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*Éditorial**News*

Qui est Jésus aujourd'hui ? Comment pouvons-nous mieux inculturer Jésus ? Quelles voies permettraient de mieux évangéliser la culture africaine ? Par quels moyens pouvons-nous aider l'Afrique à contribuer davantage à la théologie chrétienne ? Ce sont les questions que pose le **père Donald Goergen**, o.p. dans son article *The Quest for the Christ of Africa*. De plus, l'auteur nous présente certains aspects de la christologie qui nous viennent des Églises d'Afrique, tel le Christ Ancêtre, le Christ Guérisseur, le Libérateur, le Roi, etc.

Dans *Présence de l'Église auprès des Institutions européennes*, **Jean Bouttier** affirme que les Institutions européennes, bien qu'elles puissent parfois paraître lointaines, sont des lieux importants de rencontre et de dialogue. Il nous explique comment l'Église est présente à ces milieux.

Edmund Chia, FSC, dans *The Asian Church in Dialogue with Dominus Iesus*, examine la manière par laquelle les Églises catholiques d'Asie abordent le document *Dominus Iesus*. L'auteur se penche notamment sur les réactions des catholiques de la base et sur celles de la communauté des théologiens.

Bonne lecture !

Bernard East, o.p.
Directeur exécutif de SEDOS

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Donald J. Goergen, o.p.

The Quest for the Christ of Africa

Introduction

I recently had the opportunity to teach a course at Tangaza College of the Catholic University of East Africa in Kenya on who Jesus is today.¹ The majority of students were seminarians of varied religious institutes. Together we struggled with “an African Jesus”. It was not a question of accepting or not accepting traditional images of Christ. The questions were rather how best to inculturate Christ, how best to evangelize African cultures, how to allow Africa to make its distinctive contribution to Christian theology, how to contribute to an intercultural theological dialogue and even an interreligious dialogue with African religion.

We also had to bear in mind that not every African theology is an *African* theology. African theology means doing theology with an African mindset, out of the context of Africa’s cultures, history, and experience. At the same time, Africa is “in flux”. Westernisation is happening rapidly. Yet in many places people resort to native African traditions. In other places, many of those traditions are disappearing. The context for doing theology in Africa is complex and fluid. Sometimes there can be value to an outsider’s looking in. That is what I saw myself doing. What are the African theologians saying about Christ? What were my African and non-African students thinking about Christ? How would I myself interpret Jesus for an African context? These were my questions.

African Theologies of Jesus

There are already several surveys of African christologies.² African theologians who have contributed to doing christology from within an African context include Abraham Akrong,³ Kofi Appiah-Kubi, Kwame Bediako,⁴ Bénézet Bujo, Emilio J.M. de Carvalho, Jean-Marc Ela, Teresa Hinga, François Kabasélé, Kä Mana, R. Buana Kibougi, Cécé Kolié, Laurenti Magesa, S. Maimela, Ukachukwu Chris Manus, John Mbiti, Takatso Mofokeng, J.N.K. Mugambi, Gwinyai Muzorewa, Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike, A.O. Nkwoka, Albert Nolan, Charles Nyamiti,⁵ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Pashington Obeng, Efoé Julien Pénoukou, John Pobee, A.T. Sanon, Harry Sawyerr, Enyi Ben

Udoh, P. N. Wachege, John M. Waliggo, and Douglas W. Waruta, to name only some of them.⁶ These theologians have developed many images and names for Jesus within an African context. They include among others those of ancestor,⁷ elder brother,⁸ elder,⁹ healer,¹⁰ liberator,¹¹ chief,¹² king,¹³ guest,¹⁴ and master of initiation.¹⁵ Among these many images, I have chosen four upon which to comment — ancestor, healer, liberator, and king — because these have been given emphasis among African theologians and have much to offer both Africa and the wider Church.

Christ, Our Ancestor

The traditions venerating ancestors in Africa are strong and widespread, even if not universal. More attention has been given to ancestor as a way of “africanizing” Jesus than to almost any other metaphor. The concept as applied to Jesus, however, needs to be qualified. Jesus is not just one of our ancestors, but ancestor *par excellence*, a unique ancestor. There is a pre-eminence, a priority, to Jesus’ ancestorship. It is clear that Jesus for African Christians is not just like all the other ancestors, but it is also clear that he is not totally unlike the ancestors.¹⁶

Traditions concerning ancestors vary with different ethnic communities. It is difficult to generalize as varied conceptions exist.¹⁷ Ancestors are always related by blood, as members of one’s family or tribe. The ancestors of the Kikuyu in Kenya are not ancestors for the Igbo in Nigeria. Not everyone becomes an ancestor. Ordinarily only those who show exemplary qualities in life qualify as ancestors. It is important to distinguish those who are remembered and those who are not. Africa has traditions of the “living dead” — the biologically deceased who are not really dead but considered alive as long as they are remembered. In some ethnic groups, varied rituals including the practice of divination help to determine whether someone has gained ancestral status. Ancestors have a permanent existence in an afterlife while at the same time being intimately connected with our present world. Ancestors lived exemplary lives, were model leaders in their communities, and are sources of tribal solidarity and social cohesion. Through them the life force is handed

on, increased or regenerated.

An ancestor, who was once living a natural life among the people, now enjoys a quasi-supernatural or supersensible mediatorial status. He is an intermediary between God and the ancestor's people. He plays a role in the life of the people. Ancestors may become partially or nominally reincarnate in their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, sometimes even in more than one. African ancestors, however, do not reincarnate in the sense of the religions of India. Communication with the ancestors is possible; people pray and make offerings to the ancestors. There are festivals honouring them. It is important that ancestors not be displeased. The ancestor plays a role in channeling the vital force within the community and thus impacts the vitality and life of the community. The ancestor is in that sense a living member of the community, even though not in an ordinary earthly sense.¹⁸

African theologians have depicted or qualified Christ's ancestorship in varied ways. For example, for John S. Pobee, writing from within the context of Akan society in Ghana, Jesus is *Nana*, "the Great and Greatest Ancestor". For E.J. Pénoukou, whose society of origin is the Ewe-Mina of Togo, Christ is *ancêtre-joto*. For Bénézet Bujo of the Congo, Christ is the proto-ancestor. Charles Nyamiti, of Tanzania, has written more than most on the topic of Christ as ancestor. For him Christ is both our Brother and our Ancestor, or better our Brother-Ancestor. For François Kabasélé, also of the Congo, Christ is an elder brother-ancestor. Abraham Akrong, also from within the worldview of the Akan of Ghana, speaks of Christ as *Nana* and as warrior-ancestor and hero-ancestor. The limitations in applying the concept of ancestor to one's interpretation of Christ have been voiced, and yet the appeal to this tradition is strong. Clearly the concept of ancestor cannot be applied to Christ in a literal, non-metaphorical way. Ancestors are often not women, but this depends upon the particular ethnic community and its ancestor traditions. Among the strengths of the image is that Christ as a common ancestor can help us to overcome a destructive ethnocentrism. We are *one* family in Christ, one tribe, one community.

To avoid misunderstanding due to limitations associated with the ancestor concept, Bujo prefers the title Proto-Ancestor for Christ. The historical Jesus lived the African ancestor-ideal to the highest degree. Jesus manifested those qualities which Africans attribute to their ancestors. Yet the concept as applied to Jesus is only applied analogically. Jesus is not one ancestor among many, but *the* ancestor *par excellence*. The title of Proto-Ancestor "signifies that Jesus did not only realize the authentic ideal of the God-fearing African ancestors, but also infinitely transcended that ideal and brought it to new completion".¹⁹ It is not only the earthly Jesus' exemplary life

but also his death and resurrection which establish him as Proto-Ancestor. Jesus Christ's proto-ancestorship is ultimately grounded in his Incarnation as the meeting point between God and humankind.

The major strength of an ancestor christology is that it enables the development of a christology that is both thoroughly African and also thoroughly Christian.²⁰ Even if ancestor traditions wane, or become less significant in the face of Westernization, the concept of ancestor and its accompanying worldview remain particularly African.²¹ Of course, no African theologian proposes an ancestor christology to the exclusion of traditional titles for Jesus. But "Jesus, our Ancestor", inculturates Jesus within African cultures. It inserts Jesus into African soil. It incarnates Jesus as God's Word in an African context. It is an African Jesus. Jesus is our ancestor, an ancestor of all Africans, the proto-ancestor of us all, the new Adam, our new ancestral origin.

Jesus, the Healer

It is difficult to determine which expression we should prefer, whether healer,²² diviner,²³ medicine man, or witchdoctor.²⁴ We are dealing with the African concept of *nganga*.²⁵

Among Christians, and in the West, some may find "witchdoctor" too strong given negative associations with the word "witch". Yet "witchdoctor" itself is not a negative word, anymore than doctor is. The witchdoctor is a doctor who treats witches, whose expertise is knowledge of witchcraft and how to deal with it. He is not a sorcerer.²⁶ In contemporary terms, he practices alternative medicine. On the other hand, it may imply an acceptability of belief in witches. Yet such belief is widespread in Africa. The causes of disease, physical and mental, as they were understood in the first century world of Jesus were not so dissimilar to those in traditional African religion. Indeed, an African or Africanist can at times more easily understand the world of the Bible than a modern Westerner can. Hence Jesus the Witchdoctor is as good an expression as Jesus the Healer. After all, the African focus on witchcraft goes to the heart of African life and cultures and is related to the biblical notion that thought can have power independent of a person.²⁷ It shows Africa's struggles with the reality of evil. In Africa, the "witch" is the most powerful image of what *not* to be. Thus, Christ is a non-witch, an anti-witch, a witch healer or doctor, a physician who has power over the powers of evil.

There are many positive aspects to this way of naming Jesus in Africa, and it is surprising that this approach to African christology has not received even more attention. The title resonates well with what we know about the Jesus of the Gospels. Although post-

Enlightenment skepticism has dismissed most of Jesus' miracles, healing was a significant dimension of Jesus' ministry.²⁸ Jesus, preacher and teacher, prophet and sage, is often given greater attention today. But healings and exorcisms are widely attested in the New Testament, and in material that meet modern critical biblical criteria. Nor should the healings and exorcisms be separated from the preaching. They were preaching — preaching in deeds rather than words. The symbolic actions in Jesus' ministry were as important as the parabolic stories. Both reflect Jesus the healer — healing in words and in deed — the two always being integrated in Jesus for whom praxis was never separated from proclamation.

Here again the African Jesus offers himself to the universal Church as a way to re-discover who Jesus is for us today. There is great need in Africa as well as throughout the world for personal healing — physical, mental, emotional, spiritual. But not only for personal healing. Economic, political, social, tribal, and national wounds are staggering. Can Jesus' healing power reach these wounds? As we ponder this question, Jesus the healer becomes Jesus the liberator which expression we will consider shortly. The two are not separable. Healing need not imply only personal needs and, in an African context, always implies something communal.²⁹ The nations of Africa have been wounded by the slave trade, colonization, the post-colonial formation of the nation-States, neo-colonialism's economic dependency, intertribal violence and war, the corruption of many post-independence national leaders, and so on. Could not the healing Jesus have a strong appeal in Africa today? Is he not what Africa needs now more than ever? How can African christology allow Jesus, the *nganga*, the witchdoctor, the diviner, the healer to speak with all the power, strength, and alternatives that are his?

Perhaps "healer" seems less comprehensive than some other African names for Jesus. Perhaps it seems to capture only one facet of who Jesus is. This, however, is the case only if we fail to have a holistic concept of a more integral healing — which is precisely what Africa has as its tradition.³⁰ No one title ever says it all. That would place too great a burden on any one metaphor. Even biblically and traditionally many titles were needed to do justice to Jesus. Some were more flexible and therefore valuable (Son of God, Lord, Christ) but others are equally significant even if limited (son of humanity, son of David, rabbi, prophet). So likewise in Africa, many African names are needed if Christ is to be inculturated. In one sense, Christ the Healer has its parallel in the tradition with Christ the Priest.³¹ Priesthood is applied to Jesus biblically only in the Letter to the Hebrews. Yet the Church picked up the title as a way of speaking about the threefold minis-

try of Christ and the Church: Jesus as prophet, priest, and king. Michael Kirwen has indicated how, in African society, the diviner is the African equivalent of priest. Jesus Christ is the supreme priest: Jesus Christ, Healer *par excellence*, diviner, medicine man, witchdoctor.

Jesus Christ, Liberator

Another significant title for Jesus emerged from within praxis-oriented, context-aware, politically conscious liberation theologies. Sometimes these theologies have been placed at odds with the theologies of inculturation in Africa that undergird titles like ancestor and healer, although this is less and less true as one sees the interconnectedness between cultural analysis and social analysis. In the end one is not possible without the other. As Englebert Mveng indicated, there is an anthropological poverty that is as real as economic poverty.³² Liberation must be a liberation of the African cultures as well as social and economic. At the same time, however, contemporary Africans cannot become culturally conscious, genuinely African, without addressing the human deprivations in African life. Hence there is the growing awareness that there can be no inculturation apart from socio-political liberation, and no liberation apart from inculturation and the africanization of Christianity.

The first generation of sub-Saharan theologians began to emerge in the late 1950's marked by the publication of *Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent* (1957).³³ Hopeful that Africa's independence movements and the establishment of new nation-States would remedy many of Africa's social, economic, and political troubles, these theologians chose to focus more on the recovery of African traditions, African religions, negritude, and inculturation. The strength of this first wave was cultural and religious retrieval. Independence, however, did not bear all the fruits anticipated. Hence a second wave of sub-Saharan theologians engaged in social and political analysis — directly confronting the crises affecting African political, economic, and social life with an awareness that Christianity must have something to say to these issues or it has nothing to offer Africa at all. In doing so, these theologians benefited from the work of the South African liberation theologians who had been developing their own Black theology along liberation lines.³⁴

Some have maintained that sub-Saharan African theologians have not developed a specifically African theology of liberation apart from South African theology. Certainly this is no longer the case. Outside South Africa, the first efforts of African theology were not focused on liberation motifs, that is true. But today Africa has its own liberation theologians, feminist theologians, and theologians of reconstruction, the latter

ones constituting something of a third wave or new generation in African theology.

A criticism of some early theologies of liberation was their almost exclusive emphasis on liberation in socio-economic terms to the neglect of the whole human person. But how can one overemphasize the need for Christian theology and the Churches to be attentive to this facet of human existence? Is it not that the Church in the past spoke of salvation in almost exclusively spiritual or other-worldly terms to the neglect of the whole human person? So perhaps a shift in perspective had to go far in another direction in order to achieve a balanced appreciation of an integral liberation that is attentive to both the interiority and exteriority of human personhood.

