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EDITORIAL

*"Life in the Holy Spirit is the essence of mission,
the core of why we do what we do, and how we live our lives.
Spirituality gives meaning to our lives
and motivates our actions.
It is a sacred gift from the Creator, the energy for affirming
and caring for life" (WCC, "Together Towards Life:
Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes", n. 3).*



With the election of Pope Francis we now close the chapter which dealt with the Five Popes who participated in the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, whether as Conciliar Fathers or as Theologians. We are very grateful to Fr **James Kroeger, MM**, for forwarding to us a poem, his own composition and the fruit of his deep, broad knowledge of the Documents of Vatican II.

Fr **Laurenti Magesa** is a priest in the Diocese of Musoma, Tanzania, who lectures on Moral Theology. He is also a writer and heads the Religious Studies Department of the CHIEA (Catholic Higher Institute of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya).

Fr Laurenti Magesa squarely faces the pressing question of the future of the International Missionary Institutes in Africa. They were founded in Europe first and branched out to work in Africa in the middle of the nineteenth century, but they retain their original outlook which must adapt to the African context. Fr Laurenti says emphatically that: "the future of the Missionary Institutes today depends upon their openness to inclusiveness and change". He states further, "in the future, it seems, membership will be much more fluid ... people will be incardinated in dioceses with a relationship of informed obedience to the Local Bishop.... This will blur the traditional distinction between foreign missionaries and the local clergy ... but it could be a difficult process and a source of tension within the International Missionary Institutes".

The following article, by **Gerrit Noort** and **Mark C. Noort**, is a follow-up to the World Council of Churches' concern regarding discrimination and the xenophobic attitude to immigrants in The Netherlands. The large number of immigrants there presents a threat and the authors suggest that this is partly due to the local population's ignorance of the newcomers' background. To counter this trend they seek to implement a Social Representations Theory. This "perspective provides a way to take into account the immigrants' intentions and their transformative power as the 'other'" and it promotes dialogue and mutual knowledge between the groups to encourage "participatory citizenship".

We want to share the fruit of the research being done in Cochabamba by Fr **Alber Quispe Escobar** on "Ilustración, fiesta y religiosidad indígena-mestiza. Apuntes sobre las reformas de Francesco de Viedma en Cochabamba, 1784-1809": Loyal to the Spanish Monarch, Viedma and Nárvaes tried, not always with great success, to "make the Indians and 'Cholos' (hipanic creoles) of the region useful vassals and Christian men", while denouncing the clergy's abuse of the faithful. Thus, they also demanded the State to exercise a control over behaviour and beliefs which contributed to "public peace" and put the Church in the orbit of the Crown.

Blessed Pope John Paul II dedicated a full year, starting from October 2004 to October 2005, to the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. Drawing inspiration mainly from this Apostolic Letter and some other sources, Fr **Odon Patrick Mpoyi Kandindi**, is writing his doctoral thesis at the Urbanian University on the "Eucharistie, défi pour les communautés chrétiennes d'Afrique". His focus is on the Eucharist as a principle and plan of mission, and as the locus of human development and a place of reconciliation *par excellence*.

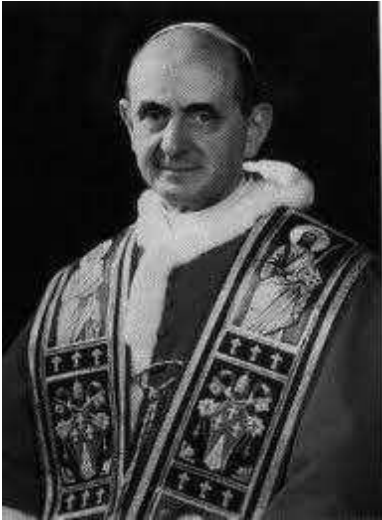
The SEDOS Residential Seminar on "The New Evangelization", held from 23-27 April, at Ariccia, was well attended (124) and much appreciated by the participants.

Sr. Nzenzili Lucie MBOMA, FMM,
Executive Director

(Ref.: pictures from the Internet)

James H. Kroeger, MM
FIVE POPES OF VATICAN II

John XXIII, loved as the "people's pope,"
You called Vatican II, inspiring much hope.
You sought peace among the nations on earth;
A renewed, transformed Church you brought to birth.



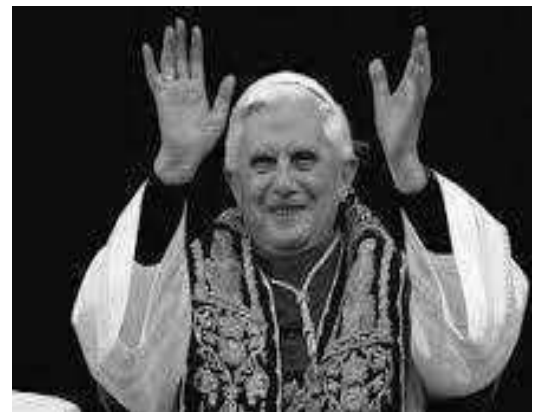
Paul VI, missionary pope by your own choice,
To human hopes and dreams you gave a voice.
You asked all in the Church to evangelize,
And with God's peoples truly sympathize.



John Paul I, our pope of many smiles,
You walked with us for merely a few miles.
You chose two names to indicate your call,
To live the Council as brother to all.



John Paul II, from a distant land you came,
To shepherd God's true Church in Christ's own name.
Your travels brought you places far and wide;
You said Vatican II was your constant guide.



Benedict XVI, your wisdom we admire,
With God's love our hearts you set on fire.
You showed great humility to resign.
Your love for the Church was seen through this sign.

Five popes of the Vatican Council Two,
We owe a profound debt to each of you.
To Vatican II's spirit keep us true,
So the Church may be ever young and new.

Laurenti Magesa*

The Future of International Missionary Institutes in Africa

Introduction

The evangelization of Africa, particularly in its third phase since the nineteenth century, took place under the exclusive auspices of Missionary Institutes. One cannot speak about the Church in Africa since the latter part of the 1880s without recalling the faith, idealism, daring, dedication, courage, and above all the conviction and enthusiasm of Missionary Institutes, individually and collectively, as well as of the individual members within them. Even if one cannot, and, indeed, must not, overlook a mistaken attitude and even blunders in performance during the missionary enterprise in response to Christ's great commission to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth, one must at the same time acknowledge that most of these mistakes were made in good faith. Since they were the children of their age and the product of their cultures much of their interpretation of the Gospel and many of their methods of communicating it reflect this. In fact, in many ways, it led those concerned to sincerely believe that they were right, even though we now know they were clearly in error. This is human, and no age, including the present, can completely escape it. The Christian call – underlying Christ's Mission in every age – always entails the willingness to be attentive to, and learn from, the past and present in view of receiving a better, more grace-filled future. The evangelical virtues articulated by St Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians (13:13) as Faith, Hope, and Love, have their foundation in, and can only be progressively realized under, these intellectual and spiritual conditions whose foundation is the divine Spirit, who works unfettered for the abundant good and life of the entire world.

"Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp!"

Throughout the Scriptures we are given a glimpse of this divine process, the realization of which I consider appropriate and necessary for our conversation's particular aim: namely, the future of International Missionary Institutes in Africa. A telling example can be found in the Book of Numbers (11:22-30), which relates that during Israel's Exodus from Egypt, in the desert of Paran, a place that was later to be called Taberah, Moses set up a tent to rest from the people's complaints against his leadership. At

God's command he chose seventy Elders from among the people, who gathered around the Tent. Then God took some of Moses' spirit of prophecy and bestowed it upon the seventy Elders so that they, like Moses, prophesied. But two of the Elders named Eldad and Medad had stayed away from the Tent in the main camp, yet they too, simultaneously with the seventy others, received the spirit and prophesied in the camp. When someone told Moses about it, his young assistant, Joshua, the son of Nun, felt concerned. He asked Moses to stop them from prophesying. Moses, however, answered Joshua, *"Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!"*.

A similar anecdote is related in the Gospels of Mark (9:38-40) and Luke (9:49-50). According to Luke's version, the disciple John approached Jesus with the information, "Master, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, because he does not follow with us". Whereupon Jesus responded, "Do not forbid him; for he that is not against you is for you". Matthew's rendition of the latter sentiment (Mt 12:22-32), set in a different, more elaborate context, reads negatively thus: "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters" (Mt 12:30, RSV).

Current theology cannot fail to note that these accounts show the universality of divine mission under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Here I wish to look at the sense they convey in terms of missionary *activity* allegorically or analogically; that is, in the sense of what members of any International Missionary Institute are fundamentally called to be. I take Moses, for example, to be like the founder of a particular Missionary Institute under the inspiration of God's spirit, the Holy Spirit. The prophesying Elders with Moses at the Tent resemble the members formally attached to a particular Institute; they form one family, sharing directly the Founder's spirit and doing the work that the Institute's spirit requires of them as they were introduced to it through their Novitiate and other forms of training. Generally, we call this spirit the Founder's and, of course, by extension, the Institute's particular charism, which sustains it in its existence. Eldad and Medad could then be

understood to represent the rest of the Christian community, people who do not partake directly of the Institute's charism, but by the grace of God through their baptismal promises, they too share in it as Christians. Moses' comment to Joshua, as is Jesus' response to John, is instructive. It truly constitutes the foundation for the possibility of the continued existence of Missionary Institutes in Africa or elsewhere in the world: "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord could put his spirit upon them!". To survive and to be effective, a change of perspective and behaviour in Missionary Institutes must follow this line of thought: whoever "is not against you is for you".

The point I am trying to make is that the future of Missionary Institutes today depends upon their openness to inclusiveness and change. They must be willing to "let go and let God act". This is to say that they must not be too jealous of their charisms in an attempt to "domesticate" them, but must be prepared to spread them far and wide in the communities they serve, both between those around them "in the Tent" and those left in the broader "camp" of the family of God, the whole Church. The process of change must begin within the particular Institute's own actual parameters and among its own members, of course, but it must go beyond these borders, more extensively, to touch the rest of the population, the wider Christian community and even farther. Today, a Missionary Institute must take care not to let itself or its charism fossilize by conceptually or practically freezing it within itself, or at one point in time or place, even within the specific environment of its founding vision. On the contrary, it must, if it is to survive, continually contextualize itself as new situations and needs arise, always associated with changes in place and time. This is, therefore, the issue: the *attitude of fossilization* spells sure death, especially spiritual death, in spite of whatever growth it may record with regard to the number of members it may attract. The second attitude, requiring *constant, judicious change* on the basis of reading the signs of the times, assures continued life and influence. The English Cardinal John Henry Newman is reported to have expressed this requirement in a well-known statement: "It may be different in a higher world, but here below, to live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often". Fullness of life entails constantly and creatively broadening our vision and the base of our activity on the basis of our ongoing reading and interpretation of divine action in the world. This is the essence and meaning of religious faith.

The argument in this reflection on the future of Missionary Institutes in Africa follows closely along these lines. It involves two main concessions: in the first place, I think that the

future of Missionary Institutes on the African continent will depend on how the particular charism of an Institute is broadened and adapted, in various appropriate ways, to include the faithful outside the immediate particular company around the Founder, and "all people of good will". Can lay associates be inducted in the evangelizing work of the Institute, for example? How about a degree of collaboration in mission between and among various Institutes with different charisms to mirror concretely the unity of the evangelizing mission of the entire Church, the Church as the Body of Christ or Family of God? At certain times and in certain circumstances, might Missionary Institutes cooperate with non-Christian groups which may be manifestly "for" and not "against" Jesus? This concession primarily concerns institutional survival, but it also, in the second place, calls for deeper "spiritual" change which comes as a result of trying to respond as appropriately as possible to the realities or "situations" that surround us in the space and time we live in. Again, this relates to the "spiritual life" of the Institute as it responds to the never-ending call of the Holy Spirit acting in the universe towards greater perfection of vision and practical life. Clearly, these requirements are both theoretical and practical; they require modification in the ways of thinking about, and acting in, mission.

Daring to look at the past with an eye to the future

To speak of the future of the International Missionary Institutes in Africa requires a word about their past and present. A brief overview, not of their "nature" or "what they are in themselves", but about their "activity", or how they have historically functioned on the continent, seems to be necessary as a way to gauge their future prospects in the dimensions I have just mentioned.

"The absolute aim of missionary work to reveal Christ through his Body, the Church, to those who do not know him, does not change", Adrian Hastings, the Africanist historian and theologian, explains. "It will always be an integral combination of witness and service, the two together building up a believing fellowship". Nonetheless, as I have insisted above and Hastings also continues to state, any kind of missionary endeavour must pay attention to the context or situation in which it is carried out. This is why in missionary work, "immediate aims, methods of work and organisation, the type of training required, can and do vary greatly according to the needs of the Church and world in each age and place" (Hastings, 1971, 1). The importance of being attentive to context in mission was a concern of Vatican II (especially the "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity",

Ad Gentes), as well as of subsequent official and theological missiological thinking (for instance, see Bosch 1991). Therefore, it cannot be overemphasized. Again, how much attention is accorded to Spirit-inspired change will dictate the possible survival or demise of a Missionary Institute.

The necessity of constantly modifying the "immediate aims" of mission, its "methods of work and organisation", and "the type of training required" for missionary personnel to enable them to respond to contexts in a relevant way seems to be self-evident today. But we encounter this requirement, unconsciously practiced in one way or another, throughout the history of the Church and church-building in different locations throughout the Christian centuries. Even if unconsciously achieved or not openly acknowledged as such in earlier times, Christian missionaries and missionary work, as part of the experience of the larger universal Church, have always had to contend with various contexts. They have had to adjust certain previously held ideals, ideas, and concepts to certain concrete, identifiable, and significant facts dictated by the host environment. Political, economic, social, and spiritual-religious realities have to various degrees played a role in determining and shaping changes in missionary positions and ministry. Often, even though these changes have been reluctantly made due to limited knowledge or to sheer prejudice as part of human nature, they *have had to be made* with reference to the existing demands of the life of specific communities targeted by missionary work.

It is well elaborated in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles how, in the macro-sphere of the early Church, modifications in perspective and attitude led to the admission of the Gentiles, namely the Romans and Greeks or Hellenists, with their custom of non-circumcision, into the Christian communities that were initially exclusive and hostile to anything unrelated to the Mosaic Law. If there is any event in the life of the early Church that changed it drastically and ensured both its survival and growth, this was it. It was momentous and pivotal, one like no other. As is well known that the change of mind, which started in the communities of Pauline foundation and related theology, eventually spread throughout the Christendom of that time. Obviously, this was a cause of grave concern to some, the *Joshuas* and *Johns*, to use the images provided by the Scriptures we have cited, as is the case with some to this day. Was the admission of the Gentiles into the Christian community, and this without circumcision, a betrayal of the Spirit of the Lord that had descended upon the disciples?, as it had upon

Moses and the Elders with him in the Tent; or, on the Day of Pentecost, upon the disciples who had been in the company of Jesus "from the beginning?". Could the Gentiles – the *Eldads* and *Medads*, as well as that unnamed "man" in Mark and Luke – also receive the spirit of prophesy, namely, the spirit of becoming disciples of Jesus, with no distinction in this regard between them and Jews?

Eventually, the question was answered positively; but if this gives the impression that the process which led to this decision was an easy one for the early Church, it would be totally false! The change did not happen without a considerable struggle, uncertainty, pain, and resistance, the latter coming, as one might expect in this case, from the original Jewish Christian communities in Jerusalem under the leadership of the Apostles, James, the Lord's brother, and Peter, the "Rock", upon whose faith Christ had promised to build the Church. It took considerable time for both James and Peter, for example, to be converted to the more inclusive, universalist spiritual view of Jesus' message, with occasional relapses. Peter, in the end, became one of the foremost protagonists for the new, expanded Christian vision of mission. As he put it memorably on one occasion, "In truth I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him". Then he asks rhetorically, "Can we refuse to baptize with water, people who have already received the Holy Spirit?" even as we have (10:47). Uncharacteristically of his former self, what he did was to order the Roman centurion, Cornelius, the epitome of the Gentile communities, and his entire household, to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (see Acts 10). Once again, the revolutionary implications of this and similar decisions of the early Church assured its spiritual and structural pulse, expansion, and survival.

Precisely because of this change of vision and attitude, throughout the first five centuries of the Church's existence, Greek and Roman influence is quite conspicuous in the thought and work of Christian evangelization. The existing writings of the Post-Apostolic Fathers present incontestable evidence of this. The transition is evident from Jewish down-to-earth, almost peasant-like thinking and articulation of the Good News by Jesus himself and the disciples' community in Jerusalem as preserved in the Gospels and many of the Epistles, to highly sophisticated Greek philosophical, metaphysical expressions of the same message. In fact, this process of change in theological expression can already be seen in some of St Paul's writings and is quite remarkable. The heresies in the Christendom of the time arose from Greek

philosophical-theological sophistication rooted largely in a variety of Gnostic speculative thought. Being very widespread and extremely attractive and influential among non-Jews and Jews in the Diaspora, gnostic teaching, seen to contradict the essential meaning of Christ's Gospel, had to be countered and disproved, particularly in northern Africa (specifically in the urban centers of Alexandria and Carthage) where Christian communities were rapidly growing numerically and intellectually.

There was no better and more effective way to counter Gnostic errors than to employ the philosophical language proper to them so as to beat them, so to speak, at their own game. The Fathers, from both the Western and Eastern parts of the Empire, did this with great effect and success. In the process, some ambiguities in Christian belief were clarified through the development of doctrine on, for example, the person and nature of Jesus, the divinity of the Holy Spirit, and the spiritual condition of humanity, specifically the transmission of Original Sin. But many other ambiguities remained, and it required a series of Regional and Ecumenical Councils to address various others as they arose. Interesting summaries of these doctrinal developments are preserved in the various Creeds of the time: the Apostles' Creed (composed c. 100 CE, but appearing c. 340 in Greek and c. 400 in Latin), the Nicene Creed (325), the Athanasian Creed – (Athanasius c. 259 – 373), and the Creed of St Cyril (4th c. [see Gager 1975, 20-65, also Link, 1984]).

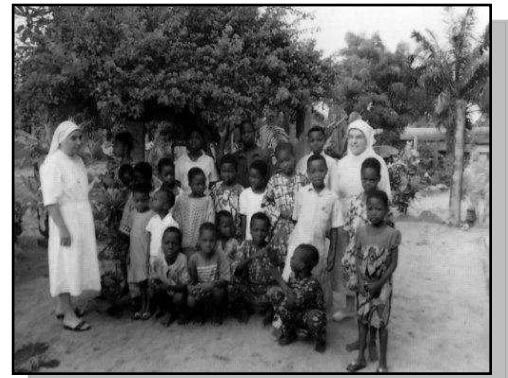
The pattern repeats itself subsequently in different contexts. After the fall of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the evangelization of Europe, Christian catechesis had to adopt the languages and many of the religious symbols of the conquering cultures of the Germanic tribes from the north while retaining some of the Hellenistic and Roman ones it had acquired previously and that had inextricably embedded themselves in the expression of the Christian faith. The problem was always how to harmonize the two when and where they conflicted. The scholastic theologians of the Middle Ages, exemplified perhaps most eminently by St Thomas Aquinas, became quite skillful in this exercise. Other prominent scholastic personalities whose common distinguishing mark is rigorous rational methodology in theological thought, following Greek philosophical principles, include Anselm of Canterbury, Peter Abelard, Alexander of Hales, and Duns Scotus. For better or for worse, their influence is still very perceptible in the training and formation of members of International Religious Institutes who, in turn, have trained members of the indigenous clergy in contemporary Africa. For a long time it appeared

that, in terms of philosophical vision in the intellectual formation of the clergy in Africa, "prophesying outside the tent" was a closed question. The static and exclusive mentality inherent in this view of formation endangers the future of the Missionary Institutes in the African context.

Questions regarding collaboration among Missionary Institutes in Africa

In spite of shared theological formation in theological institutions in some African regions – for example, in Nairobi (Kenya) and Arusha (Tanzania) for Eastern Africa, Kwa Zulu Natal (South Africa) for Southern Africa – there is still a strong pull for each Missionary Institute to be identified by its spiritual interests and practical services within the Church. As we have noted, these are referred to as an Institute's charism. A charism in its dynamic sense is itself a function that leads to further function. In turn, the specific function of the particular Institute points to the inner nature, self-understanding, or identity of the Institute. However, despite variations of charisms, all Missionary Institutes share one

overall calling and mandate: to spread the Reign of God on earth faithful to the teaching



of Jesus Christ. This is their common reason for existence; it is also their mutual goal. The microcosm of an Institute's charism can only be properly understood when it is set within the macro-cosmic picture of the evangelizing responsibility of the Church as a whole. This is a pivotal point. In this endeavour a Missionary Institute's strict autonomy can only be counterproductive, a counter-witness. No Missionary Institute, if it is genuinely Christian in outlook, can avoid or ignore Christ's general evangelizing mandate to all of his disciples. However each Institute may approach this task in ways and methods proper to it.

