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# Towards African Model and New Language of Mission

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## Introduction

African churches are said to be among the most lively churches in Christendom today. Besides that, young churches of Africa have started sending their own children as missionaries to many parts of the world. The strength of Christianity in Africa is as a result of the active participation of the laity and their generous contribution to the growth of the Church both locally and internationally. Therefore, a scientific reflection on missiology in an African context in this new millennium is timely. It is also a challenge to the African clergy and religious who bear a special responsibility of teaching the Christian faith to seriously reflect on missiology so as to enhance contributions to the cause of the Christian mission on the continent and in the world at large.

This article addresses the question of missiology in an African context. We are essentially discussing a continent in search of a model for mission theology and the praxis of evangelization. But the formulation of a model(s) for an African missiology depends to a large extent on the answers given to the following questions:

What has been the prevailing missiology in Africa? What can Africans say about missiology in the new century? And finally, what contributions can African theologians make towards the inculturation of the Christian faith and of human promotion in the continent?

These questions are closely interrelated, for our knowledge of the prevailing missiology in Africa will, to a large extent, determine our new vision for Christianity in the continent. This, in turn, has led to questions such as:

What should be the role of individual local churches and theologians for the promotion of a really authentic inculturation of the Gospel in Africa? Do Africans have a contribution towards missiology or are they passive consumers of the mission theology and the version of Christianity developed overseas? Can African churches participate fully in the evangelisation of the continent and beyond?

To explore these issues, I have chosen to emphasize the importance of a new language for missiology in Africa. I am convinced that the prevailing language of missiology has prevented us from recognizing the potentials of the local churches and the people of Africa in the mission of the Church. In developing models for Missiology in an African context, therefore, priority should be given to the question of rethinking the way Africa has been conceived in the minds of many people since the foreign invasion of the continent from the 15th century. In spite of the adjustments in the use of some terminologies, the missiology developed in that era about Africa is still the same and may not change soon. Unfortunately this missiology does not reflect the true Africa, for it was based on the foreigner's superstitious beliefs about Africa.

Although African authors started well with the "critical approach" in examining the praxis of the theology of mission used in the evangelization of the continent, it is now time to move from criticism to construction, in order to build an authentic African Christianity. This was the challenge of Pope Paul VI to the African bishops in his address at the closing session of the Symposium of African Bishops on 31 July, 1969, in Kampala, Uganda. The Church in Africa will continue to be a burden to the universal Church unless we construct and build. To gain self-reliance and self-respect in the universal Church and in the community of nations we need a new language for missiology in Africa. We need a language of construction to build a house for Jesus Christ who has found "a new homeland in Africa". This is the basis for the call for "learning language" for missiology in Africa as outlined below.

## Missiology and evangelization of Africa

Missiology, as a science of missions or mission studies, deals with the scientific study of the missionary dimension of the Christian faith. It is a systematic and scientific study of the evangelizing mission of the Church among people of various cultures. There are two major areas of specialization in missiology: (a) Specialization in mission theology (missionary theology), and (b) Specialization in evangelization (praxis).

Missiology is a branch of theology that studies the salvation activities of God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit throughout the world.

### The 15<sup>th</sup> Century mission trend in Africa

During this century of Christian expansion in Africa, the language of missiology was characterized by what has been termed as the "theology of the curse" and subsequent trends in mission theology had to build on that. The theology of the curse is based on the Western myth that Africa is "the land of the deepest, darkest, heathen night" inhabited by dark-skinned backward people, the poorest of the poor, unintelligent, without culture, language, religion, civilization, etc.(1) This theology perceived Africa as a target *par excellence* of mission. This trend was also reflected in the *padroado* (papal privileges of patronage), which empowered the Portuguese sovereigns, explorers and the missionaries who sailed around the coast of Africa to enslave, and convert to Christianity the perceived children of Ham that inhabit the dark continent. (2) It was said that during Vatican II, the founder of the Comboni Missionary Institute, Daniel Comboni, requested the Council Fathers to lift the curse on the children of Ham. It was believed that God had been punishing the children of Africa with a cruelty unknown in the history of the human race as a result of the curse. (3) But, Engelbert Mveng has argued that no such a curse was addressed against Africans; rather the Bible shows Yahweh taking the side of Moses and his African wife. (4) According to Elochukwu Uzukwu, medieval Christian belief sustained such a curse, and the prayer for the conversion of Africa (composed after *Vatican I*), which was recited in many churches in Africa before *Vatican II* suppressed it, proved the presence of such a belief. (5) This was the theology that formed William Carey's book on Christian mission in Africa. Since Carey's book was first published in 1792, we have been using the same language in missiology about Africa. (6) G. T. Basden's descriptions of the Igbos in his famous book, *The Niger Ibos* (1938), was based on this theology.