Jean-Marc Ela, Africa's first liberation theologian of note outside South Africa, a Cameroonian and Catholic priest, has written, "The Bible, which speaks of God and human beings in the same breath, always includes in the deliverance of God's people their political, economic, and social liberation — without, however, its being reduced to these".³⁵ Ela believes that Christians must make a one-hundred and eighty degree turn. "The faith cannot be lived atemporally: It must be inscribed in a historical context and be expressed in a praxis, for it must manifest, in comprehensible signs, the Christian message of liberation in Jesus Christ".³⁶ Inculturation is not the only requirement for an ongoing incarnation of the Gospel and of Jesus Christ in the world.

If there is a "priestly" dimension to the image of Jesus as healer, there is certainly a "prophetic" dimension to Jesus the liberator. Just as religion and society could not be separated in Jesus' world, so likewise in Africa. Religion is coterminous with life. Liberation for Jesus is grounded in a right relationship with God, but it is not confined to one's relationship with God, precisely because a relationship with God cannot be so confined. To love God with one's whole heart is to love God's people as well, to desire justice, and to stand in solidarity with those disadvantaged by the social structures of our world. Jesus reached out to social outcasts and those branded as sinners. Jesus himself stands in this prophetic tradition.³⁷

The economically disadvantaged were not the only subjects of Jesus' liberation. Jesus gave particular attention to women and in doing so challenged the taboos of his world. Mercy Amba Oduyoye, a Methodist originally from Ghana, is one of several African women pursuing feminist theology that is distinctly African.³⁸ Oduyoye is as critical of Euro-American feminism as she is of African patriarchy. North American and European feminism has focused too narrowly on gender analysis alone, leaving issues of class and race on the side. The African woman does not see the

African man as her enemy, but rather as a victim of First World imperialism and neo-colonialism. Africa's women theologians see Jesus as liberating, rather than seeing his maleness as an obstacle. Jesus means freedom and equality for women as well as men. Jesus is talking about another way of being human other than that into which patriarchal societies enculturate us.

In spite of negative factors associated with Christianity in Africa, Oduyoye sees the continued appeal of Christianity in its response to the primal African cry for salvation. Christ is Saviour, the *Agyenkwa*, the Rescuer.³⁹ The God of Israel, Yahweh Sabaoth, helped fight Israel's battles against human enemies. God the Saviour was God the Warrior, the One who gives victory. So also in the language of the Akan, "the One Who Saves in Battle" became a name of praise for God. Jesus saves, rescues, redeems, fights our battles. Although this latter image of the Great Warrior carries with it the risk of a God who is on our side in conflicts that are all too human and sinful, and all too ethnic and tribal, Christ is both Warrior and Liberator for Oduyoye. It is He who saves, who rescues in desperate circumstances where rescue and salvation are much needed.

In addition to feminist liberation theologies, there has emerged a new moment in African theology, a new generation, a new theology, the theology of reconstruction.⁴⁰ This new movement is embodied in the work of Kā Mana.

In 1993 Kā Mana published his *L'Afrique va-t-elle mourir? Essai d'éthique politique* and also *Théologie africaine pour temps de crise*, and in 1994 *Christ d'Afrique*. They reflect a sojourn through political ethics to an ethical and political christology. In 1993 Kā Mana was asking what was at stake for Africa and for the world in the challenges confronting our epoch. The political, economic, cultural, social, moral and spiritual concerns of Africa's theologians are present in Kā Mana, but he also recognizes the need to move from the problematic of cultural identity and socio-economic liberation (all theologies of insurrection against the West as Kā Mana calls them) to a new vision: from insurrection to reconstruction. His theology of reconstruction integrates the motifs of identity and liberation but moves then to the need to reconstruct Africa as well as the world in accord with humane requirements. "What is humanity?" is the philosophical, theological, and ethical question raised by Kā Mana.

For Kā Maria, a theology of reconstruction requires innovative thinking about the relationship between Christians and the world. His political ethics has its starting point in the Gospel. Jesus is a key moment in the conscience of humanity, the ethical impulse of history. Yet Kā Mana is quite aware of the pluralistic character of our world and the need for a dialogical

approach. The Christian is called upon to be articulate in the public forum about Jesus as the horizon before whom we re-construct humanity. A Christian theology of reconstruction offers Christ to the public discussion that must take place between the “logic of the market place” and the “logic of love” as manifested by Christ. Christ poses essential questions for today’s world. It is a question of substituting an ethical world for the cynical world and of denouncing human misery. It is thus that Kā Mana proposes christology as the heart of the theology of reconstruction, not out of deference to the Christian faith but because Christ is essential to constructing a human future. Jesus Christ is the embodiment of the logic of love to which the world must turn.

In his third book, *Christ d’Afrique*, Kā Mana reconstructs christology. After having viewed Christianity as foreign and Christ as an outsider in the previous era of African theology, we are now at a historical moment when Christ, the Gospel, and Christianity are to be seen as integral and essential to Africa’s future.⁴¹ As the person of Christ is central to christology, and as the concept of person implies an interiority of multiple concentric levels of existence (physical, psychic, spiritual), so christology carries within it several strata, each important but incomplete by itself alone (those of attentiveness to socio-political liberation, to cultural identity and ancestral traditions, and to reconstructing the myth of African origins and destiny).

Who is Christ for Africa today, according to Kā Mana? Christ is the catalyst of reconstruction, ethical and political energy, the force of our spirit, the power of conscience (*Christ d’Afrique*, 103-105). Kā Mana goes beyond a concept of Christ as simply liberator. Christ is the breath of a radical renovation, “Christ our Breath and Christ our Life” (*le Christ-souffle et le Christ-vie*, 106). To do christology is to do ethics, and to do ethics with Christ as centre is to transform Africa from within and to transform the world. The African Christ is “le Christ-Osiris”, our brother who was put to death by the idols of the Western world but is coming back to life. He is “le Christ Akhénaton”, the symbol of one God who relativizes our dogmatic systems. He is “le Christ-Moïse”, the Egyptian, the African who liberates us from all pharaonic christologies (74-79). “Je me libère, donc je suis”. Or better, “Je crois en la liberté, donc je suis vivant” (77).

Christ, the African King

Some earlier christological efforts utilized the concept of the African chief as one way of naming Jesus within an African context, although the suggestion of chief has also been criticized.⁴²

Ukachukwu Chris Manus, a lay Nigerian theolo-

gian, however, has developed a “King Christology” which deserves attention.⁴³ Manus’ effort is distinctive. Its weaknesses are the easily-made assumption that the title “king” carries with it a connotation of domination and triumphalism as well as the fact that the title is not particularly African. But this is why one must pay closer attention to the christology Manus proposes, for it is the specifically African concept of kingship which he suggests as a way of interpreting Jesus who is not simply Christ the King, but Christ the *African King*. And so what is a king within those African traditions that have had a tradition of kingship within their tribal political structures?

Manus’ suggestion of kingship as a hermeneutical key is grounded in his own ethno-historical studies of African kingship as well as in New Testament studies. In neither are there traces of triumphalism, rather both share the notion of a servant-king. Manus studied in particular how kingship functioned among the Yoruba (in southwest Nigeria), the Baganda (of Uganda), the Shilluk (of southern Sudan), and the Zulu (of South Africa). He looked at the manner of selecting and installing the king in each of these cultures, the sacral nature of the kingship, the king’s role as mediator between God and the people and concomitant priestly functions. African kingship is (among the Yoruba and Shilluk) and was (among the Baganda and Zulu) a sacralized institution. Incumbents fulfill their sacral duties as divine agents for the good of their subjects (71-117). The theology of kingship in the Old Testament and its understanding of Yahweh as king (e.g., Is 43:15; Ps(s) 5:2, 10:16, 84:3), the kingdom of God in Jesus’ preaching, and the New Testament’s understanding of Jesus as the Messiah, “the anointed servant-king” (118-167, 210-213), all manifest significant parallels with the African understanding of kingship. It is important to emphasize that “the kingship of Jesus is never exactly like any of the earthly African kingships” (233), that the kingship of Jesus transcends African traditional religious cultures (237), but that at the same time there is a complementarity between the kingship of Christ and African kingship (237).

What is the value of a christology focused on Christ as king? Naming Jesus as African king gives Jesus a home in Africa’s rich spiritual universe. Jesus functions as a king *à la mode africaine*. Jesus is Servant-King or Servant-Leader. Manus’ christology is as much a servant christology as it is a king christology and it offers a model for African leaders, both civil and religious. It is better to include “servant” in the title (i.e. Christ the African servant-king) because the greatest challenge facing a royal or king christology is that the title can so easily connote oppressor even in an African context. Given the concept of African kingship as interpreted by Manus, it becomes an appealing way to

speak of Jesus Christ. It is biblical. It unites within it significant African themes, including the relationship of the king to the ancestors. Perhaps, rather than simply naming Christ as king, one might combine elements of African ancestrology and kingship traditions and speak of Jesus as the founding or foundational ancestral king. The king as “for the people” and yet “one of the people”, shows ready application both to Jesus and to problems facing Africa today, including Kā Mana’s challenge to reconstruct Africa. Can Jesus the African ancestral servant-king liberate his people as God did of old? Of course, the image of Jesus the king completes the threefold way of speaking of Christ as prophet-liberator, priest-healer, and servant-king.⁴⁴

Before leaving this section on African titles for Jesus, a word must be said with respect to all of them, how they apply and how they do not apply, as is true of all titles attributed to Jesus, whether traditional or new. Jesus Christ, the supreme priest; Jesus Christ, Healer *par excellence*, diviner, witchdoctor; Jesus Christ, liberator, king. These titles are applied to Jesus analogously but really. They tell us who Jesus is and can be in Africa today. Naturally, this means not only applying a title, an African name, to Jesus, but also applying the name in a new way, which is the nature of metaphorical language. We must remind ourselves with all the titles, traditional and new, African or Asian or Western, that their character is metaphorical. They are not like steno-language,⁴⁵ one to one equations, but rather are intended to be revelatory of who Jesus is within the confines of human language. Thus, they can best be understood with something of the yes-no-yes structure.⁴⁶ This is true of each title. We can be critical if they are applied literally, because in a very literal way Jesus is not an ancestor as we ordinarily might speak of ancestor. He is not a king, not even “the Christ”, not in the way that “Christ” or “Messiah” was ordinarily understood within the Judaism of Jesus’ time. So the metaphor goes through a yes-no-yes in order to fit. Yes, Jesus is an ancestor. No, Jesus is not an ancestor, not in that way. But yes, Jesus is our ancestor, both in a deeper sense of what we mean by ancestor and in the sense that JESUS is ancestor. Jesus tells us, reveals to us, as much about what it means to be ancestor as the category of ancestor tells us something about Jesus. The two illuminate each other. This is true of Jesus as healer, liberator, king, or even son of David, Christ, shepherd. Yes, Jesus is a king. No, Jesus is not a king, not in that kind of way, not that kind of king. Yes, Jesus is king, a king in this sense, and let us keep in mind that *Jesus* is true king, what being a king is all about. So we find out about kingship from Jesus and not simply about Jesus from our preconceptions of what a king is.

Jesus both *is* and *is not* “ancestor” in the African sense, both *is* and *is not* “healer-diviner” in the African

sense. On the one hand, the names or titles or metaphors tell us something real and significant about who Jesus is. But on the other hand it is Jesus who tells us what being an ancestor, a healer, a liberator is all about. This is the traditional way of naming Jesus even with the biblical titles. The Epistle to the Hebrews had to re-think the meaning of priesthood in order for Jesus to fit the metaphor. The earthly Jesus was clearly not historically a priest in the sense in which that would have been literally understood within the Judaism of Jesus’ day. Nevertheless, to the author of the Letter to Hebrews, Jesus was not only a priest, but the only true priest. Likewise with the expression Messiah or Christ as applied to Jesus: Jesus was not the Messiah in the varied ways in which that was understood within Judaism at that time. These names could not be applied to Jesus literally without any flexibility, without theologizing the names, without realizing that they were functioning as metaphors for Jesus. The content of christological titles comes as much from who Jesus himself uniquely is as from the prior understanding of them within the cultural milieu of which they were a part.

In this regard then, we might say that African christology in the future need not spend time seeking still other names or titles for Jesus, searching for the title that best fits, or contrasting the titles in order to see which might be best. Rather African Christology can do as all Christian tradition has done: theologize the titles, theologize the African names for Jesus, to name Jesus as proto-ancestor, healer, liberator, king, elder brother, etc., but not allow this to be the end of the christological process but rather its beginning. The title ties Jesus into the culture, helps to indigenize Jesus, but does not stop with doing this, but goes on to the theological task of interpreting the title.

Africans Doing Christology Today

I have reviewed some of the excellent work done by African theologians in constructing an African Christology. I highlighted four images in particular: Christ, our Proto-Ancestor; Jesus the Healer; Christ-Liberator; and the African Servant-King. These represent the energy and insights of Africa’s professional theologians. However, there is always more to theology than the work of the professional theologians, as significant and irreplaceable as that is. There is also folk theology, oral theology, popular theology, the theology of the people and the faithful. These are contextual theologies, inductive theologies or theologies ‘from below’.⁴⁷ Professional theology needs to be in contact with the people’s theologies in order to discern what the Spirit is doing in the Churches. Unfortunately I cannot make a report on behalf of the African peo-

ples themselves, but I can share some “christologies-in-the-making” as I report how Jesus was seen and understood by my students. These were students studying theology. They came from a variety of backgrounds. How did they see Jesus?

The students were given an assignment in four phases. The first task was to describe a relatively recent critical experience in their lives. The narrative of this significant event provided the basis for the next phase — that of allowing the experience to raise questions for them. What questions did the experience raise? What were the existential questions that lay underneath their experiences? What were *their* questions? Then, in phase three, what was *the* question that lay underneath all the questions, a foundational question, perhaps the question on which most of the other questions depended. Ordinarily this question is a question with theological implications or one to which faith speaks. The final phase was to write a response to the question, “Who do you say that Jesus is for you?” or “Who is Jesus for us in Africa today?”. It was an effort to link their understanding of Jesus to their own questions and experiences. Who is Jesus in the context of their lives and cultures?

Some of the experiences narrated in phase one of the assignment included being robbed, visiting a community of children who were suffering with AIDS, helping a family out in the bush of northern Kenya bury their wife and mother, the unexpected death of one’s own mother, the death of an elder brother only 31 years old, assisting a man dying of cancer with his supper and his bath, a journey within a war torn zone in the Congo (former Zaire), spending Christmas in Muslim territory and sharing a Muslim-Christian celebration of Christmas, days and weeks of feeling vocationally disoriented and abandoned, loneliness and hospitalization, counseling a cousin who was contemplating another marriage and thus polygamy, intuiting and providentially escaping an accident, the almost miraculous recovery of one’s father, and witnessing from across the border killings in Rwanda where a large part of his family lived.