It is therefore only on account of the enormity and inexhaustibility of the task of evangelization, even in particular localities and times, that the existence of various charisms or ways of approach to evangelization is understandable, commendable and eternally necessary. This awareness, as we have tried to show, boasts a long history in the Church. But care must be taken that it does not lead to strict

separation or antagonism in the Church's comprehensive ministry of the proclamation of the Gospel in word and deed, in teaching and witness. In the process of evangelization, "common witness" must take priority over individual interests, because common witness may be the only factor that makes teaching credible, especially in the modern world. As Pope Paul VI commented in 1975, "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses", (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 41, 8 December 1975). The witness that seems needed in the African Church is collaboration, not only among the Missionary Institutes themselves, but, equally, broadly with the local Church. In terms of theological and pastoral training and formation, it is difficult to imagine why there should be separate institutions for different Missionary Institutes or, for that matter, for diocesan and religious clergy, often characterized by unfounded suspicious, problematic attitudes towards one another. Not least, it should be obvious that the African Church can ill afford the duplication of teaching personnel and the financial cost this arrangement entails.

The more immediate, challenging, and perennial concern of the Missionary Institutes, therefore, should be *how* to approach the broad, shared call to proclaim the message of Jesus in Africa. "How do we make the Gospel of Christ known, and how might we effectively plant the Church in the contemporary African world, inspired by the particular spirit that has been poured upon us through a particular Institute's founder or foundress?" Just as was the case in the past, the changing social, cultural, and religious conditions and prevailing local perceptions about God, humanity and the universe in general, and in contemporary Africa in particular, necessitate that each Missionary Institute's diverse formulation of, and approach to, this task be specific and concrete. Given the fact that "missionary work is human work – the limited activity of a certain number of people – one has constantly ... to judge what is feasible and should take priority in terms of the number and capacities of those whom God has called to the task" (Hastings, 1971, 1). In short, this means that a particular Missionary Institute's charism is its choice of specific ways and means of approach within a larger whole, dictated by specific needs. Indeed this is precisely why inter-cooperation, collaboration, and solidarity are necessary among the Missionary Institutes and between them and the local Churches. These are indispensable attitudes if the great work of proclaiming the Gospel is to be effective.

In the missionary experience, new conditions, locations, and times have always raised new

questions which lay beyond the parameters and psychological and practical assurances of previous patterns of thought and action, including the time of the initial "prophesy" of any Missionary Institute's Founder. Reflection on "*how best*" to put the Institute's foundational spirit into action, here and now, is obviously a perennial concern, whether it is clearly articulated as such or not. Indeed, broadly speaking, this constitutes the business of living for everyone, individuals as well as communities. As Francesco Pierli has persuasively argued, what usually lies behind the foundation of Missionary Institutes is a response to real or felt needs. In general, he explained, "Missionary activity almost always preceded the ... foundation of the Institute in the formal sense" (Pierli, 1998, 34). This has certainly been the case in Africa since the nineteenth century. Simply put, the "theory" of mission that the Missionary Institutes for Africa enshrined in their charisms and Statutes was to a certain degree the child of missionary experience on the continent. Pierli cites as examples to illustrate the practical inspiration of the African experience, the founding of the Institute of the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny by Anne Marie Javouhey; the Congregation of the Holy Ghost by François Marie Paul Libermann; the Sahara and Sudan Mission by Charles Martial Lavigerie; and the Missionary Institute for Africa by Daniel Comboni (see Pierli, 1998, 34-35). Pierli's assertion in this matter has important implications for understanding the inner life or nature of all Missionary Institutes. The point he makes, is that within the overall call to preach the Gospel and establish the Church in Africa, different aspects of the African experience have influenced the self-understanding of certain inspired individuals and led them to form their Institutes and devise methods to address the real and felt needs of the people in question.

Charism and method: Missionary Institutes and the African reality of the 19th century

If the experience of mission has played a considerable part in the founding, structuring, and spiritual orientation of particular Missionary Institutes, the dimension of change has also been an integral aspect of it. Thus, missionary praxis seeks to identify variations of context and to adapt judiciously to the present and emergent situations. Since almost all of the Missionary Institutes working in Africa, at least until the second half of the twentieth century, were founded in Europe a century earlier, they had to adjust to some degree many of the previously held assumptions and perceptions about the African continent and its peoples. For example, among the most pressing issues to be addressed in nineteenth century Africa were ignorance, poverty and disease. The missionaries were confronted with these social realities everywhere they went. They understood these situations and

conditions as calling for a response in keeping with the demands of the Gospel. To address them, the missionaries established schools and medical centres in almost every mission station they created concomitantly with the verbal proclamation of Jesus' liberation. Many even created economic programmes of different kinds wherever they worked. Later in the Catholic Church there was some debate as to whether or not this also formed part of the evangelizing ministry of the Church. Were the missionaries engaged in the economic, medical and formal educational improvement of the local populations also doing *pastoral* work? There were divergent views on the question, but to the Africans concerned this missionary engagement appeared unequivocally to form part and parcel of the "gospel" the missionaries brought with them. To the African converts, it was "witness" in Pope Paul VI's sense of the word. If the conversion to Christianity has been incredibly rapid in Africa over the years, this witness of the Missionary Institutes constitutes a major reason for it.

The point deserves emphasizing. The attraction the African populations felt for Christianity in general, and Catholicism in particular, was largely due to these services the missionaries offered from the start. Their spirituality of promoting life, also inherent in the world-view of the African population, sought to ameliorate conditions through economic, medical, and educational work as well as to parry some of the assaults on the fullness of life. From the African perspective, it could not be anything but godly. There is a big temptation now for Missionary Institutes to withdraw from these services in deference to the responsibility of governments in these areas. However, the practical and spiritual contexts on various parts of the continent suggest otherwise. The lack of educational and health facilities is still a reality everywhere, and small economic projects and economic education in general are still needed by various populations. But the most important reason for the Missionary Institutes to persevere in these spheres is "spiritual". The transformation and improvement of the standard of living corresponds with the world-view of the people and is the best practical indication of God's presence, the greatest Vital Force, in society. As agents of this transformation the Missionary Institutes become witnesses of the divine spirit.

The Slave Trade. The criminal trade in African slaves was current in many areas when

the Missionary Institutes were founded and established, and where they were active in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From their knowledge and experience of the inhuman conditions Africans suffered due to this dreadful trade, some missionaries became involved in the anti-slavery struggle, thus witnessing in practice to the liberation offered by Jesus, as articulated for example in the Gospel according to Luke (4:18, quoting Isaiah 61:1): "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed...". By this the vision and practical methods of evangelization of several Missionary Institutes were transformed. One of the main methods of evangelization employed by Libermann's Holy Ghost Fathers (or Spiritans) on the Island of Zanzibar and the coastal region of Bagamoyo (in present-day Tanzania) was the establishment of villages for rescued slaves. The practical training in crafts and trades they offered to the young residents there drew lavish praise from celebrated contemporary observers like Henry Morton Stanley and Bartle Frere who happened to visit Bagamoyo on their travels (see Kollman, 2005, pp. 139-192).



Of course, at this time there were no indigenous priests to speak of in Africa, certainly none were members of the Missionary Institutes in question. As the missionaries knew little of the cultures or the languages of the people they were evangelizing – and what they knew they usually dismissed as "pagan" and unworthy of the Gospel – they were somewhat handicapped in their work. It was

providential that on account of this they had to depend on indigenous individuals who accompanied them as well as other local people who helped them in their mission through interpretation and the identification of useful contacts. Although not by deliberate design, it is clear that the establishment and life of the Church already involved collaboration and cooperation between the missionaries and various local agents. In the case of the Holy Ghost Fathers in Bagamoyo, these were the rescued slaves who, after training, became their companions in the new evangelization endeavours outside of Bagamoyo. In a real sense, just like Eldad and Medad, or the exorcist about whom John complained to Jesus, they received part of the Spiritan charism and "prophesied". These catechists, unfortunately usually unsung, are rarely formally recognized in the history of the

evangelization of Africa, but, as indigenous religious instructors they played a crucial role in the work of evangelization in Africa and their stories need to be recovered and documented. Today, it must be said that, without them, the work of evangelization and the life of the Church in Africa, as well as the vitality Missionary Institutes currently enjoy there, would have been very much stunted. They certainly would not have had the success we are witnessing virtually everywhere on the continent. Indeed, of all the continents this is the one where Christianity is growing the fastest.

Issues facing International Missionary Institutes today

It is necessary to note one major shortcoming of the past, for the sake of fashioning appropriate missionary methods for the future. Despite the necessary adaptation of their missionary methods the Missionary Institutes made in Africa, the main paradigm underlying their thought and practice remained for a long time predominantly, if not exclusively, Eurocentric. They failed to take into account the importance of the respective cultural contexts and this oversight consequently prevented the faith from sending down deep roots into the total existence of the African people, who often felt alienated by the language and symbols of the Christian faith. The principle that the Second Vatican Council enunciated was not yet sufficiently articulated and appreciated, namely: that missionaries must not scorn but must take "from the customs, traditions, from their wisdom, teaching, arts and sciences of their people, everything which could be used to praise the glory of the Creator, manifest the grace of the Saviour, or contribute to the right ordering of Christian life" (*Ad Gentes*, n. 22). This is because, as the Council explains, "The Good News ... takes the spiritual qualities and endowments of every age and nation, and with supernatural riches causes them to blossom, as it were, from within; it fortifies, completes and restores them in Christ" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 58). Divine "spiritual qualities and endowments", we now know were and are plentiful in the "customs and traditions" of the continent.

With regard to the Missionary Institutes and their future in Africa, the question of Eurocentrism becomes extremely acute when they have become international in composition, with African members in their midst and, in the foreseeable future, even promising to become the majority in some Institutes. Since, as the Kenyan Anglican theologian Jesse Mugambi noted, the missionary paradigm of the past was from the beginning closely connected with the colonial and imperial ambitions of the Institutes' home governments; particular Institutes as a rule

operated in particular colonies, were protected by the colonial authorities there, and routinely imposed the colonial mentality in a broad scale on all dimensions of their ministry (see Mugambi, 2012, 18-19). Not surprisingly, Africans in general tended to identify the missionary with the colonialist since the former, with very, very few exceptions, usually reflected the social ideologies and attitudes of the colonial powers. The Kikuyu people of Kenya, for example, coined the saying, "*Gutiri muthungu na mubia*", to express their observation that there is little difference between the European (colonial master) and the priest (missionary). According to the Iraqw (or Iraq) people of Tanzania at the time: "A European does not change his attitude even if he preaches God". I dare to say that should the International Missionary Institutes of today persist in this mentality, it will spell disaster for their existence in the long run.

No one should underestimate the fact that the change in numerical composition and leadership from European to African hands can be a difficult process and a source of tension within the International Missionary Institutes. I have cited the experience of the early Church with the Gentile neophytes as a perennial, instructive example in this regard. Mugambi again comments that such change may imply different things to different groups within the International Institute: for the European members it may indicate "loss of power". Accordingly, the African neophytes may be seen as lacking in experienced, mature leadership. For the Africans, however, the process may be seen as a kind of "liberation", offering them freedom to exercise the ministry in their own cultural ways. Expectations may also differ widely. Historically in Africa, Mugambi notes, "When missionaries handed over [leadership of the churches they had founded] ... many of them expected their successors to maintain the 'daughter' churches [status] unchanged". The founding churches "continued to exercise influence by setting conditions for sending their grants and personnel" (Mugambi, 2012, 19). To many Africans, however, this was eventually perceived as paternalism, although, given the circumstances, they grudgingly endured and continue to endure it. There may be different dynamics today in the changeover of membership and leadership within the International Missionary Institutes, but the basic expectations on both sides may not have shifted significantly. For the sake of the future of the International Missionary Institutes in Africa, this issue must not be swept under the carpet or ignored. On the contrary, the health of these Institutes requires that this issue be faced and addressed squarely and judiciously, with all its inherent not-so-pleasant human elements, maturely and respectfully. This is the Christian "prophetic" vocation.

Again, the experience of Moses and Jesus in the Scripture passages I have noted at the beginning of this reflection is inspiring in attempting to look at and address the situation. Did Moses try to control the prophesying experience of Eldad and Medad? Did Jesus demand that the man, who was casting out devils in his name, first of all join the company of the disciples physically? It seems that what mattered was that Eldad and Medad shared in the spiritual bond that had been divinely bestowed upon Moses. It seems that what was important for Jesus was that the exorcist was acting in his (Jesus') name, thus enhancing and not undermining his ministry.

It would seem, then, that what *should* matter is the task of advancing the particular charism of a given International Missionary Institute for the benefit of the entire Church, without necessarily streamlining all of its members into a particular cultural expression of the charism. The question of new approaches to mission by the Missionary Institutes, or what Pierli defines as the issue of "spirituality, theology and methodology" (Pierli, 1998, 28) of mission is thus appropriate for this discussion on the future of the International Missionary Institutes in Africa. It leads to the lesser, but no less important, question: "how can an Institute express its charism in its intercultural religious communities living on the continent and abroad?". This lesser issue entailing the dynamics of relationships within an Institute can be subsumed within the larger one of spirituality, theology and methodology, but although fundamentally related, they are distinct. Addressing the lesser issue affords me the opportunity to stop "beating about the bush", which I may seem to have been doing up to this point, and try to take the bull by the horns. But first, a broad portrait of the general landscape.

International Missionary Institutes *in* the future and *of* the future

Amidst the vast and rapidly changing conditions currently taking place in Africa, a question arises. To put it bluntly: **"what kind of future will the International Missionary Institutes have in Africa?"**. Many, taking for granted their existence there, frame the question rather differently and inquire not about their existence but rather their shape, and consider the question of the International Missionary Institutes *of the future* in Africa? Framed in this way an important and fundamental distinction of perception and attitude appears. Both affect the International Missionary Institutes' presence in Africa in real but different ways.

The *first* perception maintains, for now and the future, the Missionary Institutes'

historical and theological-ideological structures of the past. In my opinion, this perception, if pursued, will call into question their continued existence by, as we have noted, fossilizing the charism. The *second* assumption, however, which has development a change of heart, holds out a better promise for the future. Rather than fossilizing the Institutes' charism, this envisages a necessary evolution or transformation in it from within. In this view, the Institutes are not necessarily seen as icons of a past vision; they are expected to metamorphose in order to continue the task of bringing Christ's Gospel to bear in a changing and changed Africa in different ways from before. Hamlet's soliloquy in Shakespeare's play bearing the same name might be adapted to the present discussion: the question for all the International Missionary Institutes in Africa is not really "to be or not to be". Rather, it involves *how to be* in the coming decades.

If a general picture of the aims, spirit, and performance of the Missionary Institutes in Africa in the past is somewhat easy to draw, because there is ample historical and factual evidence to help describe its features, their future shape is much more difficult to outline and ascertain. In this task one must proceed with extreme caution and with a sense of provisional, rather than definitive, prognosis. Because it is necessary to attempt to forecast possible or even probable outcomes or states of existence, I shall try to do so in the points below. Therefore what is possible at this stage, is only to suggest rough outlines of possible *scenarios*.

Possible/probable settings for the future – in six provocative points

1. Indicative trends

The African membership in International Missionary Institutes is rising, both numerically and with regard to average youthfulness. If the current trend continues – and there seems to be no reason to doubt it – the future of the Institutes in Africa will be shaped by Africans, who are most likely to constitute the majority of their members in the foreseeable future. But this has deep implications, since an African cultural content in expressing the founding charism/s seems logically to impose itself and it will demand, first and foremost, that these Institutes learn "to speak African". The point is that they must make the effort to talk about Africa from within: to see, interpret, and understand African realities from the point of view of where the African stands, intellectually, emotionally, and culturally. The sad irony, indeed even tragedy, is that though they work in the heart of Africa, many members of the Missionary Institutes, including International ones, continue to look at Africa as if from outside,

and speak about it in a language designed to conform to external standards or even “stereotypes” about the continent. In this way they continue “Mistaking Africa” (see Keim, 2009). This is unhelpful for evangelization and will also lead to unnecessary conflict within the Institutes themselves, between the African and non-African members.

What I am saying, is that the future of the International Missionary Institutes in Africa depends on their genuinely integrating their charisms or spirituality into the African context so as to make a deep impact on the African psyche, rather than a superficial one. This process must begin internally with the intellectual, psychological, spiritual, and attitudinal transformation of each Institute's membership. It is a process that demands, as Mugambi argues, a “reconstruction” or restructuring of the spirituality of each Institute through contextualization where

there is “unrestricted movement between the text and the context”. In our case the text is the Institution's charism, as articulated at the moment of founding, and the context is the African environment. “On the one hand, the context provides the operational platform on which theology has to be done. On the other, the text provides the analytical stimulus for creative reflection” (Mugambi, 2012, 23). This interactive dynamic cannot be dispensed with.

2. Complications about bases of financial power

One would very much wish, at least for once, to avoid talking about money in a parish on Sunday or in a conversation such as this one, but in most cases, and where this discussion is concerned, one must disappoint. A person does not live by “bread alone”, Jesus warned, but it is equally true that a person cannot live in this world without bread! The financial power base for almost all International Missionary Institutes will for a long time continue to be Europe. Thus, although Africans will form the majority of the Institutes' members, they will have no financial power, and so the African missionaries of the present as well as of the foreseeable future will continue to depend on Europe/America for implementing their vision and plans which, because of this, can easily be frustrated and therefore bring about tension in the life of the Institutes.

But this situation can be used creatively and help shape the International Missionary Institutes in Africa in the future. Their future lies in obviating financial dependence by instituting self-sustaining financial plans and structures for the Institutes in Africa where the need seems to be shifting to. Self-reliance can be at the service of personal dignity and the freedom of thought

and creativity in mission, something that seems to be sorely lacking at the moment. The African imagination in mission and evangelization may be one of, if not *the* most important contribution of the African members of the International Missionary Institutes. Care must be taken that it is not stifled by manipulation based on financial power, as, unfortunately, we see happening on the stage of international political and economic relations. By letting the African imagination thrive, the witness of the International Missionary Institutes will not be negligible either for themselves or for the Church at large.

3. African spirituality

Although, as just mentioned, the majority of the members of many of the International Missionary Institutes working in Africa may be African in the foreseeable future, it is ironic that it does not seem likely that African spirituality will be the fountain from which the inner resources for evangelization will be drawn. On account of their structure, it appears that the Institutes will continue to insist that all their members adhere to, for example, “Ignatian Spirituality” (in the case of the Jesuits and Missionaries of Africa), Franciscan Spirituality, Benedictine Spirituality, and so on and so forth – in other words, Western spiritualities. The issue for the International Missionary Institutes in this area may be posed starkly in this way: Are they condemned by their structural, systemic, theological, and methodological attitudes to be forever *in* Africa without genuinely *belonging* to it, in spite of the growing numerical strength of their African membership? Must they forever be aliens, albeit “resident aliens”, rather than full spiritual citizens of the continent? The question is directed less at the fundamental spirit of any Missionary Institute, the “charisms” – which are, in any case, of universal application – but, as always, at how the charisms are interpreted and understood, applied and incarnated in a given situation. As with the Church and its teaching in general, we are faced here with the question of deep-level inculturation.

The spirit of the Gospel of Jesus must not change, but it cannot afford not to take on different expressions in different climes and times. This is the basic lesson from the history of Christianity as far as mission is concerned, with its struggles and successes, its heresies and clarifications of belief in doctrine. From Palestine to Rome, to Europe, Christianity has been an exercise in an encounter of visions resulting in an expansion of horizons, sometimes benign, at other times shockingly violent. Why should it stop now, in Africa? But, if the charisms of the International Missionary Institutes are at the service of the greater reality, the Gospel of Christ, how can they fail to follow in the footsteps that the Gospel itself has taken throughout the world.

