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Original Article

### Violence in Africa: Further Reflections on the Causes.

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This is not the first time that ESEAT has written on violence in Africa. In Fact, in 1999 a whole volume was devoted to violence. In 2010 I reviewed this volume. However, despite all these efforts, we see that inter and intra-state violence continues in many countries in Africa, including environmental violence. In this paper, while referring to what has already been written about, I try to reflect on what could have been left out in our search for causes of violence on the African continent. On the theoretical plane, I suggest that we should emphasise the fact that when theologising, we use and are influenced by our historical and cultural context. This comes out when we examine the root cause of environmental violence, where we argue that it is mainly to be explained by how the West has understood the bible, especially the creation story. Furthermore, I note that while looking for the root causes on the Africa continent, we have to revisit the way we conceive causality. Rather than limiting ourselves to the immediate and visible causes, we should also include remote and invisible causes in a way that we come to what I call cumulative causality, meaning that the different factors contributing to the phenomenon must be taken together. On the practical level, I refer to how Africa has been successively invaded since the 17th century BC. I argue that these invasions have negatively impacted Africa. I end by making suggestions on how to deal with this violence, by proposing the following: the importance of putting in place mechanisms and strictures for promoting justice; the importance of using the African worldview, including appropriate rituals, while working on the causes of violence; and cooperating with well-wishers from outside Africa in fighting the causes of violence and.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Ecumenical Symposium of Eastern Africa Theologians (ESEAT) is not writing about the problem of violence on the African continent for the first time. In the previous volumes, violence has been written about from different angles by different authors. However, in 1999 ESEAT devoted a whole volume to this phenomenon under the title *From Violence to Peace: A Challenge for African Christianity*.<sup>1</sup> This volume addressed different aspects of violence. When ESEAT was celebrating 20 years of its existence, I had the privilege of reviewing and updating some aspects of violence addressed in the 1999 volume.<sup>2</sup> Let me briefly present some points from this chapter which are relevant for our discussion. I point out that some problems previously analysed have persisted and, in some cases, have become even worse. For example, intra-state violence has persisted in Mozambique, Nigeria, South Sudan, Mali, and Democratic Republic of Congo. I note that the optimism expressed in the 1999 volume could have been due to the fact that we did not pay sufficient attention to the concept of structural sin. I also suggest that we thought that Christians could make a difference without the collaboration of other people and institutions.

Furthermore, I point out that the contributors did not pay sufficient attention to the role of the Church itself in bringing about or promoting violence. I also propose that on the conceptual and methodological level, we have to complement the theological

approach where we try to understand who God is, that is outside us, with how we try to see God in us and how God looks at us. This would give rise to what I call a theologico-anthropological approach of theologising. This, I suggested should be called *theo-anthropology*. I would like to add that the way we are theologising now, trying to understand God, we should also be more explicit and note that we use human tools in our endeavour. This should be called *anthropo-theology*. This means that "theology" uses human language and concepts very well marked by the history, context, and geography of the theologian. This change of vantage might help us to refocus on caring about each other if we emphasise how God sees us, not only because we are human beings, but also because God is in us: we are divinised. The change in approach can help us also to be critical about, and relativise, our theologising which is always subject to historical and cultural contingencies. The proposed changes in the concepts of theologising are given here to help us be critical in our approach but I will continue to use the term with which we are familiar.

As of May 2022, I have to sadly note what is said above still obtains, and in some cases in a more aggravated manner. Generally, the continent continues to be the underdog of humanity, to be assisted with food and peacekeepers in some cases. Without pretending to give a comprehensive overview of the countries with internal conflicts, let me mention a few examples to illustrate my point. Somalia seems to be recovering from being a failed

<sup>1</sup> Mary N. Getui and Peter Kanyandago, eds., *From Violence to Peace: A Challenge for African Christianity* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Peter Kanyandago, "From Violence to Peace: A Challenge for African Christianity. Towards Reconciliation and Healing in Africa" Laurenti Magesa, ed., *African Theology Comes of Age: Revisiting Twenty Years of the Theology of the Ecumenical Symposium of Eastern Africa Theologians ESEAT* (Nairobi:

Paulines Publications Africa, 2010), 107-122. The same volume was also reviewed by Nehemiah Nyaundi, "From Violence to Peace: A Challenge for African Christianity. The Phenomenon of Violence in Eastern Africa", Laurenti Magesa, ed., *African Theology Comes of Age: Revisiting Twenty Years of the Theology of the Ecumenical Symposium of Eastern Africa Theologians ESEAT* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2010), 123-131.

state but the threats of Al-Shabab are real.<sup>3</sup> What is common to all these conflicts and violence is that they are internal, where brothers and sisters of the same country are fighting and killing each other. To all these types of violence we have to add the generalised forced immigration of thousands of people who leave their countries around the Sahara Desert and undertake a hazardous journey to go to Europe. Some die crossing the desert, and others drown in the Mediterranean Sea while those who make it to Europe are in many cases met with humiliating and inhumane condition, not excluding being put in in camps. We have to ask ourselves why our theological endeavours do not seem to have had a substantial impact on the predicament of the African continent. The theo-anthropological and anthropo-theological approaches suggested above might help us to refocus our attention on human beings inhabited by the divine. It could also help us to link correct theologising (orthodoxy) with right practice (orthopraxis).<sup>4</sup> We hope to add a few points to what I have attempted to do in my previous articles.

What is generally visibly absent in the 1999 volume and in its review in my chapter, and in other references to violence by ESEAT, is a lack of reference to violence done to creation.<sup>5</sup> In this chapter I will therefore, devote some space to this. Fortunately, in the Catholic Church, Pope Francis has published a very relevant and challenging Encyclical Letter on this subject.<sup>6</sup> The originality of the Letter does not lie only in the content which brings together key theological, scientific, sociological, philosophical, and economic elements related to the threats facing what the Pope calls “Our Common Home”; he also addresses “every person living on this planet”. This way the Letter is inclusive in relation to those who are being addressed.

## APPROACH AND EXPLAINING SOME CONCEPTS

I have discussed and written about violence in several places in the publications of ESEAT and elsewhere. Recalling what I said above, if ESEAT has chosen to consecrate another volume to violence this means that it is still something to write about. While focusing on looking for the root causes as my main aim, I will widen and refine the scope of my discussion and understanding of violence beyond Africa since some of the factors negatively impacting are outside the continent. In our discussion anything that interrupts the normal course of events of the development of a people and prevents them from determining what shapes their destiny is violence. This eventually leads to what one can call cultural pathology: yes, as a person can fall or be rendered sick, culture also can be rendered sick. Furthermore, violence done to human beings must be considered together with violence inflicted to nature because human beings are intimately linked to nature. Violence done to nature inversely affects human beings. However, violence done to nature must be extended to inanimate things. It is not enough to limit ourselves to animate (living) things. I believe that this approach is theologically more valid since it includes the whole of creation

While we tend to focus on acts attributable to and from human beings, I would like to emphasise the fact that acts whose causality is given as nature are also violent. This type of violence comes from phenomena which include famine, earthquakes, droughts, and cyclones. Giving this violence due attention will challenge us about what we can do to prevent such violence because it is not always inevitable, as sometimes it is depicted as acts of God. This type of violence attributed to nature is getting some special attention, and theologians need to revisit their approach to it also, because there are claims that even this violence is sometimes caused,

<sup>3</sup> Security Council, Security Council Press Statement on Recent Terrorist Attacks In Somalia, 24 March 2022. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2022/SC14840.Doc.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Peter Kanyandago, “Die rechte Praxis und die prophetische Rolle. Eine Einladung an die Kirchen der Afrikanischen Kirche” (Right Practice and Prophetic Role: An Invitation to the Churches of the African Churches), Richard Brosse and

Katja Heidenmanns, eds., *Fuer ein Leben in Fuelle: Visionen einer missionarischen Kirche* (Freiburg: Herder, 2008), 286-298.

<sup>5</sup> The term “creation” is more encompassing than “environment”.