Some of the fundamental questions raised in phase three of the assignment were: Why should innocent children suffer? Am I on the right path? Why does God allow suffering? Am I alone in life? Is there hope for the poor in Africa? Am I ready to go beyond the boundaries of my tribe and embrace all without any discrimination? Is our formation adequate so as to allow us to cope well with tribal conflicts?

The descriptions of who Jesus is were not always succinct names or titles. However, particular images did emerge. One caution the students themselves made must be called to mind. To truly “Africanize” Jesus

means to name Jesus in the native African languages. English or French is rarely the first language of native Africans. Nor does a translation of a word fully convey the meaning in its native context. The mother tongue is necessary and vital and so some of the students named Jesus in their native languages which carried particular nuances not always translatable. Following are the ways of naming Jesus among the African students in the order of frequency. Some had more than one name.

- a liberator (and from one speaking within a Bakongo perspective, a ‘*Nvuluzi*’ i.e., a liberator, rescuer), (seven in total chose this name),
 - my elder or eldest brother (six),
 - Proto-Ancessor or Ancestor (four),
 - friend, ‘*Enyioma*’ (good friend) (three),
 - healer (and from within the Bakongo perspective a ‘*Nganga-Nkisa*’ or healer)⁴⁸(two),
 - a great teacher (two),
 - Saviour (or more specifically, ‘*Chinazọ*’, which means ‘God saves’, in Igbo) (two),
 - the good mother, Mother (two),⁴⁹
 - neighbour (one and one for the following as well),
 - a guest who is open to friendship,
 - a new Moses,
 - within an Igbo context, Jesus as one’s true *chi*,
 - one who is present and walks with me,
 - one whose life explains my own life (‘*okowandum*’, among the Igbos),
 - one who purifies cultures,
 - the best illustrator of a genuine relationship,
 - Alpha and Omega (‘*Ejesia ogu*’, among the Igbos),
 - the Christ of Hope,
 - Jesus, my Providence,
 - Jesus, the compassionate, the co-sufferer.

I have separated out the images proposed by those who were not native Africans, yet their responses were fairly similar. Their descriptions included:

- personal friend (two),
- brother-friend/elder brother-friend (two),
- one who walks with me, talks to me, is present to me, but does not answer all my questions (one),
- Jesus as one who intervenes in my life (one),
- Jesus as healer (one).

These emerging christologists found particular significance in titles such as brother, elder brother, and brother-friend, friend, ways of naming Jesus as personally present to them. Suffering was also a motif that entered into the explanations of the various expressions or titles.

Peter A. Nwachukwu from Nigeria emphasized

three names or titles: ancestor, liberator, and eldest brother. He had this to say about Jesus as liberator: “The idea of liberator is not foreign to the African traditional way of life. Among the Igbos, the word liberator’ is ‘Onye Nzoputa’, and it is used in translating the Igbo Bible. For the Igbos, a liberator is one who delivers or rescues people from their different problems and situations. This title is not limited to any sex but to any one who plays the role of a liberator. A liberator is a man/ woman of the people, who has devoted his/her life for the good of others. The person gives himself/herself freely and totally for others out of love. It is rare to get such a person among the people, but if by luck a community gets a person like that, the person is more than a king. The people give him/her all the respect that he/she deserves. In fact, the person is seen as ‘a living God’”.

Another Igbo from Nigeria, Canice I. Azuoma, described Jesus as one’s true *chi*. “The Igbos believe that each human person has his/her own *chi*. Each person’s *chi* is inextricably tied to the core of his/her personality, that *chi* has also been termed one’s ‘other self’ or one’s ‘transcendental self’.... One’s *chi* owns one’s life, and aporions to one his or her individuality.... Jesus, strictly speaking, cannot be identified with *chi* as it is conceived by the Igbos. Yet *chi* does lend itself to a ‘christologization,’ at least for me....What *chi* was to me as an Igbo, Jesus is now to me — and much more.... Jesus is my good and benovolent *chi*”.

Franklin C. Udenze from Nigeria wrote, “The image of Christ that has prominently featured in my life is Christ as a Saviour. This image was prefigured in the kind of name I was given by my parents at birth. In Africa, a person’s name is very important because it not only gives the person an identity but also tells more about the circumstances that surrounded the person’s birth. Sometimes it reflects the personality and the belief or philosophy of either the person or his parents. So when I was born, I was named *Chizoba* (which means let God save).... I was born immediately after the Nigerian civil war in which millions of people died of hunger and poverty. This did not affect my parents as such, because they stayed as refugees in one farm settlement which was constantly provided with food and clothing by the Red Cross Association. During this time my father hoped to use his accounts in the bank to start a new life at the end of the war. But unfortunately for him, when the war ended, my father’s accounts were frozen or liquidated together with others and this struck my family with poverty and hunger.... This poverty continued until I was born on the Easter of that same year. As a result of the uncertainty that surrounded my survival, they named me *Chizoba*. Providentially, some weeks after my birth, God showed himself as our saviour when one of my fa-

ther’s debtors came out of the blue to repay my father the money he borrowed from him before the war”.

Tium Debesai Zewold of Ethiopia, along with other images, sees Jesus as a guest who identifies himself with his host, an extraordinary guest who never excludes anyone while still making an option for the poor, thus a guest of those who are considered as having nothing to offer, a guest whose heart is open to friendship and who accepts us as we are, a guest without bias, a guest who comes to liberate us from personal, cultural, and social forms of enslavement He writes, “Jesus does not reject us because of what we do but embraces us because of what we are”.

Innocent Maganya Halerimana, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, states: “My reflection starts from an experience of sufferings, from a situation of troubles and endless conflicts. Thousands and thousands of people died in these conflicts. Some were relatives and close friends. The situation has left behind thousands of wounded people. I am not speaking about physical wounds but wounds from deep within. When I look at these wounded people, I see that, humanly speaking, they will never recover unless there is grace somewhere. So how does Jesus speak to me and to them in this kind of situation? Can Jesus the Christ mean anything to me and to them? Is there any image which can help us understand how Jesus takes part in these sufferings and that he does care for those who suffer?... Jesus is the one who suffers with me.... Precisely because Jesus shared in our sufferings, he can be able to speak today to those who are weighed down by any type of burden. He says to them: You are not alone. I am with you. Do not be afraid for I am tender and compassionate”.

In a number of responses, in various ways, there was an emphasis on the importance of Jesus’ humanity. Mary Celestine from the Democratic Republic of the Congo wrote, “Jesus, the Word made flesh, is the one who teaches me what it means to be human”, and “to recognize the dignity of every human being”. The theme of the suffering of Christ emerged as well. Christopher Turyahikayo of Uganda saw in Christ an elder brother as well as one who suffers: “Regarding suffering, Christ our elder brother has shown us the way”. Rafael Armada, from Spain, saw in Jesus a kind of accompaniment that is often a theme in Latin American and Hispanic American theology, “Someone who is accompanying me”: “We search for Him and we miss Him when He seems to be detached from our lives, like we miss the presence of a real friend with whom we have enjoyed the company”. Stephen Lumala from Kenya interpreted liberation as having this sense of accompaniment to it as well: “Jesus is a liberator of people towards freedom and authenticity. He not only liberates people, but also societies.... He

stands as one who rescues. He works along with us and in us". Juliana Karomba from Tanzania, who also spoke of Jesus as liberator, said, "Jesus is that voice from within that calls for total trust, the foundation of any freedom".

Two men chose the image of Jesus as mother, and I would like to quote from each of them. Daniel Ehigie, Nigerian, writes, "While it is generally accepted that many traditional African societies are patriarchal, the vital and unique role of mothers in the homestead cannot be denied. The place of the mother in the nurturing of the child is so essential that if it is missing in the life of the child, it will lead to personality problems. In my ethnic group (Ishans of midwestern Nigeria) for example, motherhood is very much revered. The greatest challenge to a mother now comes when there is a physically or mentally handicapped child in the family. From the traditional African perspective, with particular reference to the Ishans, a handicapped child is seen as a bad omen from the gods.... Such children are either killed at birth, or when they are spared, are treated with disdain. Nevertheless, the good mother goes the extra mile in meeting the needs of the child.... Jesus is for me The Good Mother". Patrick Njagih, a Kenyan lay student, writes, "There are many attributes given to Jesus.... But from these many, I would take Jesus to be a 'Mother'. Born twenty-eight years ago, my father passed away when I was only five years old.... Now, what are some of the qualities, which a mother has and, which makes me take Jesus in the same image? These include: love, compassion, protection, care, providing, understanding, ready to forgive me".

There is no need to harmonize these responses. Some indicate the meaningfulness of particularly African ways of naming Jesus. Many show a personal relationship with Christ. A particular title or expression may not mean the same thing to each person who uses it. Most recognized the need for many ways of speaking about Christ. No one way is sufficient by itself alone.

An African Christ: A Guest's Perspective

Having reflected upon who Jesus Christ is within an African context, I would like to share some African images of Jesus Christ that have come to me. I share these with hesitation since I am a non-African. Yet I have been a guest in Africa. I am not suggesting these as images of an African Jesus instead of those that are current in African theology. The following is simply my own personal response to who Jesus is in Africa.

Jesus, our Host, Master of Hospitality

Enyi Ben Udoh of Nigeria developed a christology

focused on the image of Jesus as a guest becoming kin.⁵⁰ Its presupposition, given the fact of Jesus' having been imposed on Africa during the colonial and missionary period, is that Christ is a stranger in Africa. Christ in Africa remains too often a Western Christ. Jesus' status in Africa is then similar to that of an illegal alien. The African has to wrestle with a double-mindedness — a Christian identity and yet the alienness of Christ. Udoh responds to the dilemma in a positive way by proposing the image of Christ as Africa's guest. Jesus Christ as a stranger is in itself a powerful image and has been proposed by others inside and outside Africa. But "guest" welcomes the stranger into Africa, yet as a visitor from outside, since Christ has not yet become indigenized. Once acknowledged that Christ is first and foremost a guest, however, the process of naturalization can take place, the process by which Jesus, Africa's guest, becomes one of the kin. One remains an outsider until initiated into the beliefs and practices of African societies and communities. I would like to give this image a different twist, having come to Africa as an outsider myself. For me the African Christ is the host.

There are few values if any more characteristic of traditional African life than that of hospitality. This is widely acknowledged, and even emphasized in Jomo Kenyatta's *Facing Mt. Kenya*.⁵¹ Hospitality is genuinely African. If we search for christologies that are both truly African and also truly Christian, why not begin with this pre-eminent African tradition? I do not think that I heard any word spoken in East Africa more often than that of "karibu", "welcome" in Kiswahili. It symbolizes and embodies African life. The true African is always a host. To be African is to be a host. An indigenized African Jesus is therefore also a host, indeed host *par excellence*, a master of hospitality.

The image of Jesus as the good host or master of hospitality carries with it the connotation of an indigenized Jesus native to Africa. I think here of Bediako's emphasis on Christianity as no longer a Western religion. Coming into its own, African christology must realize that Jesus is as African as he is anything. Yet Jesus is not only African; he is universal host. He is a genuinely African host, but a pan-ethnic host, a host to Africans and also to non-Africans. He is particularly host to the poor, those without status in society, and to women. Thus Christ the host is not only an inculturated Christ but a liberating Christ. He welcomes all into the realm of God. He welcomes all to share in God's dream for humanity.

Jesus as host is a biblical image, and various African writers have stressed the importance of the Scriptures for doing theology in Africa.⁵² One of the fundamental characteristics of the biblical, earthly Jesus was his solidarity with peoples.⁵³ He welcomed them,

and they felt welcomed by him. He responded to their innate human dignity, and they could sense his respect for them.⁵⁴ Consider Jesus' parables in which a meal to which many were invited played a significant role in his teaching about God and God's kingdom. We can recall in particular the parable of the wedding feast (Mt 22:2-10; Lk 14:15-24), as well as his own table fellowship with people. In multiplying the loaves and fish, he played host to the crowds, not only nourishing them through the word but also providing for them with food. He was noted for the meals he shared.

Paul later put it this way: in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female (Gal 3:28). So we must always wrestle with the tension between the fact that Jesus was Jewish and yet in another sense transcended Judaism while still remaining thoroughly Jewish. Therefore, Christ must also be indigenously African, although not only African, for he transcends our human categories. In Christ there is neither Igbo nor Yoruba, neither Hutu nor Tutsi, neither Kikuyu nor Luo, neither African nor European. In Christ we all experience both our dignity and our equality. In Christ there is no superior or inferior. Christ Jesus is an African host, but a host to all of Africa, respecting while at the same time relativising tribal and ethnic identities, affirming our identities and yet challenging us to see our human identity and solidarity as well. Jesus is the universal host of all peoples.

Jesus as host may be a particularly Synoptic image of Jesus, yet the Johannine Jesus plays a significant role at the wedding in Cana. And most significant of all, we remember the final meal Jesus hosted for his Disciple-friends, at which time he washed the feet of his guests and made a blood-covenant with them. We can see how African, how biblical, and how rich is all this imagery which we associate with Jesus our host particularly at the Eucharist. "Happy are we who are called to this supper", we hear as we celebrate Eucharist together with Christ our host.

The image of host can undergird both a biblical and a liturgical christology. It manifests both the generosity of God and the generosity ethic of Africans. It calls forth from us a response of gratitude. As Africans, rather than focusing on the destructive ways in which the Gospel came, one can begin to let go of that past and look toward a future in which we can be grateful, not to the colonizers, but to Christ who has come to us and welcomes us in spite of the destructive ways in which he was preached among us. Christ has come to us *as Africans*.

Through the invitation to follow after Jesus, or to dine with him, we are invited into a living relationship with God, to dine with God, at God's table, both now and at the eschatological banquet. By being hosted by Jesus, we enter into the realm of God. Jesus' preach-

ing and teaching were focused on the reign of God to which Jesus invites us as its host: *Karibu*. Africa's Jesus goes to the core of who Jesus is. Who do you say that I am? You, Jesus, are our host and we are your guests.

Christ, our life

If there is a theme in African life and thought more prominent than that of hospitality, it would be that of life. Life is the overarching theme which threads its way through Placide Temple's seminal work on Bantu philosophy,⁵⁵ through the works of Bénézet Bujo,⁵⁶ up to Laurenti Magesa's recent exposition on African religion and morality.⁵⁷ Life, vitality, the life force become the hermeneutical keys to an African view of the world.⁵⁸ If we took the previous suggestions for an African view of Christ, we would see life as central to each: ancestor, healer, liberator, king, host.

