elites” at least for as long as this was mutually convenient.

This, of course, refers specifically to the mainline historical Churches. Africans, however, had long since begun to experiment

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18 Glélé, Naissance, 45.
Hope or Dope—Christian Churches and Development in Africa

with their own forms of Christianity in the African Instituted Churches (AICs). This development was also intimately connected with social change and thus was not without political consequences. Terence Ranger speaking of early African religious movements notes: “even if they were not unequivocally anti-colonial they constituted a form of politics”\(^{21}\). Africa has been producing its own prophets and its own responses to African questions for a long time. Religious *bricolage* has always been part of this and to use Achille Mbembe’s expression an “indocile” Africa did not hesitate to improvise on the myths of the coloniser in creating new “arguments of image”\(^{22}\), however incomprehensible they might sometimes have seemed to the outsider. Catherine Coquery-Virdovitch speaks of the “[remarkable continuity] in the climate of resistance to oppression with a religious connotation which lasted well beyond the colonial period; from which in parallel, there is a permanent defiance of political actors who continue with the surveillance and repression”\(^{23}\) of religious movements where these become inconvenient and, equally, instrumentalise them when this is convenient. It has long been obvious that Christian Churches of all hues have a definite socio-political significance.

**More recent developments**

From the 1980s, already described as “the basket case years”, the growth has been even more remarkable. Religious movements seem to have grown as states ran into increasing difficulty. Indeed it is difficult not to see the expansion of religion in some ways as a mirror image of the socio-political and economic stagnation with the churches rapidly rising in a period during which the continent


was sliding into an extremely grim situation. Starting during this period of hopelessness, it seems there has been a definite recourse to the invisible and what Achille Mbembé has described as “la proliferation du divin”. He suggests that it is the “intellectual atrophy” of the movement for socio-political change in Africa in general that has led to the rise of various “nativist ideologies and new cosmologies articulated around religious symbolism and the rehabilitation of occult forces”. In addition to these more “nativist ideologies” there has been a steady growth in the historical churches accompanied by a phenomenal growth in Evangelical Pentecostalism right across the continent.

The “intellectual atrophy” of the socio-political situation leads inevitably to a kind of alienation and anomie particularly amongst disaffected youth who can only glimpse modernity and its wares through internet cafés, TV programmes and the occasional brother or sister who has made the breakthrough to their destiny—obtaining a visa to France or the USA. A Catholic secondary school student in the Republic of Benin (West Africa) illustrates the point, unwittingly echoing Fanon, when he tells me “Nous sommes une génération maudite” (we are a cursed generation), citing AIDS, chronic unemployment, a future without hope or promise if he does not manage to flee to Europe or the USA. The distance between where he is and the world he aspires to, and increasingly peeps at for 400 francs (cfa) an hour in Internet cafés, seems to grow daily. The tension between the global and the local, tradition and modernity, the attainable and the unattainable is

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25 These are common terms in Pentecostal Christianity.
almost unbearable.²⁷ He is, he says, "blocked" in his progress at school and in his other life-project ("projets de vie").

In the absence of a ministry of protection and deliverance in the Catholic Church in his local area, he has started attending prayers with a charismatic pastor who had recently set up a Church in the area and promised him deliverance:

I kept going to him for the prayer sessions.... This was for some time before the examinations.... So now that I have succeeded at the BEPC (Intermediate level examinations). I have understood that perhaps I was somewhat delivered and that the road is open to me.²⁸

This could be dismissed as the fear and frustration of an adolescent but a senior bank official appears to confirm his view when I ask him what he is seeking in the Pentecostal Christian Action Faith Ministries International:

First of all spiritual protection for ourselves and our children and then the possibility of developing ourselves as a man and an individual in the society in which we live. You will not be unaware of the fact that we live in a country where there is a development of malefic power...You know that Benin is the cradle of Vodón, that witchcraft still exists in Benin. The advantage of this Church is that it knows how to give spiritual protection and to show that in Jesus Christ we have been saved for the future.²⁹

Albert de Surgy reports an almost identical response but the conclusion is more radical:

²⁷ Online shopping sites are amongst the most frequently visited.
²⁸ Interview 09 September 2002.
²⁹ Interview 26 May 2002.
Africans start their life with a malediction since when we are born in our families we find customs and traditions. These customs and traditions are maledictions that Satan has introduced into our families. We must cut the ties with our ancestors. Alleluia... The fetishes and idols we possess are maledictions that are blocking our path, that block all progress.... You who are Christian ...if you continue to conform to the customs and the traditions, to eat the meat of the Devil, cease doing it this very evening. Some among you are not true Christians. You are still Béninois. Me, I may have been born Zairois, but I crush my culture, my traditions, to save my brothers and sisters. This is what we must do. Amen.30

This evidence is very significant, with several common themes which, in my view, reveal a society in considerable difficulty and it can be replicated across much of the continent. In the most negative sense, they represent a rejection of family and culture that can only result in extreme alienation and certainly poses problems for the construction of a modern state and society.

In an essay entitled The religious effects of culture: nationalism, Hart cites Quentin Skinner’s The Foundation of Modern Political Thought to suggest that political modernity in Europe, the state and the nation-state, were born in the political ferment of the Renaissance and Reformation age and the religious wars that followed. “On Skinner’s view, the state is what ‘happened’ when Europeans found themselves drowning in their own blood for religious reasons. The absolutist claims of the state usurped and displaced the absolutism of Christian convictions, the

imperium of the state displacing the imperium of the Church." In effect, the state had to be strong to contain the warring forces within it and impose order and, ironically, religious enthusiasm led to the secularisation. What I am suggesting here is a similar process but somehow in reverse. The weakness of many African states creates a situation allowing Churches to emerge providing, however tentatively, the space for some semblance of an ordered life, and some hope, however ephemeral.

This is the terrain upon which religions of all kinds operate in much of Africa. Cities wake before dawn to the cries of muezzin imploring Allah "the great and the merciful" and go to sleep (or don’t) to the sound of Christian Churches praying and singing late into the night. There is an enormous religious market offering what is craved for: salvation, refuge, healing, deliverance, protection, solutions, breakthroughs, success release, prosperity, miracles, victory, and even glory. What Kā Mana describes as "the exuberance of the religious" is very striking and here one encounters what he colourfully describes as "the respectable", "the delirious", "the venerable", "illusion merchants", "true seekers of God", "counterfeitors of the sacred", "the deep breath of the spirit" as well as the occasional "terrorist of the invisible" all seeking their share of a booming religious market.

The salvation sought is not just personal it is also collective, since there is a constant emphasis across the denominational spectrum on the need for "prayers for the nations" in order to save Africa from the plight it finds itself in. The German pastor Reinhard Bonnke runs the well known move Christ for All Nations,

32 In March 2002 a presidential decree dealing with "sound pollution" placed restrictions on the nocturnal activities of the churches. One of the churches I was visiting was stoned by people of the neighbourhood upset at the noise.
33 Kā Mana, La Nouvelle Evangelisation en Afrique, 23-24.
34 See http://www.bethanyinternational.org/home/articles/mani-prayer-report.asp (accessed 02 March 2007)
which concentrates much of its crusade activity on Africa under the title *Africa is Being Saved!*" 35 Ironically, however, one of the most repeated common prayers in many churches is the supplication for success in obtaining a visa, precisely it would seem to escape the fate of being condemned to stay in a nation that is in difficulty and to escape to what many Pentecostals refer to as a new *destiny*. The following extract from a sermon is a useful illustration of this:

You are *Destined for Glory*...BUT...BUT...BUT... You are tied...You are tied... You are tied. You are destined for glory but you are tied.... You have a car, a little car. You have a job, a little job. You have money, a little money. *But that is not your destiny*. You have come to the city. Now you are at the junction of two roads. [...] Your business was going well but now it has slowed down. It is not like it was, because *you have been tied*....

It is not enough to be born-again. You must go on further to your destiny. You need to be *relocated* to where *you ought to be* [...] to where your abundance is waiting for you....

This inevitably raises questions as to what the churches are offering in any real sense, is it in fact *dope* in the Marxist sense of an opiate in a situation of *misère-désolation*, to use Corten’s term, or is it as Kä Mana hopes “a coherent schema in which the ‘images of the world’ might constitute a force, a breath, a dynamic of pregnant symbols and vital representations capable of mobilising the energies of the peoples of Africa in order to invent the future”—in other words *hope*? 36 The answer must surely be mixed and it certainly requires an examination of the different discourses.

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Development of Social Doctrine within the Mainline Churches

Within Catholicism and indeed in ecumenical Christianity generally there is a certain emphasis on the social doctrine of the Churches; there is heavy involvement in social projects of all kinds, education, health, agriculture, women's projects and social development of all kinds. Often they are the main providers either through local church services or through the intervention of international faith-based NGOs.