Great thinkers like John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rou, Jean-Jacques Rousde Maistre, among others, developed theories based on the theology of the curse. In a blunt tone, G. W .F. Hegel postulated that the Africans are unruly and "savage", and that there is nothing in Africa, which really deserves the name "human". (7) David Livingston, the famous explorer and missionary was under the urge of this theology when he alerted the West about the discovery of the Great Lake of East Africa and the missionary need there. The British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery acted under this theology when he conspired to make Africa a continent ruled by Whites after his secret visit to Africa in 1947. According to him, the "African was a complete savage and quite incapable of developing the country himself" For him, the African was hopeless and needed to be ruled by Whites who could civilize Africa. Montgomery claimed the survival of Britain depended on this. And so he hailed Cecil Rhodes' spirit, based on apartheid emerging in South Africa. (8)

Therefore, the theology of the curse which remained prevalently active until the 19th century, paved the way not only for the penetration of Christianity to Africa, but also for the growth of the European power and commerce on the continent. The latter was officially sanctioned by the 1884-85 Berlin Conference, at which the European powers partitioned and divided up the continent of Africa, in a system of divide and rule. The colonial boundaries have continued to be a source of tension and fighting in post-independent African States, and in the actualization of ecclesial communion in African local Churches (cf. *Ecclesia in Africa*, 49). Another side of the aftermaths of the theology of the curse and the foreign invasion of the continent has caused the feeling of inferiority complex among some Africans who tend to shun anything associated with the black race, especially, the language and culture. According to Pope John Paul II., the trauma of the past has weakened the ability of the Africans to resist and to respond to situations: "An injured person has to rediscover all the resources of his own humanity". To achieve this, the Pope suggests the theology of *The Good Samaritan*. That Africans need an understanding presence and pastoral concern: "They need to be helped to recoup their energies so as to put them at the service of the common good" (*Ecclesia in Africa*, 41).

### The 19<sup>th</sup> Century mission trend in Africa

A notable development occurred in the African missions towards the end of the 19th century: a change in the missionary juridical system from *padroado* to *ius commissionis*. The Congregation *de Propaganda Fide* issued the *ius commissionis* by which mission territories were allocated to particular missionary institutes to evangelize and administer. In principle, the Pope himself, represented by the Propaganda Fide, had the primary responsibility for evangelization and not a monarch as it was the practice in the *padroado*. Many missionary institutes were founded in Europe during this period, specifically for the conversion of Africans to Christianity. (9)

It was at this period that Josef Schmidlin and Pierre Charles, among others, developed their Mission theories of the "saving of souls" and "implanting of churches", which included building of schools, hospitals and other structures of social services. However, many missionaries interpreted the implanting of Churches literally, and reproduced in Africa "carbon copies" of the Churches in Europe, especially in terms of architecture, organization and devotions. Some missionaries continued to view African cultures negatively. (10) This development led to the establishment of departments of mission studies — missiology in the universities and faculties of theology. This was as a result of pressures from missionary students particularly from United States, and also as a result of requests from governments as was with the case in Germany. David Bosch argues that when missiology was first introduced in theological faculties, its primary goal was to serve the colonial needs. The issue of proper incarnation of the Christian faith was secondary. (11)

Missionary work was seen as the Church's bounded duty to bring the true faith to pagans, or to save souls that were in dark ness. Christianity was intended to civilize and to save Africans from idolatry, immoral marriage (polygamy), and the devil. Again, there was still negative attitude towards African spiritual values and culture. (12) This tendency initiated the debate in the theology of adaptation. In principle, adaptation is the missionary effort whose primary objective is to translate the Christian faith into African conceptual apparatus. However, for critics of this theology, adaptation is a missionary theory that was employed to transplant a Christianity developed elsewhere into Africa as if Africans have no cultures of their own on which the Christian faith could anchor. (13)

In his book, *An Overview of African Theology*, Ngindu Mushete identifies three mission theories inherent in the theology of adaptation.