4. Community life

For a long time "community life" was presented and lived in Missionary Institutes as a charism, specific to them, but the sense of community life confined to members of a specific Institute alone is now strained, so that it is not likely to attract the young generation. In my view, the Institutes of the future will have to expand the practice of this concept to be more in line with the idea of the African ("extended") family, in which more than the immediate members of the "nuclear" family are welcome to participate. I have already alluded to affiliated lay members of these Institutions, because community life will have to go beyond this to include other members of the Christian community, in a location and in the spirit of interreligious dialogue of life, even people of other faiths. This will also be necessitated by the conditions prevailing in the Missionary Institutes themselves: it appears that in the future more and more individual members of Missionary Institutes will be living alone or with people of their choice and not in an artificial or imposed "community" of like-minded confrères. The idea of complementarity of gifts in the Body of Christ, the Church, seems to be key here.

Moreover from another angle, it seems that the missionaries of the future will work in less institutionalized and more specialized and more *ad hoc* areas than they have so far. The traditional idea of streamlining missionary activity, seeing missionaries as trail-blazers, pioneers, path finders or openers of new territories for Christ, will remain important, but it is not likely to be the dominant feature of missionary work in the future. There is nothing "un-missionary" or "un-spiritual" about Missionary Institutes participating and cooperating in advancing good causes, initially started by others, for the flourishing of humanity. This is fortunately already happening in such areas as refugee services where certain Missionary Institutes are significantly engaged. Other possibilities might include cooperating closely with secular entities such as: "Médecins sans Frontières" / (Doctors without Borders), or "Reporters without Borders". The particular identity of a Missionary Institute's members will neither be compromised nor forfeited by this cooperation, but it will shine out in the quality of life of the spirit which, guided by their charism, they will infuse into the work they engage in at any given moment. There is an opportunity here as well of evangelizing the secular entities in question from within.

5. Re-envisioning and renewal

The reasons that led to the establishment of Missionary Congregations and Societies were, as we have seen, to a certain extent dependent on the social conditions of the time. To be honest,

many of these are now either non-existent or obsolete. Thus, the reasons for the existence of certain Institutes need to be rethought, and it is up to the missionaries of the future to do this, particularly the prophets and visionaries among them. Of course, we are not talking about the demise of the Missionary Institutes, although this will inevitably happen in some cases. Rather, we are talking primarily about the need to re-envision and renew them in the context of Africa, something that we have already alluded to several times above. *Ecclesia semper reformanda*, also applies to the Missionary Institutes, and it calls for new understandings of divine self-disclosure. For instance, what place does African Religion take in Christian evangelization? Must not the missionaries of the future, unlike previously, take seriously the realization of the divine presence in African Religion? How will they deal with this African Religion in practice? Will not their acknowledgment of the true Christic values it incorporates shape the idea of mission and evangelization and, by extension, their own charisms, originally often conceived to deride and oppose the African spiritual legacy?

6. The Challenge of the New Movements in the Church

If the New Movements in the Catholic Church like *Opus Dei*, the Neo-Catechumenal Way, Legionaries of Christ or *Regnum Christi* continue to spread and consolidate themselves in Africa, as they are doing now, the concept of what a "missionary" Institute is will change. While in the past missionaries belonged to their congregations/societies, in the future, it seems, membership will be much more fluid: people will belong to Movements such as the above-named, which are essentially local, and will be incardinated into dioceses with a relationship of informed obedience to the local bishop. But it seems more likely that many will combine diocesan, regional, and even international characteristics at the same time. This situation will blur the traditional distinction between missionaries (evangelizers coming from geographical and cultural areas outside) and the native secular or local clergy. Taken creatively, this need not spell the death of the Missionary Institutes; rather, it will offer an opportunity for their invigoration as it will open the door to imaginative cooperation in the task of proclaiming the Gospel of universal love and unity. It will also nourish and energize the life of the secular clergy whose spiritual and pastoral health often tends to be stifled by undesirable centripetal tendencies.

Conclusion

I have always found one of the most consoling messages in the Gospels to be the oft-

repeated counsel of the Lord: "Be not afraid". As humans, we will, of course, have cares and concerns and we must try to address them accordingly. But in the end it is God's action that matters. "And which of you by being anxious can add a cubit to his span of life?" (Lk 12:25; Mt 6:27) the Gospels ask rhetorically. If there is God's work to do in Africa, *and heaven knows*

there is, the Missionary Institutes in their growing international form will survive into the future, provided they are attentive and are willing to adapt to the constant voice of the Divine Spirit: Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches (*cf.* Rev 3:22).

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Gerrit Noort and Mark C. Noort
The "Other" Contributes Equally
Some Theological and Psychological Perspectives on
Constructing the Inclusive Christian Identity

This article addresses xenophobic attitudes and the construction of the inclusive Christian identity. The perspectives provided contribute to the exploration of the 2013 World Council of Churches (WCC) Tenth Assembly's theme: "God of Life, lead us to justice and peace". Embracing the "other" in our own identity creates a space for just and peaceful action, both in an ecumenical and social perspective.

We approach our discussion of xenophobic attitudes and "othering" from a psychological and theological perspective. This approach concerns intervention strategies that aim for inclusion and recognition of the fact that the "other" can contribute equally. As xenophobia and "othering" derive from a negative image of immigrants, in this article we will argue that xenophobia could be best understood and reduced by taking into account a "social representations" perspective.¹ The concluding paragraph seeks to integrate proposed psychological intervention strategies with theologies of migration.

Seeing and Excluding the "Other"

Over the last decades globalization and migration have brought many previously separate cultures into contact with each other. By now "the other" person, with a different cultural background from ours, often lives in close proximity within the same town or neighbourhood. Ibn Noor, for instance, was born in Syria and migrated to The Netherlands about 12 years ago. He was raised a Muslim, but became a Christian while living in his country of origin. Now he worships in an Arab-speaking evangelical church in The Netherlands, as he is not over enthusiastic about the reception he received in native Dutch-speaking churches. They "could grow in hospitality", he says, "for we are brothers and sisters and that is how we may treat each other". He continues, "The Dutch keep their distance and they actually don't have the guts to eat food that is unfamiliar to them".² His experience of being seen but not included is shared by many other migrant Christians, such as Gnimdou, a young man who immigrated to The Netherlands in 2006. Being a Protestant Christian born in Togo 33 years ago, he attended Dutch-speaking Protestant worship and services, but felt that, as an outsider, he was hardly noticed.³

In The Netherlands there are approximately 3.5 million first — and second-generation immigrants, accounting for a total population of 17 million people.⁴ But while the possibility of contact with immigrants has increased, there has also been a sharp increase in xenophobia in The Netherlands, a fact seized upon by the newly emerged populist and far-right-wing political parties, such as *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* (LPF), *Trots op Nederland* (Proud of The Netherlands; ToN), or Geert Wilders's *Partij Voor de Vrijheid* (Freedom Party; PVV), each promoting a strong Dutch identity while labelling immigration as a threat to the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

In this light, a significant programme of research was conducted in The Netherlands in 2012. A group of nine first-generation Christians of non-Western ethnic origin, (from the Yemen, Syria, Iran, Rwanda, Togo, Ghana, and Angola), including Ibn Noor and Gnimdou attended services at "native" Dutch-speaking Protestant churches in order to discover how they would be received and whether or not they would be noticed. All the congregations they visited were, according to their mission statements, intentionally hospitable and inclusive, and some even arranged special teams to welcome newcomers. Yet the young men and women of the research group had various experiences, ranging from very good and uplifting to embarrassing and discouraging. The surprised non-verbal responses to the unexpected visit of non-Western Christians were not experienced as negative in themselves, but sometimes disapproving facial expressions (*cf.* Frantz Fanon's "gaze"⁵) were experienced as a painful form of exclusion⁶ and seemed potentially xenophobic. The superficial nature of conversation with the visitors — if started at all — evoked additional painful moments for the immigrant Christians. The conversation often came to an end after questions concerning the guest's country of origin were answered. Nevertheless, some congregations went to great lengths to provide translations for the visitors.⁷ This was highly valued as a hospitable expression of truly welcoming new ("foreign") people into the congregation and being inclusive.⁸

The research group, which included two native Dutch theology students without previous

contact with immigrants, set out to discover how native Dutch Protestant congregations can develop a truly hospitable attitude towards migrants. Posing as the "other", the immigrant Christians found out that a friendly initial contact is only an important first step: overcoming "othering" demands much more. It demands a change in lifestyle: first, to "create a place in your heart for the stranger"⁹ and second, to learn to acquire an inclusive mind-set. However, xenophobia — the prejudiced fear of the unfamiliar "other" — hinders creating this space, in spite of the scriptural love-thy-neighbour guidelines that Christians embrace. Moreover, due to this fear, constructive dialogue between Dutch people and immigrants in society is prevented.

"Othering"

We tend to identify with other people in different ways. We identify with some people because they share our convictions or ethnicity, such as relatives or church members. We *identify less* with some, for instance, because they have migrated from distant places, adhere to other religious convictions, or speak other languages. All these basic facts form a person's social identity.

The "other" disturbs me

We are separated from the "other" by many

boundaries, real and imaginary. In social reality, however, there is only a vague distinction between the two.¹⁰ Overcoming boundaries, through encountering the "other", implies that individuals have to renegotiate their own position within a changed context. This can be a deeply



disturbing process because, dialogical contact with the out-group worldview will challenge "one's own sacred" values and can result in uncertainty, anxiety, distrust, and dislike. Salient differences, such as cultural or religious convictions may be discovered, and possibly lead to the construction of "otherness". Discovering and highlighting difference as such is not destructive to maintaining inclusive relationships, whereas constructing "otherness" is. It creates "asymmetrical power relationships", leaving the vulnerable "other" exposed to control, manipulation and exploitation.¹¹ For instance "otherness" assumes that immigration, with or without legal documents, constitutes a potential "major threat to our cultural and political integrity".¹² It

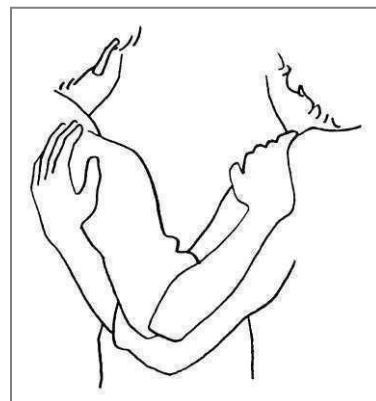
submits that Islam is a threat to our Dutch way of living and that Christian immigrants who want to rent our well-maintained church facilities don't know how to take care of them in a "proper" (conform to cultural norms) manner.

"Othering" is a strategy to create distance in order to protect personal values and convictions and to exclude the unfamiliar. "Exactly at the moment that Muslims become good Europeans, Wilders says that Islam cannot reform itself and therefore is not part of Europe", writes Rabbi Elisa Klapheck from Frankfurt (Germany). She observed a Dutch identity crisis, stemming from the immigration of East Europeans, Europe, and the Euro. "It is nice to ventilate our insecurity and direct it against another group".¹³

We label those who belong to a group different from our own as the (out-group), "the others", and erect boundaries to mark our own social identity, while often blaming the unfamiliar "other" for threats to our values and very existence.¹⁴ Our unawareness of what lies behind these identity marking boundaries, stated sociologists Z. Bauman and T. May, leads to misinterpretation and fallacious categorization.¹⁵ We assume we know what lies beyond the boundaries, but we fail to recognize that what lies beyond can contribute to our existence. We set the other/s apart in order to maintain our own way of life and thinking, intentionally or unintentionally, creating *apartheid* in this process of labelling the other.

The "other" defines me

Being different from the "other" defines our uniqueness, our personal and *social identity*. But it is in the social relation that the "other" defines me, and "I" define the "other". By recognizing difference and setting boundaries we construct both the identity of the other and of ourselves. How we perceive ourselves and the "other" is not unrelated. The way I see myself, postulated



S. Reicher, defines the way I see others.¹⁶ We understand ourselves and act on the basis of a given set of beliefs, norms, and values related to our constructed identity, and expect a different set of values and forms of behaviour of others. This sets us apart from them, both personally and culturally, and makes us into different groups.

Once recognizing difference changes into

labelling the "other" as an actual threat, thus declaring social identity a sacred unchangeable entity, then such a construed identity and set boundaries become detrimental to relationships because of their potential xenophobic and divisive character. Tendencies like these can be identified in the discourse on Islam in the West in the way radical fundamentalist believers perceive secular neighbours and in the way native populations view the influx of immigrants.

K. Creutz-Kämpfi argues that creating "otherness", by fostering polarization, is a strategic choice to strengthen boundaries between the "other" and us. "Otherness", she continues, emphasizes what differentiates instead of what connects, and in doing so it reduces the possibility of embracing the "other" and acting inclusively.¹⁷ She then sets out to describe how, in conversations on Islam in the West, the use of terminology and rhetorical choices in news reports contributed significantly to the construction of the "otherness" of Muslims, while at the same time strengthening the identity of the in-group. Media representations created an out-group, by using polemic language such as "the war on terrorism" and "Muslims have a natural leaning towards violence", while on the other hand appealing to Europe as the common denominator of the in-group.¹⁸

The social representations of Islam, of the Muslim "other", come to reinforce preconceptions. When there is only superficial, non-dialogical contact with the "other", news and information will be interpreted through the filter of these preconceptions and threatening stereotypes. Similarly radicalized religious fundamentalists may perceive the secular non-believer as a threat to their identity and tradition and construct a strict belief system that prevents inclusion of the (religiously) "other". "Otherness" is constructed by emphasizing that the non-believer is a "heathen", leading a "sinful life" and therefore "not redeemed" (common perception in colonial Christian mission). The "other" is perceived as misunderstanding reality, having weak ethics and no purpose in life.¹⁹ The in-group identity however is constructed by stressing divine election, a shared and unique calling of the believers to represent the will and word of the divine being in the world, and by claiming to have received the divine revelation and therefore the absolute truth.

Non-Western immigrants, who move to a Western country, feel the effects of xenophobic identity construction as they experience

reactions that lead to reduced access to employment, education, health care, and legal services. Recent newspaper articles in The Netherlands submit that reduced access to jobs applies not only to first-generation non-Western immigrants, but also to the well-educated second generation. Young immigrants experience that their mere (foreign) name leads to rejection and exclusion from job interviews.²⁰ Moreover, the high unemployment rate of migrants may strengthen stereotypes of migrants as lazy people who happily rely on the Dutch social welfare system.²¹

"Othering" in the Dutch Context

The political arena

The Dutch have a long-standing tradition of tolerance and providing a safe haven for refugees. Many reformed Huguenots fled to The Netherlands at the end of the 17th century, as well as Sephardim Jews to escape the 16th-century Inquisition in Spain and Portugal. A century later many Jews sought shelter in The Netherlands from repression during the Religious Wars in Germany. In this perspective it is rather surprising that nowadays The Netherlands is struggling to provide space for the new "authorized" and "illegal" migrants within their borders. In the past decade xenophobic tendencies have increased in response to the impact of migration.

In the year 2000, the multicultural policy of the "purple cabinets" (1994 - 2002)²² sparked a public debate.²³ The feeling of many, including representatives of the *Partij van de Arbeid* (Labour Party; PvdA), was that the immigration policy at that time had led to a "multicultural drama". The political climate of multiculturalistic tolerance — according to J. Habermas the mutual concession that the other has the right to choose convictions and practices that they themselves reject²⁴ — in reality increased social inequality and the sense of alienation in society. Apparently the "tolerance of otherness does not come easily".²⁵ Widespread was the feeling that being tolerant was but a poor excuse for shying away from correcting un-Dutch cultural practices, such as wearing a *burqa* and the refusal of some imams to shake hands with women. The much-lauded Dutch tolerance, many claimed, had led to blindness to the fact that in society a spontaneous *apartheid* and segregation had emerged between certain immigrant groups and the native population. In the following years this growing trend against tolerance and multiculturalism became more pronounced in the anti-Islam stance of politician Pim Fortuyn and the movie producer Theo van Gogh. Fortuyn argued that the more frequent contact with Muslims increased the threat of losing original Dutch

culture and that therefore clear boundaries were needed.²⁶

With 9/11 still fresh in mind, following the murders of Fortuyn (killed in 2002 by a "native" left-wing secular extremist) and van Gogh (killed in 2004 by a Dutch-Moroccan extremist Muslim), xenophobic attitudes against Muslims were more blatantly stated in the media. A Dutch Minister's speech after the murder of van Gogh, for instance, made a clear distinction between the Dutch native population and threatening Muslim fundamentalists.²⁷ Anti-Muslim xenophobia became especially prominent, because both 9/11 and the murder of Theo van Gogh were carried out by Muslims. Migration, authorized or illegal, was now increasingly linked to potential Islamic terrorists. This had a decisive impact on the attitude towards all migrants, irrespective of religious conviction and country of origin. In the following years, ToN and Wilders's PVV entered the political arena, expressing a strong anti-Muslim sentiment. Today, while the Constituencies of LPF and ToN have virtually evaporated and the parties as such have ceased to exist, PVV succeeded in drawing in far-right-wing voters and emerged as the third biggest party in Parliament. Since the elections of October 2010, it has exercised its newly gained power by condoning and supporting the minority Government of Prime Minister Mark Rutte's Liberal Party. PVV's political power, as well as its weakness, became evident in April 2012 when it suddenly withdrew its support of the Government during Budget negotiations, which led to the immediate fall of the Cabinet.

The ecclesial landscape

Churches in The Netherlands have experienced a period of transition as well. In the United Protestant Church of The Netherlands, remnants of the old "folk church" are still visible, both in thought and matter, but policies to implement new flexible mechanisms are being developed in view of the rapidly declining church membership and a related decrease in financial means. Unused church buildings are being sold off and the money obtained used to ensure the continuity of the local congregations and to stimulate local missionary work.

In this ecclesial context of shrinking resources yet emerging mission opportunities the "old" native churches encounter "others". Renewed missionary efforts in the local context result in encounters between the native Christians and newcomers of both religious and secular conviction.²⁸ Over the past ten years, in direct response to changes in demography and negative attitudes towards immigrants, a number of international churches, such as the

International Christian Fellowship in the small town of Gouda, have started. These communities are intentionally intercultural and inclusive in terms of leadership, preaching, worship, and community service. The number of mono-ethnic migrant-led churches however is far bigger. Many of these migrant churches rent facilities from the native churches for their meetings. A few, like the Congolese *Eglise de la Haye*, acquired an unused urban church building from the Protestant Church. Sadly, "othering" and the financial burden of the mortgage had a direct impact on the church members. Due to the rise of xenophobic attitudes in The Netherlands a large percentage of the Congolese church members, who preferred to raise their children in a more hospitable social-political climate, migrated again.

"Othering" from a Psychological Perspective

Xenophobia in psychological discourse

The "Social Representations Theory" aims to understand xenophobia and "othering" by focusing on historical and cultural processes in the creation of symbolic meaning: such as Muslims attach to objects like burkas.²⁹ In its most basic form, a representation is the communication or action between subjects regarding an object.³⁰ This communication or action exists over time and in context (eg., Islam in the post-9/11 Netherlands) and will be transformed and diffused in society.³¹ Members of groups who share a set of ideas, beliefs, and related practices and identities — social representations — stand in a dialectical relationship with their environment, forming the "other" over time, as well as being transformed by the "other".³²

The "Social Representations Theory" holds that the self and the other are less clearly separable than is often supposed in popular thought.³³ To re-emphasize: the other defines us as much as we define the "other". Within an intergroup context, such as the multi-ethnic Dutch society, this means that social representations — e.g., regarding Turkish Muslims having double citizenship³⁴ — can be "formed in relation to other communities in order to resist or dominate" them.³⁵ In this sense, social representations are by no means neutral, but are intrinsically evaluative and legitimizing systems of our own and the other's identity.³⁶

In a social representations perspective the rise of Dutch xenophobia was the result of communication between natives, over a longer period of time, who came to understand and make sense of the immigrant community as "other". During this identity construction process,

and the diffusion of its result in society, the "other" was evaluated and the constructed identities of the in-group (Dutch speaking natives) and the out-group (Muslim immigrants) were legitimized. Over time the said communication concerning the "other" gradually evolved into "othering", in order to reclaim a sense of proud native Dutch collectiveness or to dominate the immigrant community as object.