In the past thirty years there has been a particular emphasis within Catholicism on the importance of the social doctrine of the Church. This was developed particularly during the pontificate of John Paul II, most particularly in the 1987 encyclical Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (On Social Concern). This along with John Paul's many visits to the continent became the basis for Catholic social commentary on Africa, ultimately leading to the post-synodal exhortation Ecclesia in Africa.\(^37\)

This emphasis on the social teaching is often followed up in institutes throughout the continent dedicated to issues of justice and peace. The Institute of Justice and Peace (IJP) in Cotonou, Benin, is an interesting example of this. The Institute's largely Christian-democratic orientation would seem to be confirmed by the support it receives from the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung,\(^38\) which has been actively involved in democratic political development in Benin since 1990, as well as its contacts with the German Catholic business world. Dr Tardy Ostry, director of the KAS, says: “Our aim is to strengthen the social doctrine of the Church”. And in this contribute to the consolidation of democratic institutions within the

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\(^{38}\) Founded in 1956. “The Foundation offers political education, conducts scientific fact-finding research for political projects, grants scholarships to gifted individuals, researches the history of Christian Democracy, and supports and encourages European unification, international understanding, and development-policy co-operation.” See http://www1.kas.de/stiftung/englisch/intro.html
The UPs discourse is essentially that of the social doctrine. It is somewhat abstract, conservative and appears to be little adapted to the political realities of the country, although it does touch on questions such as ethnic identity. Essentially, however, it repeats with little variation what it sees as classical Thomist positions and the social doctrine as enunciated by John Paul II. It is difficult to know to what extent it contributes to the imagining of the state in contemporary Benin. I posed the problem to Fr. Goudjo, director of the Institute, in the course of an interview. He acknowledges my observations but says that the problem is one of finding an appropriate discourse that will express a political philosophy for Africa today. He has chosen that of classical Thomism because, he says, when African intellectuals meet they need a schema of debate “because [they] don’t have a philosophical springboard...that is thought out and co-ordinated”. In fact, he points out, all of them are using exogenous discourses, whether developmentalist, Marxist/dependency or neo-liberal, and in this his institute is no different.

We can take a few of our local sayings but this is not a discourse, and in order to establish a discourse one must find another logic. We haven’t been formed in an African logic—even those who pass for Africanists.... There is not an African thinker who has the logical coherence upon which we could found our philosophical springboard. My springboard is founded upon the Catholic faith; that is all I have done. Catholicism and Thomism for the very simple reason that I admire Thomas Aquinas...his capacity and the strength of his synthesis...because of these titanic ideas he has succeeded in establishing.

I’m doing what I can...If I write a lot, it is because of that, it is because we find ourselves in a no man’s land... So we have to

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39 Interview, 11/06/2002.
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accept the entry into our politics of external elements which are completely strange to us but which at the same time impose upon us a conversion in the way we look at things...  

The ethical values expressed in the social doctrine are those that he considers to have contributed to the construction of other successful polities in the Christian Democratic tradition. These states are based on the dignity of the human person, the primacy of truth, the common good, and justice for all, in a state that is respectful of the subsidiary entities that compose it, allowing them room to develop in a spirit of solidarity with others and the wider world. This certainly contests more totalitarian models of power which seem to have been dominant since independence. It is difficult, however, to see how this is making any real inroads in the cut and thrust of everyday politics in Benin.

Pentecostalism and the Search for a new Destiny

Pentecostal churches speak of Africa making a breakthrough as they advance on widespread campaigns seeking “soul harvests”, the rejection of the tradition and new destiny for the nations of the continent.

Amongst academics David Martin is perhaps the most enthusiastic particularly with regard to Evangelical Pentecostalism as a source of new energy and life for the continent. He claims:

41 Interview, 14/07/02.
42 See Amato Giuliano, Dehaene Jean-Luc et Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, ‘L'Europe demain: la fausse querelle des "petits" et des "grands"'. Le Monde 13/11/03 18-19. A part of this long piece in Le Monde attempts to show how these values have been fundamental to the construction of European polities and how they have been incorporated into the proposed European constitution.
To be born again is to have the power to "construct a space" for freedom and dignity, and to exercise authority by prayer, by exorcism and by averting misfortune. The reorganisation of a chaotic moral field enables Pentecostals to participate in popular discontent with government. Most born-again Christians do not bribe officials or even tolerate such behaviour, and they also articulate an indirect critique of state-sponsored violence and the operations of the fraternities. They wrestle against the principalities and powers, and that means spiritual and satanic wickedness in high places, i.e. big and evil men. They are armed with countervailing power and their struggle on the spiritual level is all of a piece with their refusal to "play the game". There are signs that this spiritual contest with corruption and with violence and lack of accountability of the powerful may grow into a more institutional participation in politics... Clearly this cannot be a homogeneous movement precisely because Evangelicals express different sets of interests in their opposition to corrupt elements in the social order. Nevertheless, they are part of self-conscious regulation "in an ongoing process of social transformation."  

Martin's thesis is that Pentecostalism has "replicated Methodism" and that its socio-economic and political effects in Latin America and in Africa will be similar to those it is claimed it led to in Great Britain and in the USA. He is enthusiastic about its transforming effect on the situation of oppressed groups and

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particularly women, even calling it "a women's movement". The Pentecostal emphasis on "betterment, self-discipline, aspirations and hard work" which are "the first harsh phase of modernisation" will, he claims, eventually propel other parts of the world into modernity.

Paul Gifford casts a colder eye on things. While acknowledging that Evangelical Pentecostalism may contribute to the maintenance of a certain social cohesion and "peaceability", as Martin suggests, he has little time for the idea that they contribute in any meaningful way to the "reform of culture". Even in their understanding of "peaceability", he argues, they play the game of those in power, and thus in dulling the public debate that is essential to a working democracy and a renewal of Africa. He is equally dismissive of their role in gender issues, the understanding of success, and the inculcation of democratic values, the building of social capital or trust, and the work ethic, all at the core of Martin's argument.

I would find it difficult to share Martin's optimism and my fieldwork revealed little that corresponds to his thesis. Much of the discourse I heard in Pentecostal churches, and indeed in many of the mainline churches, seemed centred increasingly on deliverance, healing, wonders and miracles rather than anything that could be even loosely described as a new Protestant ethic. Far from being the centres of a new motivating discourse, they often appeared to me more as places of refuge in the face of a difficult daily life and an often a dysfunctional state. Writing of Haïti Laënnec Hurbon states:

One can ask oneself if the Pentecostal public space is not conceived essentially on the basis of the imaginary of witchcraft. In other words, only the Church herself, that is the assembly, can offer a haven of protection against a world

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45 Martin, Pentecostalism, 169.
understood as totally hostile, and in some sense an intermediate space which serves both as a private and as a public sphere, in the sense that the individual can allow himself to freely express the sufferings of his daily life and at the same time find a certain fusion with the pentecostal community, his new family. Can we say that we are witnessing here a *marronnage* (that is to say a flight) from the political?47

I certainly found it significant to note within the churches a constant emphasis on fellowship, fraternity, community etc., all over and against society. These churches seemed to me at times to be *alternative societies*, and in that sense *sectarian* and somewhat closed in on themselves rather than positively engaged with and contributing to the edification of a better civil and political society.

Across the churches it appeared to me that that was a serious lack of social analysis of the kind that might allow for the development of appropriate theologies “capable of mobilising the energies of the peoples of Africa in order to invent the future”48. In fact one is often struck by the paucity of original theology in Africa. Liberation theology had a brief life in the writings of one or two authors such as Englebert Mveng and Jean Marc Eja, Kā Mana worked briefly on a theology of reconstruction but it is not clear that this resulted in very much.

Writing recently of Kenya, Paul Gifford is quite pessimistic in his analysis of the theologies coming out of a part of Africa that has become a kind of intellectual centre for the continent. Far from being political theologies with a view to social and political change, he sees them as dominated by the idea of African culture and the theme of inculturation but they are also marked by a “relentless externalism or blaming the West” for all of Africa’s problems.49 This in turn takes the focus away from where it should

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49 Paul Gifford, personal communication
be in analysis. It is a kind of inculturation, in my view, that looks to a golden past rather than towards building a new future. Naipaul remarks that “Africa lives its past like a dream of purity, the past as a religion.” The question one must ask, however, is what of the future?

Conclusion

And so the time comes to put my own cards on the table in answering the question set in my title: Christian Churches dope or hope? I should state that I came to this study as a practising Christian and having lived and worked as a missionary for 25 years, it can fairly be said that I have every interest in viewing this positively. Of course, I have also met Christians who I think are making a difference based on their faith and their commitment. Kä Mana’s “true seekers of God”, the poor of the Beatitudes (Mt. 5.1-10), righteous people in the best sense seeking to live honest lives and build a better and more hopeful future for themselves and their families. No doubt this is spread across the denominational spectrum.

The churches themselves speak of an African kairos in which faith must play a role. But how effective is all this? Where does it lead? Is there a coherent project “capable of mobilising the energies needed in Africa] to invent a new future?” To what extent “can the Christian utopia as a horizon of existence be credible in the debates of society and in what way could the new evangelisation be presented as another way of being and of living for human societies”? One must certainly wonder and worry about the apparent recourse to the invisible, to a world of “miracles and wonders” that often seems devoid of any kind of social analysis, as indeed one wonders and worries about a discourse which while it may have a certain intellectual or philosophical coherence also fails to engage with more concrete realities on the ground.