These are: (i) The theology of the salvation of souls in darkness; (ii) The theology of the implanting of the Church (among people considered to have neither culture nor civilization; the theology of *tabula rasa*); (iii) The theology of the search for "stepping-stones" (the theology of the *semina verbi* and of the *praeparatio evangelica*). The contention of Mushete is that, since these were the popular mission theories that governed the 15th and the 19th centuries evangelization of Africa, they might account for the slow pace in the incarnation of Christianity in the continent.

According to Mushete the modest contribution of the theology of adaptation is that it has helped in clarifying the process of inculturation. (14)

### **Mission theology of the Vatican II**

One of the major achievements of Vatican II is its rediscovery of the theology of reciprocity, which is based on the Gospel image of the sowing of the Good News and on the Council's theology of the local churches establishment. This theology informed the Council's missionary juridical system of *mandatum* which replaces the *ius commissionis*. The conciliar system of *mandatum* empowers the local bishops as fully responsible for evangelization in their dioceses. The missionaries are to enter into contract with the bishops in whose diocese they wish to serve.

Again, the new awareness is centred on the Council's theology of mission as reciprocal activity between sister churches. This new theology of mission applies universally to all the churches, but without denying their differences (cf. AG 6). Thus, the Council's mission theology should not be confused with the prevailing missiology in the evangelization of Africa. (15) The bottom-line in the conciliar mission theology is the emphasis on cultural diversity in the Church and the role of local churches (in communion with the universal Church-Family) in the work of evangelization and implanting of the Church in their various cultural contexts. This is reciprocity. In addition to assuming all that the Church has acquired in its earthly pilgrimage, each local church is challenged to contribute something from its cultural-setting to enrich the patrimony of the universal Church-Family. In other words, the Council developed a theology of co-responsibility in evangelization and of trust on the local churches.

The foregoing discussion underscores the importance of the *Vatican II* theology of mission, particularly, the rediscovery of the local churches as the primary agents of mission. This awareness has led to a fundamentally new interpretation of the purpose of mission and the role of missionaries and mission agencies. However, the Council still affirms, that in the midst of these new circumstances and relationships there is still need for formation of experts, or rather trained missionaries. But, the missionaries, are to recognize that their task pertains to the whole Church. They ought to appreciate that they are sent as ambassadors of one local church to another local church (where such a local church already exists), as

witnesses of solidarity and partnership, expressions of mutual encounter, exchange, and enrichment (cf. AG 26).

I have chosen to highlight the above aspects of the conciliar mission theology so as to help us evaluate and see for ourselves the pros and cons not only of the language of the previous mission trends but also of the actual language of missiology in Africa. It will now be clear as to whether the practice of mission in Africa today is following the *Vatican II* theology or whether it is still rooted in the out-dated phenomenon already discussed.

The two main trends in the present-day language of missiology in Africa,, which still bear some traces of the old beliefs before the Vatican II are: (a) The *mission-charity* trend; and (b) The "*on the way*" or the "*still-learners*" trend.

### **The mission-charity trend**

This is based on the linkage of mission with *charity*. This theology has inspired foreign mission agencies and charitable organizations to recruit workers for Africa on the basis of the continent being the target of mission *par excellence* which in turn is the expression of the phenomenon mentioned above. Some have become heroes in the West because of their African experiences. Yet all their efforts seem to have achieved little for the continent, as Africans still remain largely poor and languished. Indeed, Africans themselves have been aware of their own vulnerability for sometime. And as Tienou puts it: "Is Africa good only for promoting outsiders to hero status?" (16) The impasse here rests on the fact that many people easily associate material deprivation, technological simplicity, skin colour, with spiritual needs. Since Africa is inhabited by poor dark-skinned and backward people, it must follow that it is a place where the unreached are and so are needs for *missionizing*. When missiologists become convinced of these arguments, an inevitable link between mission and charity develops, whereby, mission and charitable work become synonymous.