<sup>6</sup> Francis, *Laudato Si: Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father Francis on Care for Our Common Home* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2015).

or at least aggravated, by human actions.<sup>7</sup> It is now said that extreme weather conditions like droughts, floods, landslides, and storms are in some cases caused by climate change or by putting up structures where we should not. Furthermore, extracting shale oil from rocks could have increased the occurrence of earthquakes. Earthquakes have been occurring but if we put up storeyed buildings in earthquake prone areas the violence and destruction are much more pronounced, not because earthquakes have become more common or destructive, but because we have built where we should not. Similarly, building on slopes compromises the stability of the soil and can provoke very destructive landslides as was the case in Ethiopia.<sup>8</sup> Theology must be critical of attributing violence from nature to God. For example, a Friar said that the earthquake which struck Italy in November 2016 was an act of God for punishing same sex unions.<sup>9</sup> Even in cases where natural violence is inevitable, a lot can be done to mitigate or prevent violence. The violence that leaves a greater impression is that one directly caused by human beings with a physical appearance, including wars, acts of terrorism, massacres, genocides, rapes, shootings, domestic violence, uprisings, road accidents and riots. This is very easy to film and report on because this violence has a face. But even in this type of violence, the attention given will depend on the social class or nationality of the people involved.

There is another type of violence that is not apparent, but is not less harmful. This is the type of violence that affects people and nature through acts of structural, ideological, and institutional decisions. This type of violence includes slave trade, colonialism, imperialism, forced displacement, exploitation of people, inequalities between people, extraction of resources, and racism. Of course, colonialism and slave trade, for example, were accompanied by physical and visible violence, and had physical manifestations. However, I would like to go behind these physical acts to pay more

attention to the “invisible violence” which also leaves terrible and lasting marks on individuals, social psyches, and nature. Such wounds and hurts are also root causes of other personal and/or collective violence like child abuse and abuse of substances. This violence, including racism and other forms of discrimination, has no physical appearance but is not less insidious. It includes structural and institutional violence and injustices which deny a person’s and community’s right to be themselves. This can be called cultural negation. There is the case of denying people the right to own and use what they have. This can be called economic negation. Lastly, when people have been subjected to the forms of violence, they end up by turning all this violence on to themselves by hating themselves and what is theirs. This can be called self-negation, and with the two others we get what one can call triple negation.

Let me present four more, namely: distinction to be made between endogenous and exogenous violence, cumulative causality, anthropological history, and the distinction to be made between Christianity and the gospel. These will help to deepen to take our discussion to another level. When we are discussing violence of any type, we should make a distinction between endogenous and exogenous violence. I see endogenous violence to be that violence which we find in every society, culture, and community. This is not difficult to understand. However, over time and in history, different people have imposed themselves on others thus bringing in violence that comes from outside. That is what I call exogenous violence. The problem is that when the two types of violence mix, sometimes it is impossible to distinguish them, especially at the level of causality, as I will later show here below. For example, Britain and the missionaries imposed and left us an education system which hardly ever gave any credit to the African education systems we had in

<sup>7</sup> S. Neema et al., “Community Perspective on Policy Options for Resettlement Management: A Case Study of Risk Reduction in Bududa, Eastern Uganda”. *Current Disasters*, 26 July 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Rubbish Dump Landslide Kills At Least 46 In Ethiopia, 12 March 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/Mar/12/Rubbish-Dump-Landslide-Kills-At-Least-30-In-Ethiopia>,

<sup>9</sup> Meka Beresford, “Vatican Condemns Friar Who Said Earthquakes In Italy Were ‘God’s Punishment’ For Same Sex Unions”, 5 November 2016. *Pinknews*, <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2016/11/05/vatican-condemns-friar-who-said-earthquakes-in-italy-were-gods-punishment-for-same-sex-unions/>

Uganda.<sup>10</sup> The exogenous systems introduced fees which discriminate in favour of those who have more money, a form of violence. This education system separated learners from one's community, which contributes to the self-negation. So far one can speak of exogenous violence, but this system has been integrated in the social fabric and worldview of the Ugandans to the extent that we Ugandans are supporting it. The ensuing violence we find in cheating in examinations and strikes in schools, of course, is not directly being caused by the exogenous violence, but at the same time it cannot be explained without referring to it.