50 V.S. Naipaul cit. in Smith Négrologie, 82
51 Ibid., 20-21.
As a Christian one lives in hope but at the same time one must have an awareness of the dead ends religion has also led us into. Here, of course, one comes back to the importance of the theologies and where they take us. In his study of the Reformation, Geoffrey Elton notes: "It will not do to treat the radical reformers as though only their theology mattered; neither the spread of their ideas nor the reaction of others can possibly be understood unless the secular discontent to which they give tongue is kept in mind". It is a fundamental theoretical tenet of this paper that neither religion nor theology exists outside social circumstances. They respond to these in different ways. Thus it can take on forms that one may find difficult to recognise as 'religious' in the more conventional sense. The course of religious history has often been one of decay and reformation. It seems to go down blind alleys and into dead ends to the point where it becomes a caricature of itself, making Faustian deals of all kinds with the powers of the world. In these circumstances, it is certainly difficult to see it making a contribution to the edification of a more just society.

As a Christian, however, one is also aware of its positive power and its contribution to the construction of a more just society. What we need, I suggest, is a theology with its ear to the ground, or, perhaps more appropriately, on the heart of humanity: a theology of engagement rather than a theology of retreat, a theology of liberation as well as a theology of solidarity, ultimately, in Jürgen Mölmann's terms, a theology of hope.

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FEATURES
The relationship between the church and the world and the church’s role toward social transformation and enduring peace culture has attracted wide discussions, schools of thought, and volumes of literature. Yet, the persistence and changing nature of violent conflicts and historical exigencies always call up the question anew to be addressed in new lights. This is the case with today’s identity and asymmetric conflicts and the culture of selfish individualism, dangerous competitive materialism, increasing unbridled relativism, widening economic disparity, persistent domination and exploitation, and continuing discrimination, hate and fragmentation of humanity. The situation calls for a new consciousness and commitment of the church to peacemaking as its mission in the world, albeit without compromising its identity and guiding ethical principles.

I see in the church’s presence as a social reality a strategy in itself of social transformation that, if given the critical consciousness and intentional commitment it deserves, will not only give intellectual credibility to Christian worldview, but will significantly advance the cause of enduring culture of peace. Yet, the approach is not one of pragmatic calculation and choice, but normative to the church. The Mennonite scholar John Howard Yoder who taught at Notre Dame (Catholic) University Indiana before his untimely death in 1997 has powerfully demonstrated this. This paper is based on his elaboration of the dynamics of presence as the church’s peacemaking strategy. It will first elucidate the idea of peace culture as the orienting horizon of the church’s peacemaking. Next, it will show the biblical basis of presence as the church’s peacemaking paradigm and approach and then proffer the frontiers the church needs to transcend for effective operation of

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presence as its strategy. Finally, the paper will throw light on elements of presence as dynamic strategy of peacemaking.

The Idea of a Peace Culture
The Hebrew concept of shalom as integral human wellbeing or completeness, which is realizable only in society where steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, and justice prevail, gives us a good insight into the idea of a peace culture. This notion of shalom is evident in Psalm 85:10, which personifies and pairs four powerful moral concepts: steadfast love (chesed), faithfulness (emunah), righteousness (tsedaqah), and justice (mishpat). This Psalm appears in the context of a people pleading and waiting for the return of God’s favour against the reign of injustice, insecurity, and misery. The return of God’s favour, which is the reign of peace, means the reign, in the dynamic interplay, of these moral values in the land. Remarkably, the vision of shalom in Psalm 85 bears an eschatological referent. The optimum condition of shalom transcends human possibilities. It needs divine intervention. However, the people must live in accord with righteousness and justice for peace to prevail.

It is important to point out that the Old Testament prophets associate the full realization of shalom with the rule of the Messiah. Christ fulfils this in enacting God’s kingdom as a socio-political and economic reality of which justice and peace are among its core values. Yet, the kingdom is here and not here. As far as the historical event of Christ is concerned, revealing the ultimate human destiny and the purpose of history in which we now live, we live in anticipatory way. Thus, the full peace remains an eschatological reality. Nevertheless,

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3 See Ibid., 30.
set in the context of ‘incarnational humanism,’ eschatology is not a call for inaction. It is rather a call for action in correspondence to the nature of God’s kingdom already here. From this perspective, *shalom* serves as a kind of check-and-balance in the pursuit of peace. It defines our orienting peacemaking horizon, but cautions us against thinking that we must achieve full justice and peace in this world.\(^6\)

It is important to know then that the idea of a peace culture is not an Utopian idea of absolute just and peaceful social order. More importantly, the notion of *shalom* evidences that peace is more than the absence of war. It is an integral and dynamic condition of human wellbeing and that of society. Consequently, the idea of peace culture is that communal or social environment and condition, dependent upon the establishment of just social, political, and economic systems and structures, in which people grow in loving, kind, justice-full, nonviolent, and responsible relationship toward the fuller realization of their wellbeing, integrity, and dignity. Social transformation and peacemaking emerge as the process of creating within the community those conditions and structures that are life-enhancing, and, conversely, eradicating all those structures and features that diminish human wellbeing.\(^7\)

The idea of peace culture, therefore, enables us think broadly of multiple activities and roles that can contribute toward the establishment of a just and peaceful society. Elise Boulding beautifully expresses this point when she writes:

> When we are thinking in terms of peace culture, many other elements come into play as well. It helps to think of peace culture as a mosaic, made up of varied ingredients: historical memories of peaceful peoplehood; teachings and practices of communities of faith on gentleness, compassion, forgiveness, and the inward disciplines of reflection and prayer; ways families care for one


Presence as Ecclesial Peacemaking Strategy

another and nurture the next generation; economic behavior that deals carefully with earth’s resources and is oriented to human need and human sharing; forms of governance that ensure justice for all; and means of dealing with conflicts, differences, strangers—with those who are ‘other’—in the problem-solving, reconciling manner.8

Furthermore, the idea of peace culture encourages appreciating and enhancing values and practices among all peoples and cultures that non-violently promote genuine peace. To use the words of Augustine, it is a process that “instead of nullifying and tearing down, ... preserves and appropriates whatever in the diversities of diverse races is aimed at one and the same objective of human peace, provided that they do not stand in the way of the faith and worship of the one supreme and true God.”9 Furthermore, it suggests that we should think in terms of holistic peacemaking or peace-building processes in ongoing transformation of society.

Let me emphasise here that the logic of peace culture as the orienting horizon of peacemaking lies in our common humanity. In practice, this means that there exists a global relationship among all peoples, irrespective of our differences. We have one world, but expanded in parts to all ends.10 This corroborates the point that peace culture calls for multiple roles and practices across cultures and peoples. It is important, therefore, to remark that although the church has a unique role to play toward a global peace culture it is not its task alone. The orienting horizon of peace culture demands that the church

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10 Ibid., 18.2, 5.22.
should seek collaboration with other sociological bodies and authorities and the State.

Before I delve into the church’s role in this collaborative task, let me first show the biblical basis of presence as the church’s intra-systemic peacemaking paradigm and approach.

**The Biblical Basis of Presence as the Church’s Peacemaking Paradigm and Approach**

Yoder’s voice is important in the discussion of the church’s peacemaking paradigm and role in the world not because he proposes what could pass the test of our scientific age as a strategy, in the pragmatic scale of immediate effectiveness. It is rather because he vividly and eloquently expounds the nature of the church, as a social reality, as itself the paradigm and unique instrument of the Gospel imperative of justice and peace. The world’s need of the church is therefore to be the church. Here is the notion of presence as a strategy: the church’s sociological presence is a strategy of social transformation and peacemaking. Thus, presence as the ecclesial peacemaking strategy is not a mere tactic or technique of calculable outcome. It is the church’s way of life, a way of being in the world and a way of making things happen.

The paradigm of presence goes back to the Jeremianic model of living in the city where God has sent the Jewish Diaspora into exile. The Jeremianic model, as Yoder says, prefigures the way Christians are to live in world. What Jeremiah asks his Hebrew people, exiled in Babylon, is to seek the peace of the city (Jer. 29:7). This, according to Yoder, is not a call to a guerrilla campaign or arms insurrection against their oppressors. To seek the peace of the city, to initiate social change or liberation “is the creation of a confessing community which is viable without or against the force of the state and does not glorify that power

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structure even by the effort to topple it”. In other words, what Jeremiah recommends to the exiled faithful Hebrew people is a strategy of presence, the ‘servant-hood’ of a ‘people-hood’, as a countercultural community. This is not a position of weakness, inaction or naïve withdrawal; it is neither throwing in the towel nor conformity with the idolatrous practices of the pagan nation. It is a way of subordination to the pagan powers without supporting their arrogance and oppressive system, but gradually transforming them into the acceptance of Hebrew monotheism.

However, it is with Jesus that the countercultural community strategy of presence takes its definitive shape and normative status. The logic lies in Jesus’ own methodology and teaching, and his Lordship, which is not an abstract theological conclusion safeguarded in the language of doctrine or an attribute that stands or falls based on the confession of individuals or the powers ruling the world’s systems. It is a social, political, and structural fact, the inexorable result of Christ’s victory over all principalities and powers.