Furthermore, the theology of charity has brought about what would be called an unholy alliance among the press, the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and the missionary agencies. These organizations engage a "damaging propaganda", as regards the African image, in the name of seeking donations to help the poor people of the *dark* continent. Take up a journal of any of the foreign missionary institutes, NGOs or agencies operating in Africa, and you won't need to be told what their image of Africa is all about. Christopher Clapham has recently drawn our attention to the fact that the arrival of the NGOs engendered a change in the content of the external world's relation with Africa, in ways which reduced the normal "State to State" relation, and increased that of charitable and civil-right organizations. In addition, Clapham affirms that the NGOs broadly represent the privatization of North-South relations. In Africa, they come with strongly held Western values which encompass the full range of often contradictory attitudes and sentiments that the continent evokes. (17)

As for Peter Sarpong, the role of the foreign media in Africa has assumed ideological and political strategy, designed to demoralize Africans and discourage them from believing that they are equal with the rest of the peoples in the world. For the media and most of the charitable organizations, Africa is synonymous with "poverty, AIDS, sexual promiscuity, tribal wars, refugees, hunger, disorderliness, disease, ignorance", etc. Rarely do news items that are not derogatory to Africa appear in Western media. Sarpong insists that if we are to promote the dignity of the human person, the media must balance their presentation of Africa by giving a positive image of the continent. (18)

### **The "on-the-way" or "still learners" mission trend**

Another tendency in the actual language of missiology in Africa is what we have termed as the "*on-the-way*" theology, which is based on the concept that Africans are still on the way or are learners, or junior members of the human race and are in constant need of benevolent care. The "*on-the-way*" theology does not perceive Africa as a continent of people as such, but as some small insignificant continent with strange beings that need a special kind of treatment. This theology demeans Africans of their capacity for beatific vision and ontological reality, and does not recognize the fact that becoming a good Christian is not dependent on colour or place of birth but on one's response to faith in Jesus Christ.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger gives a classical description of the on-the-way theology with the following illustration: When asked as to whether a bishop from Africa or Latin America could be elected to take his place on the papal chair, the cardinal replied: No, everyone, at least in the College of Cardinals, could

imagine us electing an African or someone from non European country, but to what extent European Christians would swallow that is another question. For despite all the declarations of racial equality and all the condemnation, there is still a certain European self-consciousness that comes to the surface at critical moments.

Thus the "*on-the-way*" theology shows that missionary endeavour is still characterized by a curious paradox in that, while preaching equality for all before God, it elevates White Christians to superior beings, thereby keeping alive racism as a way of life even in the Church.

In addition, when asked if Africa will be part of the new impulses that will shape the future of the Church in the new century, Cardinal Ratzinger said: "There is a strong consciousness that the Africans are "still on the way", that they are "still learners". (19) This is the crux of the matter. Will a student ever become a master? Africans have been students for the past five hundred years or so since their encounter with the West and the Arab world. During these years, Africans have been enslaved, colonized, Islamized and Christianised. They have been polarized by the Organization for Islamic Conferences (OIC). At present they are studying in schools of the Non-Governmental Organizations, the Multinationals, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These departments are currently acting as Institutions of Globalization. Yet, a few questions remain to be answered: When will Africa ever Graduate? Is Africa destined to be forever a student and a learner under foreign control? As Pope John Paul II teaches, "In the midst of an all-pervading despair, how is the Christian message, Good News for the African? Where lie the hope and optimism which the Gospel brings?" Moreover, "in a world controlled by the rich and powerful nations, Africa has practically become an irrelevant appendix, often forgotten and neglected" (*Ecclesia in Africa* 40).

This has been an important aspect of missiology under which the evangelization of Africa is being executed. Some have argued that the theology is based on the *dependency program, the system of control*. The unhappy desire to keep Africa for as long as possible under foreign tutelage. (20) In this case therefore, the theology of The *Good Samaritan* proposed in the apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (n. 41) needs to be quantified and complemented by the prophetic theology proposed by the African bishops in their message at the end of the 1994 *Synod for Africa*. The problem that remains is how to free the theology of the Good Samaritan from the prevalent tendency of paternalism, dependency and control.