An alternate route to construct social representation is to involve the "other" more equally and reciprocally and to prevent as far as possible the construction process being limited to the in-group. In most research, however, xenophobia is not studied within a social representations paradigm, but, as will be shown below, within psychological frameworks like the contact hypothesis, social identity theory, and integrated threat theory.³⁷

Xenophobia and psychological intervention strategies

American psychologist G.W. Allport, credited with the development of the contact hypothesis (also known as intergroup contact theory),³⁸ made a classic distinction between casual and acquaintance contacts between groups. He found that creating space for casual (superficial) contact between natives and immigrants leads to an increase in prejudice, while on the other hand fostering positive opportunities to become acquainted leads to a decrease. Negative stereotypes and anxiety are reduced through better knowledge of the "other" and through perspective-taking (perceiving physical, social, or emotional situations from a point of view other than one's own).³⁹

A recent meta-analysis by T.F. Pettigrew and L.R. Tropp⁴⁰ confirmed that positive acquaintance-contact reduces xenophobia, breeds liking, whereas casual contact does not.⁴¹ When society provides structures for acquaintance-contact, xenophobia decreases even more. The increasing number of immigrants in The Netherlands might, therefore, according to the contact hypothesis, lead to xenophobia **only** when acquainted analogical relationships **do not** develop and the relationships stay casual and non-dialogical.

The contact hypothesis may explain the role of "intergroup contact" in the increase and decrease of xenophobia, but it still leaves us with a problem, because it does not take into account the motives people have for evaluating out-group members. The motives are addressed by the Social Identity Theory,⁴² which states that people's group membership is part of their self-concept. People strive to maintain a positive

sense of their social identity by comparing themselves favourably with other groups. And if necessary and possible, they will change group, or their perception of group/s, to achieve this. This implies that fear of the immigrant is a result of strategies of the native population to achieve and maintain a positive social identity. Indeed, strong identification with the Dutch culture leads to a higher perceived symbolic threat from immigrants (threat to a way of life; different values, norms and beliefs), and thus to a more prejudiced attitude.⁴³

The Integrated Threat Theory provides a theoretical framework for yet another aspect: one that combines the effects of contact and one's social identity with the endorsement of multiculturalism by natives.⁴⁴ In short, and applied to Dutch xenophobia, this theory states that prejudiced xenophobia is caused by a perceived symbolic threat from Muslims and having negative stereotypes about them. Negative stereotypes are reduced in two ways: intergroup contact between native Dutch and immigrant Muslims, and the endorsement of multiculturalism by natives. The symbolic threat is heightened by, on the one hand, identifying as Dutch and, on the other by globalization that "dilutes" this identity.⁴⁵ The threat is reduced, however, by endorsing multiculturalism.

The intervention strategy proposed by the Integrated Threat Theory — friendship creating intergroup contact and endorsing multiculturalism as ways to reduce xenophobia — may sound attractive, but it still lacks some important elements which the Social Representations Theory takes up. The former fails to see that social representations are co-constructed and transformed when people encounter representations of others.⁴⁶ People can have multiple contradictory representations of objects and self at the same time.⁴⁷ Moreover, as mentioned above, the distinction between the individual and the social is not as clear-cut as is often presumed.⁴⁸ This means that xenophobia can only exist as a result of mutual communication and therefore as a social construct.

What it is crucial to note is that the Integrated Threat Theory only takes into account one-sided perspectives, wrongly implying that the analysis of structural aspects of intergroup behaviour depends only on either native Dutch or migrants.⁴⁹ The social representations perspective provides a way to take into account the immigrants' intentions as well and their transformative power as "other". The native's reasons for xenophobia may lie in a will to dominate or the determination to reclaim a sense of collectiveness,⁵⁰ whereas the immigrants have complementary or contrasting motives. The

Integrated Threat Theory fails to take a dialectical stance, whereas the Social Representations Theory does.⁵¹ Xenophobic representations of the native population influence the immigrants' behaviour (e.g., withdrawal, adaptation, or resistance), which in turn alter the representations once again. Furthermore, the social representations perspective shows that the difference between casual and acquaintance-contacts is how representations about immigrants are formed: with immigrants as inclusive "other" (dialogical) or as exclusive object (non-dialogical).⁵² We should therefore take into account: that xenophobia is a social construct, give equal value to the transformative power of immigrants, recognize the dialectical nature of xenophobic representations, and acknowledge the different ways immigrants can be involved in representing.

A prime example of a Dutch institution taking into account the immigrant's perspective is RADAR (Rotterdam Anti-Discrimination Action Council).⁵³ It provides structured programmes to fight the creation and effects of xenophobic representations in society by educating children and supporting the local cooperation of natives and immigrants as well as of ethnically different groups of immigrants. RADAR registers complaints about discrimination and exclusion and intervenes by arranging for dialogical contact between victims and offenders. Similarly, the project, "Welcome in Rotterdam", started in 2005, facilitates dialogical contact between citizens of different ethnicities and creates conditions for more social cohesion by providing knowledge of the other's culture and stimulating interest. A recent report on this project concluded that facilitating structured meetings between the native and immigrant population resulted in more nuance in constructed social representations and reduced stereotyping. It also appealed for double integration, in which native and immigrant contribute equally to participatory citizenship.⁵⁴

Creating superordinate identity through dialogue

Every anti-xenophobia policy should therefore focus on dialogical contacts to stimulate positive ideas about other groups. Symbolically threatening representations resulting from cultural differences — certain Muslims being responsible for 9/11 and the murder of van Gogh — are in such instances reconstructed positively in dialogue between natives and Muslims as "other" instead of object. Dialogue gives them a more equal transformative power and promotes good forms of future intergroup behaviour. One positive effect of dialogical contact with Muslims as "other" is to re-present them as equal members of Dutch society. That is, having a

superordinate overarching identity as Dutch citizens reduces intergroup bias and prejudice.⁵⁵

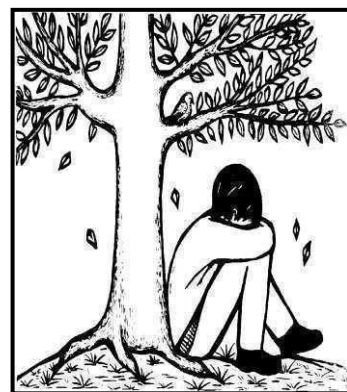
However, a large percentage of the far-right-wing voters live in the Dutch province of Limburg, where relatively few Muslims reside.⁵⁶ So in that location, dialogical contact is not likely to happen spontaneously and institutions enforcing dialogical contact are necessary.

In summary, based on the integration of the Integrated Threat Theory with the Social Representations Theory, we suggest that policies aimed at reducing xenophobia in society and churches should focus on three main strategies: 1) creating institutions enforcing and preserving dialogical contact based on equal potential and status to promote representations built on mutual understanding and familiarity with the immigrant's and native's respective cultures; 2) reducing globalization's diluting effects on identity by creating a positive superordinate over-arching identity including natives and migrants; and 3) promoting multiculturalism (native's perspective) and integration (immigrants' perspective). But first and foremost, underlying these strategies is the proposition that to fight xenophobia, immigrants should not be regarded as an excluded object, but as an equally contributing included "other" in the dialogical construction of social representations.

"Othering" from a Theological Perspective

The "other" needs salvation

For centuries, The Netherlands was labelled a Christian country, being strongly influenced by Calvin's teaching and reformed ethics. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the non-reformed "others" were tolerated, as long as they were not too visible. In consequence, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Arminians, and Mennonites constructed "hidden churches", buildings that could not be identified as a church from the outside. The "popish mass" was considered an "accursed idolatry",⁵⁷ effectively making a Roman Catholic "other" an idolator and heretic. At best they were called "baptized heathens" in peril of eternal rejection by God and therefore in dire need of evangelization by reformed missionaries.⁵⁸ "Others" from Africa and Asia, ethnically different, were identified as "blind heathens".



In post-Enlightenment theology and Christian faith, we may stress biblical references to the "other" as the one who deserves protection and provision. On the one hand, there is the key ethical mandate to love the alien in the pentateuchal and prophetic writings. Love the alien as thyself and treat him as native-born (Lev 19:34). The prophets make abundantly clear that not heeding this inclusive guideline will bring a curse upon the trespassers. Their house shall become a "desolation", a ruin (Jer 22:3,5). This inclusive line culminates in the story of Ruth, the Moabite woman, who married Boaz and was included in the Davidic lineage (Ruth 4:15-22).

Yet there are some disconcerting aspects about the stranger in biblical writings as well. S. Snyder refers to contrasting passages in Scripture using such terms as the "ecology of fear" and the "ecology of faith".⁵⁹ Whereas Leviticus 19 provides an inclusive ethical framework for the encounter with the "other", Chapter 25 sets limits to freedom and distinguishes between "natives" and people from "the nations round about you". The "other" can be enslaved, whereas the native-born cannot (Lev 25:44). This distinction implies that the "other" is excluded from the right to live in freedom.

Probably most disturbing is the framing of the "other" in the accounts of the land conquest and the period of Exile. When Joshua captured the city of Jericho, "every living thing" had to be destroyed (Josh 6:17, 21; cf. Deut 7:1-4). Ezra sets clear guidelines about the separation from foreign wives and their children. They are framed as the cause of contamination and impurity and therefore were to be sent away (Ezra 10:3,14). This process of "othering" was motivated not only religiously, but also ethno-linguistically. Nehemiah mentions that half of the children of ethnically mixed marriages "could not speak the language of Judah" (Neh 13:24). The native-born, the "men of Judah", were rebuked, cursed, and beaten because of their inter-ethnic marriages. What happened to the "others", born on foreign soil, is not alluded to.

The "other" saves me

L.N. Rivera-Pagán submits that the New Testament writings show an inclusive Christological perspective that provides *xenophilia* (love for the stranger, hospitality) as the key ethical mandate.⁶⁰ "Love the alien" is widened to "love thy neighbour". Jesus included the foreign Samaritan woman (Jn 4:7-30) as well as powerless "others", for instance those who were hungry, thirsty, naked, imprisoned, and sick. The nations are judged in accordance

to the way they encountered and dialogued with the marginalized and powerless "other". Breaking down existing boundaries, Jesus identified inclusion as a dual redemptive action, not only in terms of saving the "other", but also in terms of the "other" who saves me. In the "other" we encounter Christ, the divine stranger (Mt 25:43) and ultimate "other". In the Christological perspective, the constructed wall (boundaries) that divides alien and citizen is broken down, as Christ's peace was brought to believers far ("others", Gentiles) or near (Jews). Through the gift of the Spirit, we have become "fellow citizens" (Eph 2:17-19).

Integrating Perspectives from the Social Representations Theory and Theology of Migration

What then are the implications of a social representations perspective for a theology of migration and the ecumenical life of the congregations? Can the approaches be integrated? The psychological theories discussed above make clear that dialogical (not casual) intergroup contact reduces prejudice, that creating and maintaining space for dialectical contact in which the other contributes equally leads to a more positive representation of symbolic meaning, and that the construction of a superordinate over-arching identity is effective in reducing xenophobia.

Available resources

The Churches, though being visibly divided and equally guilty of exclusion, have powerful resources that can be made available for the reduction of xenophobia and the construction of a superordinate identity. The ecumenical movement, based on the premise that Christ's Church is one, recognizes that the "interrelated diversity" of the Christian communities is "essential to its wholeness".⁶¹ It developed mechanisms that foster unity and understanding in the multicultural and multi-ethnic context of confessional and denominational diversity, while recognizing different formulations of the faith, different charismata and ministries, as legitimate expressions of the Gospel.⁶² It builds on the recognition that Christians journey together in conversation and common action, that the "other" contributes equally, and that "apart from the other we are impoverished".⁶³ There is "not a lord or a master, but a brother and a friend", as V.S. Azariah stated at the 1910 World Mission Conference in Edinburgh, speaking about the much-needed cooperation between foreign and native workers in mission.⁶⁴

Ecumenical theology builds on the premise that Christian identity can transform and be transformed, as it is shaped in a tri-angular

relation of the Creator, the self, and the created other. It recognizes that a just and peaceful society needs the equal contribution of all its members in order to deal with diversity and conflict.⁶⁵

The theological discourse on migration presupposes that cultural and ethnic diversity is a fact of human existence and that Christian communal life and its mission is migration-shaped.⁶⁶ In conversations on multi-ethnic communities, the kinship of all sojourners is stressed. It takes the perspective of the *Visio Dei*, in which human beings are restored to the image of God through his intervening Word.⁶⁷ This redemptive action involves marking a new identity by the construction (creation) of a new kingdom-community, a new kinship and social identity that goes beyond national or ethnic boundaries and that lives by the economy of reconciled diversity. This is a new eschatological and Eucharistic community, journeying with the nations to the heavenly Jerusalem for the Messianic banquet (Is 2:2; 25:6).

In the context of multicultural and multireligious New Testament times, the Apostles, not accidentally, stressed the creation of a new individual and social identity in Christ: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal 3:27), that superseded citizenship and ethnicity. Multi-ethnic Christian communities to that effect are laboratories of identity construction that intentionally and dialogically strengthen reconciliation and social cohesion. As such they have great relevance for societies in social transition.

These aims of ecumenical and migration theology coincide with perspectives provided by the Integrated Threat Theory and the Social Representations Theory. The dialectical discourses on unity and diversity, on inclusive re-imagination of church and community, serve as strategies to influence social representations of the "other" in a positive way, as one who is recognized as a fellow human being (equally image of God), fellow believer (equally part of the body), fellow pilgrim (equally seeking the face of God), and even next of kin. It serves to create a superordinate identity, by which we can move beyond "us" and "them" to a "we".

Applied resources

The Christian churches and individuals often do not act according to their identity and values. A great divide between teaching and praxis is visible. It is therefore the task of ecumenical leadership, firstly, to engage churches in North and South to participate in conversations on migration and on the values that guide the process of integration. Secondly, to mobilize

resources that help to bridge the divide by continually calling for a culture of inclusivity, that celebrates life in its diversity⁶⁸ while challenging destructive social representations. And thirdly to facilitate shaping new patterns of local ecumenical cooperation between native and migrant churches, as they are equally contributing "partners in mission".⁶⁹

The social representations perspective makes clear that multi-ethnic churches, with their emphasis on dialogue, an equal power base, and shared over-arching identity as fellow-pilgrims, can contribute to re-creating the social representations of the "other" and can decrease xenophobic attitudes. Churches and theological institutions therefore need to consistently develop and strengthen inclusive theological designs. The International Christian Fellowship in Gouda, mentioned earlier, opted for shaping bi-ethnic leadership teams to enforce power-sharing and "listening with the other". The formation of these teams not only enables a more equal distribution of power, but also results in long term dialogical contacts, which in turn lead to getting acquainted with the "other", perspective-taking, and respecting the "other's" contribution to the community.

The impact of inclusive Christian preaching and teaching should not be underestimated. Surprisingly research has shown that strong identification with Christians as a social group and Christian teaching results in positive feelings about the secular "other", but even more so when the other is recognized as non-threatening.⁷⁰ This is the result of the diffusion into the Christian community of conversations on the "other" who is represented as also being created in the image of God and therefore equally contributing to the community through knowledge, wisdom, and talent. In Christian teaching and preaching, metaphors that strengthen the construction of an over-arching superordinate identity should therefore be further developed, as they constitute building blocks for intervention strategies that decrease negative social representations of the "other" — be they migrant fellow-believers, those of other faiths, or secular non-believers.

Seeing and including the "Other": Concluding Remarks

In this article we have addressed xenophobic attitudes and the construction of an inclusive Christian identity. We have argued that inclusion of the "other" as an equally contributing person creates space to act justly and peacefully in an ecumenical and social perspective. Recognizing the equal contribution of all and creating a superordinate identity will

reduce prejudice and intergroup bias. We have shown that the transformative Christian tradition has resources to decrease xenophobic attitudes and to increase inclusion and cohesion. The Social Representations Theory may help the ecumenical family to analyze and strengthen its intervention strategies, thereby contributing to the inclusion of the "other" and justice for all.

What we have argued for is certainly not all new. Indeed the ecumenical family has a long-the (exclusive) relationship with "other" Christians and churches. A true ecumenical response to the "other" focuses not on the worldwide Christian family as such, but on the *oikoumene*, God's whole world.⁷¹ Ecumenism calls us to allow the "other" to be different and yet to find a superordinate identity that binds us together.

A re-affirmed commitment to provide an ecumenical space for all and to be "entrepreneurs of identity"⁷² will no doubt confront us with some challenges, practical as well as theological. In practice, in facilitating theological training for the Christian ministry, the ecumenical family should give higher priority to teaching the Social Representations Theory, while relating this to ecclesiology and ways to plan intervention strategies. All students should grapple with these issues

standing tradition of thinking about the relationship with the "other". It has already responded to the challenges described above in many ways. One of these responses was given by J.C. Hoekendijk, Acting Secretary to the WCC's Department of Evangelism between 1949 and 1953. In his essay, "The Church in Missionary Thinking" (1952), he argued that the WCC and its constituency should free itself from "churchism", from a one-sided understanding of *koinonia* as

because they will have an impact on the way ministers preach, teach, and plan church programmes, and will, consequently, contribute to a life that leads people to justice and peace.

Theologically, the ecumenical family should expect that inclusive planning may come into conflict with exclusive soteriological positions concerning non-believers and those of other faiths. While recognizing and respecting this tension, we submit that whatever theological position on soteriology we hold, Scripture's key ethical mandate to love our neighbour as ourselves, is prominent. When the nations are judged, love of neighbour is the disturbing, sole criterion (Mt 25:31-46). This neighbourly love starts by representing the "other" in the light of the Divine Other, while recognizing that all, native and migrant alike, are created in God's image and contribute equally.

End Notes

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- ²⁰ "Werkloosheid allochtone jongeren dramatisch", *Trouw*, 16 July 2012.
- ²¹ Unemployment rates of migrants (ages 15-25) rose to 29% (April 2012). Overall unemployment figures for immigrants in 2011 were 13.1%, compared to 4.2% for native Dutch (CBS website).
- ²² The liberal and social-democratic parties constituted the "purple cabinet", excluding the Christian-Democrats, who were part of virtually every cabinet since 1918.
- ²³ See also S.J. Vellinga, "'Huntington' in Holland: The Public Debate on Muslim Immigrants in The Netherlands", *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society* 21:1 (2008), 21-41.
- ²⁴ J. Habermas, "Notes on a Post-Secular Society", *New Perspectives Quarterly* 25:4 (2008), 6.
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Alber Quispe Escobar*

Ilustración, fiesta y religiosidad indígena-mestiza

Apuntes sobre las reformas de Francisco de Viedma en Cochabamba, 1784-1809ⁱ



Desde que logró (a "España unir á sus dominio el vasto, fértil y riquísimo reino del Perú, siempre ha sido tí objeto del infatigable celo de los Reyes y sus Ministros, el conservar inviolados sus fieles vasallos, y mejorar la disposición de las almas idólatras, para atraerlas á nuestra sagrada Religión.

Francisco de Viedma [1784] 1836, 2

1

Aunque desde muy temprano la evangelización acompañó a la empresa de la conquista, siendo la difusión de la fe cristiana de constante preocupación e interés de la Corona en su acción colonizadora (Bravo 1990), sólo a partir de las reformas borbónicas de mediados del siglo XVIII se desarrolló en América un proceso de reforma eclesiástica gestado y regulado desde el Estado. En este sentido, Serge Gruzinski (1985) ha argumentado que si bien hasta lo espiritual dependía del rey en tanto patrono de la Iglesia, nunca antes de las reformas las autoridades civiles habían intervenido con tanta decisión en ámbitos que anteriormente sólo competían a la clerecía. Se trataría, en consecuencia, de una "segunda aculturación" que a diferencia del primer ciclo evangelizador que fue impulsado por los eclesiásticos, empezó a ser inducido por el Estado borbónico.

A partir de las reformas borbónicas, de hecho, la monarquía ilustrada de los Borbones buscó reducir el papel de la Iglesia en América o, como señala Luque (2001), trató de hacer de la Iglesia americana uno de los pilares de la política colonial. A la par que la victoria de las políticas regalistas significó el sometimiento del clero al monarca español (Guerra 1993, 77), emergió un proyecto de ilustración católica fundado en una reforma eclesiástica que proponía una teología más racional que hizo eco en algunas autoridades eclesiásticas de América. Buena parte de las transformaciones en el ámbito religioso y festivo vino de la mano del sistema de intendentes que concentró un poder casi ilimitado en las provincias sólo superado por la autoridad del virrey en América y el rey en España.