It is remarkable that the Gospels situate Jesus’ ministry as political, carried out within the context of oppressed Jews anxiously looking forward to their liberation and shalom with the coming of the messiah. Jesus came as the awaited messiah and began his ministry with announcing the good news that the awaited God’s reign is near (Mk. 1:15), indeed, that the Israelites’ theocratic hope is a social, political, and economic order, the fulfilment of which has started with him (Lk. 4:18-21; Is. 61:2). As Elizabeth Johnson puts it, “In this new reality, as Jesus saw it, the longings of the ‘little ones’ of the world are especially fulfilled: the poor are included; mourners are comforted;

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those who hunger and thirst for justice are satisfied; the merciful, the pure of heart, those who have been persecuted are blessed of God, the peacemakers are called children of God (Mt 5:3-10). Jesus did not leave his political agenda as an abstract ideal and hope suspended in the future. He fulfills it in his own practice of unbounded love, welcoming the poor and outcast in a new inclusive community, forgiving peoples’ sins, healing the sick, exorcising the possessed, restoring people to peace with themselves, with others and with God, directly challenging the injustices and established givens of the powers that be, speaking the truth to their faces, and laying down his life on the cross to liberate the oppressed. But the story did not end in his death; rather it ended in his resurrection and ascension to the Father wherefore he rules as Lord.

Although the kingdom enacted by Christ is not yet consummated, the message of the resurrection is that we now live in a new historical epoch in which “the gospel can neither be annihilated nor can its historical momentum be arrested because the process of arresting or annihilating it would be structurally identical to the crucifixion itself and would therefore have the effect of supplying the revelation with yet another proof of its historical pertinence.” Hence, we live in a new order under God’s reign in which the church as a community of believers is where the Lordship of Christ is fully operative. What this means is that the church’s task is not to attack the powers, but to concentrate its own life in making Christ the indispensable centre in defining the new political humanity. It is remarkable that Jesus’ methodology is not one of violence. As Yoder says,

What is wrong with the violent revolution according to Jesus is not that it changes too much but that it changes too little; the Zealot is the reflection of the tyrant whom he replaces by means

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16 Ibid., 75-76.
The Zealot resembles the tyrant whom he attacks in the moral claims he makes for himself and his cause: ‘In the world, kings lord it over their subjects; and those in authority are called their country's ‘Benefactors’ (Luke 22:25). The original revolutionary tactic Jesus brought to the faithful Jews is a new community, dedicated to its own deviant value system. This, itself, is a social change and a powerful tool of social change. It constitutes a challenge to the powers that be and this is why Jesus was killed.

Evidently, the church, as a historical community, is founded to be the unique instrument of continuing the confession of the Lordship of Christ and transformation of the social status quo in the light of God's kingdom already present in our midst. As Yoder puts it, “the church is both the paradigm and the instrument of the political presence of the Gospel.” It is “the primary structure through which the gospel works to change other structures.” For one thing the ecclesial strategy of presence, which is affirmed here, does not promise us a broad social reform. This is because its operative category is not effectiveness, but obedience to Christ. But this is not to say that it does not work; for obedience to Christ, which means reflecting his character, is aligned to his ultimate victory. The key to obedience is patience; it is the effectiveness of presence as the mode of the church's peacemaking. So, after all, it works, “for the powers,” as Yoder says, “have been defeated not by some kind of cosmic hocus-pocus but by the concreteness of the cross; the impact of the cross upon them is not the working of magical words nor the fulfillment of a legal contract calling

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19 Ibid., 28, 31.
21 Yoder, Politics of Jesus, 154.
for the shedding of innocent blood, but the sovereign presence, within the structures of creaturely orderliness, of Jesus the kingly claimant and of the church which is itself a structure and a power in society.”

My next task is to elucidate three frontiers the church requires to transcend in order to provide a richer understanding and effective operation of presence as the church’s peacemaking approach.

Transcending Three Frontiers: Richer Understanding and Effective Operation of the Strategy of Presence:
In line with what I said above about the church’s need to develop a new consciousness and intentional commitment to its presence as a strategy of social transformation, a proper understanding and effective operation of this strategy requires that it should move beyond a number of frontiers. These include moving beyond denominations, moving beyond mere technique, and moving beyond narcissistic preoccupation with identity.

1. The Need to Move beyond Denomination
Whereas the plurality of Christian denominations could serve as valuable tool toward rapid transformation of the world, it constitutes a barrier and scandal where the denominations fail to realize the essential oneness of the church and are locked in division and enmity, hate, mistrust, and intolerance, and unable to work together on issues of social order, conflict resolution, relieving pain and enhancing human wellbeing. It is important to realize that change is made and peace flourishes when humans are awakened to the existence of others in a new energy of love. The church will realize and exercise its full potential in transforming society for enduring peace culture if it transcends denomination and moves towards ecumenism in its peacemaking framework and processes. Working toward a global peaceful community presupposes overcoming divisions, isolations, and separations in favour of interconnection and interdependence. Thus, it seems that the difficult challenge facing the realization of a global

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23 Yoder, Politics of Jesus, 158.
peace culture is how the church should move from where it is, as Harvey Cox says, to where it wants to go, from denominations to the ecumenical church.24

What is urgent is for the different Christian denominations to transcend peacemaking as identity-oriented venture over against the other. The tendency of such denominational and identity-oriented approach is that peacemaking becomes a mere technique, a mechanistic metaphor, which "finds philosophical expression with the modern European Enlightenment, political expression with liberal democracy, and triumphed economically with industrial capitalism."25 To guard against such tendency, the different denominations need to be mindful of their substantive guidance, their basic nature as community bound with others by the same moral authority, common mission, and common destiny. In other words, the church must be mindful of its essential oneness. This does not only call for perceptual and attitudinal change, but also for concrete cooperation in peace work where necessary.

2. The Need to Move beyond a Mere Technique Approach
A serious temptation the church must overcome in the new consciousness and intentional commitment to peacemaking or social transformation is that of not throwing its distinctiveness or identity overboard in order to achieve some significant social change or not being seriously committed in order to preserve its identity. What must be recognized, as I remarked earlier, is that the church’s strategy of presence is not a mere tactic or technique, but the community’s way of life. In other words, it does not derive independently from the witness of the faith community.26 Evidently, the church, authentic and faithful

to its call, cannot abandon its distinctiveness in the bid for effectiveness or the realisation of immediate broad social transformation; it cannot but act from within its world of faithfulness. To do otherwise is to lose its quality as salt of the earth—a countercultural community, and an independent force in society that leads a revolutionary life against corrupt culture. Losing its particularity, the church’s peacemaking process and role in the world will become a series of independent items on an action checklist, a formal claim of effective technique independent of what the church is.

Against the tendency of throwing overbroad its particularity and turning its pursuit of social justice and peace into an item on its action checklist independent of its character as a faith community, the church needs to be always mindful of its call to obedience to Christ as its substantive guidance. At the heart of this, according to Daniel Berrigan, is the consciousness or realization that “the world’s need of Christians could perhaps be defined as a need for spiritual presence and a need for prophecy.”

The prophecy required of us is one that has undergone the experience of the world and hence can speak out of knowledge and compassion rather than from safety and distance, and the Christian presence must also be carefully understood; it is a presence filled with spirit rather than merely another technique among techniques; it is a sense of man, in fact, which admits of a breakthrough from without.  

Yoder’s solution to this tendency is for the church to see its role in the world from the point of view of witness. In all, the central point is that the church should not see its role and strategy as independent of what it is or of the witness of the faith community.

3. The Need to Move beyond Narcissistic Preoccupation with Preservation of Its Identity

The opposite tendency to guarding against abandoning its identity or particularity in the involvedness of its peacemaking endeavour is a narcissistic preoccupation with preserving its identity. Here, the consequence will be the church losing its essence and relevance in the world as the unique instrument of the gospel imperative of justice and peace. The above references from Berrigan and Yoder mediate between the two tendencies. However, let me emphasize that presence as the church’s strategy is not a preoccupation with preserving a peculiar identity and a passive unconcern with the distress of people and society. On the contrary, it is about active concern and creative construction of loving, nonviolent ways of social change and reconstruction to make more visible in the world justice and peace, which are powerful signs of the kingdom enacted by Christ.

As I indicated earlier, Jesus did not simply proclaim the kingdom and reign of God as an abstract ideal, but enacted it as a new social, political and economic order. His methodology, which is a new moral option of love, embracing ‘servant-hood’, nonviolent, and new community, is essential to understanding the dynamics of presence as the church’s peacemaking strategy. The quality of this love, which is the central principle of the church’s life, shows that presence is not a mode of doctrinaire conservatism and passive unconcern to the distress of one’s neighbour. While this love binds Christians to one another in the faith community, it transcends the walls of the church and our selfish orbit. It is by its nature radically oriented toward the shalom of the other and society in subjective and objective actions. Indeed, bearing the Christ-like love means being drawn into a kind of obsession and compulsion to seek, like Christ, the shalom of the other that is selfless. This is why active commitment to social transformation and peacemaking is not an optional Christian commitment. The words of the Catholic Bishops Conference of America resonate here:

Peacemaking is not an optional commitment. It is a requirement of our faith. We are called to be peacemakers not by some movement
of the moment, but by our Lord Jesus. The content and context of our peacemaking is set not by some political agenda or ideological program, but by the teaching of his Church.28

The understanding of Church's presence as Spirit-filled and as a strategy for social transformation, therefore, requires that it should move beyond passivity in relation to social justice to active nonviolent resistance to transform unjust structures.