E.J. Pénoukou was one of the first to propose Christ as ancestor. For him Christ is "l'ancêtre Joto" (a concept of the Ewe-Mina tribe of Togo), namely an ancestor who is the source of life, the ancestor who generates and re-generates life.⁵⁹ For both Nyamiti (1984) and Bujo (1986), the concept of ancestor is also linked to life and the transmission of the life force. The "work" or "ministry" of the healer or diviner or witchdoctor is also that of a concern for life. The liberator is concerned with the life, the quality of life, and the life-giving freedom of the people. And the African king, as described by Manus, "generated powers of fecundity and fertility".⁶⁰ They were concerned with the promotion of life, the fertility of the land and of the people. And Christ as host invites us to the fullness of life which is the fulfillment of the promises of God. He welcomes us to the banquet of life. Aylward Shorter, in a brief article on folk Christianity and christology, alludes to the value of "the image of the risen Christ as the Lord of Life in the Eucharist".⁶¹ There is no African christological title which is unrelated to the theme of life and life itself can serve as a synthetic principle for African christology

Kä Mana's political and ethical christology also focused on life, "la christologie de la vie en abondance", (the christology of life in abundance) and Christ's concern with the promotion of the human.⁶² Kä Mana refers favourably to Tempels' exposition of an African anthropology of the vital force, refers to the 1992 Conference of the Churches of All Africa (CETA) which dedicated its general assembly to the question of abundant life in Jesus Christ, and even speaks in a footnote of "Christ-Vie".⁶³

As with host, Christ our Life has potential biblically, liturgically, and ethically. It is a strong Johannine theme. The Jesus of the Fourth Gospel states unequivocally, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (14:6).

An indigenous African christology can capitalize on this biblical revelation. Even earlier in the same Gospel, immediately before Jesus' self-identification as the Good Shepherd, Jesus says, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (10:10). And the prologue to the Gospel of John already sees Jesus Christ as source of life. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was LIFE, and the life was the light of humankind" (1:1-4).

One needs to distinguish between Christ our Life and the Holy Spirit as the Giver of Life, for the Creed states, "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life". We will refer to Jesus' gift of the Spirit later, but we can see that the Johannine Jesus is the source of life and is life, true life, the fullness of life, eternal life, divine life. In both the African world view and the Gospel of John, life is understood holistically with all its connections, one might say in a cosmotheandric way.⁶⁴ Christ as Life is not limited to the Gospel of John. One finds similar imagery in Pauline christology which emphasizes that to live is to live in Christ. For Paul, life is Christ Jesus. "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21). The Letter to the Colossians also speaks of "Christ who is our life" (3:4).

A christology grounded in the metaphor of life is thoroughly African and thoroughly Christian — the aspiration of all African Christian theology from the beginning. Africa, African theology, and African christology are all pro-life when they are most true to themselves. Jesus Christ is Life, our Life, life-giving, life-healing, life-directing, life-sharing, communal life, sacramental life, life that is both human and divine, vital, powerful, and salvific. Christ is life for Africa wherein Christ has found a home.

Risen Jesus, Giver of the Spirit, Lord of the Spirits

The centrality of "life-force" in African cultures is equalled only by the theme of the spirit-world. There is no dichotomy or antagonism between matter and spirit as in some Western philosophies. Rather the spiritual and material form one interconnected organic and cosmic whole in which there is a continuity between this world, the living dead, the ancestral spirits, and God. In an African view of the world, the Holy Spirit is at home. The Holy Spirit is promised by Jesus and given by the risen Christ. An African christology ought to be a pneumatic or Spirit Christology which shows Jesus' power over the world of spirits and his connectedness to the Holy Spirit.⁶⁵ In fact, it may well be that Africa's most significant contribution to Catholic

theology will be in the area of pneumatology rather than christology, an area increasingly recognized as having been neglected in the theology of the West in contrast to the theologies of the East.

The Holy Spirit is Jesus' supreme gift to those who are his disciples. This is again a particularly Johannine theology, but the Holy Spirit also plays a prominent role in the Lucan and Pauline writings. Following are some texts from the Gospel of John: "And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever" (14:16). "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (14:26). "But when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me" (15:26). "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you" (16:7). "And when he [the risen Jesus] had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (20:22). Christology is always interwoven with pneumatology and vice-versa. It was the Holy Spirit who was already present in Africa and African religions before the arrival of Christian missionaries.⁶⁶ It is the same Spirit who animates African religion and African Christianity. Yet this Spirit who was active in the world even before the Christian Era comes to us from the Father through the Son. He is Jesus' Spirit as well as God's Spirit. Thus, he is seen as Jesus' gift to us.

Jesus is the one who gives, the generous host. Jesus gives us both himself and the Holy Spirit: this is grace, or God given to us through Christ in the Spirit. An African pneumatology accompanies African christology, for the African Jesus is one who shares (hospitably) his very own Spirit (the giver of life) totally with us. Jesus is exemplary host, source of life, and giver of the Spirit. Jesus is an African host, master of hospitality, host at the banquet of everlasting life. He is source of our life, natural and supernatural, a generous giver, the one who gives us the gift of the life-giving Spirit, who together with the Father and the Son is the Lord of all spirits. Jesus is King of the universe, Liberator and Healer of humanity, our primordial Ancestor, who promises new life to Africa. He breathes upon Africa his very own Spirit. He is the risen Jesus for whom death does not have the final word. He is Jesus, Africa's hope for the future.

It might be noted in the christological paradigms presented here that there is a lack of emphasis on the suffering Christ or crucified Christ, which theme is of great significance to Africa.⁶⁷ This theme is not completely absent, for it finds an essential place in theologies emphasizing Jesus as liberator and as healer. It was

also present in the reflections of the students and associated among them with various images of Christ. Yet it is important to call this theme of suffering to our attention. The suffering Christ has always had a central place in traditional christologies, and africanized christologies are not intended to replace those but supplement them. Thus Africans value the traditional titles as well, such as “suffering servant” and “Immanuel”⁶⁸ which have particular significance for Africa and deserve to be developed further in a specifically African context. Christ, the African king, is a servant-king, and it is precisely the notion of suffering that is woven biblically into the servant theme. Thus a healthy theology of suffering is intrinsic to the christologies of Christ the servant-king, the prophetic liberator, the priestly healer. After all, who is Christ for any of us but The-One-Who-Is-With-Us, Immanuel, the one who accompanies us, also a theme brought forward by the students in the image of Christ as friend.⁶⁹

In Conclusion: “Africa, Who Do You Say That I Am?” You are Jesus, *Chinazo*, the one who saves (Mt 1: 21),

Immanuel, the one who is with us (Mt 1:23; Is 7:14), the Christ, our Ancestor, a new ancestor, through the water, the blood, and the spirit, our Proto-Ancestor. our brother-ancestor,

through whom, with whom, in whom we have life,
the fullness of life, everlasting life.

You are our Life, our Truth, our Way (Jn 14:6).

Crucified Christ, our elder brother, our friend, Friend of all who suffer, who suffers with us, and in us, and through us,

Raise us up with yourself, O eternal Son of God,

Give us hope, bless us with new life,
Bring us true justice, bring us true peace,
Restore to us our rightful dignity as your daughters and sons,

Children of Africa, children of God.

You, O risen Christ, are the energy of a new Africa,

Africa’s conscience, catalyst of our reconstruction,

the hope for a world, a continent, renewed.

Give us again, O Giver of the Spirit, the Gift of your Holy

Spirit, to guide us, to encourage us,
to give us courage, to give us wisdom.

Nvuluzi, liberate us.
Nganga-Nkisi, heal us.
Jesus, *Chinazo*, save us.
Heal our wounds,
Liberate your people,
Liberate our communities, our countries, our continent.

Jesus, African prophet, African priest, African king
servant of God and all humankind,
Make of us, your peoples of Africa,
your holy people,
rich in our diversity, one in our destiny,
Make of us, O Compassionate One,
your family.

You are our Host, and we your guests,
And you are our Guest, and we the host.
Help us to recognize you as one of us.
Teach us to love one another as you love us.

You are our lover, our friend, our freedom, our life.

Notes

¹ I dedicate this article to the 24 students in the class

² Akintunde E. Akinade, “Who Do You Say That I Am?” — An Assessment of Some Christological Constructs in Africa”, *Asian Journal of Theology* 9, no. 1 (1995), 181-99. Ukachukwu Chris Manus, “Contemporary Images of Jesus in Africa”, chap. three in his *Christ, the African King*, (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1993), 49-70, a good summary and survey with an excellent bibliography. Raymond Moloney, “African Christology”, *Theological Studies* 48 (1987), 505-515. Charles Nyamiti, “African Christologies Today”, in *Jesus in African Christianity*, eds. J.N.K. Mugambi and Laurenti Magesa (Nairobi: Initiatives Publishers, 1989), 17- 39, reprinted in *Faces of Jesus in Africa*, ed. Robert Schreiter (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 3-23. J. José Alviar, “Anthropological Foundations of African Christology”, *African Christian Studies*, Journal of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, 13, no. 1 (1997), 19-27, a brief introduction. Also see J.S. Ukpong, “The Emergence of African Theologies”, *Theological Studies* 45 (1984), 501-36.

³ See the bibliography on African Christology at the end of this article. Rather than document in footnotes the work of each individual theologian to whom I refer, I have chosen to include a bibliography in order to make referring to their works easier. Complete documentation on the references can be found there.

⁴ Bediako challenges the assumption that Christianity is alien to African culture, indicates the parallels

between primal religion and Christianity; and asserts the need to acknowledge and own Christianity as a non-Western religion, even more so given the shift of Christianity's center of gravity to the third world and Africa in particular. Thus Christianity has come of age in Africa as "an African religion", (*Christianity in Africa, The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*, 179).

⁵ Charles Nyamiti, *Christ as Our Ancestor* (Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1984). Nyamiti has informed me that he is revising this book and bringing out a new edition. For other contributions by Nyamiti, see the bibliography. Nyamiti's theology was the subject of the 1997 doctoral dissertation by Mika Vähäkangas at the University of Helsinki, entitled *In Search of Foundations for African Catholicism: Charley Nyamiti's Theological Methodology*. (Studies in Christian Mission) Brill, Leiden-Boston-Cologne, 1999, containing a complete bibliography of Nyamiti's writings.

⁶ See also the bibliography prepared by Missio, "Bibliography on Christology in Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America", *Theology in Context, Supplements* (Aachen: Institute of Missiology, 1990).

⁷ See Akrong, Bediako, Bujo, Kabasélé, Nyamiti, Pénoukou, Pobee.

⁸ See Kabasélé, Nkwoka, Sawyers.

⁹ See Wachege.

¹⁰ See Kibongi, Kirwen, Kolié, Obeng, Shorter.

¹¹ See De Carvalho, Ela, Magesa, Maimela, Mofokeng, Nolan, Obeng, Oduyoye.

¹² See Kabasélé, Pobee.

¹³ See Manus.

¹⁴ See Udoh.

¹⁵ See Sanon.

¹⁶ Perhaps the strongest critic of "ancestor" as a helpful christological title has been Aylward Shorter. See his "Conflicting Attitudes to Ancestor Veneration in Africa", *AFER*, 11, no. 1 (1969), 27-37. His is a positive appraisal of the role of ancestors in African Christian life, but he expresses hesitancy with respect to its value in christology. See also his "Ancestor Veneration Revisited", *AFER*, 25, no. 4 (1983), 197-203. In his 1983 article, he does write, "But, whereas the 'ancestor' concept does not illuminate or develop our understanding of the person and role of Christ, the person and role of Christ can and does illuminate and redeem the African understanding of the 'ancestor'" (202). Certainly the ancestor concept has to be 'purified' or further theologized as it is applied to Christ. It is not applied to Christ univocally. The theologian who has utilized ancestrology most extensively in theology is Nyamiti, incorporating it into a theology of the Trinity as well.

¹⁷ Nyamiti, in "The Trinity from an African Ancestral Perspective", writes: "There is no uniform system of beliefs and practices of this cult in Black Africa. In

fact, one finds differences of detail even in the same ethnic group. Moreover, the ancestral veneration which will be described here is not found in each African traditional community. Nevertheless the cult belongs to the majority of the African peoples. Besides, notwithstanding the differences referred to above, there are many elements shared in common conceptions on ancestors and their cult among Black Africans" (38).

¹⁸ Nyamiti, in "The Trinity from an African Ancestral Perspective", p. 41, indicates five items that are sufficiently common within the African concept of ancestor to make it theologically helpful for constructing an African theology. These are the ancestor as kin and source of life, his or her sacred status, the mediatorial role, exemplary behaviour, and the ancestor's right to regular sacred communication with the earthly kin.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 80.

²⁰ Bediako's treatment of ancestrology and ancestor christology is also particularly helpful in this regard as is his entire discussion of Christianity as a non-Western religion. Cf. *Christianity in Africa*, 210-33.

²¹ This is not to deny its existence and significance elsewhere, for example, in Korea. Yet it is truly and deeply African. Cf., Roger L. Janelli and Dawnhee Yim Janelli, *Ancestor Worship and Korean Society* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1982).

²² See R. Buana Kibongi and Cécé Kolié. Bujo, *African Theology in its Social Contexts*, p. 85, considers "Healer of Healers". Also see Emmanuel Milingo, *The World In Between, Christian Healing and the Struggle for Spiritual Survival* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984). Milingo was the Catholic Archbishop of Lusaka, Zambia, until 1982.

²³ Michael Kirwen, *The Missionary and the Diviner*. Kirwen is a North American Maryknoll Missionary who has been in ministry in East Africa since 1963.

²⁴ Aylward Shorter, *Jesus and the Witchdoctor, An Approach to Healing and Wholeness*. Shorter is a British-born Missionary of Africa. Also see his "Folk Christianity and Functional Christology", *AFER* 24 (1982), 133-37. For the particular relationship between this christological concept and folk Christianity, also see Schoffeleers.

²⁵ See R. Buana Kibongi as well as the excellent treatment by Matthew Schoffeleers, "Folk Christology in Africa: The Dialectics of the Nganga Paradigm", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 19, no. 2 (1989), 157-83 as well as his earlier "Christ as the Medicine-man and the Medicine-man as Christ: A Tentative History of African Christological Thought", *Man and Life*, journal of the Institute of Social Research and Applied Anthropology, Calcutta, vol. 8,1 & 2, pp. 11-28. Also Obeng, *Asante Catholicism*, 203-5, speaks of the *duyefoo* (medicine man, healer, witchdoctor) among the Asante Roman Catholics of Ghana and how it is applied to Christ as a pan-ethnic *duyefoo* in Catholic ritual. He also speaks about Christ as *oaagyefoo* (warlord or liberator) and as

kurowiamansa (leopard) in Asante Catholicism.