En Cochabamba este proyecto estuvo sustentado en la figura administrativa del gobernador intendente Francisco de Viedma y Narváez cuya perspectiva ilustrada moldearía la reforma de distintos ámbitos tal como puede notarse en su proyecto de gobierno, que fue expuesto fundamentalmente en su *Descripción geográfica y*

estadística ... de 1793. Sugiero, como punto de partida, que esta autoridad española vio como un espacio fundamental de sus reformas el campo de la religiosidad y espacio festivo indígena-mestizo, para proyectar algunas de sus ideas ilustradas de gobierno. Así, según la propia percepción que Viedma emitiera en 1784 y que sirve de epígrafe en este escrito, la problemática religiosa ocupará un lugar central en su rol como autoridad civil. Sin embargo, aunque el asunto de las idolatrías (Viedma habla de "almas idólatras") desde hacía tiempo era considerado por las autoridades eclesiásticas como un tema resuelto, a fines del siglo XVIII se pone en debate el carácter de las prácticas religiosas indígena-mestizas y la labor evangelizadora del clero en este distrito de la antigua Charcas. Aquí Viedma hará prevalecer, a pesar de las adversidades, su amplia autoridad aún en un marco de ambigüedad.

En suma, este ejercicio, con todas sus inconsistencias, debe entenderse como parte de una problemática más amplia sobre la ilustración, las reformas borbónicas y la cuestión religiosa en los Andes del siglo XVIII.

2

La designación de Francisco de Viedma como gobernador intendente de la provincia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra,ⁱⁱ cuya capital administrativa fue Cochabamba, formó parte del nuevo proyecto que el Estado borbónico implantó en América a partir del sistema de intendentes puesto en marcha en el virreinato del Río de la Plata en 1782 con la *Real Ordenanza de Intendentes*. Al igual que en el caso mexicano, en este virreinato dicha ordenanza terminó subordinando la política eclesiástica a los proyectos de los ministros ilustrados que defendieron más los argumentos de razón y no tanto de fe en sus objetivos (Mazín 1998, 73). Entre las atribuciones en las cuatro ramas de gobierno (justicia, policía, hacienda y guerra) conferidas a estas autoridades, una de las principales facultades de los gobernadores intendentes era el cuidado y vigilancia del buen

trato a los indígenas, no sólo en el aspecto temporal sino también en lo espiritual. Las primeras preocupaciones de estas autoridades civiles, de hecho, estaban encaminadas a ver su adoctrinamiento o cristianización (Navarro y Ruigómez 1993, 224).

Viedma era un oficial (marino) ilustrado del ejército español que llegó a Cochabamba en agosto de 1784 después de desempeñarse como superintendente del establecimiento de Río Negro en la costa patagónica cuya vigilancia, dicho sea de paso, fue decisiva a lo largo del siglo XVIII y principios del XIX ante la creciente presencia inglesa (Senatora 2007, 37-38). Como otros ilustrados enviados a América, Viedma sentía el apremio de corregir diversos males o carencias de los que padecía la provincia puesta bajo su mando. A casi dos siglos desde que los españoles se asentaron en los valles de Cochabamba, la situación de este distrito rico en producción cerealera que abastecía a los mercados mineros de Potosí (Larson 1992) se encontraba en relativa languidez y la administración de los tributos y la mita minera indígenas escapaban del control del Estado colonial debido al amplio proceso de mestizaje cultural.

Aunque hay mucho que decir del proyecto de gobierno que Viedma expuso a la Corona en su *Descripción geográfica y estadística ...* de 1793, se puede asumir que su "mentalidad política" estuvo fundada en "los ideales teóricos de la ilustración" que conciben que "la libertad individual emana de la racionalidad humana" y que su visión económica estuvo influida por varias corrientes económicas europeas prevalecientes en ese momento histórico (Gordillo 1997, 63). Con estos ideales, desde su llegada a Cochabamba en 1784 hasta 1809 cuando acaeció su muerte, Francisco de Viedma se propuso, y en gran medida logró, su cometido: reformar distintos aspectos que él identificó como adversos al *progreso* de la región. Su constante preocupación por la reforma tributaria tuvo éxito con el incremento de las recaudaciones aunque sus proyectos para ampliar la agricultura de los valles hacia el oriente no prosperaron (Gordillo 1997). El comercio y las manufacturas tuvieron también, aunque en menor medida, la atención de Viedma. No descuidó el espacio urbano para cuya reorganización dispuso significativas medidas respecto al ancho, uniformidad y empedrado de las calles y plaza central, la división de la ciudadⁱⁱⁱ en cuarteles, el mejoramiento del precario sistema de recojo de basura, la refacción de edificios administrativos, entre muchas otras tareas (Cossio 1969). No menos importante fue su actuación en el sistema de justicia en el cual tenía amplia competencia que muchas veces ejerció de forma arbitraria (Enciso 2007). De estas reformas formó parte

el sistema ipenitenciario con la creación de un "presidio" para reos en la finca Chuquioma (partido de Mizque) que se constituyó en una propuesta novedosa en toda Charcas (Mariluz 1962).

A la par de las facultades en materia de Justicia, Policía, Hacienda y Guerra con las que fue revestido el gobernador intendente Viedma, sus intenciones reformistas se reprodujeron con fuerza en el ámbito de las creencias y costumbres. A medida que se fue introduciendo en la administración de la provincia, encontró un mundo festivo y religioso abultadísimo, no siempre subordinado al "bien público", al "recto orden del estado" y a las bases morales del cristianismo. Sus mayores preocupaciones y animadvertencias estuvieron enfocadas principalmente, aunque no de forma exclusiva, en las celebraciones religiosas protagonizadas por indios y cholos. Desde su percepción ilustrada, vio con pesar que a título de la celebración de festividades religiosas se ponían en práctica ceremonias y ritos indígenas antiguos muchas veces con la complicidad de los mismos curas a quienes Viedma fustigó constantemente. También pudo percibir y denunciar la existencia de un ciclo de fiestas basado en fundamentos coercitivos a través del sistema de alferazgos de los cuales obtenían, en su visión, amplias ventajas económicas algunos curas, amén de otros males que se propuso cambiar.⁴

A fines del siglo XVIII este tipo de religiosidad en Cochabamba presentaba un cuadro complejo y parcialmente sincrético a partir de la tensa coexistencia de elementos andinos y cristianos producto, sin duda, del proceso que despuntara con la evangelización en los Andes al comenzar la Conquista. A esas alturas, las variadas formas en las que se yuxtaponían ritos andinos y cristianos daban cuenta de una tensa convergencia donde las prácticas andinas no terminaban de ajustarse a la doctrina cristiana a pesar del conflictivo y ambivalente proceso de cristianización. Este esquema se reproducía en una nutrida red de fiestas patronales, cofradieras y advocaciones mañanas en las que la participación indígena-mestiza fue determinante (Quispe 2009).

En otra oportunidad señalé, al margen de este fenómeno, la poca efectividad del clero en las tareas de evangelización (más adelante veremos algunas aristas de este asunto). Cabe recalcar aquí que las políticas reformistas de Viedma atacaron precisamente esta compleja mezcla de tradiciones religiosas que llevaban, en su visión, a constantes irreverencias y prácticas indeseadas. Probablemente, como ha planteado Gruzinski (1985) para el caso mexicano, le interesaba más al poder civil ilustrado atacar esta configuración *indígena colonial* (esto es, la mezcla confusa de lo

indígena con lo católico) que la herencia indígena o amerindia.

Así que el mundo festivo y religioso que conoce Viedma en sus años de funcionario de la Corona española se presenta como un escenario preciso, que requiere de urgentes reformas, que Viedma emprende guiado, además del sustento legal con el que cuenta, por nuevas ideas que como español ilustrado posee y defiende.⁵ En este escenario, en su abultado calendario administrativo, no descuidó esta faceta de la vida cotidiana y festiva tanto en la Villa y sus alrededores como en los distritos dispersos en toda la provincia. A lo largo de su gobierno, para esta tarea, contó con la colaboración de subdelegados y algunos curas cercanos a él que le informaban de los pormenores festivos y sus "corrupciones".

En términos generales, Viedma arremetió principalmente contra dos aspectos que estructuraban estas celebraciones religiosas coloniales, a saber: el consumo de chicha y el sistema de alferazgos. De ambos elementos el más perjudicial en la visión de este ilustrado español era el consumo de chicha que, decía, era la causa del "desorden público" y la "haraganería". El consumo de chicha, efectuado en los valles de Cochabamba desde tiempos preincaicos (Anderson 2008), era el elemento articulador del ciclo festivo local y aún de la vida cotidiana. Pudo comprobar Viedma que en la elaboración de chicha se consumían "en sólo el distrito del antiguo corregimiento de esta ciudad más de 200.000 fanegadas de maíz anualmente" (Viedma [1793] 1969, 47) de los cuales un importante porcentaje debió ser usado en el ámbito religioso con fines rituales.⁶ Según sus apreciaciones, el excesivo consumo de chicha estaba íntimamente articulado al sistema de fiestas locales de la mano del régimen de alferazgos:

Luego que salen de la función de iglesia, se junta la mayor parte del pueblo en la casa del alférez, y allí es el teatro de la embriaguez y obscenidades; no hay otra diversión ni festejo que el de la chicha, mientras dura el mucho repuesto que de este asqueroso brebaje tiene dispuesto. Permanece la embriaguez sea cuatro, ocho o quince días, en ellos, a más de las graves ofensas a Dios, se abandona el trabajo, se arraiga más y más la haraganería, pues como quedan desfallecidos de semejante tanda, necesitan de algún tiempo para reponerse (Viedma, [1793] 1969, 173).

De la "muchacha pasión o vicio por la chicha" que observó a lo largo de su mandato, el gobernador intendente siempre tuvo un juicio negativo que le llevó a calificar a la chicha como "asqueroso brebaje" a pesar de que proyectó aplicar un impuesto a su fabricación con el

propósito de financiar un sector manufacturero centralizado en el Estado. Aquí, como ocurrió con el tema de la mita minera (Gordillo 1997), el pensamiento ilustrado de Viedma entra en contradicción con su rol de administrador pues mientras por un lado desea suprimir el consumo de chicha, por otro está consciente de la importancia económica que ésta tiene en la región y que puede traer beneficios para las arcas del Estado al que representa.

Además del excesivo consumo de chicha en el ciclo festivo local, el ilustrado español desaprobó el extendido sistema de alferazgos que se ejercían ampliamente en los curatos de Cochabamba y que, en rigor, eran la base de las festividades religiosas. El gobernador intendente expuso sus argumentos en contra de los alferazgos en su conocido informe de 1793 elevado al virrey del Río de la Plata, Nicolás de Arredondo. En él se queja Viedma de lo común que resultaba este sistema de cargos festivos cuyo resultado, en su perspectiva, no era otro que la embriaguez prolongada por varias jornadas y que sustentaba la "haraganería". La sujeción a los alferazgos no solamente estaba destinada para los indios sino también para los más acomodados cholos y mestizos, registrados éstos en los alferazgos de españoles. Viedma se queja de que el funcionamiento del conocido sistema de alferazgos que regía en los curatos "a título de solemnizar el culto divino con la celebridad de las festividades destinadas a ello" causaba "cada un año la destrucción de aquel que se le grave con esta carga, y se da margen al desorden" ([1793] 1969, 173).

Quizá la intervención más emblemática de Viedma en la supresión de este tipo de religiosidad festiva se expresó en la fiesta de San Andrés. A cuatro meses de su arribo a Cochabamba, el gobernador intendente vio, con mucho pesar y espanto, que en ocasión de la fiesta cristiana de San Andrés celebrada cada 30 de noviembre, indios y cholos conjuraban una "agresión blasfema" y no dudaban en profanar los sepulcros que yacían en la iglesia Matriz y el convento San Juan de Dios para desenterrar los huesos y cadáveres de sus allegados y, según la costumbre andina de la muerte, rendirles culto (Quispe 2008). Desde su parecer ilustrado, Viedma se empeñó en atacar estos rituales mortuorios andinos que se realizaban a vista y paciencia del clero "desde tiempo inmemorial". Juzgó esta autoridad que estos rituales, bien conocidos en los restantes curatos, no eran otra cosa que una "abusiva costumbre" que daba lugar a "escandalosos abusos" de "disturbios", "pendencias", "enemistades" y otros perjuicios a la "paz pública" y "tranquilidad del vecindario" además de causar "grave perjuicio a la salud pública" debido a los desenterramientos de

huesos y calaveras "mal disecadas" (AHPC, EC, vol. 6, doc. 1, f. 3v y f. 6r).

A partir de esta agria experiencia, Viedma puso mayor empeño en la reglamentación de las fiestas religiosas en las cuales participaba "la gente plebe", la "ínfima plebe". No fue casual que la fiesta del *Corpus Christi*, una de las celebraciones más importantes de la Villa de Oropesa, que daba cabida a todos los grupos sociales, empezara a ser estrictamente controlada como ocurrió, en realidad, en otros distritos de Charcas (Bridikhina 2000). De este modo, en 1787 el Cabildo presidido por el gobernador intendente se propuso reformar ciertas costumbres que "deslucían" la fiesta del *Corpus*. Se puso en discusión así la "abusiva costumbre" impuesta por los gremios de artesanos y menestrales de "echar una derrama" para la solemnidad del *Corpus* y su octava.⁷ Si bien no se prohibió de forma abrupta esta costumbre, se inició, en cambio, una estrategia más ingeniosa para reglamentarla y aún eliminarla progresivamente aunque esta tarea fuera dejaba en manos de la Junta de Hacienda que debía resolver el asunto "en la forma que tenga por conveniente" (Soruco 1897, 31).

Las danzas y mascaradas que realizaban los indios en la fiesta de *Corpus Christi*, cuya participación fue obligatoria desde la administración del virrey Francisco de Toledo a fines del siglo XVI, empezaron a ser vistas como causantes de desorden, irreverencia e irrespeto al ceremonial católico y, aún, al poder real. Se insistió entonces en la reforma de los "espectáculos de danzas" que no servían, decían las autoridades del Cabildo, sino de "irrisión i fomento a la embriaguez y holgazanería" (1897, 31). Hay razones para pensar que estas disposiciones a la par que limitaban la participación indígena en dicha festividad, reforzaban del mismo modo el simbolismo que combinaba el ceremonial religioso con la obediencia política al rey y sus autoridades delegadas en América (Bridikhina 2007).

La exaltación del carácter cívico en las fiestas religiosas fue propia de las autoridades ilustradas en toda Charcas. Al igual que sus similares de otras provincias, el gobernador intendente de Cochabamba no descuidó esta faceta simbólica de reafirmación del poder regio. Buscó por todos los medios realzar el ceremonial político en aquellas fiestas religiosas que recordaban y reforzaban la lealtad al rey. De hecho, la reafirmación ritual de la presencia del poder real en Cochabamba fue reforzada por medio de ceremoniales que recordaban la autoridad del monarca. De este orden fueron "las funciones" organizadas por Viedma en 1789 para realzar la proclamación de Carlos IV. Sus gestiones para costear estas

ceremonias a través de la cobranza de cuotas en los partidos de su administración y los tonos simbólico-rituales que adquirieron éstas, dicen mucho de sus pretensiones encaminadas a hacer prevalecer este tipo de festejos públicos a contrapelo de sus actuaciones en las festividades indígena-mestizas (AHMC, ECC, vol. 214, doc. 3; AHMC, vol. 215, doc. 4, f. 56v).

Entre estos ceremoniales de reforzamiento del poder regio, Viedma privilegió la presencia de las autoridades civiles a las que pretendió otorgar más atribuciones organizativas a costa de los representantes religiosos. Siendo de estos pensamientos, le disgustó que en 1787 la fiesta celebrada el 30 de agosto por los dominicos en conmemoración de Santa Rosa de Lima, "patrona del reino", haya estado regida por la "indecencia" y poco lucimiento, al margen de que el "traje i vestuario" de la imagen estuviera "tan deslucido" (Soruco 1897, 33). Si bien se optó por "exitar la devoción de la gente á fin de que con su intercesión se consiga la felicidad de ella, i la piedad i misericordia del Todo Poderoso" (1897, 33), en realidad se buscaba con estos argumentos desplazar al clero a un lugar marginal en estos ceremoniales cada vez más encaminados a reforzar el pacto entre el monarca y sus súbditos. Así, la solución llegó en la propuesta que sugería que la fiesta fuese realizada por turno por los regidores del Cabildo quienes contarían con veinticinco pesos para solemnizar la festividad y hacer prevalecer "la moderada decencia que corresponde". En estas modificaciones los juicios de las autoridades religiosas sólo fueron requeridos para saber la conveniencia de sacar la imagen de las casas del Cabildo o del mismo convento para cuyo fin se debía pasar un oficio al Prior.

Como en los casos presentados hasta ahora, las intenciones reformistas del gobernador intendente Francisco de Viedma en el ámbito festivo-religioso siguieron siendo predominantes en años posteriores. A comienzos del siglo XIX Viedma puso sus oficios para evitar "embriagueses" y "otros delitos" (AHPC, EC, vol. 40, doc. 41) en la conocida fiesta de Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes esta vez por intermedio del visitador eclesiástico Matías Terrazas a quien se quejó de las arbitrariedades de los curas mercedarios en la administración de la cofradía de la misma imagen (Quispe 2007).

3

Existe un vínculo muy estrecho entre las reformas que emprendió Francisco de Viedma en el ámbito de la religiosidad indígena-mestiza y el papel que desempeñó el clero ante estas novedosas intervenciones del poder civil así como en la vigencia y continuidad de este tipo de prácticas en el seno del cristianismo. Aunque todavía no se

ha estudiado la labor del clero en la difusión de la doctrina cristiana en los curatos de Cochabamba, cuando nos concentramos en el proyecto de Viedma destinado a "asuntos religiosos", estamos tentados de dar por válidos indicios que sugieren que a fines del siglo XVIII estos representantes terrenales de la Iglesia no vivían precisamente regidos a una "vida cristiana". ¿Se trata simplemente de la acusación de una autoridad civil destinada a socavar la jurisdicción religiosa e incrementar el poder (regulación y control) del Estado? ¿Hasta qué punto las acusaciones de Viedma sobre la poca moralidad cristiana del clero resultan evidentes cuando nos encontramos en un periodo de fuerte disputa entre el poder civil y religioso? No es vano, en consecuencia, empezar esta discusión tomando en cuenta las reformas previas gestadas por la propia Iglesia para "encaminar" la labor evangelizadora.

El Sínodo organizado por el arzobispo de La Plata Pedro Miguel de Argandoña Pasten en 1771, se propuso realizar la reforma de la Iglesia en lo concerniente a la evangelización apoyada en el clero parroquial secular que debía llevar a cabo la renovación cristiana de sus fieles. Uno de los temas de más debate al interior del Sínodo fue el referido a las fiestas, su obligatoriedad y aranceles. Las constituciones sinodales pretendieron resolver la vieja injusticia de las exacciones que los curas doctrineros hacían por conceptos de obvenciones y limosnas en la organización de las fiestas religiosas. No obstante, su solución fue bastante ambigua y, al fin de cuentas, terminó favoreciendo a la Iglesia aún a costa de las disposiciones borbónicas (Luque 2001, Adrián 2000).

El caso de Cochabamba acaso confirma la poca importancia que tuvieron las constituciones sinodales de 1773 en la vida evangelizadora del clero encargado de las parroquias de indios y aún de la misma capital. Si bien Viedma destaca la "educación cristiana y disciplina eclesiástica" del Arzobispado hacia los curas del distrito de su mando, a lo largo de su gobierno se quejó constantemente de la débil labor evangelizadora de los curas y a menudo acusó a éstos de regirse a una vida libertina. Fue esta autoridad quien emprendió una aguda crítica a la labor de los eclesiásticos de Cochabamba y pidió su pronta reforma.⁸ En su informe de 1793 elevado al virrey Nicolás de Arredondo, denunciaba el gobernador intendente los "abusos" del clero en ocasión de las festividades religiosas y la imposición de alferazgos no obstante la reforma del estado eclesiástico impulsado por el arzobispo Antonio de San Alberto:

Por las leyes de estos dominios, ordenanzas y cédulas reales se les encarga estrechamente a los curas remedien en lo posible la embriaguez

de los indios, pero en lugar de ocurrir efectivamente a este mal, con la permanencia de semejante abuso, se les da motivos para autorizarle, haciéndole de imposible curación; y lo peor es, que algunos curas han llegado al extremo de embargar y vender de autoridad propia los cortos bienes del alférez, aunque estos sean una yunta de bueyes y cuatro ovejas, para hacerse pago de sus derechos, dejándoles incapaces de poder pagar el tributo, ni asistir a sus hijos, por lo que son obligados a profugar, haciéndose unos vagantes, que infestan los pueblos con sus robos y rapiñas ([1793] 1969,174).