The Dynamics of Presence as Church's Peacemaking Strategy:
While I hope it is clear by now that presence as the church's strategy does not derive abstractly, independent of what the church is, let me state more categorically that the church, which springs from faith in Jesus Christ and is in historical continuity with that faith, is characterized by distinctive countercultural compositional and relational features. Over against the world's system characterized by selfish individualism, nationalism, discriminative, domination, and exploitation, the church is an inclusive community, with no national boundaries. It is a koinonia community in that it is lived by a covenanted people who share and bear one another's burdens, instruct one another, forgive one another, and reinforce one another's witness.29 So said, it is evident that the context of the inner dynamics of the church is the crucible from which the determinate framework of social transformation springs. Consequently, the primary task of the church in working toward social transformation for enduring peace culture is to prioritize the quality of its own life, that is to say, the elements of its inner dynamics, which impact directly and indirectly on the social process. Also the church's peacemaking process, under the

strategy of presence, includes direct public prophetic peace witness. I will elaborate on the dynamics of these two elements in what follows.

1. Presence in Church’s Peacemaking Strategy: Quality of its Life
I will address four critical elements as constitutive of the inner dynamics of the church for social transformation under the strategy of presence. These are, presence as paradigmatic peace witness, presence as relational and work ethics extra muros ecclesiae, presence as nonconformity, and finally presence as commitment to social service and community welfare.

Presence as Paradigmatic Peace Witness
Central to the idea of presence is that the church’s peacemaking basically takes the form of a paradigmatic peace witness. Whereas this may be described as a passive mode of peacemaking, it is, nevertheless, a significant and powerful way of influencing the social process. In today’s separation of state and church, the state may not want the church to tell it what to do or how to organize its affairs. But as a community of peoples, the state will find itself seeking for and drawing from a model that brings new ideas about the nature of things and how to deal with certain issues, especially as it encounters novel problems. If the church as a community lives up to its own standard in the light of the character or rather ethics of the kingdom enacted by Christ, directly or indirectly the state will always find itself challenged and summoned to respond with proper actions to the possibility of creating a peaceful political community or society. Acts 2:42-47 attests to how people changed by observing the way the early Christians lived as a community, conforming their character to the demands of Christ, such that each day the Lord increased their number. Today, the church could change peoples’ hearts and influence the social process if it reflects in its own body and inner dynamics the values it enjoins on society. As Yoder rightly says, “the simple fact that the church is intractably present on the social scene as a body with its own authority, economic structure, leadership, international relations, openness to new members, conscientious involvement in society at some points, and
conscientious resistance at others means that the social process cannot go on without taking account of her presence and particular commitment."\textsuperscript{30}

The belief that the church can offer the world precisely this mode of presence and insight into its social processes is behind the hermeneutic of the church’s body politic and sacraments as model or paradigm to the larger political community for proper ordering of its affairs. This resonates with Yoder’s remark that the “challenge to the faith community should not be to dilute or filter or translate its witness, so that the ‘public’ community can handle it without believing, but so to purify and clarify and exemplify it that the world can perceive it to be good news without having to learn a foreign language.”\textsuperscript{31} Following Karl Barth’s analogical style, Yoder shows how the church’s body politics can be rendered intelligible to the watching eyes of the world and instructive as stimuli to the conscience of society. Baptismal induction into the church as a community of brothers and sisters, he says, can serve as a model for egalitarian society; binding and loosing can serve as model for conflict resolution, alternative to litigation, and alternative perspectives on correction; the church’s recognition of each member’s gift can provide an immediate alternative to vertical business models of management; while Eucharistic table sharing of bread can serve as a model for soup kitchens and hospital houses and also for social security and negative income tax.\textsuperscript{32} In similar hermeneutics, William Cavanaugh calls the Eucharist, which is the heart of the church, “a proper ‘anarchy,’” not in the sense that it proposes chaos, but in the sense that it challenges the false order of the state. Through

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 187.
the Eucharist, Christians are united not only to God, but also to one another, transcending national boundaries.\textsuperscript{33} 

Unfortunately, the truth, evident even with cursory look, is that the church does not reflect or represent in its own body what the above interpretations of its body politics suggest and call the larger society to be. There is a regrettable deep economic and racial differences existing in the church. It is shamef ul that the church should claim to be a koinonia community, the mystical Body of Christ, and a paradigm to the larger political community when many faithful are hungry, naked, and homeless, dying for lack of the basic needs to exist while others live insensitively in affluence and surplus, including church authorities. Whereas only a community that renounces violence for the dignity of the human person and the oneness of the human family can, with authority, condemn the violence that some perpetrate to dominate others, the church’s ambivalence with respect to violence persists. This is particular the case as many Christians mindlessly engage in violence. These are only few examples of redeemable imperfections of the church, which remind us that the paradigmatic posture of the church and the social hermeneutic of its body politics can only be practically meaningful and if it awakens in the church a consciousness of the need for and commitment to its self-transformation for the transformation of the social order.\textsuperscript{34} This is at the heart of the dynamics of presence.


\textsuperscript{34} Hendrick Berko f rightly writes: “All resistance and every attack against the gods of this age will be unfruitful, unless the church herself is resistance and attack. Unless she demonstrates in her life and fellowship how men can live freed from the Powers…. To reject nationalism we must begin by no longer recognizing in our own bosoms any difference between peoples. We shall only resist social injustice and the disintegration of comm unity if justice and mercy prevail in our own common life and social differences have lost their power to divide. Clai voyant and warning words and deeds aimed at state or nation are meaningful only insofar as they spring from a church whose inner life is itself her proclamation of God manifold wisdom to the ‘Powers in the air.’” Hendrick Berkhof, \textit{Christ and the Powers}, trans. John H. Yoder (Scottdale and Kitchener: Herald Press, 1977), 51. See Yoder, \textit{Politics of Jesus}, 147-148.
Presence as Relational and Work Ethic in the World

Another critical dimension of the dynamics of presence is the church’s character formation. The logic of the crucial nature of this dimension lies in the fact that the church has no impermeable boundary with the world. Christians are citizens both of the church and of the world. The church exists in the world and with the world under the same order of redemption. Consequently, the church has no separate ethics for living within the faith community (Christengemeinde) and another for living outside it (Bürgergemeinde). The distinctiveness of the church, as Yoder says, lies in the exceptionally normal quality of humanness it is committed.35 Thus, “a Christ-centered understanding of discipleship sets the context for the understanding of our work, our vocations, and our very lives.”36 Therefore, it is important that in the church people should be changed in such a way as to bring the ethics of God’s kingdom to bear in their relationships, not only within the church community, but also extra muros ecclesiae and in their works or political functions.

This point cannot be overemphasized realizing that it is with its members that the church comes into more direct contact with the world systems, structures, and institutions and so can directly transform them. A good ethical background or formation is vital for a proper exercise of one’s political function, commitment to community service, and honest dealing in business and market, which is critical in today’s scandal-ridden corporate environment. The dynamics of presence as the church’s peacemaking strategy requires that it should pay attention to helping Christians acquire a sound ethical background necessary to make critical choices in their ongoing relations and social commitments. It is important to note, as Yoder says, that a consistent Christian life of honesty, mutual respect, hard work, clean thinking,

unselfishness and tolerance can, through a sort of moral osmosis, build up the moral fabric of society.\textsuperscript{37}

\textit{Presence as Nonconformity}

The Christological wellspring of the church’s life, peacemaking paradigm and approach does not only let it see the incompatibilities of the oppressive structures (certain pervasive societal lifestyles and political functions) with its own life and the demand of faith, it calls it the Church to nonconformity. The nonconformity is not about being apolitical. It is rather an inexorable implication of faith and a proper exercise of political responsibility. As Yoder eloquently puts it:

The disciple chooses not to exercise certain types of power because in a given context, the rebellion of the structure of a given particular power is so incorrigible that at the time the most effective way to take responsibility is to refuse to collaborate, and by that refusal to take sides in favor of the victims whom that power is oppressing. This refusal is not withdrawal from society. It is rather a major negative intervention within the process of social change, a refusal to use unworthy means even for what seems to be a worthy end.\textsuperscript{38}

The strategy of presence requires that the church, as a countercultural community, take nonconformity seriously, realizing that in so doing it awakens in society the moral sense that the means we choose for our goal are equally important to be right as the goal we seek.

\textit{Presence as Commitment to Social Service and Community Welfare}

The contributions of the church to community development and welfare services through its health and educational institutions and relief services to the poor and the needy are significant. The church’s


\textsuperscript{38} Yoder, \textit{Politics of Jesus}, 154.
educational institutions have been significant means to incarnate its values and influence the social process.\textsuperscript{39} Richard Niebuhr expresses the view that the church's "direct service to the community in education, social welfare, and evangelism has been more important in creating common mind and developing a sense of mutual responsibility than its indirect approaches to the common life through political agencies."\textsuperscript{40} The challenge facing the church in this area is still enormous and it is important to note that it is from the marginalized poorest communities and peoples that comes the most evocative glimpse of the longed-for alternatives.\textsuperscript{41} With its ubiquity reaching to the grassroots and the poorest of communities, the church can, through community services and development, produce the kind of social revolution needed to enthrone a new culture of relational sensitivity, empathy, justice and solidarity against excessive individualism, competitive materialism, injustice, domination, and exploitation.