²⁶ On divination and witchcraft, see among others Laurenti Magesa, *African Groaning in Faith, African Religion, The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, esp. 179-91, 209-34.

²⁷ See Lucy Mair, *Witchcraft* (London: World University Library, 1969), esp. 76-101.

²⁸ See Donald J. Goergen, *The Mission and Ministry of Jesus* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1986), a Michael Glazier Book, esp. 170-76.

²⁹ See Bénédet Bujo, *The Ethical Dimension of Community, The African Model and The Dialogue Between North and South*, among others.

³⁰ Cf. Alyward Shorter, *Jesus and the Witchdoctor*, and Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion*.

³¹ See R. Buana Kibongi, who translates *nganga* as priest.

³² *L'Afrique dans l'Église, Paroles d'un Croyant* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985). Also see "Impoverishment and Liberation: A Theological Approach for Africa and the Third World", in *Paths of African Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994), 154-65.

³³ See the analysis of Josiah U. Young III in his *African Theology, A Critical Analysis and Annotated Bibliography* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1993).

³⁴ See e.g., *The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa*, ed. Basil Moore (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973).

³⁵ *African Cry*, 90.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

³⁷ Goergen, *The Mission and Ministry of Jesus*, 146-76. Albert Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity*.

³⁸ Besides Oduyoye, there are among others Bette Ekeya, Mary Getui, Teresa Hinga, Musimbi Kanyoro, Hannah Kinoti, Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike and Nyambura Njoroge of Kenya, Teresa Okure of Nigeria, Elizabeth Amoah of Ghana, Rose Zoe, Louise Tappa and Grace Eneme in Cameroon, Bernardette Mbuy Beya and Justine Kahungu in Zaire, and Brigalia Bam and Denise Ackerman in South Africa. There is also the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. Cf. Musimbi Kanyoro, "African Women's Quest for Justice: A Review of African Women's Theology", *Pacific Journal of Theology* (1996), 77-88, reprinted in *Journal of Constructive Theology* 2 (1996), 5-18. Also *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa*, eds. Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992). Amoah and Oduyoye, "The Christ for African Women", in *With Passion and Compassion, Third World Women Doing Theology*, eds. Virginia Fabella and Mercy Amba Oduyoye (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), 35-46. *Groaning in Faith, African Women in the House-*

bold of God, Musimbi Kanyoro and Nyambura Njoroge (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1996). *Violence Against Women*, eds. Grace Wamue and Mary Getui (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1996). Also see Laurenti Magesa, "Christology, African Women and Ministry".

³⁹ *Hearing and Knowing*, 98.

⁴⁰ This new moment is foreshadowed in Emmanuel Martey's *African Theology, Inculturation and Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993) and John Parratt's *Reinventing Christianity, African Theology Today* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995). Martey indicates the interconnectedness and complementarity between theologies of inculturation and liberation. Parratt moves to a new phase in his speech about reinventing theology in an era of reconstruction in Africa, following upon the collapse of the Soviet system and the cold war during which time Africa was a different kind of player in world politics between these two opposing systems vying for the future of humankind. Clearly suggesting a shift in the paradigm for African theology from 'liberation' to 'reconstruction' is J.N.K. Mugambi's *From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian Theology after the Cold War* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1995). The new theological language is also reflected in the collection *The Church and Reconstruction of Africa, Theological Considerations*, ed. J.N.K. Mugambi (Nairobi: All Africa Conference of Churches, 1997). In this collection, see especially Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, "Half A Century of African Christian Theologies," 84-114, esp. 106-107. Also see, Tinyiko Sam Maluleke's "Recent Developments in the Christian Theologies of Africa: Towards the Twenty-First Century", *Journal of Constructive Theology*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1996), 33-60; and earlier "The Proposal for a Theology of Reconstruction, A Critical Appraisal", *Missionalia* 22 (1994), 245-58. J.N.K. Mugambi seems to have been the first to have initiated the idea of a theology of reconstruction. See his "The Future of the Church and the Church of the Future in Africa", in *The Church of Africa: Towards a Theology of Reconstruction* (Nairobi: All Africa Council of Churches), 29-50. Also see C. Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction* (Cambridge: 1994).

⁴¹ Kä Mana writes in reference to Christianity, "Il est nôtre" (*Christ d'Afrique*, 8). This point parallels Kwame Bediako's thesis in *Christianity in Africa*.

⁴² Harry Sawyerr, an Anglican from Sierra Leone, was critical of the suggestion that Christ be presented as chief, *Creative Evangelism*, pp. 72-74. It must be admitted that Jesus as king will speak only to those societies with a particular tribal structure in which there were hereditary kings or chieftans. Some ethnic com-

munities are politically structured around a council of elders.

⁴³ Ukachukwu Chris Manus, Christ, *the African King* along with other articles. References in the body of the text are from the 1993 book.

⁴⁴ Concerning this threefold paradigm in reference to African christology, see Douglas Waruta, "Who Is Jesus for Africans Today? Prophet, Priest, Potentate".

⁴⁵ Cf. Philip Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1962); and *The Burning Fountain, A Study in the Language of Symbolism* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1954). Also, Donald Goergen, *Jesus, Son of God, Son of Mary, Immanuel* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 186-88.

⁴⁶ Gail Ramshaw-Schmidt, *Christ in Sacred Speech* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 23-26.

⁴⁷ Along this line, see Wairimu Churu, "African Christology in Process: Making a Christology within the Christian Community", *Hekima Review*, n. 18 (1997), 28-36. Also see Alyward Shorter, "Folk Christianity and Functional Christology", *AFER*, vol. 24, no. 3 (1982), 133-37.

⁴⁸ It was explained to me that the title or image of 'Nganga', from the Bakongo perspective, has four connotations: 'Nganga', meaning witchdoctor; 'Nganga Nzambi', referring to a priest or minister of God; 'Nganga Mbuta', referring to the Pope; and 'Nganga Nkisi', meaning a healer or medicine man.

⁴⁹ This is an interesting choice since it had not surfaced in class discussions. Imaging Jesus as 'Mother' is more common in India, e.g., see Michael Amaladoss, "Images of Jesus in India", *East African Pastoral Review* 31, n. 1/2 (1994). Jesus (not simply God but Jesus) as mother is also present in medieval spirituality. Cf. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother, Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1982).

⁵⁰ Udoh, *Guest Christology An Interpretative View of the Christological Problem in Africa*.

⁵¹ (Nairobi: Kenway Publications, 1992), esp. 41-52. Also, in Elochukwu Uzukwu's *Worship as Body Language, Introduction to Christian Worship, An African Orientation* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997), p. 295, Uzukwu indicates that the experiment with the Cameroonian *ndzon-melen* Mass had its inspiration in the structure of the Beti assembly during which the host serves a meal to the assembly. Also on traditional hospitality, see Chris Nwaka Egbulem, *The "Rite Zairois the Context of Liturgical Inculturation in Middle-Belt Africa Since the Second Vatican Council*, S.T.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1989 (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms In-

ternational, 1989), 228-230, 300-301.

⁵² See John Mbiti among others. Also see *The Bible in African Christianity, Essays in Biblical Theology*, eds. Hannah Kinoti and John M. Waliggo (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1997).

⁵³ See Goergen, *The Mission and Ministry of Jesus*, 207-281.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, esp., 278-81.

⁵⁵ Placide Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1959).

⁵⁶ See Bujo, *The Ethical Dimension of Community*, where both community and life are woven together as foundational for an African ethics. In *African Theology in Its Social Context*, p. 34, Bujo writes, "The focus of African religion is life". See esp. pp 17-37. In relationship to liturgy and inculturation, the centrality of life is singled out by Chris Egbulem, *op. cit.*, 209-18.

⁵⁷ Magesa, *African Religion, The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*.

⁵⁸ It would be worthwhile to study this same theme in the philosophy of Henri Bergson and later Teilhard de Chardin to see the parallels with Tempels' Bantu philosophy. Bishop T. Tshibangu recognized the value in Africans' studying Bergson and Teilhard. See his *Le Propos d'une théologie africaine* (1974) and *La théologie africaine, Manifeste et programme* (1987).

⁵⁹ See Pénoukou, "Réalité africaine et salut en Jésus Christ".

⁶⁰ Ukachukwu Chris Manus, 96.

⁶¹ Shorter, "Folk Christianity and Functional Christology", 135. In the same article he speaks of the life-giving, Spirit-imparting Christ.

⁶² Kä Mana, *Christ d'Afrique*, esp. 81-83.

⁶³ *Ibid.*; 82, fn 3. He writes, "Le Christ ne pouvait être compris et accueilli en Afrique que s'il devenait Christ-Vie". I had already begun to formulate my own proposal of Life as a title for Christ in Africa when I ran across this note in Kä Mana and was delighted to see the reference. Kä Mana in the same footnote also refers to the Protestant theologian Seth Nomenyo who has made this intuition the center of his theology, but I am at this point unfamiliar with his work.

⁶⁴ E.J. Pénoukou, "Realité africaine et salut en Jésus Christ", speaks of a cosmotheandric tri-polarity in the African's spirituality although the cosmotheandric vision is more often associated with the Indian Catholic theologian Raimon Panikkar. On the holistic, social, and cosmic understanding of life, also Alviar, "Anthropological Foundations of African Christology".

⁶⁵ Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, p. 176, writes, "It is hardly surprising that the Christologies that have emerged in African theology so far are predominantly

‘pneumatic’, presenting a Christ who is a living power in the realm of spirit”.

⁶⁶ See Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), for an excellent discussion of the relationship between Christianity and the other religions of the world.

⁶⁷ Although not emphasized in my discussion here, indeed it is not absent in African theology, e.g., see Mofokeng, Waliggo, among others. On the notion of the suffering servant as interpretative key for Christ’s death, also see Donald J. Goergen, *The Death and Resurrection of Jesus* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1988), 11-68.

⁶⁸ See Ch. B. Okolo, “Christ, ‘Emmanuel’: An African Inquiry”, *Bulletin of African Theology*, 2, no. 3 (1980), 15-22.

⁶⁹ See Goergen, *Jesus. Son of God, Son of Mary, Immanuel* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1995), for a christological reflection focused on the theme of Immanuel.

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Présence de l'Église auprès des Institutions européennes

Les Institutions européennes apparaissent souvent lointaines. Elles sont pourtant des lieux importants de rencontre et de dialogue. L'Église catholique n'en est pas absente. Au contraire, à des niveaux divers, elle y assume une présence spécifique, que l'on peut regrouper autour de trois institutions principales :

Le CCEE, Conseil des Conférences Épiscopales d'Europe¹

Il doit son origine (1967) à Mgr Etchegaray, alors Secrétaire de l'Épiscopat français. Il réunit, bien avant l'ouverture de 1989, des représentants des Conférences Épiscopales de l'Europe, tant de l'Est que de l'Ouest. Son président est actuellement Monseigneur Amédée Grab, Évêque de Coire en Suisse. Le délégué de la Conférence des Évêques de France est le Cardinal Billé, Archevêque de Lyon. Il couvre, plus ou moins, l'Europe du Conseil de l'Europe... jusqu'à Vladivostok... mais n'entretient pas de relations habituelles avec ce Conseil.

Il est surtout un lieu d'échanges d'expériences et de réflexion entre Conférences lors de symposiums tenus à intervalles plus ou moins réguliers, sur des thèmes pastoraux, certains concernant davantage l'évolution de l'Europe elle-même. L'ouverture de 1989 lui a évidemment donné un souffle nouveau devant les questions alors posées aux Églises. Ont été abordés les thèmes suivants :

- 1967 Les structures diocésaines post-conciliaires et leurs relations avec l'Église universelle,
- 1969 Le prêtre dans le monde et l'Église d'aujourd'hui,
- 1975 Le ministère de l'Évêque au service de la Foi,
- 1979 Les jeunes et la Foi,
- 1980 Responsabilités des chrétiens vis-à-vis de l'Europe d'aujourd'hui et de demain,
- 1982 La responsabilité collégiale des Évêques et des Conférences épiscopales dans l'évangélisation du continent,

- 1985 "Sécularisation" et évangélisation,
- 1989 Attitudes contemporaines devant la naissance et la mort,
- 1993 Vivre l'Évangile dans la liberté et la solidarité,
- 1996 La religion, fait privé et réalité publique. La place de l'Église dans les sociétés pluralistes.
- 2002 (En préparation) Les jeunes d'Europe dans l'évolution. Laboratoires de la Foi.

Les Assemblées européennes œcuméniques de Bâle (1959) et de Graz (1997) ont eu lieu sous l'égide du CCEE et de la KEK (Conférence des Églises Européennes, protestantes et orthodoxes : l'Église catholique y participe comme observatrice). Celle de Graz a vécu des difficultés tenant à la nouveauté de la rencontre Est-Ouest après cinquante ans d'isolement. Elle fut cependant une occasion de solliciter un engagement plus précis des responsables des Églises : ce fut le sens donné à la Charte Œcuménique, signée à Strasbourg, le 22 avril 2001, par le Métropolitain Jérémie, président de la KEK, et le Cardinal Vlk, alors président du CCEE².

Ce fut aussi pourquoi la célébration proposée pour le cinquantenaire du Conseil de l'Europe (1999) fut elle-même présidée par Mgr Jérémie et Mgr Lehmann, alors vice-président du CCEE à Strasbourg.

La COMECE (Commission des Évêques de la Communauté Européenne)³

Autrefois organe indépendant, elle est devenue une commission du CCEE. Elle réunit les Évêques délégués des quinze pays de l'Union Européenne (UE), avec cependant quelques particularités : l'Angleterre en est membre avec le Pays de Galles, mais l'Écosse l'est aussi de façon distincte ; par contre la Scandinavie (Suède, Finlande, Danemark où les catholiques sont peu nombreux) ne forment qu'une seule Conférence. La Pologne, la République tchèque, la Hongrie et la Suisse

y sont membres “associés”. Le représentant de l'épiscopat français y est Mgr Simon, Évêque de Clermont-Ferrand. Le siège de la COMECE et son Secrétariat sont à Bruxelles. Elle est présente à Strasbourg surtout lors des Sessions du Parlement européen. Près de l'UE, le Saint-Siège a un représentant permanent et des liens avec la COMECE.

La COMECE travaille en trois directions principales :

- par des contacts réguliers et des échanges avec des hommes politiques et des fonctionnaires de l'UE, notamment dans les domaines où l'Église se sent plus concernée. Elle leur fait part de la réflexion des Évêques européens concernant la construction européenne.

- en retour, elle sensibilise et informe les Évêques européens et les communautés ecclésiales sur les questions traitées par les diverses institutions européennes.