### **Towards a new language for missiology in Africa**

It is now evident that the prevailing language of missiology in Africa is a cultural problem. The historical unhealthy relationship that has been existing between Africans and people of the North has its origin in the myth that informed the theology of the curse: the peculiar and strange way in which the continent is still perceived, despised and marginalized. The tragic events of the past and present are committed on the ground of cultural bias. On the basis of this, the new language for missiology in Africa must be centred around the effort to give a new and an admirable identity to the Africans based on their cultural values, tradition and the Gospel message:

- a. *A new language for missiology in Africa* will come from the retrieval and modernization of our African cultural matrix pursued from the point of view of the daily struggles of the Africans themselves for survival. The attainment of self-esteem for the Africans, depends on their self appreciation of their cultural identity and rediscovery of their deeply rooted traditional values in the light of the Gospel. Pope John Paul II challenges the African Church saying: "Today I urge you to look inside yourselves. Look to the riches of your own traditions, look to the faith which we are celebrating in this assembly. Here you will find genuine freedom - here you will find Christ who will lead you to the truth" (*Ecclesia in Africa* 48).
- b. *The new language for missiology in Africa* must be that of admiration and appreciation of Africans as members of the human family. In the light of the Vatican II mission theology, the new language should be based on the fact that Africans will do better in the face of admiration but not of sympathy. That Africans will do well when they are offered hope and not demoralization. (21) Indeed what Africa needs is not necessarily foreign aid that often comes with strings attached, but change of attitude and mentality of the people of the North in speaking, studying and dealing with the continent. What Africa is asking for is the purification of memory and evangelization of the superstitious beliefs, which have hitherto informed the external world's attitude and relationship with the continent.
- c. *The new language for missiology in Africa* should also address the Africans themselves on the spirit of cooperation (cf. *Ecclesia in Africa* 49). One would wonder: "Why is it that it is normally black

communities or countries worldwide that are disunited, factionalized, disorganized and strife prone? Why is it that it is the black communities or countries that have the largest number of tribes, ethnic, dialects and language groups. Why are Africans backward as communities, groups and nations? Why is it that the most stable countries in Africa are those where the resources are firmly under the control of one boss, and usually, no matter how greedy he might be, he is never challenged? Why is it that the state in Africa is personalized by whoever is in power? It may be easy to suggest that the reason for all this, is because Africans suffer from the above named forces of division or from "inferiority complex and mental slavery" caused by their sickening under-development and insurgence of the foreign powers. It may also be easy to blame it on the African leaders and accuse them of being incapable to rise to the demands of good governance and responsibility as indeed some have them. (22) But the fact remains, that all human beings share the same attributes irrespective of race. Every race has its own share of the good and the bad. Therefore, Africans are not inferior in respect to all God given attributes. At the individual level, given reasonable opportunity, Africans are comparable to the "others". This is evidenced by the large number of thriving Africans in all areas of human endeavours (albeit most may be in Diasporas).

The people may not quite get the rulers they deserve but there must be a connection between the rulers and the ruled. The dictators, even the jump-up sergeant who seizes power with the gun and rules by repression and whim, emerge from society. There is no loyalty to the State itself, let alone to development of the people. Wars occur not where life for the masses is intolerable but where there is competition for resources. Owing the State is the only true ambition of many African leaders. (23) Why all this? According to Ayinmode: "*The answer is that blacks find it difficult to work as a group*" (emphasis mine). But it will be wrong to say they are incapable of working as a group. It is this individualism or intolerance for group cooperation and defence that is probably responsible for the break-up of Africans into incredibly large numbers of ethnic nationalities. It is also probable that this same factor, as well, made and still makes Africans vulnerable to external forces of *divide and rule*. It is in the context of this lack of cooperation among the Africans that I highlight *cooperation* as a new missiological language in the continent (cf. *Nuntius* 24-25). Unity in diversity and diversity as strength should form the bedrock of the new language learning for missiology in an African context.

### **The role of African theologians**

Okonkwo, the hero in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, laments: "He has won our brother and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together, and we have fallen apart". Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, describes a Pentecost event in Igboland in particular, and Africa in general. This novel, though published many years ago is yet to be read and taught to African children with a prophetic vision. In their Message at the 1994 Synod, the African bishops took hold of the vision in the *Things Fall Apart* in these words: "The culture which gave its identity to our people is in serious crisis". For the Bishops, the way out of this crisis is "for prophets to arise and speak in the name of the God of hope for a creation of a new identity. Africa has a need of holy prophets" (*Nuntius* 15). In the light of this search for prophets in Africa, I propose the following ways through which African theologians can make their own contributions for the reconstruction of their continent:

- a. *African theologians* should take the lead in the process of re-education of our people. If the Church championed education in Africa during the colonial era, it is now the turn of the African theologians and intellectuals to educate their people, using the available resources God has blessed them with. African theologians must prepare themselves not only for assignments in high diocesan offices or higher institutions such as universities, but also for teaching in secondary and primary schools as well as serving in the small Christian communities. They must be prepared to take up assignments in the remotest parts of their dioceses without resentment. After Pentecost the disciples of Jesus wasted no time in building up the Christian community with the existing structures. Later, the churches founded in Greece and Rome under serious persecutions, did not have to wait for an outsider to set up for them the structures they needed to worship the true God. With confidence in the power of God who had raised Jesus Christ from the dead, these early Christian communities began constructing their churches, theologies, liturgies and so forth, making use of whatever good, God had blessed them with in their land and culture. It is now the task of African theologians to do the same in their continent and in their local churches regardless of the conditions in which they may find themselves.

- b. *African theologians* must re-educate their people with a sense of responsibility based on the love of God and neighbour. They need to appreciate themselves, love their brothers and sisters before they can expect others to appreciate and love them. The greatest gift one can give to the beloved is no less than oneself. African theologians need to give themselves to their people. When Moses began the long and rigorous work of liberating the people of Israel from slavery, his first task was to make them love one another (cf. *Ex 2:13-14*). In other words, African theologians need to develop the spirit of love and inculcate the same to others. Since individualism and intolerance have been identified as the major weakness of contemporary Africans, re-education of Africans must aim at correcting the spirit of antagonism that is often the life style of many today.
- c. *African theologians* in this work of re-educating the people, must tackle the question of eradicating the dependency syndrome that has eaten deep into the fabric of their continent. The forefathers of Africa were not known as beggars, but today, the Church in Africa is a "begging" Church. This is partly due to the fact that the structures they have at present are a foreign invention and so require foreign maintenance. One would argue that instead of looking to the West for support, church leaders should develop and use the means and human resources they have. The greatest resources are the people. Obviously, the African people want to come out from the situation that has reduced them to objects of foreign charity. This implies that, from now, seminaries and houses of formation in Africa must stress self-confidence, hard work, self-reliance, self-sacrifice, and uprightness, along with intensive spirit of collaboration.
- d. *African theologians* will not interpret the word construction in this context to mean building a four-wall structure. The current existing structures in Africa are more than enough to take them to the 'promised land'. Take, for instance, the issue of establishing a theological faculty or research centre. Nearly all the cultural zones in Africa have got at least one state-owned university. What problem has the local church in approaching the state-owned university for establishment of a faculty or a department of theology, which can be shared by Catholics and the Protestants? Up to now, Africans must go to the West to obtain recognized degree in sacred theology. Take Italy, for example or any other countries of Europe, all the major provincial state-owned universities have faculties of theology and this is in addition to the ones already established by religious orders serving in the locality. The universal Church apparently recognizes degrees awarded in these universities as valid. Why then can't each African nation (cultural/ ethnic group) do the same? The existing sub-continental regional institutes such as Catholic Institute for West Africa, which were established by the *Propagation of the Faith* for Catholics, will continue their indispensable role of promoting regional cooperation and cultural exchange in theological scholarship among the member churches. But in addition to that, it is very necessary to point out that we cannot build a new language for a local church (in liturgy, theology, catechism, etc.), unless we have a theological faculty established for that purpose and located within the geographical area of the cultural group in question.
- e. *Among the African theologians* (of some cultural and language groups) there are experts who can take up for instance, the translation and reduction in the local language of some basic texts we use in theology, liturgy, catechism, etc. This must not be a personal work. There needs to be professional groups or associations of experts that can take up such projects. These professionals should cooperate among themselves for the common good. They can also engage themselves in writing, publishing and documentation of the salvation history of their people. One major advantage of such a project is that through the professional associations, the local church will be kept alive and informed of any new development in theological studies and research. In almost all the European countries and America, there are such associations. One of their major tasks is to bring to the awareness of their people a new publication or development in their area of competence. Take Italy for instance, any new major publication in missiology be it in German or any other language, is immediately taken up by the Italian missiological association and in a question of a year or so, the volume is translated into Italian for the local public. The same applies to other countries where such associations exist.