What is perhaps a serious concern today is the growing turn in the church's institutions. Rather than being a nurturing ground for countercultural values, many ecclesial institutions are influenced by the secular culture. They are not different from their secular counterparts and are overtaken by liberal neutrality and relativism. Commenting on this growing trend Kenneth Clark writes: "When our colleges and universities become havens from value, when our teachers become defenders of such transparent escapes, they contribute to, if not help to create, the profound tragedy of the moral erosion and emptiness of those who have the intellectual gifts that might make human advancement and survival possible."\textsuperscript{42} Indeed, we cannot hope for an enduring peaceful world without training human beings to instil moral

\textsuperscript{39} See Yoder, "Biblical Mandate for Evangelical Action," 185; Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, 19.
\textsuperscript{41} See Mary C. Grey, Beyond the Dark Night: A Way Forward for the Church? (London: Cassell, 1997), 137.
sensitivity as an integral part of the complex pattern of functional human intelligence. The intra-systemic peacemaking process of the church requires that the church pay serious attention to its institutions as true nurturing ground for counter values without preventing true academic freedom.

2. Presence in the Church’s Peacemaking: Public Prophetic Peace Witness
The second element in the dynamics of the church’s peacemaking under the approach of presence is its direct public evangelical and prophetic witness of peace to individual statespersons and social critique of the state. Let me emphasise that the idea of prophetic peace witness is not about predicting the future of human social affairs. It is rather an evangelical message directed toward the transformation of culture perceived to be corrupt, by calling individual statespersons to conversion and to proper exercise of their political functions. It is about social critique of the state. Yet, it transcends this; it embraces actions at resisting and transforming unjust policies and structures and solving deep social crises.43

Evangelism, understood as a call to faith in Christ, is fundamental to the mission of the church in the world. It is an integral element of its peacemaking process. The message directed to the individual statesperson is a call to personal commitment and at the same time to proper exercise of his or her political function. The logic is simple. The message derives from the gospel. Thus, it is first a call to conversion. But conversion correlates with proper exercise of one’s political duty. And even if the person refuses conversion, the message does not change from being evangelical. It summons the person to emulate as

fully as possible within his or her setting of unbelief the values and conducts appropriate to life under the reign of God.\textsuperscript{44}

In like manner, the church has the inexorable responsibility, deriving from biblical revelation, to critique the state and call it to justice and order. This is because "only a clearly eschatological viewpoint permits a valid critique of the present historical situation and the choice of action which can be effective. Non-eschatological analysis of history is unprotected against the dangers of subjectivism and opportunism, and finishes by letting the sinful present situation be its own norm."\textsuperscript{45} But the role of the church within the ethical stricture of presence does not stop at social critique of the state. Often the state is so intransigent over certain policies that it requires alternative action to persuade it to change. In such situations, the dynamics of the church’s peacemaking requires that it engage in loving, nonviolent ways to bring a change. Such nonviolent resistant actions within the ethical stricture of love include civil demonstrations and withdrawal of cooperation with government.\textsuperscript{46}

**Conclusion:**

This paper’s reflection on the intra-systemic peacemaking paradigm of the church in the approach of presence in no sense draws a moral line or suggests that this is the only ethically permissible way the church engages or can engage in peacemaking. The attraction is its non-violent mode; and the fundamentals of the church’s inner dynamics are its very first consideration.

I have tried to show, from the perspective of Yoder, that the church’s intrasystemic peacemaking paradigm in the strategy of presence is particularly significant with its character-orientedness. This challenges our achievement-oriented society for which we


\textsuperscript{45} Yoder, *Original Revolution*, 71.

\textsuperscript{46} See Ibid., 168; Yoder, *Christian Witness to the State*, 54-55.
often sacrifice ethical principles for interest and result. The latter neglects the people and ignores the church’s resources for peacemaking; it is obsessed with techniques and it places the work for peace in the hands of few so-called experts (peace technocrats, diplomats, and the military). In the new consciousness and commitment to presence as a strategy of peacemaking, the church adopts a unique way of actively engaging in peacemaking that has the potentials of transforming the social order.
Trinity and Inculturation:

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This book is a largely reworked version of a PhD dissertation in Theology presented in December 2005 at the Catholic University of Paris (Institut Catholic de Paris) and Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. The title of the dissertation was *L’Humanité de Dieu: Pertinence de la doctrine trinitaire d’Eberhard Jüngel pour la nomination de Dieu dans le contexte de la théologie africaine de l’inculturation* (*The Humanity of God. The Pertinence of Eberhard Jüngel’s Doctrine of the Trinity for the Naming of God in the Context of African Inculturation Theology.*)

The book proposes a renewal of the naming of God in the context of on-going debates in fundamental theology about the responsibility of theology towards its object, the Trinitarian God, in a world of epistemological and religious pluralism. Special attention is paid to the dilemma of African inculturation theology, which serves as the author’s point of departure.

*The dilemma: Defence of African cultures and dogmatic responsibility of theology*

In the effort to demonstrate the pertinence of Christian faith in the African context, theological reflection in Africa since 1960 has been massively centred on inculturation. The objective of this theological reflection was to help Africans accept the Christian God while safeguarding their identity and their cultural and religious traditions. This explains why theological reflections have attempted to demonstrate continuity between the God of African traditional religions and the Christian God using the idea of

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primitive monotheism. This also explains Christological reflections, which present Christ as an Ancestor who accomplishes the aspirations of African ancestry.

The advantage of this inculturation theology is that it affirms the necessity to move away from the disdain of African religious traditions. Moreover, this theology emphasizes that a major characteristic of the Christian faith is revealing to human beings that they are already in contact with God through personal existential experience. If it is true that no culture is totally closed to God, then the presentation of the Christian God can assume certain features of African cultures.

Nevertheless, the apologetic approach of African inculturation theology produces two adverse effects. On the one hand, because it pursues self-defence and self-justification of cultures, this theology tends to distance itself from the dogmatic responsibility of every theology. This is evident in the disjunction between theology and Christology, the difficulty of thinking God along with God’s incarnation and God’s self-identification with Jesus Christ. A consequent difficulty is conceptualising the human being before God. On the other, this apologetics does not fully respect African religious traditions because it depends on an evolutionist history of religions that views them as evangelical preparation, that is, incomplete religions waiting to be completed by Christianity.

The project: renewing the naming of God in African inculturation theology through a rediscovery of the doctrine of the Trinity.

This book therefore proposes a renewal of the naming of God in the context of African inculturation theology. It hopes to contribute to the on-going debates in fundamental theology about the responsibility of theology towards its object, the Trinitarian God, in the context of epistemological pluralism.

Starting from the hypothesis of the pertinence of contemporary Trinitarian theology for the renewal of the naming of God in the context of African inculturation theology, it proposes to borrow from the doctrine of the humanity of God in the work of German
theologian Eberhard Jüngel. The central question addressed by the dissertation is: To what extent can Jüngel’s doctrine of the humanity of God help to solve the problem of disjunction between theology and Christology inherent in the apologetics of the African inculturation theology?

A Book in Three Parts
Part I: State of the Questions—Naming of God in African theology
This part demonstrates that the problem of this reconfiguration of God can be traced back to its apologetic goal of speaking about God and the Christian mission in such a way that safeguard African cultural values.

Chapter One traces the origin of African inculturation apologetics to the first definitions of God and African religions in the internal debates among Western epistemologies in the 18th through to the 20th centuries. Three moments are distinguished: the debate on the theistic idea of God in the 18th century (Voltaire, Rousseau, Hume and Hegel); the socio-cultural evolutionism of the 19th century (Herbert Spencer, Edward Tylor on the one hand, and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and Leo Frobenius on the other); and the apologetics, of primitive monotheism by ecclesiastics (Wilhelm Schmidt, Alexandre le Roy and Placide Tempels) at the beginning of the 20th century.

In these debates, African religions appear under contrasted characteristics. Some classify them under the category of magic; some regard them as polytheistic religions, while others go the extent of considering them as primitive monotheisms recognizing the existence of the unique God, the Supreme Being. But these classifications serve specific purposes. On the one hand, theists and anthropologists use them to account for the unitary evolution of humankind and simultaneously to disqualify the Christian religion’s claim of uniqueness. On the other, the hypothesis of primitive monotheism accorded to Africans by certain anthropologists serves as a major weapon for Christian apologists to defend the humanity of Africans against Hegel and to prove the
possibility of a primitive revelation and the historicity and universality of Christian revelation.

Chapter Two shows how the debates on African identity and religions continue in African literature. Two tendencies are analysed. The first is the Black movement, the Négritude (W. E. Du Bois and Léopold Senghor) that defends the black race. The second, more critical and subversive, is the African personality (Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka). The former thinkers tend to reduce the multiplicity of African traditions to a world vision having as centre the monotheistic idea of Supreme Being, while the latter authors propose to integrate the question of African identity into the more global question of the truth of tragic human existence. They thereby discard the affirmation of the Supreme Being as the centre of African world vision.