- elle accueille personnes et groupes intéressés par une découverte des institutions européennes et leurs rapports avec l'Église. Ainsi le groupe des secrétaires nationaux de l'Épiscopat l'a-t-il rencontrée en février 2001, après d'ailleurs une première visite au Conseil de l'Europe à Strasbourg en février 2000.

Pour être plus en phase avec les Églises nationales, la COMECE organise divers colloques ou séminaires. Ainsi, en février 1998, avec les commissions sociales des évêchés : “*Solidarité et cohésion sociale dans l'Union monétaire*”, ou, en juillet 1999, “*l'avenir de la coopération au développement ; Union et ACP, perspectives après Lomé*” (celui-ci en collaboration avec la commission correspondante de la KEK. Quelques commissions rassemblent régulièrement des représentants des Églises de l'UE, avec la difficulté des situations et des habitudes pastorales diversifiées, ainsi une commission des migrants.

La COMECE réagit parfois aussi à l'actualité par des “déclarations” : pour les élections européennes par exemple, en 1999, ou plus récemment (30 mars 2001, DC 2250) : “*Pour le bien-être des migrants et des sociétés accueillantes*”. À l'occasion de situations ou d'événements européens, des Conférences nationales s'expriment également : ainsi l'épiscopat français par son texte “*Réhabiliter la politique*” (1999) en préparation aux élections européennes. Ce texte a été rédigé grâce à de multiples collaborations dont celle de plusieurs députés européens. La COMECE a ses propres publications, en particulier avec l'OCIPE (Office Catholique d'Information et d'Initiatives pour l'Europe) : *Europe Info*, paraît chaque mois à destination de toute personne intéressée.

L'OCIPE est un organisme jésuite. Les

Dominicains ont aussi le leur depuis quelques années : *Espaces*. Ils sont composés surtout de religieux de divers pays d'Europe et travaillent souvent ensemble à Bruxelles et à Strasbourg. Les Congrégations missionnaires se sont regroupées notamment pour une information de l'UE concernant l'Afrique.

À Bruxelles et à Luxembourg, des paroisses linguistiques assurent liturgie, sacrements, catéchisme et autres services paroissiaux. Elles proposent aussi des temps de réflexion.

Auprès du Conseil de l'Europe

Le Conseil de l'Europe est la plus ancienne institution européenne, née en 1949 de la volonté de construire la paix en Europe après la deuxième guerre mondiale et ses catastrophes. L'Église y est présente assez activement et sous des formes diverses.

Auprès de lui, le Saint-Siège a une “Mission permanente”. Il n'est pas membre du Conseil (43 membres) mais observateur. Sans droit de vote, le délégué peut participer à toutes les rencontres du Secrétariat ou de l'Assemblée parlementaire et s'y exprimer. Le délégué le fait par lui-même ou par des “experts”. Il y est une voix écoutée.

Des prêtres et des pasteurs des différentes Églises (luthérienne, anglicane, orthodoxe et catholique), en accord avec leurs responsables (diocèse de Strasbourg, KEK), ont mis sur pied une petite équipe “pastorale”, *Oikoumene*. Elle n'assure pas de services paroissiaux, mais des contacts avec députés et fonctionnaires et propose des rencontres-échanges régulières aux membres du Parlement européen et de l'Assemblée parlementaire ainsi qu'aux fonctionnaires du Conseil de l'Europe. Ces échanges portent sur les actualités européennes ou la vie des Églises dont beaucoup n'ont que peu d'éléments d'information. Ébranlée par plusieurs départs, cette équipe poursuit ses activités en proposant quelques colloques : “*Common law et Droit napoléonien en Europe*”, “*Media*”. Les Jésuites de leur côté organisent deux journées de travail chaque année avec des personnalités intervenantes.

En suite à l'Assemblée (Œcuménique de Graz et à la veille du sommet des chefs d'état et de gouvernement du Conseil de l'Europe tenu à Strasbourg, l'équipe *Oikoumene* a proposé une conférence-débat œcuménique sur le thème : “*la marginalisation de l'éthique et des droits de l'homme dans la construction de l'Europe*” (24 septembre 1997) et, dans la même ligne, dans le cadre des manifestations du 50^e anniversaire du Conseil de l'Europe, une journée sur le thème “*Universalité des droits de l'homme et diversités culturelles*” (23 juin 1998). Cette

journée comportait quatre thèmes : politique et religion, culture et religion, risques et promesses du pluralisme aujourd'hui, dignité humaine et religion, chacun avec deux intervenants de religion différente (juive, islamique, luthérienne, anglicane, orthodoxe, catholique, ainsi qu'un humaniste) venant des différentes parties de l'Europe du Conseil de l'Europe (de Moscou à Madrid en passant par la Bosnie).

Une place importante est faite par le Conseil de l'Europe aux ONG. Plus de 400 sont reconnues avec statut consultatif. Parmi elles, un bon nombre d'organisations et de mouvements catholiques, autre type de présence de l'Église. Une certaine coordination existe entre eux. Tous sont invités à participer aux divers "regroupements" proposés par le bureau de liaison des ONG qui leur permettent un travail en commun et facilitent des interventions auprès des instances du Conseil de l'Europe (secrétariat et assemblée parlementaire). Du point de vue ecclésial, c'est une forme importante de participation, en particulier des laïcs, à la construction de l'Europe à partir de leur expérience concrète.

J'y accompagne le MIAMSI (Mouvement International d'Apostolat en Milieux Sociaux Indépendants). Certains fonctionnaires participent d'ailleurs, à titre personnel, à des équipes en ville de Strasbourg.

Oïkoumène propose enfin certains temps de prière : chaque jeudi matin, avec parfois une eucharistie, dans un lieu de prière et de recueillement du Conseil de l'Europe. Dans un lieu semblable, au Parlement européen, une eucharistie catholique est célébrée le mercredi de chaque session. Lors du cinquantenaire du Conseil de l'Europe (1999), une célébration œcuménique a rassemblé nombre de personnes de la ville de Strasbourg et du Conseil de l'Europe, sous la présidence de Mgr Jérémie, président de la KEK, et de Mgr Lehmann, alors vice-président du CCEE, avec la participation de Mgr Doré, Archevêque de Strasbourg.

Les formes de présence de l'Église aux Institutions européennes sont donc diverses et permettent des approches différentes. Elles engagent nombre de chrétiens, en lien souvent avec beaucoup d'autres. En s'y rendant plus attentifs, les chrétiens d'Europe peuvent se découvrir plus proches qu'ils ne le pensent de ces Institutions, par leur présence dans les régions, par les professions, les syndicats, les jumelages et y trouver des lieux de présence, de réflexion et d'action avec d'autres. L'Europe, nous le savons, sera ce que nous la ferons. Le Concile, et plus récemment Jean Paul II, tout au long du Jubilé, en particulier dans sa lettre d'envoi pour le troisième millénaire (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*,

DC 2240), nous invitent fortement à cette présence active et partagée.

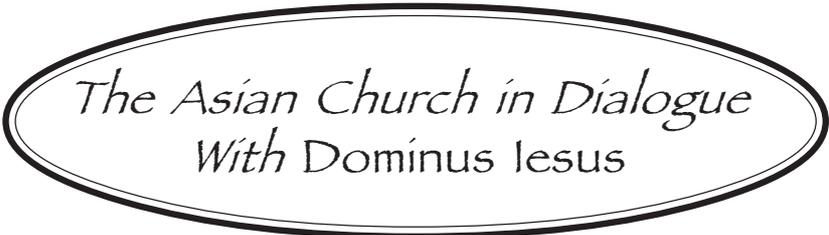
Notes

1. www.kath.ch/CCEE
2. Cf. *Documentation Catholique* du 17 juin 2001, p. 584 ss.
3. E-mail : comece@comece.org

Réf. : *Mission de l'Église*, n. 134, Janvier-Mars 2002.

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*The Asian Church in Dialogue
With Dominus Iesus*

Introduction

The present paper is written in response to a request made by a Missionary Society wishing to know more about the Asian Church in the context of interreligious dialogue. Specifically, the request reads: “We would like to know more about the formal institutional response to dialogue, specifically the agreements and tensions that exist between what’s happening in Asia on a regular basis and the statements coming out of Rome about dialogue”. I am not exactly sure what was meant in reference to “the agreements and tensions that exist” and also the part about “the statements coming out of Rome”. But, I would hazard a guess that in speaking of “the statements coming from Rome” it was probably in reference to the recent Vatican Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, issued about a year and a half ago, since that has been the most talked-about document in recent times. Thus, I have entitled my presentation as “The Asian Church in Dialogue with *Dominus Iesus*”. The presentation will then not only talk about dialogue but will also look at the dialogue between Asia and the Vatican, in the context of *Dominus Iesus*. It is interesting that *Dominus Iesus* has become very much associated with Asia. It is as if it were a document written specifically for the Church in Asia.

Ecumenical Reactions

However, for those who might have missed it, I think the most vociferous reactions came not from Asia, but from peoples in the West, especially those from Europe and America. Also, the most critical and negative comments were against what the document had written about the inter-Church relationship of ecumenism and not what it had to say about interreligious dialogue. Hence, the reactions were more about issues such as whether the Church continues to exist fully *only* in the Catholic Church, as *Dominus Iesus* has put it, or whether those who have “not preserved

the valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharist” can be referred to as Churches or should be relegated to what *Dominus Iesus* calls “ecclesia communities”, or whether these Churches are by nature “imperfect” or “suffer from defects”, as *Dominus Iesus* suggests they do.

Hence, it was not surprising that the media’s reports, particularly in the West, had headlines such as “Catholics Are The Best”, “Catholics the Only Ones Who Will Be Saved”, “*Dominus Iesus* Exalts Her Throne”, “Not All In The Family”, and “Kiss of Death for Ecumenists”. Moreover the statements which came from our Ecumenical partners, from George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to the Rev. Konrad Raiser, the General-Secretary of the World Council of Churches, had a note of regret and disbelief. “What has happened to the 35 years of ecumenical dialogue?” was a question many of them asked. On the part of the Catholics, of course, many bishops and cardinals had to do a lot of damage-control work. Cardinal Roger Mahony, for example, had to reassure us that the dialogue will go on. Cardinals Edward Cassidy and Walter Kasper regretted that the “tone and timing” were not appropriate. These reactions, coming from both outside as well as within the Catholic Church, were so strong that Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger himself was taken aback. In an interview published by a German newspaper,¹ Ratzinger said: “I would like to first of all express my sadness and disappointment at the fact that the public reaction, with a few praiseworthy exceptions, has completely disregarded the *Declaration’s* true theme. The document begins with the words ‘*Dominus Iesus*’; this is the brief formula of faith contained in the First Letter to the Corinthians (12:3), in which Paul has summarized the essence of Christianity: Jesus is Lord”. The Cardinal then laments: “The ecclesiological and ecumenical issues of which everyone is now speaking occupy only a small part of the document, which it seemed to us necessary to write in order to emphasize Christ’s living and concrete presence in history”.

Interreligious Reactions

This brings us, therefore, to the real intent of the document. If the ecumenical concerns occupied only a ‘small part’ of the document, then for sure the ‘big part’ of the document had to do with the issues surrounding interreligious dialogue. There was no camouflage on this, as far as Ratzinger was concerned. In fact, his primary thesis in the entire document was that the spirit of “relativism” is not only dangerous but has become widespread as well. This, Ratzinger believes, is on account of the liberal views postulated by theologians, especially those exploring the issues of interreligious dialogue. To be sure, he specifically identifies Asia as the hotbed for these relativistic theories. Thus, it was necessary to promulgate the document *Dominus Iesus* in order to reaffirm the Lordship of Christ, and to reiterate the main tenets of our Christian faith. That was the professed aim of the document: to spell out in unambiguous terms, what can and must be believed. In fact, *Dominus Iesus* used very strong language, such as, it must be “firmly believed” (nn. 9, 20), or we must offer “full submission”, or our response is the “obedience of faith” (n. 7), or that something is “contrary to the Catholic teachings” (n. 12), etc.

Of course, I would be the first to grant that there is certainly nothing wrong with this. Every religious community is entitled and even has the duty to reaffirm its own faith and reiterate teachings which serve to encourage greater discipleship. But, the problem comes when the document begins to distinguish between the Christian religion as “faith in revealed Truth” while other religions are regarded to have only mere “beliefs”. Moreover, these beliefs are then said to be “still in search of the absolute truth and still lacking assent to God” (n. 7). Also problematic is when the document describes other religions as containing “gaps, insufficiencies and errors” (n. 8). However, it is when the document asserts unequivocally that “it is also certain that objectively speaking [other religions] are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation”(n. 22), that a declaration of war on other religions seems to have taken place. Unfortunately, such assertions cannot but evoke a situation where civilization is dichotomized into “we versus they” or “us versus them”. “We are the saved, and they are the unsaved”, “we are the believers, they are the infidels”, “ours is the true faith, theirs is merely a belief”. Such sentiments, I suppose many of us would

agree, cannot but fuel the “clash of civilization” which Samuel Huntington speaks about.

Thus, it is not surprising that even if the reactions from the peoples of other religions were few and far between, — mainly because they don’t read our Church documents — those who did give feedback were generally very negative. Let us look at a few responses from India. C.S. Radhakrishnan, a Hindu from Goa, lamented that the Vatican’s *Declaration* would probably foster “unnecessary animosity and frivolous irritations”.² Shiekh Jamal, a Muslim journalist from India, remarked that the *Dominus Iesus Declaration* has a “language of antagonism”, and therefore cannot be useful for dialogue. J.P. Singh, a Sikh by religion, commented that the Document leaves “no room for other religions to exist” and simply goes against the Sikh religious teachings which is unambiguous that the various religions are alternative routes to God. The Indian media reports were no less critical. The *Organizer*, the mouthpiece of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, RSS (National Volunteer Corps) which is linked to the nationalist BJP political party of India, said the Vatican *Declaration* filled with “16th- century papal arrogance” is bound to create tension in pluralistic societies such as India. Suggesting that *Dominus Iesus* goes against “the basic philosophy of the Indian constitution” that regards all religions to be equal, the *Organizer* called on the Federal Government to launch a protest on the Vatican document as it “may cause communal disturbance in the country”.³ Such reactions, coming from a country which has seen a rise in anti-Christian violence perpetuated by religious fundamentalists alleged to be associated with the RSS movement, is certainly a useful warning.