Del mismo modo que ocurrió en otras latitudes andinas, en Cochabamba entre las múltiples transgresiones de las que fueron acusados los curas, las exacciones económicas de sus feligreses indígenas a través del costeo de fiestas religiosas se constituyeron en una de las principales causas de "corrupción" y débil labor evangelizadora hacia los indígenas. El asunto del número de fiestas que debían costear los indígenas es particularmente interesante cuando se considera que la práctica ritual-festiva fue parte decisiva en el mundo andino que, en la mayor parte de los casos, se reproducía bajo advocaciones cristianas. No fue casual entonces que las doctrinas más codiciadas por el clero fueran las comunidades indígenas debido a la gran cantidad de feligreses que podían contribuir con obvenciones y costear las numerosas fiestas, amén de otros privilegios como los pagos en especie o mano de obra (Adrián 2000).

El trabajo del clero secular y regular en la labor evangelizadora de Cochabamba, en realidad como sucedió en todo el territorio andino, no fue suficientemente intenso como para imponer de modo concluyente esquemas cristianos en las tradicionales celebraciones indígenas. En la fiesta ritual de San Andrés, por ejemplo, la institución eclesiástica, sumida al parecer en otros problemas no precisamente evangélicos, no había erradicado en absoluto las prácticas rituales indígenas desplegadas bajo la advocación del santo cristiano. Al contrario, algo alejados del Arzobispado de La Plata de cuya jurisdicción dependían, los curas de Cochabamba se habían vuelto cómplices de los rituales mortuorios andinos. La embestida contra estos ritos sobre la muerte vino no por gracia precisamente de las autoridades eclesiásticas de Cochabamba sino por el férreo mandato del gobernador intendente Viedma. Más aún, las acciones del gobernador intendente para frenar tales "escandalosos abusos" disgustaron a las autoridades eclesiásticas locales como al juez eclesiástico doctor Faustino Mendoza quien se negó a poner fin al desentierro de los cadáveres y huesos de los templos cristianos.⁹

Seguramente el gobernador intendente comunicó estas faltas del clero al arzobispo de La Plata Antonio de San Alberto, quien hizo la visita pastoral de los curatos de Cochabamba, como ningún otro, hacia 1790. De hecho, San Alberto, un religioso ilustrado de su época, fue el primero que penetró hasta el curato de Yani (provincia de Ayopaya) acompañado del gobernador intendente Francisco de Viedma (Gutiérrez 1865, 515). A partir de esta visita, el arzobispo pudo convencerse de la mala conducta, falta de moral y dignidad de los curas, más bien entregados a la avaricia y a las exacciones de sus feligreses.¹⁰ Es bastante sugerente que no sólo Viedma tuviera un juicio negativo de una parte del clero, sino que este parecer fuera reforzado por San Alberto con quien el gobernador intendente compartió no pocas ideas de "buen gobierno".

Años más tarde, en 1808, las noticias de los cultos mortuorios en la fiesta de San Andrés llegaron a oídos del arzobispo de La Plata Benito María Moxó y Francoli, por intermedio del propio Viedma, quien refiere, en una carta, que a poco de haber recibido el gobierno en agosto de 1784 presencié espantado esta costumbre, persiguiéndola desde entonces para suprimirla (Moreno 1997). No debió sorprender tanto al Arzobispo la existencia misma de los rituales andinos (pues, a nuestro entender, la Iglesia estaba consciente de su parcial labor de evangelización respecto a las religiones andinas) cuanto la actitud de los curas que se vieron involucrados directamente en el desarrollo de la celebración.

La crítica de Viedma, sin embargo, no se detuvo en la intervención del clero en asuntos festivos o en aquellos relacionados con los procesos de evangelización de la población indígena, sino que se extendió a denunciar irregularidades y arbitrariedades de seculares y regulares que en su visión opacaban el "celo cristiano" y, por el contrario, se constituían en graves faltas que limitaban la labor cristiana entre los feligreses. Veamos su juicio:

En los conventos religiosos que tiene esta ciudad, a excepción del de mi padre San Francisco, no se guarda clausura ni vida común. Las mujeres entran a las horas que les parece en los claustros y celdas; cada religioso come en la suya o fuera del convento, lo que puede según su manejo de medios; por lo regular algunos viven fuera de ellos y otros casi apóstatas. Desde el prelado abajo, se recogen a la hora que les parece. Aunque están obligados a auxiliar a la iglesia con su predicación y socorros espirituales a los fieles, solamente en el convento de San Francisco se predica los viernes de cuaresma, y en el de la Merced en idioma quichua de tres años a esta parte, que se ha dedicado un religioso, llamado Fray Francisco Paz de Buenavida; faltando éste, seguirá como antes. Para con los otros conventos todo el tiempo es igual. En ninguno se socorre al

prójimo en el estado efe su último fin, ayudándole a bien morir; en esto hay el mayor abandono, así en los eclesiásticos seculares, como regulares. En administrándoles el cura o ayudante los últimos sacramentos, los dejan en manos de su familia o asistentes, si los tiene, y expiran sin que tengan quienes invoquen el dulcísimo nombre de Jesús ([1793] 1969,176).

Legítimo es creer tales extremos no sólo en las denuncias del gobernador intendente sino sobre todo en la insistente reforma que se intentó desde el arzobispado de La Plata, principalmente bajo los auspicios del arzobispo San Alberto, más tarde continuada bajo la dirección de Benito María Moxó y Francoli, quien inició una reforma parcial en la doctrina, moral y disciplina del clero de Cochabamba.

No cabe duda, sin embargo, que esta problemática debe ser entendida como parte del conflicto más general entre las pretensiones de concentración del poder (o la centralización del Estado) emprendidas por el gobernador intendente quien extendió su autoridad hacia ámbitos de predominancia eclesial. Se entiende así que las disputas por el control del poder no sólo se circunscribieron al campo de las fiestas públicas sino también a espacios donde el clero tenía participación y jurisdicción. Entre los muchos casos al respecto, cabe nombrar la visita que emprendió Viedma en 1788 al Partido de Arque donde se enteró que los curas y sus tenientes cometían "abusos, daños y extorsiones" a los indígenas "recargándolos de pensiones y diferentes especies de servicio personal" (AHMC, ECC, vol. 206, doc. 12, ff. 219r-219v). Más tarde, en 1794, en este mismo Partido, encontró un aliado en el cacique del pueblo de Tapacarí, Matías Quispe, que se quejó de las "extorsiones que padecen aquellos Yndios" causadas por los cobradores de diezmos y primicias que beneficiaban al clero. Su intento de regulación causó "ruidosos efectos"¹¹ e hizo cada vez más tensa la relación entre Viedma y los curas de Cochabamba quienes algunas veces contaron con el respaldo de la Audiencia de La Plata que, como en este caso, no dio la razón a Viedma y restituyó el método antiguo de cobrar diezmos y veintenatas.

Otro ejemplo de la clara intervención de Viedma en asuntos antes considerados privativos de las autoridades religiosas, sucedió en el ámbito de las cofradías. A comienzos del siglo XIX la administración de la cofradía de Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes, cuya amplia devoción le aseguraba una cantidad de fieles, fue traspasada a manos de los religiosos del convento de la Merced en forma irregular (Quispe 2007). Aunque el pedido de un informe sobre el origen, economía y administración provino de la Real Audiencia con sede en La Plata, fue el gobernador intendente quien tomó a su cargo este asunto, tarea para la

cual inició varias diligencias a veces más allá de sus atribuciones. Obligó, de este modo, en 1803 a fray Manuel Pareja, a la sazón mayordomo de la cofradía y comendador del convento de la Merced, a hacer público el libro de la cofradía, a la vez que encargó al escribano real Francisco Ángel Astete a presentar un informe en base a este documento. Quizá lo que sospechaba Viedma fue que los mercedarios habían despojado de la mayordomía a los seculares con el objeto de administrar el apreciable monto de limosnas que ofrecían los feligreses y los réditos de los censos impuestos en algunas propiedades a favor de la imagen (AHPC, EC, vol. 36, doc. 2). Aunque desconocemos el veredicto final respecto a la disputa por la administración de la cofradía, lo que cabe recalcar aquí es la intervención del gobernador intendente en asuntos antes hegemonícamente eclesiásticos.

Es de suponer que la persistente labor reformista de Francisco de Viedma en arenas religioso-festivas aumentó el descontento del clero que venía siendo afectado en sus privilegios a partir del reformismo borbónico.¹² Gruzinski (1985), para el caso de México de fines del siglo XVIII, ha argumentado que la jerarquía eclesiástica vio desconfiada la intromisión de la autoridad civil en materias que consideraba de su competencia como fue el asunto de las cofradías indígenas. Como en este caso, las reformas de Viedma causaron no pocos desaires entre el clero que tenía intereses en Cochabamba.

En 1790 Viedma sostuvo un altercado con el Obispo de La Paz relacionado al nombramiento de sacerdotes (Lynch 1967). Hacia 1797 cuando Viedma publicó las ordenanzas del Duque de la Palata de 1684 que eximían a los indios de la contribución de derechos parroquiales y las destinadas a celebrar las fiestas, los curas de Cochabamba reaccionaron incómodos reclamando y argumentando ante Viedma que era necesario no dar lugar a tales excepciones ya que tendrían escasas rentas y el culto festivo a Dios sería insignificante. Ante la respuesta relativamente satisfactoria que recibieron del gobernador intendente por tratarse de "motivos especiales" aprobados por el anterior arzobispo, dicho tropiezo no tuvo mayores inconvenientes. Sin embargo, la actitud de Viedma nuevamente se tornó ambivalente pues aunque estaba en contra de los alferazgos, en esta oportunidad aprobó temporalmente (hasta recibir la respuesta del virrey) la existencia de éstos con tal de que no pasaran ciertos montos económicos establecidos por el arancel (AHPC, EC, vol. 27, doc. 26).

¿Cuál fue la respuesta de Viedma frente a todas estas arbitrariedades? Aunque Viedma emprendió una clara labor administrativa que buscó limitar el control eclesiástico en "asuntos religiosos", su

apuesta final no parece descansar en una regulación absoluta del Estado. Al contrario, cuando esta autoridad reflexiona sobre los "abusos" del clero de su jurisdicción, no encuentra otra salida que sugerir la creación de un nuevo obispado que imponga "disciplina eclesiástica" y limite los excesos de los curas. Su propuesta, en este sentido, no dejaba de ser novedosa pues consideraba que "la religión cristiana florecería sin los escandalosos excesos que se notan, mayormente si las religiones se sujetasen a los ordinarios en estas Américas, con total independencia de su general, suprimiendo los provinciales, y dejando en libertad a los religiosos, para que elijan prelados en sus respectivos conventos a su satisfacción" ([1793] 1969,177). Las propiedades de un "cristianismo ilustrado" acaso se expresaban en este tipo de ideas que debieron incomodar a más de una autoridad religiosa. En el fondo, no obstante, siguen latentes sus intenciones de extender el poder del Estado a espacios donde la Iglesia, o sus representantes, tenía predominancia antes del reformismo borbónico.

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A partir de la aplicación de las reformas borbónicas en Cochabamba la búsqueda de una ruptura, o al menos un distanciamiento, con el pasado inmediato se tradujo en la puesta en marcha de medidas administrativas de control de las prácticas culturales del espacio festivo y religioso. Como en el México estudiado por Gruzinski (1985), los actos desplegados por el gobernador intendente Francisco de Viedma en Cochabamba formaron parte de una política más amplia donde prevalecía la voluntad de controlar y moralizar los comportamientos culturales. Si bien autoridades eclesiásticas como el arzobispo ilustrado San Alberto tomaron parte en la reforma moral de los feligreses y el clero llano, fue la personalidad ilustrada de Viedma que articuló desde su cargo administrativo esta empresa renovadora del orden social y cultural. Se puede afirmar que el proyecto ilustrado de Viedma pretendió, con muchas adversidades, hacer de los indios y cholos de la región vasallos útiles y hombres cristianos que sintieran lealtad y respeto igual por el rey y la fe católica. Su objeto, en este sentido, se encaminó a denunciar los abusos del clero contra los fieles a la vez que utilizó tales denuncias para limitar el rol de los clérigos al ámbito espiritual.

Se trató, con todas sus deficiencias y consecuencias, de un proyecto que reafirmó el control del Estado sobre los comportamientos y creencias, a la par que ocurría el debilitamiento de la Iglesia americana a causa de su progresivo sometimiento a la política centralista de la Corona española. Con todo, las tareas encaminadas a la reforma de la provincia de la jurisdicción de Viedma, no fueron del todo bien recibidas y a

menudo fueron fuente de pugnas y tensiones entre las autoridades civiles y las autoridades eclesiásticas locales. Lo nuevo y lo viejo no terminaron de cuajar en una sociedad que abría resquicios para la formación de una "cultura popular" (Larson 2000) que, dicho sea de paso, fue incómoda para el programa ilustrado del gobernador intendente.

No obstante, en el fondo, este proyecto reformista basado en ideales de la ilustración fue también una búsqueda de la "paz pública", de la salubridad de la Villa, de la voluntad cristiana de los indios, a la par que la defensa de los pilares morales (nuevos) del cristianismo. Aquí se puede sugerir que el proyecto ilustrado de Viedma no se arraigó exclusivamente en arenas de la razón, como generalmente se concluye al hablar de personajes ilustrados del siglo XVIII, sino que tuvo sus motivaciones en la fe cristiana aunque, cabe aclarar, ésta fue más bien interpretada

desde una perspectiva racionalista casi afín a la del arzobispo de La Plata Antonio de San Alberto, otro ilustrado que predicaba una teología relativamente novedosa en los límites de su época. Aún en esas condiciones, no podemos decir de forma concluyente que el proyecto ilustrado de Francisco de Viedma en relación al ámbito religioso fuera del todo "exitoso" a mediano y largo plazo. Aunque no hemos podido examinar, por ejemplo, las reacciones de los indígenas ante las prohibiciones dictadas por Viedma, sí podemos adelantar que las descripciones que dejaron viajeros (como Juan H. Scrivener) que visitaron Cochabamba a lo largo del siglo XIX dan cuenta de un mundo festivo-religioso notoriamente denso donde muchas prácticas indígenas prohibidas por Viedma volvieron a la escena pública.¹³ A fines del siglo XIX un nuevo ciclo de control del espacio urbano y las prácticas culturales recaerá en manos de las élites locales a casi un siglo de las reformas del marino español.

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End Notes

ⁱⁱ Una primera versión de este escrito fue presentada al VI Congreso de la Asociación de Estudios Bolivianos, Sucre, 2011.

ⁱⁱ Desde 1776 esta provincia o intendencia pasó a depender de la jurisdicción del virreinato del Río de la Plata. A la vez, la Real Ordenanza de Intendentes de 1782 estableció que esta provincia estuviera integrada por los territorios pertenecientes a los corregimientos de Cochabamba, Mizque y la capitanía de Santa Cruz de la Sierra, y por los gobiernos de Moxos y Chiquitos en materia militar.

ⁱⁱⁱ La otrora Villa de Oropesa recibió el título de ciudad recién en 1786 con la distinción de "leal y valerosa" dada por Carlos III "en atención al exacto desempeño con que la villa de Cochabamba y su Provincia, han acreditado su debida fidelidad en los recientes alborotos, y sublevación excitada por los indios de algunas provincias inmediatas" (citado en Viedma 1969, 171).

⁴ En realidad, esta situación nada agradable para autoridades como Viedma y algunas autoridades eclesiásticas jerárquicas, se reproducía casi en el conjunto de los curatos de esta parte de América. Conscientes de este tipo de desavenencias y motivadas por un sentimiento reformista, algunas autoridades eclesiásticas impulsaron la celebración de Sínodos a fines del siglo XVIII para corregir la "desviación" de sus pastores. El Sínodo celebrado en 1771 en Charcas, de cuya jurisdicción dependían los curatos de Cochabamba, fue realizado con estas motivaciones aunque no tuvo los resultados esperados.

⁵ Se puede conjeturar, en este orden de cosas, que pesaba también en Viedma una convicción personal de fuerte devoción cristiana. Al revisar el testamento que dejó, se puede constatar una ferviente religiosidad expresada en su cultura material ya que entre sus numerosos objetos tasados en rigor de ley, se catalogaron bultos e imágenes cristianas diversas que pueden expresar esta convicción más allá (o entreverada a ella) de su defensa de la razón sobre la fe. Su actitud caritativa hacia los pobres y huérfanos de la provincia a quienes dejó parte de su herencia, pueden dar testimonio de esta faceta a veces olvidada (HAMC Testamento..1978; AHMC, PRC, vol. 19, doc. 74, ff. 198r-209r; AHMC, PRC, vol. 20, doc. 26, ff. 100r-104v). Visto así este asunto, se puede conjeturar que en Viedma no hubo un conflicto real entre razón y fe aunque habrá que decir que la primera primaba sobre la segunda.

⁶ De los excepcionales usos de la chicha en las celebraciones religiosas patronales, y aún al interior de los templos cristianos, pudo dar testimonio años más tarde el médico inglés Juan H. Scrivener en su visita a Cochabamba (Scrivener 1864).

⁷ Entre las autoridades civiles parecía prevalecer la duda de los destinos de las contribuciones de los feligreses y su carácter voluntario o coercitivo ya que se cuestionó que año tras año dichos montos corrieran "sin formalizar [...], como es debido i dar las cuentas de su inversión". A pedido de Viedma se resolvió que tomara parte en ella la Junta Superior de Real Hacienda. Mientras se hacían estas diligencias se optó por la continuidad de esa práctica "con tal de que intervenga el caballero Sindico por lo que interesa el público i que se den las cuentas con la debida justificación presentándolas a dicho Señor, para, en su vista proceder a

expresar esta convicción más allá (o entreverada a ella) de su defensa de la razón sobre la fe. Su actitud caritativa hacia los pobres y huérfanos de la provincia a quienes dejó parte de su herencia, pueden dar testimonio de esta faceta a veces olvidada (HAMC Testamento..1978; AHMC, PRC, vol. 19, doc. 74, ff. 198r-209r; AHMC, PRC, vol. 20, doc. 26, ff. 100r-104v). Visto así este asunto, se puede conjeturar que en Viedma no hubo un conflicto real entre razón y fe aunque habrá que decir que la primera primaba sobre la segunda.

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⁸ Moreno (1997), con dura crítica, ha tratado este asunto en "Los clérigos de Cochabamba y Chuquisaca. 1784-1808", pp. 171-186.

⁹ Esta fue la respuesta de Mendoza ante el pedido de Viedma: "No é ordenado la omnímota cesación en esta costumbre por que veo que se halla fundada, y apoiada con el propio Veneficio Publico que agito el selo de V[uestra] señoría pues ala Verdad estas exhumaciones no se hacen con otro fin que el de proporcionar lugar en las Yglecias para la sepultación de los Cadáveres y evitar la Corrupción que ocasiona el que estos se entierren unos sobre otros con este principal objeto se trasladan los huesos áridos y secos aun foso para soterrarlos ó depositarlos en lugar sagrado, pues de otro modo jamas se podría conseguir su total desecación por que participando de la humedad de los Cuerpos frescos habría mayor matherial para el fermento y consiguientemente para la Corrupción la qual en ningún lugar se debe evitar más que en las Yglecias, assi por que podría impedir la Celebración de los Divinos oficios, como por que siendo frequente e Indispensable el concurso de los fieles en ellas habría maior motivo para que se apestase la República" (AHPC, EC, vol. 6, doc.1, f. 4v). Aunque, luego, el religioso reprocho la "borrachera y escándalos" de los que, según estaba convencido, eran causantes los alféreces, hay razones para pensar que no tenía interés en abolir tales exhumaciones debido, quizá, a los réditos que lograba para ambos conventos por derechos de exhumación y nuevo entierro. Le siguió en esta actitud el prior del convento San Juan de Dios quien pese a ser notificado por la autoridad eclesiástica se había empeñado en no cumplir las disposiciones libradas para el caso.

¹⁰ En esa oportunidad San Alberto anotó: "Hay curas [...] que desde el instante en que son nombrados, ya no piensan, no hablan de otra cosa que en aviarse, y no como quiera y con aquella moderación que corresponde á un pobre Cura sino con un tren y equipaje igual y aun tal vez superior al que pudiera prevenir un canónigo ó una dignidad o un gran señor. Olandas y estopillas para camisas, encages y clarines para las pechugueras, terciopelos y fondos para vestido exterior; tercianela, grodetues y buratos para sotanas y manteo, colgaduras de damasco para la cama, muestras de relojes de oro, dos cuando menos, para que á todos lados cuelgue y se ostente riqueza y vanidad; el mejor caballo o la mejor mula, con el aderezo más brillante, valga lo que valga y cueste lo que cueste. Pero como ni ellos ni sus padres tienen caudal ni posibles para tanto, se les hace preciso o tomar la plata á réditos o sacar los géneros al fiado, y consiguientemente a entrar en el curato empeñados en miles de pesos" (Carta Pastoral de 1790, citado en Gutiérrez 1865, 517).