African theologians, should also promote the study of missiology on the continent. Up to the time of writing this article, there is no Catholic Institution in Africa that offers graduate and post-graduate degrees in missiology. Apart from the University of South Africa in Pretoria (which is Protestant). The continent is crying out for a chair in mission studies. The shift in modern theology has placed missiological studies at the centre of gravity: evangelization, Christology, contextual theology, inculturation, ecumenism, inter-religious dialogue, religious pluralism, human promotion or liberation, globalization, etc. Unless we begin specialized studies in missiology in Africa, the continent shall continue to lag behind in areas of theological innovations.

f. *African theologians* should also establish publishing houses in their various countries for local publication of major works in theology and other ecclesiastical disciplines. There are already established publishing houses serving the academic community in Africa and theologians could enter into dialogue with some of them. All it needs is for the theologians to provide experts (editors) from their group who will give an authoritative vent to whatever would be published in that sector. The main advantages of working with locally based publishing houses are that, first, books printed and published in Africa would not just be affordable but also serve the local community. Secondly, the voice of leading African theologians is scarcely being heard in the continent because of the shortage of publishing houses for theological works. That is why thousands of theses and papers that come out in Africa continue to gather dust and might never be published, and yet works of leading African authors circulate more in Europe and North America than within Africa, where they are much needed. (24)

g. *African theologians* should ensure that the educational programs for the people, be it in the classroom or through print, should include the lives of great African heroes in various fields of life. Inspiration for the creation of a new identity could best be gained by learning about the lives of personalities like: Olaudah Equiano, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Julius Nyerere, Steve Biko, Martyrs of Uganda, Blessed Iwene Tansi, Cardinal Joseph Malula of Kinshasa. These are the people whose brave contributions have impacted the lives of others. In the same vein, theologians are challenged to publish works on the early local Christian converts and heroes whose courageous lives are not yet in print. Hence, topics for the licentiate and doctoral theses of African students should centre around African reality and dialogue with the works of pioneer African authors and theologians. This was what Thomas Aquinas did when he wrote on the works of the pagan Aristotle and baptized him. This is what students in the West and elsewhere are doing when they choose topics bordering on the works of their ancestral authors such as Immanuel Kant, Yves Congar, Karl Rahner, Karl Barth, etc.

It is obvious there might be financial problems, but if theologians form professional associations with missionary objectives, there is no doubt that the lay faithful would be ready to help. This is also another way of forming the laity on the spirit of cooperation for mission and pastoral works, as well as for social development of the society at large. It is therefore a challenge to African theologians that they continue the documentary work and publication on the history and culture of their people. This should necessarily include their new story in the Christian Church, and hence requires dialogue between, their culture, history and the Gospel message. It is also a way of recreating a new cultural identity and it is a way of evangelization. The fruits of such a project might not materialize in our time, but we hope that the future generations will benefit and have something good to tell about us.

## **Conclusion**

Our starting point is the call for a new language for missiology in Africa. The paper has established that there are inadequacies of the prevailing missiology in the evangelization of Africa and demonstrated that the new language can only emerge through the involvement of African Christians and theologians in the construction of local theology, liturgy, catechism, etc. But this should always be carried out in communion with the universal Church-Family. In other words, the role of African intellectuals and gifted theologians in the development of a new cultural identity is significant.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the famous Kenyan novelist, in his book, *Devil on the Cross*, tells a story of a man who suffers from ogre. Unfortunately, neither of the so many well-known medicine men he visited could cure him. One day he decided to visit an old man, and after narrating his story, the old man, boldly looking into his face, said:

"My child, you have the key to your problem. Go home, get boiling oil, and pour it on your back, on the very spot where the ogre is, and you will gain total freedom".

"But what shall become of my back?" The man shouted.

"There you are", replied the old man, "you either risk a burn on your back and experience total freedom, or live with the ogre as a permanent feature of your body".

Cooperation is the key to the eradication of the root causes of the many problems in Africa. For Africans to gain total freedom, there is a need to painfully part with the familiar though we risk a "burn". This applies both to ecclesial and civil communities. Africans must learn to cooperate and love one another as brothers and sisters. Only then could they build a house for Jesus Christ who has found a "new home land in Africa".

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## Notes:

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