After these inquiries about the origins of the defence of African identity, Chapter Three explains how these debates determine the reconfiguration of God in African inculturation theology. Three major stages are identified: the apologetics of African monotheism (Bolaji Idowu and John Mbiti), the Christ-Ancestor Christology (Charles Nyamiti and Bénézet Bujo) and two attempts of epistemological rupture: the existential analyses of Oscar Bimwenyi-Kweshi and the negative theology of Fabien Eboussi-Boulaga. The analysis brings to light the difficulty of holding together theology and Christology and of theologically conceiving the identity of the human being before God. It also shows the connection between these theological developments and those of other contemporary theologians, especially Germans who have attempted to give an account of the Christian God in the modern context.

Part II: Eberhard Jüngel’s Doctrine of the Trinity, the Humanity of God
This part searches for dogmatic and methodological bases for a Trinitarian theology that would help solve the problem of
disjunction between theology and Christology in African inculturation theology.

Chapter Four situates Jüngel’s doctrine of the humanity of God in the footsteps of philosophical and theological debates on God’s being, precisely God’s incarnation in Jesus Christ in the context of modernity under the influence of the Aufklärung or Enlightenment. Special mention is made here of Hegel’s theologia crucis and the debate between Karl Barth and Rudolph Bultmann on the objectivity of God’ being.

Chapter Five deals with Eherhard Jüngel’s doctrine of the Trinity, precisely his understanding of God’s being as love from God’s self-identification with the crucified and the understanding of the being of this man from his determination by God.

Chapter Six streamlines the implications of Jüngel’s doctrine of the humanity of God for Christian theological anthropology and for method in theology. Special attention is paid to the question of the starting point of theology and the relationship between theology and other epistemologies. Jüngel proposes an unapologetic theology which does not seek to ground itself on other epistemologies, although it does borrow concepts from them. Moreover, the theological anthropology derived from the humanity of God conceives human being extra se, as from the event of justification.

Part III: Pertinence of Jüngel’s unapologetic Theology for Renewing the Naming of God in African Inculturation Theology.
Chapter Seven takes up the question of the starting point of theology and its relationship to other epistemologies. It shows how assuming dogmatic responsibility for the Trinitarian God helps to go beyond the theory of continuity between the God of African traditional religion and the Christian God. By doing so, theology respects the specificity of Christianity as well as that of African traditional religion.

Chapter Eight takes up the project of thinking African identity before God. It verifies the pertinence of Jüngel’s understanding of
justification derived from the humanity of God as the definition of the human being and hence as the hermeneutical principle for the critique of the world and its self-understanding.

In conclusion, Chapter Nine demonstrates how an unapologetic theology can help reflect on Christian mission and inter-religious dialogue in a way that respects the specificity of Christian faith. It proposes to conceptualize the humanity of God as a regulator of how Christians should live and share with others in society.

**Thesis statement**

It is important to note that the analyses and critique proposed herein are not meant to disqualify the immense work done by our predecessors in African inculturation theology. They rather represent our reception of this theology. The best way to assure posterity of a thought is to evaluate its objectives and epistemological tools and, following the results, to propose either changing or refining them. The problem of African inculturation theology is not its missiological objective as such, but rather its apologetic approach that tends to absolve theology of its dogmatic responsibility.

The thesis of this book can be formulated as follows: the unapologetic-theology proposed by Eberhard Jüngel in his doctrine of the Trinity, the humanity of God resolves the problem of disjunction between theology and Christology and thereby helps theology to assume the specificity of the Christian God who made himself known in Jesus Christ. In that sense, Jüngel’s doctrine of the humanity of God stands a chance to help African inculturation theology to accomplish its objectives. This consists in thinking the Christian God and the identity of the human being in such a way that opens an avenue for Christian mission while promoting inter-religious dialogue. If it was necessary in the past to affirm an African God to oppose the disdain of African cultures and traditions, it has become urgent today to assume the specificity of
the Christian God in order to foster Christian mission and dialogue in the context of religious pluralism.

This thesis has few consequences. Amidst the context of domestication of God and the growing culture of violence in Africa, Christians moulded by the doctrine of the Trinity are called to demonstrate the possibility of an alternative society. They should avoid cheap equations, for example, pretending to federate the African Tradition Religion, Islam and Christianity under the same idea of monotheism. It is not even certain that different Christian denominations from the Pentecostal movements to the most orthodox churches can agree on their understanding of God. How much more the different religions that affirm their claims to truth in diversified ways. Christians have the responsibility to confess the Trinitarian God.

Christian theology has to re-examine the question of God from a new perspective. It is not enough to ask: how can one present God to Africans in order that this God may correspond to the God of the African Traditional Religion? The question should now be: how can Christianity convert Africans to the God who revealed God’s self in Jesus Christ and the activities of the Holy Spirit? By so doing, theology presents itself as a critical theology; it assumes the dogmatic responsibility of helping Christian communities to confess their faith in a way that corresponds to the way of being of the Trinitarian God.

This style of theology does not hinder interreligious dialogue; rather it brings to light a specific Christian way of thinking and practising interreligious dialogue. The dialogue will primarily concern the encounter between different truth claims about the meaning of human existence and the destiny of human society. The Christian style of dialogue will be at the same time a Yes to humanity and a No to inhumanity. While accepting joyfully the work of God’s grace in other religions, Christians will be ready to denounce that which does not encourage life.
BOOK REVIEW


This book was published to coincide with the bicentennial celebration of the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire in 2007. Walvin has a number of masterly works on the slave trade to his credit. But this work has a unique perspective in focussing on three historical characters associated with the British slave trade and the overseas implications of this dastardly business. He acknowledges that slavery has deep roots in many human cultures over long periods of history. However the Atlantic slave trade, in its three centuries of existence from 1550, was unique in its motivation, capitalist inspiration, and the degree of cruelty and exploitation involved in the institution. As he states: “to transport so many Africans, to force them to work, generally in the most difficult and oppressive of environments, Europeans and their American descendants devised systems of excruciating violence and cruelty” (p. xvi).

That this could have its roots in substantially Christian societies without serious criticism is explored by Walvin. He points out that this was only possible by keeping the slave transporting phase of the triangle (Africa to the Americas, otherwise known as the Middle Passage) removed from the ports of Europe. The other two sides completed the triangle. On the one hand, the Americas to Europe transported the produce of the slave economy (sugar, tobacco and rice). On the other hand, Europe to Africa involved trade goods (including armaments). In completing the triangle a ship never travelled empty ensuring trading prosperity. Yet the triangle ensured that no captive slave needed to be seen in any European port to disturb a troubled conscience. All could function under the appearance of ordinary trade.

Walvin notes the scale of the trade by pointing out that in the period 1662 to 1807 British ships transported 3,250,000 slaves to markets in the Americas (in the last seven years climaxing with a total of 250,000 persons). Not that the British had any monopoly of the barbarous trade, but for a century and a half they exploited the trade to
their advantage, and on it built the foundations of their modern economy more than did any other nation.

To explore the question Walvin personifies the issues by choosing three historical figures representing the concerned groups: the slave trader in the person of John Newton, the slave owner in the person of Thomas Thistlewood of Jamaica, and the slave in the person of Olaudah Equiano (otherwise known as Gustavus Vassa), all three being eighteenth century contemporaries.

Newton, after a career as slave trader on the Guinea coast was partly disabled by a stroke and took a bureaucratic job in the port of Liverpool before undergoing an evangelical conversion. He became a Methodist priest and a noted evangelical preacher and hymn composer (whose compositions include the famous Amazing Grace). While admitting some of his earlier slaving career, the details had to be filled in after his death by examining his meticulous ship logs. In 1770 he wrote: 'we are taught from our infancy to admire those who, in the language of the world, are styled great captains and conquerors, because they burned with desire to carry slaughter and terror into every part of the globe, and to aggrandise their names by the depopulation of countries and the destruction of their species....' (p. 86). In 1788, as the Wilberforce movement for abolition was gaining strength, Newton published Thoughts upon the African Slave Trade, and became an influential advocate for the abolition cause.

By contrast Thomas Thistlewood is studied as typical of the slave-owning class in the Caribbean. Though this class were products of Enlightenment education, this had little effect on their attitudes towards their slaves. As Walvin states: 'In this highly racialised world, the rooted inferiority of the black majority was an article of faith, an economic and racial assumption from which everything else followed.... Violence was the lubricant of the whole system' (pp. 108, 121). Naming and sexual humiliation were used to destroy any sense of previous identity. But many cases are found where slaves found strategies to cope with their intolerable situation, sometimes leading to violent revolution. However Walvin concludes that ultimately it was the subversive nature of Enlightenment ideas which would eventually undermine the supports of slavery.

The third character chosen by Walvin's study is Olaudah Equiano, a slave who succeeds, by extraordinary personal business
initiative, in buying his own manumission. In London he came under the influence of the Quaker-originated abolitionist movement, and took an active part in it. He came on the scene at a time of extraordinary convergence of religious, cultural, political and economic forces which would eventually succeed in bringing about the banning of the slave trade in the British Empire.