¹¹ Escribió Viedma en esa oportunidad: "Los curas levantaron el grito, especialmente los de la Santa Iglesia Matriz de esta dicha ciudad alegando despojo en la costumbre en que se hallan de cobrar primicia aún de la cantidad más corta con notable perjuicio a sus legítimos derechos, y presentándome el despacho del muy Reberendo Arzobispo Don Juan Queipo Llano y Valdes en que por auto de dies y seis de Noviembre de mil setecientos y tres declaró el método y forma que devia observarse en la Cobranza de primicia, pidieron no se hiciera novedad del que se observa en el día, y sin embargo de haverse exedido a lo declarado por el expresado Mui Reberendo Arzobispo los cobradores e ir introduciendo cada día maiores abusos con grave perjuicio de los miserables indios y demás contribuyentes [...]" (AHMC, ECC, vol. 241, doc. 9, ff. 118v-119r).

¹² Las medidas de la Corona más perjudiciales para los curas doctrineros fueron: las que buscaban reducir el número de fiestas, reducir la jurisdicción de los doctrineros y formar un solo ingreso de entre las variadas entradas compuestas por el sínodo (salarios que se deducía de la masa tributaria de los indios), pagos directos en moneda y especie generalmente destinadas a costear las fiestas y las obvenciones (bautismos, matrimonio, entierros) (Adrián 2000).

¹³ Todavía el Sínodo de 1873, presidido por el obispado de Cochabamba Francisco María del Granado, discutió el "detestable abuso" de sepultar cadáveres fuera de los cementerios, así como la "horrible costumbre" de extraerlos el día de San Andrés (Valda 1995), prácticas que tanto había combatido Viedma durante su administración.

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P. Odon Patrick Mpoyi Kandindi
Eucharistie, défi pour les communautés
chrétiennes d'Afrique

Introduction

Nous voulons dans cette dissertation faire un effort de revisiter à nouveaux frais le mystère eucharistique qui fonde et donne naissance à l'Église-Famille de Dieu qui est en Afrique. L'Afrique est dotée d'une authentique fraternité, à savoir, la solidarité et le partage, la défense des droits et de la dignité du frère ... qui sont en voie de disparition à cause des défis connus: la violence des dictatures, l'incitation à la haine tribale et à des affrontements fratricides, le génocide, l'abandon du peuple à son triste sort.

Dans l'Eucharistie, le Christ nous révèle la nouvelle possibilité d'habiter le monde et nous offre une nouvelle possibilité d'exister, de comprendre notre humanité et nous-mêmes comme projet de vie et générateur de vie, dans la mesure où nous donnons — comme le Christ — notre propre vie.

Ce faisant, l'invitation «faites ceci en mémoire de moi» qui accompagne les récits de l'institution indique, pour les chrétiens, un devoir de transmission (1 Co 11, 23), en même temps qu'une responsabilité d'actualisation (1 Co 11,26).ⁱ De la sorte, le mystère eucharistique doit provoquer et interpeller au plus haut point, en ce moment où le continent africain connaît plusieurs foyers de violence et que les efforts de réconciliation ne semblent pas aboutir aisément, où la pauvreté, la misère, les guerres sont devenues monnaie courante. L'Eucharistie doit aussi provoquer l'Église-Famille, Dieu — communion, ou Dieu — Trinité.ⁱⁱ Trinité comprise comme une communauté des personnes qui fondent une société des frères et sœurs, où le dialogue et le consensus constituent les fondements de la convivialité aussi bien pour le monde que pour l'Église.ⁱⁱⁱ

En revanche, cette Église-Famille est à construire autour du «sacramentum caritas», étant donné que l'Eucharistie bien comprise, bien vécue et bien célébrée, a la force de la transformer l'existence humaine en amenant ceux qui y participent à un plein accomplissement. Car elle est le fruit de l'amour de Dieu et nous y recevons l'amour auquel nos mœurs sont appelées à se modeler. Et pour cela, il est nécessaire de tenir compte de

l'existence éthique de l'Eucharistie, de sa capacité de promouvoir la personne humaine et de son pouvoir de réconcilier l'homme avec Dieu, avec son prochain et avec la nature.

C'est dans ce sillage que nous allons articuler cette dissertation autour de quatre points, à savoir: l'exigence éthique de l'Eucharistie, Eucharistie comme principe et projet de mission, Eucharistie comme lieu de la promotion humaine, Eucharistie comme lieu de la réconciliation.

1. L'exigence éthique de l'Eucharistie

Les Pères de l'Église ont toujours parlé du caractère inachevé de notre Eucharistie: l'Eucharistie était pour eux — comme elle l'est aussi pour nous — une ombre par rapport à la réalité ultime qu'elle préfigure dans les signes. Son inachèvement que nous avons ici en vue est celui qui relève essentiellement de nos misères: nous trahissons l'Eucharistie. L'inachevé concerne moins la forme même du Repas du Seigneur que la médiocrité des participants que nous sommes.^{iv} A ce propos, Guy Goureaux écrit: «Qu'est-ce que cette communauté, interrogent les uns, qui se formerait dans l'Église avec des hommes qui se combattent (et sans aménité) dans la vie économique, sociale et politique ? Qu'est-ce que cette communauté qui se dit au service des pauvres des plus déshérités, mais qui est essentiellement faite de ces nantis?».^v De plus, Saint Jacques ne condamne-t-il pas une assemblée chrétienne où l'on peut estimer les riches à cause de leurs richesses et humilier ainsi les pauvres? (Jc 2,2-5).

De ce point de vue, à en croire M. Bellet, les chrétiens sont invités à «reprenre la quête de sens»^{vi} de l'Eucharistie c'est-à-dire chercher à comprendre la nouvelle possibilité d'habiter le monde que l'Eucharistie nous révèle. Ce faisant, nous recevons une nouvelle possibilité d'exister, de comprendre notre humanité et nous-mêmes comme projet de vie et engendreur de vie, dans la mesure où nous donnons comme le Christ notre propre vie.

S'il en est ainsi, l'Eucharistie est, dans son essence, un mode d'exister plutôt qu'un culte. Et la question vient très vite: est-ce que cette Eucharistie est vraiment le réel de notre

vie ou n'a-t-elle plus de place que là où la réalité de ce monde la confine, c'est-à-dire dans les Églises?^{vii} Il faut saisir et expliciter les enjeux éthiques liés à l'Eucharistie. Célébrer le repas de Jésus ne suffit pas. Encore faut-il exposer son comportement de serviteur. On ne peut communier au corps du Christ si on n'est pas prêt à communier à ses options fondamentales. Ces options doivent prendre corps dans les actes concrets et quotidiens que le manger.^{viii} A ce propos, écrit Martelet: «pour être vraie, explicite un exégète des Actes des Apôtres, la communion de tous au Ressuscité exigeait en cas d'urgence, d'aller jusqu'à vendre champs et maisons. Ceux qui ont de quoi vivre peuvent-ils conserver allégrement leur superflu, tant qu'un membre du Christ singulier ou collectif, est dans le dénuement, sans que soit rompue la communion? Cette conscience pratique d'autrui mesure exactement l'appartenance au Ressuscité».^{ix}

Par ailleurs, il convient de noter que même les Évêques d'Afrique et de Madagascar ont insisté dans leur Exhortation pastorale intitulée *L'Église et la promotion humaine en Afrique aujourd'hui sur l'exigence éthique de l'Eucharistie* en ce termes: «Participer à l'Eucharistie, c'est donc s'engager historiquement dans le combat pour l'avènement d'un monde plus juste et plus équitable pour tous».^x

Pour sa part, Beraudy met en évidence cette urgence éthique lorsqu'il écrit: «C'est dans l'alliance avec nos frères humaines, alliance qui se concrétise dans un don qui va jusqu'au pardon, dans un vivre — pour — autrui, dans le Christ qui est allé jusqu'à en mourir — pour, que prend corps, dans l'esprit, la nouvelle alliance, célébrée en mémorial dans l'Eucharistie, c'est dire que, dans l'Église, la pratique eucharistique renvoie à la pratique du don, du partage, du service et cela aussi bien sur le plan collectif des rapports politiques, économiques et culturels entre les nations et les races, que sur celui des relations interpersonnelles».^{xi}

Précisons que le chemin qui conduit nos Eucharisties à leur consommation glorieuse est long et difficile. Il passe souvent par des déserts ou des volcans, semblables sur ce point aux grandes crises du passé, nous découvrons, plus que d'autres générations chrétiennes, avec la grandeur, le poids du monde et les urgences de l'action. Il faut se décider à vivre si l'on déclare avoir ici mangé. Il faut changer quelque chose à la face du monde, si l'on prétend s'être abreuvé à la source des bouleversements absolus de la terre. La participation au corps du Christ suppose

qu'on accepte l'effort quotidien pour la justice dans l'amour.

Autrement, notre «amour» est un leurre, nos confessions de foi sont un souffle de mots, et notre entrée sacramentelle dans la Résurrection est comme un contre signe dérisoire. Mais pour une telle tâche qui exige que jamais on ne dorme, nous serons des chrétiens à coup sûr défaillants, si les énergies transformatrices de la résurrection ne nous soutiennent pas. Manger le pain de vie devant des puissances de mort est une nécessité d'ordre biologique. Lutter contre des forces qui s'enracinent dans ce que l'égoïsme a de plus endurci suppose que le Christ dissolve en nous tous les moulages qui nous protègent contre la nouveauté qui devrait nous changer.^{xii}

On le voit, le lien entre l'Eucharistie et l'agir éthique interroge notre conscience individuelle et collective. Déjà Saint Paul avait perçu les enjeux éthiques de l'Eucharistie lorsque, exaspéré par la conduite des chrétiens de Corinthe, il leur disait pratiquement que celui qui mange le corps du Seigneur et boit son sang sans discerner les exigences éthiques intrinsèques au rite qu'il célèbre «mange et boit son propre jugement» (1 Co 11,27). Car il entrave la réalisation de l'événement qu'il célèbre, l'édification du corps du Christ dans la communion de la nouvelle alliance.^{xiii}

2. Eucharistie, principe et projet de mission

«Chaque fois que vous mangez ce pain et que vous buvez à cette coupe, vous proclamez la mort du Seigneur jusqu'à ce qu'il vienne» (1 Co, 11,26). Ces paroles de l'Apôtre Paul mettent en étroite relation le banquet et l'annonce: entrer en communion avec le Christ dans le mémorial de la Pâque signifie en même temps faire l'expérience de la nécessité de se faire missionnaire de l'événement actualisé dans ce rite. A ce sujet Jean-Paul II écrit: «Après avoir reconnu le Seigneur, les deux disciples d'Emmaüs se levèrent à l'instant même (cfr. Lc 24,33) pour communiquer ce qu'ils avaient vu et entendu. Lorsqu'on a fait une véritable expérience du Ressuscité, se nourrissant de son corps et de son sang, on ne peut garder pour soi seul la joie éprouvée. La rencontre avec le Christ, approfondie en permanence dans l'intimité et de l'évangélisation».^{xiv} Et d'ailleurs, le prêtre invite les chrétiens à s'engager pour la diffusion de l'Évangile et pour l'animation chrétienne de la société dans l'envoie à la fin de chaque messe.

En effet, pour telle mission, l'Eucharistie ne procure pas seulement la force intérieure, mais aussi en un sens le projet. C'est-à-dire une manière d'être de Jésus qui passe chez le chrétien

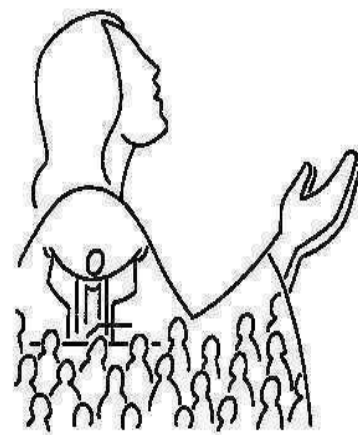
et, par le témoignage de ce dernier, vise à répondre dans la société et dans la culture. Pour que cela se réalise, il est nécessaire que chaque chrétien assimile dans la méditation personnelle et communautaire, les valeurs que l'Eucharistie exprime, les attitudes qu'elle inspire les propositions de vie qu'elle suscite.^{xv}

Au demeurant, il convient de souligner qu'un élément fondamental de ce projet provient de la signification même du mot Eucharistie: action de grâce. Car, à en croire A. Kabasele Mukenge, participer à l'Eucharistie aujourd'hui ne saurait se réduire à prendre et manger, sans s'inscrire en même temps dans la dynamique de l'action de grâce (ouverture à l'Autre) et dans celle de la fraction (ouverture aux autres). Du reste, cette fraction qui permet aux disciples d'Emmaüs d'ouvrir les yeux et de reconnaître Jésus. Leurs yeux se sont donc ouverts sur la réalité de l'autre, sur une histoire du don, voire du don de soi. Ce qui les poussera à rebrousser le chemin pour retrouver la communauté, c'est-à-dire les autres.^{xvi} Tel est l'avis de Jean-Paul II. Citons son texte: «En Jésus, dans son sacrifice, dans son oui inconditionnel à la volonté du Père, il y a le oui, le merci et l'amen de l'humanité entière. L'Eglise est invitée à rappeler cette grande vérité aux hommes. Il est urgent que cela soit réalisé surtout dans notre culture sécularisée, qui imprégnée de l'oubli de Dieu et qui favorise la vaine autosuffisance de l'homme. Incarner le projet eucharistique dans la vie quotidienne, dans les milieux de travail et de vie — en famille, à l'école, à l'usine, dans les conditions de vie les plus diverses — signifie, entre autres choses, témoigner que la réalité humaine ne se justifie pas sans la référence au Créateur: 'la créature sans son Créateur s'évanouit'. Cette référence transcendante qui nous engage à un merci permanent — à une attitude eucharistique précisément — pour ce que nous avons et pour ce que nous sommes, ne porte pas préjudice à la légitime autonomie des réalités terrestres, mais la fonde au sens le plus authentique, en lui assignant, dans le même temps, ses justes limites^{xvii} étant donné que l'Eucharistie promeut une culture du dialogue et donne à cette dernière force et nourriture. Toutefois, celui qui apprend à dire merci à la manière du Christ crucifié pourra être un martyr, mais il ne sera jamais un bourreau.^{xviii}

Autrement dit, ce à quoi invite l'Eucharistie, c'est accepter la dynamique qui conduit à l'ouverture à l'autre. Une communauté eucharistique est une communauté où l'altérité n'est pas étouffée ni combattue, mais reconnue, valorisée. Une communauté où la réconciliation

est promue non pas comme une réduction au même, mais en vue d'une communauté du don et du pardon. L'Eucharistie doit donc ouvrir nos yeux sur l'autre comme visage de Dieu à la manière des disciples d'Emmaüs, libérés de la peur et du découragement, reconnaissant la valeur de la fraction, c'est-à-dire du don, du partage.^{xix}

Nous comprenons alors que l'Eucharistie n'est pas seulement une expression de communion dans la vie de l'Eglise; elle est aussi un projet de solidarité pour l'humanité tout entier. Plus explicite, A. Kabasele Mukenge: «la solidarité n'est plus basée sur l'appartenance au même où à la même habitation: en Christ, il n'y a plus ni juif ni grec ... un membre souffre-t-il? Tous les membres souffrent avec lui. Un membre est-il à l'honneur? Tous les membres se réjouissent avec lui (1 Co 12,26). Il me semble que le déplacement opéré par le message évangélique consiste dans le fait d'avoir situé la solidarité sur le plan de la création, la fondant en Dieu, lui fait lever son soleil sur les bons et les méchants (Mt 5,45), et l'appuyant sur l'exemple de Jésus, qui n'a fait acception de personne».^{xx}



Et Jean-Paul II de poursuivre: «chaque messe, même célébrée de manière cachée et dans une région retirée du monde, porte toujours le signe de l'universalité. Le chrétien qui participe à l'Eucharistie apprend par elle à se faire artisan de communion, de paix, de la solidarité, dans toutes les circonstances de la vie. L'image de notre monde déchiré, qui a inauguré le nouveau millénaire avec le spectre du terrorisme et la tragédie de la guerre, appelle plus que jamais les chrétiens à vivre l'Eucharistie comme une grande école de paix où se forment des hommes et des femmes qui, à différents niveaux de responsabilité dans la vie sociale, culturelle, politique deviennent des artisans de dialogue et de communion».^{xxi}

Comprise dans ce sens, la solidarité évangélique coïncide avec l'agapè: elle est ouverte, universelle. Elle s'illustre à merveille dans l'exemple du samaritain (Lc 10,29-37) où le prochain n'est pas le frère de sang, mais celui qui se montre proche du nécessaire.

Jean-Paul II avec son éloquence habituelle l'exprime d'une manière plus suave et savoureuse. Écoutons-le: «l'authenticité de la participation à l'Eucharistie, célébrée dans la communauté, c'est l'élan qui s'en dégage en vue d'un engagement effectif dans l'édification d'une société plus équitable et plus fraternelle. Dans l'Eucharistie, notre Dieu a manifesté la forme extrême de l'amour, bouleversant tous les critères de pouvoir qui règlent la vie en un critère du service: 'si quelqu'un veut être le premier de tous, qu'il soit le dernier de tous et le serviteur de tous' (Mc 9,35). Ce n'est pas un hasard si, dans l'Évangile de Jean, nous ne trouvons pas le récit de l'institution eucharistique, mais celui du 'lavement des pieds' (cfr. Jn 13,1-20): en s'agenouillant pour laver les pieds de ses disciples, Jésus explique sans équivoque le sens de l'Eucharistie. A son tour, Saint Paul rappelle avec vigueur que n'est pas permise une célébration eucharistique où ne resplendit pas la charité manifestée dans le partage concret avec les plus pauvres (1 Co 11,17-22,27-34)».^{xxii}

On le voit, nous ne pouvons pas nous faire d'illusion: c'est à l'amour mutuel et en particulier, à la sollicitude que nous manifesterons à ceux qui sont dans le besoin que nous serons reconnus comme de véritables disciples du Christ (cfr. Jn 13,35; Mt 25,31-46). Tel est le critère qui prouvera l'authenticité de nos célébrations eucharistiques. De plus, nous ne pouvons garder pour l'amour que nous célébrons dans ce sacrement.

Il demande de par sa nature d'être communiqué à tous. Ce dont le monde a besoin, c'est l'amour de Dieu, c'est de rencontrer le Christ et de croire en lui. C'est pourquoi l'Eucharistie n'est pas seulement source et sommet de la vie de l'Église; elle est aussi source et sommet de sa mission. Une Église authentiquement eucharistique est une Église missionnaire. De la sorte, nous ne pouvons-nous approcher de la Table eucharistique sans nous laisser entraîner dans le mouvement de la mission qui, prenant naissance dans le cœur même de Dieu, veut rejoindre tous les hommes. La tension missionnaire est donc constitutive de la forme eucharistique de l'existence chrétienne.^{xxiii}

3. Eucharistie comme lieu de la promotion humaine

Participer réellement à l'Eucharistie c'est refuser de laisser dans la communauté humaine des frères et sœurs croupir dans la misère, souffrir de l'exploitation, de l'injustice ou de l'ignorance. Célébrer le repas du Seigneur en état

de rupture fraternelle vient à contredire en acte la nature du rite établi par le Seigneur pour le pain brisé et distribué qui crée une communauté soudée dans la communion d'un seul corps.^{xxiv} Ce faisant proclamer la mort du Seigneur jusqu'à ce qu'il vienne (1 Co 11,26) implique pour ceux qui participent à l'Eucharistie, l'engagement de transformer la vie, pour qu'elle devienne, d'une certaine façon totalement eucharistique.