The Dialogue of the Pastoral Magisterium

In view of such negative reactions coming from peoples of other religions, the Church leaders and theologians of Asia were quick to offer their own responses. If anything, these responses were more of a distancing of the Asian Church from the Vatican document. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India, for example, circulated a letter aimed at “toning down” the Vatican’s *Declaration*.⁴ The introduction to the circular noted that *Dominus Iesus* was “hotly debated” in India. As implied earlier, some of these debates could have led to catastrophic consequences, especially given the Church’s minority status in predominantly Hindu India. Thus, the Bishops saw fit to explicitly affirm the importance of Indian Catholics to remain patriotic and

ensure the preservation of the best of the local cultures and other religions, all of which, the Indian Bishops' circular asserts, God uses as instruments for salvation.

Fr Saby Vempeny, a scholar of Islam in India, compares the *Declaration* to the "fatwas" or religious edicts of the Taliban.⁵ To be sure, it was a fatwa specifically directed against the Church in Asia, since they are the ones most engaged in the activity of interreligious dialogue. Vempeny expressed fear that the document would be used as proof that Christians are fundamentalists, and so deserves to be curbed, if not extinguished altogether. Another priest, Fr Thomas Kuriakose, the former secretary of the Jesuit secretariat for dialogue in South Asia, regretted that the *Declaration* appears insulting to those engaged in the mission of dialogue. His appraisal is that the Vatican document seems to ignore the human and pastoral dimensions of interreligious dialogue, making it seem that the authors of it are simply "not living in dialogue".⁶ This sentiment was echoed by another Jesuit, Fr Sebastian Painadath, who asserted that "this document hasn't grown out of lived experience".⁷ Referring to *Dominus Iesus'* aloof and detached language, Painadath, who is founder-director of Sameeksha Ashram, a centre for Asian spirituality in Kerala, said, "It is a Western 'desk experience'".

Fr Bao Tinh Vuong Dinh Bich, a commentator on Church-society relations in Vietnam, intimated that *Dominus Iesus* would present cultural problems for Vietnamese Catholics. Proposing that respect for the other's culture is a basic value incumbent upon followers of Jesus of Nazareth, he then observed that even if Jesus was an Oriental, "the magisterial apparatus of the Catholic Church is located in Rome and its personnel are almost exclusively Westerners".⁸ This accounts for the lack of understanding on the part of the drafters of the document on sensitive cultural issues. Fr Bich then remarked, "If the drafters of the *Declaration Dominus Iesus* had spent a few weeks in the Asian region where Catholics are mostly a minority, they would have realized the cultural stakes brought about by the magisterial document that was written for the sake of the Church". Xavierian Fr Franco Xottocornola, director of Tozai Shukyo Koryu, an interreligious centre in Japan, which he co-founded with a Buddhist monk, resounded Bich's comments by suggesting that *Dominus Iesus* has an "Occidental" tone.⁹ The "Oriental way", he continued, is more concerned about creation of "human relationship first as preparation for dialogue". The importance of building relationships was similarly echoed in Indonesia at a seminar organized by the

Widya Sasana School of Philosophy and Theology in Malang. Vincentian Fr Petrus Maria Handoko suggested that it was probably a conservative theologian afraid that the Catholic Church was becoming too friendly with other religions who formulated *Dominus Iesus*.¹⁰

As is clear from the various voices which have just been highlighted, the response from the leaders of the Church in Asia to *Dominus Iesus* was generally negative. In some instances, this negativity was not a negativity for the sake of criticism. To be sure, they can be a matter of life and death. The already tense interreligious relations in some countries can certainly be exacerbated by declarations such as these, which pronounce negative judgements upon other religions. Negative judgements not only insult but can be lethal as well, thus inviting equally lethal reactions. For instance, they could be used blatantly by peoples looking for an excuse to scapegoat Christians. Yes, the stakes are high, especially in places where people are studying Church statements for the primary purpose of using them against the Christian community. For example, when the Pope came to New Delhi in November 1999 to proclaim the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, he made a comment about wishing and hoping that in the third millennium a great harvest of faith would be reaped in this vast continent of Asia. Shortly after, a very prominent Indian journalist-politician picked up that statement as proof that the Catholic Church's ultimate goal was to convert Asia to Christianity. Hence, because the Church is out to destroy the Hindu and other religions, they ought to be stopped. He then brought out a book entitled, *Harvesting Our Souls*.

In view of these very sensitive and explosive reactions, when a group of bishops from Asia met for the purpose of discussing the document *Dominus Iesus*, they issued a statement saying that in case the Vatican was not aware of it, it is the local Churches which have to "bear the brunt" of any anger generated on account of Vatican documents. They urged Vatican officials to be aware that in some countries "groups inimical to Christianity are making use of Vatican documents to attack the Church and to build a climate of suspicion and antipathy".¹¹ In other words, it is all too easy for the members of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to be promulgating documents while they themselves are hidden behind the protective walls of the Vatican, far removed from local realities. But, it is the local Churches, some living more than 10,000 miles away from Rome, who will be the ones having their churches burnt, nuns raped, and priests murdered. And,

at times, the evangelistic and aggressive tone of Church documents have given the excuse for such crimes. Thus, *Dominus Iesus*, as a document promulgated to safeguard the Catholic faith could well be the very document used for the destruction of Christianity and the Church in Asia.

The Dialogue of the Grassroots Magisterium

Thus far, we have looked at how some of the leaders of the Church responded to *Dominus Iesus*. In a sense, it is the response of the Magisterium of the Asian Church, or more appropriately, it is the response of the pastoral Magisterium of the Church in Asia. We will now look at yet another Magisterium of the institutional Church — indeed, a much more significant one at that — and see how they have responded to *Dominus Iesus*. In particular I am referring to the ordinary laity, the Catholics on the streets of Asia, sometimes referred to as the grassroots Magisterium. This, we shall do, by looking at data I collected from a questionnaire survey which I conducted over the past month. Because I am still receiving a lot of responses, what I shall be sharing with you is therefore not the final analysis but a very basic and preliminary report on data I already have in hand.

I had e-mailed this questionnaire survey to all my friends, and what I am using for the present analysis are responses from 180 Asian Catholics from countries as far West as Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka, to the East such as Indonesia and the Philippines and up north to Korea, Japan and even China and Mongolia. This, therefore, can be regarded as the *sensus fidelium* of the Church in Asia. Put another way, it is the instinct, the sixth sense or spiritual sense of the Catholic faithful, the People of God, of the Church in Asia. Let me now delineate seven main themes which *Dominus Iesus* speaks about and look at these in the context of the responses I received through the survey.

First, *Dominus Iesus* insists on the fullness and definitiveness of the revelation of Jesus Christ. The survey showed that out of a total of 180 respondents, 174 (97%) believe that Jesus is God's revelation, while only 130 (72% of the total population) believe that he is indeed the "fullness" of God's revelation. However, of these 130, 78 (43%) of the respondents, while believing that the fullness and definitiveness of the revelation is given in Jesus Christ, also believe that revelation is given elsewhere, for example in the other religions. Only 40 (22%) of the respondents who believe

in the fullness of Jesus' revelation assert that this revelation is given "only" in Jesus and not anywhere else. Whereas, 105 (58%) believe not so much in the "fullness" of Jesus' revelation but that revelation is given in Jesus as well as in the other religions. Second, *Dominus Iesus* postulates the unicity and universality of the salvific mystery of Jesus Christ. The results of the survey showed that out of a total of 180 respondents, 165 (92%) believe in Jesus as saviour for Christians. Of these, 158 (88%) believe in the universality of Jesus' saviour-hood. However, only 93 (52%) believe that Jesus is the "only" saviour for humankind, while 44 (24%) of the respondents believe in Jesus' universality as well as the possibility of other saviours for humankind. Third, *Dominus Iesus* insists on the necessity of the Church for salvation, while at the same time stating that those who do not belong to the Church can also be saved through the Church, even if it is not known how that happens. Ignoring the apparent ambiguity these statements raise, the survey, nevertheless, showed that 149 (83%) of the respondents believe the Church to be a means of salvation. However, only 70 (39%) of the respondents believe in the "necessity" of the Church for salvation. Of these, however, 30 (17%) would rule out absolutely the possibility of salvation through other religions, while 33 (18%) admit of that possibility while also holding on to the necessity of the Church for salvation. More significant is that 91 (51%) of the respondents hold that the Church is indeed a means of salvation — albeit not a necessary means — and at the same time hold that other religions could also be a means of salvation.

Fourth, *Dominus Iesus* asserts that those who are in the Church have the fullness of the means of salvation. 119 (66%) of the respondents believe in the assertion, while 45 (25%) oppose it. The document then goes on to contrast this with the followers of other religions who are regarded as being in a gravely deficient situation. Of the 119 respondents who believe the first assertion that those who belong to the Church have the fullness of the means of salvation, 53 (29%) also believe in this second assertion that the followers of other religions are indeed in a gravely deficient situation, while 40 (22%) disagree with this second assertion. Fifth, *Dominus Iesus* posits that the Church reserves the designation of inspired texts only to the Bible. Of the 180 total respondents, 164 (91%) believe the Bible is inspired but only 47 (26%) would go as far as *Dominus Iesus* to insist that the Bible is the "only" inspired text or sacred Word of God. Whereas, 79 (44%) accept the Bible as God's Word and at the same

time accept the possibility of other sacred texts as God's Word. Sixth, to the question whether the one true religion exists in the Catholic Church, 168 (93%) of the respondents responded in the affirmative. However, of these only 55 (31%) would assert that there can be no other true religion while 80 (44%) assert that there can be other true religions, just as Christianity is a true religion. Seventh, of the 180 respondents, 168 (93%) agreed that the Catholic in Asia should be engaged in interreligious dialogue.

I will not attempt to analyze the results of the study at this point, but will only make some general observations and raise some questions from the data of the survey. First, a cursory look at the data would suggest that the affirmations of faith outlined in *Dominus Iesus* do not seem to be as firmly adhered to as *Dominus Iesus* might have expected or wanted it to be. Thus, one would have to raise questions about the relevance of *Dominus Iesus*' very strong language such as "it must be firmly believed", "we must offer full submission", and "it is contrary to the Catholic teachings", if a significant percentage of Catholics in Asia do not even seem to believe in its basic affirmations. Does it mean that these Catholics are not being faithful to the Church's tradition and does it mean they could be excommunicated or could it be that *Dominus Iesus* is just not in touch with the lived reality of the people, especially those living in societies where religious pluralism is an existential reality? Second, one would notice that many of the responses seem to display a sense of openness to complementarity or the both-and option rather than the mutually exclusive either-or attitude. For example, 58% of the population accepts the revelation in Jesus while being open to other revelations; 51% believe the Church to be a means of salvation and at the same time believe that other religions could also be means of salvation; 44% of the 180 respondents accept the Bible as the Word of God while also accepting that there could be other scriptures which are also God's Word. This observation, therefore, raises questions about the nature of Church teachings — which by and large are generally exclusive rather than inclusive — especially in the context of societies where there are other religious teachings, which many Catholics are not only aware of but also subscribe to.

My next observations have to do with information received surrounding the survey research. First, I found it interesting that many of the respondents sent me additional messages suggesting to the effect that this is the first time they were seeing questions such as those used in the survey. Many also said they found it

an interesting study, even if they had never ever discussed such issues with others before. Some asked me why I was doing the study and how I came up with such questions. My own conclusion from these inquiries is that most of them are probably not aware of the document *Dominus Iesus*. If they were, they would certainly have recognized the issues raised in the questions. A handful, of course, did recognize *Dominus Iesus* in the survey. But more important, this seems to suggest that *Dominus Iesus* had not trickled down to the masses, the ordinary Catholics (lay as well as Religious) in the dioceses and parishes. Perhaps the bishops who received the document did not deem it important or necessary to pass it on to the laity and Religious. It was probably too complex or too technical for bishops to want to disseminate it. Or, perhaps, the document was regarded as simply irrelevant to the faith of Catholics in Asia. Whatever it was, it probably did not rank very high on the priority of the Church's pastoral programme, even if it was, in a sense, directed towards the Church in Asia. This observation, therefore, raises questions for the theology of reception of *Dominus Iesus* in particular and Church teachings in general.

Another observation which strikes me as important is the fact that many of the respondents suggested they had never ever discussed such issues before. Thus, it was something very new for most of the respondents. Nevertheless, they found the questions very interesting and thought provoking. This may come as a surprise to many of us since religious pluralism is so real in Asia. How can Catholics not be engaged in discussions about the impact of religious pluralism upon their faith? How can they not have seriously thought about the meaning of their faith claims in the context of other religions? Is there something gravely deficient in the theologies and catechisms which we are imparting to the common faithful? Or, could it be that these issues — such as the possibility of salvation or revelation in other religions, or the question of whether Jesus or the Church is universal or unique — are simply not relevant to the peoples in Asia. To be sure, many of these questions have arisen in the West only in the last fifty years or so, on account of the rising pluralism in Western societies. But for us here in Asia, religious pluralism has been present in societies for as long as we can remember. It is, in a sense, already deeply ingrained in our psyche, thus they no longer pose as questions. Thus questions surrounding religious pluralism are in a way irrelevant since they are regarded as givens in society. An analogy might help to illustrate this: Western societies in the last fifty years

or so have also seen an increase in the different types of cuisine. Thus, it is not uncommon to hear someone say “today I had rice in the Chinese restaurant” or ask “how many times a month do you have rice for meals?” However, if that same question was asked of us here in Asia, one would probably get a stare. It’s an irrelevant question. We don’t ask such questions. It is a given. Everybody knows the answer and everybody’s answer would probably be the same. This is because most Asians eat rice everyday, and several times a day too!

Having said that, it would still be important for us to look at the issues surrounding religious pluralism. Like it or not, Asian Catholics cannot run away from the fact of their reliance, dependence and connectedness to Western and especially Roman theologies. Until not so long ago, that was the only form of theology known to Catholics in Asia. Even if these theologies may not be adequate for Asians to address issues of religious pluralism, they continue to be the only ones taught and disseminated in many seminaries and formation houses throughout Asia even until today. Hence, at best, the Catholic in Asia will probably not have any theological basis by which to make sense of her/his lived experience of religious pluralism. At worst, s/he espouses a fundamentalistic view of religion and regards other religions as “gravely deficient”, “insufficient”, or “in error”. In this sense, faith is compartmentalized and has nothing to do with their lived experience of relations with persons of other religions. Their exclusive Christian beliefs are confined to the church walls, while their lives are lived with utter respect and love for not only their neighbours, spouses, children or parents who belong to other religions, but for their religions and religious beliefs as well.