There is no doubt that Equiano emerges from the story as a most admirable individual. However his story is so unique that it is hard to imagine him as typical of the slave experience, while Newton and Thistlewood could indeed be seen as typical of their classes. Equiano comes across as having many of the elements of an English gentleman, which might be the purpose his image served in the abolitionist movement: to show that there was no need to fear the consequences of emancipation. But the picture needs to be balanced by histories of slaves who took their own destinies into their own hands in less fortunate circumstances, sometimes leading to a violent outcome. Such was the case of Tacky's Revolt in Jamaica in 1760 (p. 139), or indeed the emergence of the slave republic in Haiti under the leadership of Toussaint L'Overture in 1791.

Walvin assumes that the abolition of slavery in the British Empire came about principally as a result of a popular movement growing out of a belated application of the Christian morality and Enlightenment-based humanitarian concern. However a competing theory of Eric Williams deserves to be considered as a balance: that slavery came to an end because it was no longer profitable or serving the interests of a capitalist class.

James Walvin's book is a most readable and absorbing work which deserves a wide readership due to its theme and its blending historical accuracy with personalised characters with whom readers can easily identify.

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Recent reports from Papua New Guinea point to a resurgence of sorcery (*sanguma*), the return of the cargo cults, and even the execution of suspected ‘witches’ in response to the AIDS pandemic, echoing similar warnings from Africa. The tragedy of Rwanda-Burundi should have made clear an unpalatable truth which Claffey confronts directly, politically incorrect though it may be: the ‘Christianisation’ of Africa is still only skin-deep, and the unexorcised demons of Africa’s past still haunt the nation-states which are struggling to be ‘modern’ societies. Africa, like the India of V.S. Naipaul, is a “wounded civilisation” with which Christianity, whether in the form of traditional churches or the ‘modern’ African Initiated Churches with their message of ‘health and wealth’, has yet to come to grips. Claffey questions whether Pentecostalism is in fact a new form of liberation in Africa, as the sociologist David Martin has claimed for Latin America. His more basic question, however, concerns the churches’ role in democratisation.

The dramatic story of the passage of the Kingdom of Danxome, with its heritage of human sacrifice and complicity in the slave trade, to the modern democratic state of Dahomey, now Benin, provides a gripping case study of the religio-political forces at work in the modernisation of traditional societies. Early Irish republicanism contained elements of the sacralisation of violence, but the extent of African complicity in the slave trade from Danxome and its ritual legitimisation is truly shocking. Even at a time when agriculture would have been a viable alternative, opted for by the neighbouring Yoruba, the kings of Danxome clung to slavery and sanctified it in the public human sacrifice known as the Customs, withdrawing into the “closed calabash” of Vodún until their “kingdom of fear and suspicion” finally imploded and was swept away. The repressed memory of this dark past has still not been faced up to, giving rise to an “anthropological fragility” which casts doubt over the cultural and political viability of the new
nation. Traditional Danxome was “a Hobbesian solution to a Hobbesian problem”, the repressed memory of which still poisons contemporary politics. The thought that Benin could yet end up as a second Haiti is “West Africa’s worst nightmare”.

This account, however, relies heavily on the “colonial narrative” which still influences Dahomeans’ perception of themselves, just as it contributed to the West’s picture of Danxome as the prototypical kingdom of darkness. Colonial observers, who are quoted copiously, revelled in descriptions of the notorious Customs, which their Victorian contemporaries predictably found shocking. Vodún, conceived in terms of West Indian Voodoo rather than West African religion, was misinterpreted and misrepresented. As described by Claffey, it resembles the *mana* of the Pacific Islanders, the power of Life passing over to the Ancestors (*tumbuna*), rather than a divinity along the lines of the Yoruba Orisha. Danxome, at any rate, proved impervious to Christian missions, playing one off against the other and all the churches against the colonial administration while maintaining its isolation. At the same time, its Manichean heritage seemed only too compatible with the theologies of the English Protestant and French Catholic churches which competed for its allegiance. This raises the question which Claffey principally wishes to address: how are churches to deal with such a Machiavellian totalitarian polity? Claffey recounts the unsuccessful attempts of a number of colourful missionary personalities to penetrate the defences of a society which managed to quarantine them all in their restricted enclaves and neutralise their evangelical message.

After the final defeat of Danxome in 1892, however, the churches had their chance to collaborate in building the nation of Dahomey. The more far-sighted of them envisaged an indigenous clergy and, in Claffey’s striking phrase, “education was the new Vodún”, forming a Catholic elite which provided the first generation of revolutionaries. A coup in 1972 ushered in a Marxist-Leninist regime which inaugurated a church-state split, but the churches had the resources to make a constructive contribution to nation-building which eventually superseded Marxist ideology.
Traditional Catholic social doctrine rather than imported liberation theology was a more reliable guide to democracy and development, and even ‘apolitical’ Pentecostalism was de facto an important political factor with its “fantasies of dramatic transformation”. Its apocalyptic and militaristic imagery awakened uneasy memories of slavery-ridden past with its ever-present Vodún, but the churches found a more acceptable role as the refuge and rock of people in dire need of healing and deliverance, an alternative to witchcraft in the face of new crises such as AIDS. For today’s educated professionals, the traditional remedies simply don’t work; the type of cost-benefit analysis they are used to looks for practical solutions to specific problems, though the ministry of exorcism could well be counted among these. The resurgence of witchcraft is exacerbated by the individualism which goes hand in hand with modernity and by the sense of victimhood arising from a half-remembered past. Anthropological fragility acquires a social dimension.

Yet in 2006 Benin held successful presidential elections resulting in a peaceful transfer of power, a process in which the churches played a constructive role. This is no mean achievement for a fledgling state with such a past, and it bears out Claffey’s thesis that Christianity, despite many failures, does have a role in modern Africa. This role, however, is not merely that of a provider of educational and health care. The churches, if they can wean themselves from the cheap ‘success’ that comes from winning converts by promising prosperity, have the much more profound task of helping African peoples deal with their anthropological fragility by confronting the memories of past suffering and victimisation, even and especially where, as in Danxome, it was self-inflicted.

The wealth of documentation cited, the forthright though never confrontational style, and the sheer heights and depths of the story of Danxome-Dahomey-Benin make this book a compelling read as well as a valuable contribution to the missiology and anthropology of West Africa.

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Ruth Marshall-Fratani’s 1991 essay ‘Power in the Name of Jesus’ opened a debate on the question of gender, social change and power in African Pentecostalism which has continued down to the present. This book, based on case studies in Ghana is the most important research on the question to date. Clear, concise, and elegantly written, it is a subtle and nuanced analysis of the gender dynamics in this form of African Christianity.

Jane Soothill is very aware of the difficulties posed by her position as a female, British scholar, versed in the gender debates of the Western academy. As she notes, the “book looks at the lives and experiences of ‘African women’, which requires the researcher to be doubly aware perhaps of the relationship between the ‘Self’ and ‘Other’, especially given the history of European women’s engagement with their African counterparts.” This is something she does very well.

Soothill looks at Pentecostalism and gender in an historical perspective before moving on to contemporary patterns. Looking back to the evangelical move in the USA, she notes that “on the whole the evangelical movement was not a feminist one” but that “many women, when they did move from evangelicalism to feminism, took with them the knowledge and skills they had learnt” in their churches. These claims are often made for Pentecostalism in other parts of the world. Soothill examines the work of Salvatore Cucchiari and Elizabeth Brusco, writing from southern European perspectives and Latin American perspectives, while going on to look in some detail at the claims of Ruth Marshall-Fratani with regard to Pentecostalism, gender and power in Africa. It was upon much of this material that David Martin based his somewhat ecstatic conclusion that Pentecostalism is in fact a “women’s movement”; a “sisterhood of shared experience”. Martin points to the “buried intelligentsia who through their
involvement in the churches more and more actively relate to each other and sustain each other”. Jane Soothill is more circumspect and more complex in her analysis, concluding that “the gender discourses of Charismatic Christianity are used in multiple ways to challenge old cultural forms, to create new ones, and to generate renewed forms of legitimacy for ‘traditional’ gender norms”. She concludes that essentially “[they do] not challenge the structures that reinforce and perpetuate gender inequalities”.

Two remarkable figures in Ghanaian Pentecostalism, Francesca Duncan-Williams and Christie Doe Tetteh emerge in the chapter entitled “Big Women, Small Girls”. Soothill was quite clearly impressed (maybe even a little overawed) by these “big women”. Soothill feels their power, but they also feel hers, and their relationship was marked by a definite tension. For me this was a particularly fascinating part of the book. She explores the relationship of power between born-again women and argues that leading female figures such as these exert considerable authority over other women in their respective churches. Concluding her marvellous study of these two figures Soothill concludes: “The new churches appeal to many women primarily not because they provide opportunities for communal solidarity—though they may do this to some extent—but because they provide access to the spiritual power of prophetic individuals.”

While these “big women” have enormous power, other women can also access it and often do, particularly in relation to their men. In Chapter Six entitled ‘Men, Marriage and Modernity” the author examines the influence of this form of Christianity on the understanding of marriage and how “born-again women access spiritual power through charismatic practices and use it to try to mediate changes in their gendered relationships.”

Going back to the late Adrian Hastings and Richard Gray, and more recently in the work of Paul Gifford and J.D.Y Peel amongst others, the School of Oriental and African Studies, has made an important contribution to the understanding of African Christianity. In this book Jane Soothill has made an impressive contribution to that tradition and claimed a significant place in the field.

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