Bien plus, l'Église vit de l'Eucharistie depuis ses origines. En elle, elle trouve la raison de son existence, la source intarissable de sa sainteté, la force de l'unité et le lieu de communion, l'impulsion de sa vitalité évangélique, le principe de son action d'évangélisation, la source de la charité et l'élan de la promotion humaine, l'anticipation de sa gloire dans le Banquet éternel des noces de l'agneau (cfr. Ap 19,7-9).^{xxv}

A partir de ceci, l'action eucharistique apparaît dans toute sa force de source et sommet de l'existence ecclésiale du chrétien car, elle exprime, dans le même temps, tant la genèse que l'accomplissement du culte nouveau et définitif. A ce propos, Benoît XVI écrit: «Le nouveau culte chrétien englobe tous les aspects de l'existence, en la transfigurant: tout ce que vous faites: manger, boire, ou n'importe quoi d'autre, faites-le pour la gloire de Dieu (1 Co 10,31). En tout acte de vie, le chrétien est appelé à exprimer le vrai culte rendu à Dieu. C'est ici que prend forme la nature intrinsèquement eucharistique de la vie chrétienne, puisqu'elle implique la réalité humaine du croyant dans le concret du quotidien, l'Eucharistie rend possible jour après jour, la transfiguration progressive de l'homme, appelé par la grâce à être à l'image du Fils de Dieu (Rm 8,29 ss) (...). Ici apparaît toute la valeur anthropologique de la nouveauté radicale apportée par le Christ dans l'Eucharistie: le culte rendu à Dieu dans l'existence humaine ne peut être cantonné à un moment particulier et privé, mais il tend de par sa nature à envahir chaque aspect de la réalité de la personne. Le culte agréable à Dieu devient ainsi une nouvelle façon de vivre toutes les circonstances de l'existence où toute particularité est exaltée en tant qu'elle est vécue dans la relation avec le Christ et offert à Dieu».^{xxvi}

Dans cette vision paulinienne du nouveau culte comme offrande totale de sa propre personne toute séparation entre sacré et profane est définitivement dépassée. Le culte chrétien n'est pas une parenthèse à l'intérieur d'une existence vécue dans un horizon profane. Il n'est pas non plus un pur acte sacrificiel et réparateur des offenses et des prises de distance

envers Dieu: «soit donc que vous mangiez, soit que vous buviez, et quoique vous fassiez, faites tout pour la gloire de Dieu» (1 Co 10,31).

Par conséquent, nos communautés, quand elles célèbrent l'Eucharistie, doivent prendre toujours plus conscience que le sacrifice du Christ est pour tous, et que l'Eucharistie presse alors toute personne qui croit en lui à se faire «pain rompu» pour les autres et donc à s'engager pour un monde plus juste et plus fraternel. En pensant à la multiplication des pains et des poissons, nous devons reconnaître que le Christ, encore aujourd'hui continue à exhorter ses disciples à s'engager personnellement. «Donnez-leur vous-mêmes à manger» (Mt 14,16). La vocation de chacun de nous consiste véritablement à être, avec Jésus, pain rompu pour la vie du monde

En revanche, ne faut-il pas déplorer dans la situation actuelle de notre société, la coresponsabilité, voire la complicité de tant de chrétiens dans les formes graves d'injustice sociale, de corruption et de violation des droits humains fondamentaux? «Que chacun s'éprouve soi-même» (1 Co 11,28) demandait Saint Paul à ses contemporains, c'est-à-dire que chacun prenne pleinement conscience des exigences éthiques de la célébration de l'Eucharistie. Il ne suffit pas de chanter alléluia ou de dire: «Seigneur, Seigneur» mais il faut pratiquer la Parole.^{xxvii}

Cette observation nous invite à dénoncer des célébrations eucharistiques qui s'enlisent dans une sorte de folklorisme local et de liturgisme, de piétisme naïf et de fondamentalisme corrosif et nébuleux; des célébrations qui développent ainsi les spiritualités d'enthousiasme, d'exubérance et d'incandescence sacrale sans commune mesure avec les exigences de transformation fondamentale de nos sociétés et de nos systèmes institutionnels, des célébrations où pendant des heures des gens chantent, dansent et sont presque ivres de joie, mais que deviennent-ils par la suite. L'on peut à bon droit se demander si cette Eucharistie conduit à quoi? Quelle est la tâche du chrétien à la suite de cette fête eucharistique?^{xxviii}

A en croire Benoît XVI, la mission première et fondamentale des saints mystères que nous célébrons est de rendre témoignage par notre vie. L'émerveillement pour le don que Dieu nous a fait dans le Christ imprime à notre existence un dynamisme nouveau qui nous engage à être témoins de son amour. Nous devenons témoins lorsque, par nos actions, nos paroles et nos comportements, un Autre

transparaît et se communique. On peut dire rejoint l'homme dans l'histoire, l'invitant à accueillir librement cette nouveauté radicale.

En d'autres termes, souligne L. Santedi, par l'Eucharistie le Christ mort pour nous libérer du péché nous convie à nous libérer de l'esclavage sous toutes ses formes individuelles et sociales: l'emprise aliénante du péché, celle des systèmes de péché qui oppriment l'homme.^{xxix} L'Eucharistie apparaît ainsi comme une célébration de libération totale de l'homme et de la transformation du monde. Elle engage une praxis qui n'est pas lutte de classe, mais amour capable de dépasser la haine, de briser le cercle des oppositions en chaîne. C'est ce dénuement que le Christ a partagé et vécu.^{xxx} Cet événement du passé n'est pas un événement passé, mais un événement libérateur, ouvrant l'avenir et par-là déterminant le présent.

Déterminant dans le présent parce qu'«Après avoir célébrer l'Eucharistie dans l'Eglise, nous sommes envoyés à la célébrer sur le monde de nos engagements socio-politiques et de notre travail, par le témoignage de la sainteté. C'est dans ce sens que la célébration de l'Eucharistie se termine par l'envoi en mission pour travailler avec le Christ à la promotion de tout homme et de tout l'homme».^{xxxi}

On le voit, cet envoi à la fin de la messe n'est pas seulement une indication que la messe est finie et que nous pouvons repartir chez nous. Il nous invite à prendre au sérieux la présence de Celui qui est au cœur de l'Eucharistie, à savoir le Christ mort et ressuscité pour le monde entier. Il nous ordonne «aller» d'aller annoncer la paix, c'est-à-dire le salut qui vient d'être célébré et que nous avons reçu. Le nom le plus courant de l'Eucharistie est la messe. Ce mot vient de l'envoi. «Ite missa est». Au cœur de l'Eglise, il y a l'Eucharistie. Au cœur de l'Eucharistie, il y a le Christ envoyé du Père qui édifie son Eglise et l'envoie dans le monde proposer à tous la paix — shalom qui est le Christ lui-même.^{xxxii}

Célébrant la messe, nous sommes unis au Christ pour nous unir à nos frères et les servir. Si nos Eucharisties ne nous conduisent pas jusqu'au service de l'autre comme sacrement de la présence du Christ, elles ne demeurent plus fidèles à la visée du Christ. la promotion humaine sans communion est un arbre sans racine, mais la communion sans promotion humaine est un arbre sans feuille ni fleurs ni fruits. Cet arbre est stérile il

consomme inutilement la terre, il mérite d'être coupé et jeté au feu.^{xxxiii}

Tel est le visage de l'Église famille, celle où tous les membres sont unis au Christ qui invite au repas et où tous se donnent la main pour le service de l'humanité. Dans ce sens, souligne M. Malu Nyimi, les chrétiens sont appelés dans le Christ à assumer leur devenir, leur évolution comme une responsabilité non seulement à l'égard de leur petite destinée, mais comme une responsabilité envers son corps et son milieu.^{xxxiv}

Dès lors, nous comprenons que l'Eucharistie est sacrement de communion entre frères et sœurs qui acceptent à se réconcilier dans le Christ, lui qui a fait des juifs et des païens un seul peuple, abattant le mur d'inimitié qui les sépare (Eph 2,14). C'est seulement cette constante tension en vue de la réconciliation qui permet de communier dignement au corps et au sang du Christ (Mt 5,23-24).

4. Eucharistie comme lieu de la réconciliation

Nous constatons assurément que, à notre époque, les fidèles se trouvent immergés dans une culture qui tend à effacer le sens du péché, favorisant un comportement superficiel qui porte à oublier la nécessité d'être dans la grâce de Dieu pour s'approcher dignement de la communion sacramentelle. «Puisque le péché consiste en une rupture avec Dieu, avec l'homme et avec la nature, l'on ne peut célébrer l'Eucharistie sans entretenir et/ou rétablir la communion avec Dieu, avec son prochain et avec la nature».^{xxxv}

L'exigence de la réconciliation est constitutive du mystère de l'Eucharistie. Et il convient de comprendre cette exigence comme un appel, une vocation que le Christ inscrit au cœur de l'humanité. Ou si l'on préfère, une manière de devenir plus humain. A ce propos. Benoît XVI écrit: «la relation entre Eucharistie et réconciliation nous rappelle que le péché n'est jamais une réalité exclusivement individuelle, il comporte toujours également une blessure au sein de la communion ecclésiale, dans laquelle nous sommes insérés par le baptême. C'est pourquoi la réconciliation, comme le disaient les Pères de l'Église, est 'laboriosus quidam baptismus', soulignant de cette façon que l'issue du chemin de conversion est aussi le rétablissement de la pleine communion ecclésiale qui se manifeste par le

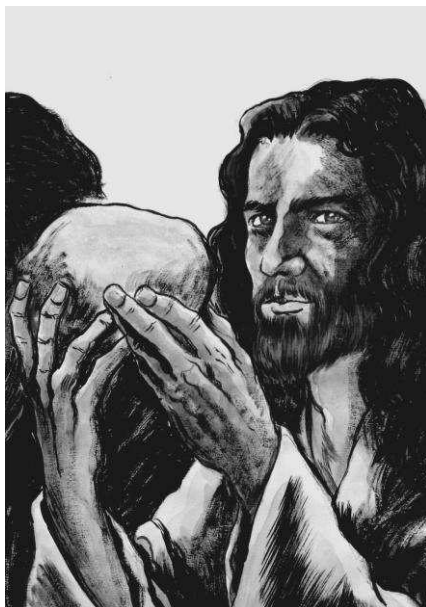
fait de s'approcher à nouveau de l'Eucharistie».^{xxxvi}

En effet, on se plaît à souligner l'importance du repas comme horizon anthropologique de l'Eucharistie.^{xxxvii} Le repas rassemble, il est l'expression ordinaire du partage, de la communion. Lieu de fraternité, voire d'intimité. Seulement voilà, il peut exister une communion trichée. Le repas, le lieu de vie et de partage, serait-il aussi lieu de mort et d'extermination? Mais, qui a pu transformer le repas en lieu d'empoisonnement et de trahison? C'est donc que la base anthropologique du repas ne suffit pas pour introduire au mystère de l'Eucharistie.^{xxxviii} Les cas des massacres qui se vit dans différents parties des pays africains nous en dit long. Ces compatriotes qui se sont tués pour la plupart participaient à l'eucharistie. Cette dernière ne crée pas automatiquement la fraternité, la communion, la réconciliation.

C'est ce qu'atteste A. Kabasele lorsqu'il mentionne: «le pain partagé et reçu n'a pas réussi à arrêter automatiquement ce déchaînement de violence. Le repas n'a pas converti aux meilleurs sentiments. Judas, ayant pris part à l'Eucharistie, ne s'est pas arrêté dans la voie de trahison».^{xxxix} L'Eucharistie en tant que mystère de la rencontre avec le Christ, est un programme, un défi à relever, un mode d'exister. Née de la violence humaine — sang versé — elle appelle l'homme à sortir de la violence originaire et se présente comme une tâche.^{xl}

Bien plus, le rôle social du repas est bien rempli si le repas est véritablement le lieu où l'on consent à une limite, soit par le partage, le don, soit encore par la réconciliation, le pardon. Comme le dit si bien André Wenin, «le repas est donc le lieu possible d'un renoncement à la violence où la vie trouve à s'épanouir. Pour cela, ceux qui sont conviés au repas doivent retraverser les pièges que cache le fait même de manger. En effet, celui-ci restera toujours un lieu d'épreuve, y compris dans le repas eucharistique qui ne sauve de manière magique. Car un agir éthique est indispensable pour que en mangeant, l'être humain puisse avoir la vie».^{xli}

C'est dans cette optique que nous sommes invités à dégager en surplus de sens du signe eucharistique. Car, aux yeux de A. Kabasele, «les signes du pain et du vin sont



d'origine végétale, mais Jésus les donne à ses disciples en renvoyant à une nourriture carnée portant les traces d'une violence inouïe: chair et sang. Ce qui apparaît ici est que Jésus assume cette violence humaine originaire exercée contre lui de manière injuste, pour que son acception libre fonde une vie où l'on n'exerce plus cette violence sur les autres» (Jn 13,15).^{xlii} Au fond, lorsque Jésus donne une chair déchirée par la violence en un pain qui proclame l'espoir d'une alliance pour la paix, il invite à délaisser la violence pour vivre de douceur. Celui qui y répond accomplit en lui l'image de Dieu et réalise ainsi l'appel que Dieu lance aux hommes quand il leur donne, pour vivre, une nourriture de céréales (pain) et de fruits (vigne).

L'Eucharistie rappelle de cette manière, le projet divin: refus de la violence de ses causes principales que sont la convoitise et la peur. C'est à ce projet que nous devons souscrire si nous voulons construire des communautés eucharistiques, dans la perspective d'une Église-famille de Dieu. La réalité de la violence qui caractérise l'Afrique contemporaine indique que la souscription à ce projet reste un défi, comme l'Eucharistie l'est pour chaque chrétien.^{xliii} Ce à quoi nous invite l'Eucharistie, c'est accepter la dynamique qui conduit à l'ouverture de l'autre. Une communauté eucharistique est une communauté où l'altérité n'est pas étouffée ni combattue, mais reconnue, valorisée. Une communauté où la réconciliation est promue, non pas comme une réduction au même, mais en vue d'une communauté du don et du partage.

L'Eucharistie doit donc ouvrir nos yeux sur l'autre comme visage de Dieu, à la manière de Jacob libéré du piège de la convoitise, à la manière des disciples d'Emmaüs, libéré de la peur et du découragement, reconnaissant la valeur de la fraction, c'est-à-dire du don, du partage.

Dans les récits de l'institution de l'Eucharistie nous retrouvons les quatre verbes: prendre, rendre grâce, rompre et donner. Ces quatre actions sauvent l'acte de manger du piège de la violence et de l'égoïsme dans lequel il peut enfermer. Rendre grâce signifie l'élan du partage, de la distribution, et prolonge en quelque sorte le mouvement du don reçu. Le partage entre frères trouve ainsi son fondement dans le fait que Dieu donne aux humains.^{xliv}

Il convient tout de même souligner que, ce qui est ici énoncé ne doit pas être compris

seulement comme condition pour célébrer l'Eucharistie. Il s'agit également des implications de l'Eucharistie, car c'est cela qu'elle enseigne. La mémoire du Christ qu'elle rappelle (Faites ceci en mémoire de moi) est une mémoire subversive, qui ne laisse aucune communauté, aucun disciple au repos tant que l'action de grâce et la fraction n'ont pas pris corps dans le quotidien par la reconnaissance de l'Autre, des autres et par le partage. L'Eucharistie ne rassemble pas les «purs», elle engage au combat contre notre péché, et aussi contre les «structure du péché», autour de nous, structures qui consacrent les inégalités sociales et économiques.

De ce point de vue, l'Eucharistie comme sacrement qui nous rassemble en un peuple de l'alliance pour la rémission des péchés appelle la réconciliation avec Dieu, avec les autres et avec le cosmos dont les éléments sont présentés en offrande devant celui qui sanctifie «toute chose».

Conclusion

Dans notre dissertation, nous avons essayé de montrer que le mystère eucharistique provoque l'Église-Famille de Dieu qui est en Afrique, continent déchiré par la violence sous toutes ses formes.

Du reste, pour que le mystère eucharistique devienne dans la vie ce qu'elle signifie dans la célébration il faut une exigence éthique étant donné que participer à l'Eucharistie, c'est donc s'engager historiquement dans le combat pour l'avènement d'un monde plus juste et plus équitable pour tous. Pour cela, il faut comprendre que l'Eucharistie est un principe et un projet de mission pour la simple raison qu'elle ne procure pas seulement la force intérieure — en un sens — le projet comme une manière d'être de Jésus.

Par ailleurs, source de la promotion humaine, l'Eucharistie implique pour ceux qui y participent l'engagement de transformer la vie, pour qu'elle devienne, d'une certaine façon totalement action de grâce.

Amis, puisque l'Afrique est déchirée par la violence, conséquence du «péché» qui nous habite, une rupture avec Dieu, avec l'homme et avec la nature, nous sommes invités à revisiter le mystère eucharistique comme lieu de la vraie réconciliation qui récapitule la dimension théologique, anthropologique, sociale et cosmique de l'eucharistie.

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ⁱ Cfr. A. Kabasele Mukenge Et Alii, *L'eucharistie Dans L'église-Famille En Afrique A L'aube Du Troisième Millénaire*, 5.

ⁱⁱ Cfr. A. Kabasele Mukenge, «Eucharistie Et Réconciliation Dans L'église-Famille De Dieu », In *Telema* N° 113 (Janvier-Mars 2000), 36.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cfr. A. Kabasele Mukenge, «Eucharistie Et Réconciliation Dans L'église-Famille De Dieu », 37.

^{iv} Cfr. G. Martelet, *Résurrection, Eucharistie Et Genèse De L'homme. Chemins Théologiques D'un Renouveau Chrétien*, 200.

^v G. Goureaux, *Le Marasme De L'église En France*, Idoc International, 39, 1971, 53.

^{vi} M. Bellet, *La Chose La Plus Etrange — Manger La Chair De Dieu Et Boire Son Sang*, Desclée Brouwer, Paris 1999, 107.

^{vii} Ibidem, 108.

^{viii} Cfr. A. Wenin, *Pas Seulement De Pain...Violence Et Alliance Dans La Bible*, Cerf, Paris 1998, 273.

^{ix} G. Martelet, *Résurrection, Eucharistie Et Genèse De L'homme. Chemins Théologiques D'un Renouveau Chrétien*, 202.

^x Sceaam, *L'église Et La Promotion Humaine En Afrique Aujourd'hui*, Ed. Du Secrétariat, Kinshasa 1985, N° 69.

^{xi} R. Beraudy, *Sacrifice Et Eucharistie. La Dimension Anthropologique Du Sacrifice Dans La Célébration De L'eucharistie*, Cerfs, Paris 1997, 124.

^{xii} Cfr. G. Martelet, *Résurrection, Eucharistie Et Genèse De L'homme. Chemins Théologiques D'un Renouveau Chrétien*, 205-206.

^{xiii} Cfr. A. Kabasele Mukenge, «Eucharistie Et Réconciliation Dans L'église-Famille De Dieu », 7.

^{xiv} Jean-Paul II, *Mane Nobiscum Domine*. Lettre Apostolique A L'épiscopat, Au Clergé Et Aux Fidèles Pour L'année Eucharistique, Médiaspaul, Kinshasa 2004, N° 24.

^{xv} Ibidem, N° 25.

^{xvi} A. Kabasele Mukenge, *La Parole Se Fait Chair Et Sang*, Médiaspaul, Kinshasa 2003, 125.

^{xvii} Jean-Paul II, *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, N° 26.

^{xviii} Idem.

^{xix} A. Kabasele Mukenge, *La Parole Se Fait Chair Et Sang*, 126.

^{xx} Ibidem, 138.

^{xxi} Jean-Paul II, *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, N° 27.

^{xxii} Ibidem, N° 28.

^{xxiii} Benoît Xvi, *L'eucharistie, Sacramentum Caritas*. Exhortation Apostolique Post-Synodale, Médiaspaul, Kinshasa 2006, N° 88.

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^{xxv} Cfr. Instrumentum Laboris, In D.C. 2342 (2005), 814-859.

^{xxvi} Idem.

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^{xxviii} Ibidem, 55-56.

^{xxix} Ibidem, 57.

^{xxx} Cfr. R. Laurentin, *Jésus-Christ Est Présent. Pour Préparer Le Congrès Eucharistique*, Ddb, Paris 1980, 48.

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^{xxxviii} Cfr. A. Kabasele Mukenge, *La Parole Se Fait Chair Et Sang*, 41.

^{xxxix} A. Kabasele Mukenge, *La Parole Se Fait Chair Et Sang*, 108.

^{xl} Cfr. Ibidem, 109.

^{xli} Cfr. A. Wenin, *Pas Seulement Le Pain*, 182.

^{xlii} A. Kabasele Mukenge, *La Parole Se Fait Chair Et Sang*, 45.

^{xliiii} Cfr. Ibidem, 123-124.

^{xliiv} A. Kabasele Mukenge, *La Parole Se Fait Chair Et Sang*, 124.



**TOWARDS THE 50th
ANNIVERSARY OF SEDOS
1964-2014**

***Thanks to all of you ...
106 SEDOS Member Congregations***