This, therefore, raises questions about the importance of a rethinking and/or reformulation of the Church’s teachings. The teachings have to be relevant not only for the Catholic within the church walls, but outside of it as well. They have to teach Christian doctrines which are at once authentically Christian as well as interreligiously sensitive. This simply means that Church teachings can no longer be regarded as “in-house” teachings (as some proponents of *Dominus Iesus* suggested it was), but must adequately address issues posed by religious pluralism as well. For this to happen, it is important that Catholics in Asia be consciously engaged in discussions about religious pluralism. This not only helps clarify Church teachings, but could also help in the evolution of a theological sense of the faithful in Asia. In a sense Catholics in Asia have the responsibility and duty in helping to evolve a Christian

theology more appropriately related to and in harmony with their experience of religious pluralism. Such a theology must, with time, be integrated and adopted as a theology not only for Christians living in Asia, but for all Christians throughout the world as well, since every community on the globe is becoming more and more religiously pluralistic.

The Dialogue of the Theological Magisterium

This brings me to the final part of my presentation, namely, to discuss the response of the third Magisterium of the Institutional Church, namely, the academic Magisterium of the theological community. As alluded to earlier, in general, the response of the theologians of Asia to *Dominus Iesus* was mainly critical and negative. In fact, an entire issue of the *Jeevadbara* theological journal from India was dedicated to these responses. The various articles, written by scholars from across Asia, dismissed *Dominus Iesus* for its incompatibility with the experience of Asian Catholics with religious pluralism.

Perhaps one of the most critical and at the same time hopeful responses came from Aloysius Pieris of Sri Lanka. One of Asia’s foremost thinkers, Pieris spoke on *Dominus Iesus* when presenting a talk at the Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue in Colombo on 30 September 2000.¹² Instead of discussing the Vatican *Declaration*, he chose to discuss the background to how the Church operates and why a document such as *Dominus Iesus* was promulgated. Specifically, Pieris looked at the Vatican *Declaration* in the context of the renewal of the Second Vatican Council and the concomitant “ecclesiastical politics” surrounding the Council, and which continues until today.

Pointing out that the “dynamics of the movement and counter-movements” within the Church today has its roots in the Second Vatican Council, Pieris then reminds us that Vatican II was a “renewal” Council and not so much a “reform” Council. A “reform” Council, Pieris suggests, would be a “controlled and graduated process of change that keeps the institutional set-up of the Church intact”.¹³ Thus, reform is a “top-down” process, or change evoked from the “Centre” moving out towards the “Periphery”. The First Vatican Council and the Council of Trent were reform Councils. The Centre — more specifically the Vatican Curia — issues decrees or procedures and the local Churches, or the Periphery, implements them. Change is smooth, predictable and well-managed.

A “renewal” Council, on the other hand, is a movement in the opposite direction. “It irrupts from below and works its way up to the top volcanically”, remarks Pieris. Renewals are initiated mainly by those at the peripheries “where fresh and new ideas flow in more freely than in the Center of the establishment”. Pieris further elaborates it as follows:

“Renewalist currents that begin to whirl in the margin of the church surge into centripetal waves that dash on the fortified ecclesiastical structures. The resistance at the Center is inevitable. Yet, there is a gradual transformation to which the Centre has to yield”.¹⁴

The first irruption from the Periphery, as is well known, was that which irrupted in Latin America. We are probably quite familiar with the rise of liberation theologies in the 1970s and 1980s and the subsequent assault on it by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, resulting in the investigation of theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez, Jon Sobrino, and the silencing of Leonardo Boff. Then, with the appointment of conservative bishops to head the Latin American Church, liberation theology was more or less arrested.

If there is any doubt as to whether liberation theology had been arrested, an address by Cardinal Ratzinger to the presidents of the Doctrinal Commission of CELAM held in Mexico in May 1996 will clear such doubt.¹⁵ Ratzinger begins his speech by saying that “in the 1980s, the theology of liberation in its radical forms seemed to be the most urgent challenge for the faith of the Church”. He then went on to assert that the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe “turned out to be a kind of twilight of the gods for that theology of redeeming political praxis”. As is crystal clear, this 1996 statement was in reference to liberation theology and more or less represents the final nail into its coffin. In a way, an era of campaign in the CDF’s history had closed. Liberation theology no longer posed an urgent challenge for the faith.

However, if this 1996 address ended the war of the CDF against Latin America, it was in this very same address where the CDF’s guns were turned and pointed in the direction of Asia. For, in that same address in Mexico, Ratzinger also said that “relativism has thus become the central problem for the faith at the present time”. Getting straight to the point, Ratzinger then remarked that “the so-called pluralist theology of religion has been developing progressively since the 1950s. Nonetheless, only now has it come to the centre of the Christian conscience”. Aiming his guns even more pointedly, Ratzinger continues: “On the one hand, rela-

tivism is a typical offshoot of the Western world and its forms of philosophical thought ... on the other it is connected with the philosophical and religious institutions of Asia especially, and surprisingly, with those of the Indian subcontinent”.

Thus, when *Dominus Iesus* was issued, it came as no surprise that many suspected the targets were the theologians from Asia in general and India in particular. Aside from Ratzinger’s specific mention of the “negative theology of Asia” in his introductory comments, a statement by Cardinal Edward Cassidy, the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, was also revealing. Cassidy, in appealing to Jewish leaders who had decided to boycott a Judeo-Christian function on account of the insensitive posture taken by *Dominus Iesus*, tried to explain: “The text is not directed to the ecumenical and interreligious realm, but to the academic world”. Cassidy then hit the nail on the head when he continued, “Above all, it was directed to theology professors of India, because in Asia there is a theological problem over the oneness of salvation”.¹⁶ It seems rather clear, therefore, that in the eyes of the Vatican Asia is the “problem”, and hence the need for a document such as *Dominus Iesus*.

However, if *Dominus Iesus* was directed at Asian theologians, it is but merely a single event in an overall scheme of many phases aimed at arresting the development of theologies of religious pluralism in Asia. We are probably aware of the various cases in which Asian theologians have been investigated in the past years since Ratzinger’s 1996 address. Three cases stand out as most significant for the Church in Asia. The first is the case of the Sri Lankan O.M.I. priest, Tissa Balasuriya, who, after several years of investigation, was excommunicated in January 1997, only to be reinstated a year later after intense protests from all quarters both of peoples inside as well as outside of the Church. The second case was that of the Indian Jesuit Anthony de Mello, who died in 1987. Nevertheless, this did not prevent his works from being condemned posthumously more than ten years later. Because a dead man cannot defend himself, he remained castigated, when the CDF issued a “Notification Concerning the Writings of Fr Anthony de Mello” in June 1998. The third case is that of Jacques Dupuis, a Belgian Jesuit, who had served more than three decades in India. A much respected scholar, very much identified with Indian and Asian theology, Dupuis’ investigation, which began in September 1998, came as a surprise to many since he had always been regarded as mainstream and cautious in his theologizing. If not for the insistent defense put

up by Dupuis and his Superiors, he would have been regarded as having committed serious theological errors. In the end, however, he was vindicated in January 2001, but not without having at least to admit to the possibility of leading others to err.

Hence, it is in the context of all these investigations that Aloysius Pieris suggests he was more or less expecting a document such as *Dominus Iesus*. The Vatican *Declaration* is but the Centre's response to the various "irruptions" happening at the peripheries. Irruptions, can by no means be gentle, pleasant, or welcome. If anything, irruptions are chaotic, abrasive and unsettling. Thus, fear, worry and trembling amidst irruptions are anticipated and even understandable responses. *Dominus Iesus* seems to reveal that the authors are fearful of the irruption which goes by the name of the theology of religious pluralism. The Centre's response is thus adamant, firm and unyielding. That *Dominus Iesus* used such strong language — "to be firmly believed", "definitive and complete", "contrary to the Church's faith", "required to profess", "full submission", etc. — seems to suggest that the irruptions from the Periphery must have been equally strong.

In a sense, *Dominus Iesus* is more or less a verification that the irruptions coming from the Periphery are valid and flowing according to the design of the law of natural social processes. Put another way, *Dominus Iesus* is the inevitable resistance to the renewalist currents coming from Asia, where religious pluralism is an existential reality. This, of course, is nothing more than the dialectics of change. The fresh and new ideas whirling in from Asia are evoking a backlash from the Roman Centre. This process will continue for a while until such time as the Center is ready to yield. It is in this context that one sees the hope which *Dominus Iesus* seems to be generating: hope that the Vatican II renewal in the area of the Church's relations with other religions is slowly but surely being effected in the Church, in which the most significant players can be found in the Church in Asia.

Conclusion

Thus, by way of conclusion, I would suggest that theologians in Asia ought to rejoice at the promulgation of *Dominus Iesus*, since through the document, their works have not only gained recognition, but affirmation as well. Asian theologies of religious pluralism, have, in a sense, arrived at maturity. *Dominus Iesus*, therefore, ought to be more fully appreciated by the Church in Asia. It is, after all, a document issued specifically

for Asia, even if it was not intended to affirm but to condemn. Whatever it is, the Asian interpretation of it is probably most relevant and truth revealing. Since the main issues in *Dominus Iesus* are about truth and truth claims, let me conclude appropriately with a story from Anthony de Mello. However, before I share that story with you, I will have to read the *Notification* which the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued on de Mello's work. So, please be warned that the following story "is incompatible with the Catholic faith and can cause grave harm!". The story goes that there was once a parachutist who was blown off course from where he was supposed to land. Unfortunately, he ended up caught on a tree and hung up there until a gentleman passed by. The parachutist shouted: "Sir, can you help me?" The gentleman replied, "Sure, but please tell me what happened first". The parachutist told his story and then asked, "And, can you please tell me where I am?". The gentleman replied, "Sure, you are up on a tree". The parachutist replied, "Thank you. By the way, you must be a theologian". The gentleman was stunned, taken aback, scratched his head, and then said, "In fact I am. But, how did you know?" The parachutist replied, "Well Sir, what you said is absolutely true. But, it is totally useless".

Notes

¹ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, "Answers to Main Objections against *Dominus Iesus*", in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, republished in *L'Osservatore Romano* (22 November 2000) p.10, [Text also available at <http://www.ewtn.com/>].

² "Indians of Various Religions Shocked over 'unnecessary' Vatican Document", *Union of Catholic Asian News, UCAN* (19 September 2000), [<http://www.ucanews/>].

³ "Media Say Vatican Document Threatens Dialogue, Communal Peace", *UCAN* (3 October 2000).

⁴ "Bishops Note Room for 'Theological Inquiry' in Toning Down *Dominus Iesus*", *UCAN* (3 May 2001).

⁵ "Some Church People Regret Vatican Language, Others Justify Recent *Declaration*", *UCAN* (14 September 2000).

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ "Kingdom Values are Core of Church Mission in 21st Century", *UCAN* (4 January 2001).

⁸ "*Dominus Iesus* Brings Cultural Tension for Vietnam Catholics", *UCAN* (18 September 2000).

⁹ "Japanese Indifferent to *Dominus Iesus*, Theologian Regrets Western Approach", *UCAN* (5 October 2000).

¹⁰“Theology Institute Initiates Public Discussion on *Dominus Iesus*”, *UCAN* (29 December 2000).

¹¹“Bishops Call for Episcopal Solidarity, Collegiality to Avert Interreligious Crises”, *UCAN* (10 September 2001).

¹²The paper of this talk is published in *East Asian Pastoral Review*, Vol. 38 (2001),[<http://eapi.topcities.com/eapr001/pieris.htm>].

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵Cardinal Ratzinger, *Relativism: The Central Problem for Faith Today*, Address delivered during the meeting of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith with the presidents of the Doctrinal Commissions of the Bishops’ Conferences of Latin America (Guadalajara, Mexico, May 1996), [<http://www.ewtn.com/library>]. All of Ratzinger’s comments in this section are from this source.

¹⁶ZENIT: The World Seen From Rome, 26 September, 2000 [<http://www.zenit.org>].

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Dictionary of African Christian Biography

The Twentieth-century growth and character of Christianity in the Southern continents generally and in Africa particularly are without historical precedent. Yet the story of the Church in Africa continues to be told as though it were simply a footnote to the story of European tribes. Information on indigenous evangelists, catechists and Christian leaders most vitally involved cannot be found in standard reference works or textbooks, and the "Acts of African Apostles" is in danger of being lost to historical memory. The *Dictionary of African Christian Biography (DACB)*, sometimes referred to as "Project Luke" (cf. Luke 1:1-3; Acts 1:1-2) constitutes a significant first step toward ensuring that this essential record is preserved for future generations. The Overseas Ministries Study Center (OMSC) has committed itself to serve as host and facilitator of the *DACB* and Project Luke.

A Dictionary of African Christian Biography

An international team of scholars and church leaders is now engaged in the creation of the *DACB*. Broadly inter-confessional, historically descriptive, and exploiting the full range of oral and written records, the *DACB* will cover the whole field of African Christianity from the earliest times to the present, over the entire continent. It is being produced electronically in English and translation of the website into French has recently begun with plans for translation into Portuguese, Swahili and Arabic. As a database, the *DACB* constitutes a uniquely dynamic way to maintain, amend, expand, access, and disseminate information vital to an understanding of African Christianity as something more than simply a footnote to the story of European tribes. Being non-proprietary, it is possible for material within it to be freely reproduced anywhere in Africa in printed form. Being electronic, both on the World Wide Web and in an

annually updated CD-ROM version, the material will be accessible to readers around the world. The second annual CD-ROM version of the *DACB* website was published in January 2002.

Ongoing DACB Work

The first four of the Director's trips to Africa took him to Kenya (1999), Ethiopia (2000), Tanzania and Zambia (2001), and Ghana (2002). Nigeria is his contemplated destination in February of 2003. As a direct result some forty seminaries and universities are now registered as official participating institutions and a steady stream of biographical material is now being received. His trip to Zambia in 2001 led to an exciting development: the creation of a *DACB* Africa office in Lusaka, Zambia, which is now the administrative and promotional centre for *DACB* activities in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland, Lesotho and South Africa. The New Haven *DACB* office, fully equipped since January 2000 and staffed since October 2000, is located at the Overseas Ministries Study Center. It is hoped that four more *DACB* offices will be established in Africa to facilitate the collection and translation of stories in French, Portuguese, Swahili and Arabic.

Stories from across Africa are being actively solicited. The aim is to generate a total of three thousand stories by the year 2011. It is the intention of the editors to make all of these stories available in English, French, Portuguese, Swahili and Arabic.

Inquires are welcome.

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14-18 May 2002

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Professor of Theology at the *Catholic Theological Union*
in Chicago
President of the *American Society of Missiology* and
of the *Catholic Society of America*

Enrique Marroquín, C.M.F.
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Wednesday, 13 March **Debt Group** 9:30 hrs at **SEDOS**
Wednesday, 13 March **China Group** 15:00 hrs at **SEDOS**
Tuesday, 19 March **Bible and Mission** 15:30 hrs at **SEDOS**