When we are looking for causes, we should not stop at what is immediate and visible. In some cases, we have to dig deeper. For example, referring to the education system in Uganda, if a head teacher mismanages a school and gets a strike, s/he cannot simply blame the British, and yet, while looking for the root cause, one must refer to the history of colonisation and evangelisation. In this case one can indeed speak of a cumulative causality, meaning that in order to understand a phenomenon, one must take into account how different factors contribute towards its existence without limiting oneself to immediate causes. In the case at hand, the immediate cause of the strike could be the head teacher's mismanagement, but one would have to consider the introduction of an education system foreign to Africans and the erosion of African cultures. The three factors therefore, should be considered in a "cumulative" way

Another useful concept to bring on board in our discussion is anthropological history. This helps us to avoid, when discussing causality, not to put a break between what happened in the past and the present. Simply stated, it means that what happened in the past is relayed and is in the present through

ideas, systems, ideologies, and structures.<sup>11</sup> What happened in the past also continues to live in our experiences passed on to us from those who experienced the events. In this sense there is no break between the past and the present. Furthermore, this concept of anthropological history helps us to see that what caused events in the past have not necessarily changed. More precisely in our discussion about the root causes of violence in Africa, we have to say that what originally motivated exogenous violence from the Arabs and Europeans is still obtaining, namely the poverty in those areas and the wealth in Africa. Africa was not originally invaded because it was poor: it is because it was, and is still rich. The concept also helps us to shed ethical light on what happened in the past and to hold people accountable for that.

Discussions on these and similar topics, especially in relation to claims for reparations and justice because of what was done to Africa during colonisation and slave trade, are easily closed by saying that these belong to the past. Regarding slave trade, for example, those who benefitted from it usually ask: If we were to give reparations, who would receive them? Discussion on these acts is also usually closed by saying that there is no way of making legal claims in this type of violence. For example, Belgium has apologised for their involvement in the murder of Patrice Lumumba but has refused to address the issue of compensation. Germany has apologised for the extermination of the Herero but has also refused to talk about reparations. As far as I know, it is only Italy which has accepted to compensate Libya for having invaded and colonised that country.<sup>12</sup>

The Western legal approach puts emphasis on the fact that only can be claimed that which can be proved in courts of law using a law.<sup>13</sup> In other

<sup>10</sup> Asavia Wandira, *Early Missionary Education in Uganda: A Study of Purpose in Missionary Education* (Kampala: Makerere University, 1972).

<sup>11</sup> Peter Kanyandago, "Ethical Responsibility and Need for Reparation: Using the Concept of Anthropological History in the African Context", Marco Moerschbacher and Ignace Ndongal Maduku, eds., *Culture et foi dans la théologie africaine: Le dynamisme de l'Eglise catholique au Congo Kinshasa* [Culture and faith in African theology: The dynamism of the Catholic Church in Congo Kinshasa] (Paris: Karthala, 2014), 33-44.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 33-44.

<sup>13</sup> See For Example, Australian Law Reform Commission, "Arguments Against The Recognition Of Aboriginal Customary Law", 18 August 2011. <https://www.alrc.gov.au/publication/recognition-of-aboriginal-customary-laws-alrc-report-31/8-aboriginal-customary-laws-recognition/arguments-against-the-recognition-of-aboriginal-customary-laws/>,

words, even if Africa was harmed and exploited through colonialism, if at that time there was no law prohibiting colonialism, then one can have no claim. Theologians must challenge this type of approach which excludes ethical and anthropological considerations in trying to redress situations of injustices and bring in ethical demands to redress the present situations of injustices because application of legal standards is limited and is often used by the oppressor to escape from his/her reasonability.

Lastly, I would like to make a distinction between Christianity and the gospel, or the good news. Christianity is any attempt by a group of people, culture, to understand and live the gospel message of God saving us and asking us to work with him/her to create a more just world.<sup>14</sup> This message finds a special fulfilment in the person of Christ. Such a contextualised Christianity is necessarily linked to the geography, history and cultures of the people who are trying to express, explain and live it. For example, we have Western Christianity with strands in the Roman (Latin) and Protestant Christianity. The Western type of Christianity was the one which set out to evangelise, and in the process got compromised with Western imperialism and colonialism. This type of Christianity is also associated with the triple negation as has been explained above, since it refused to give credit to the systems of beliefs, they found among the people they evangelised.<sup>15</sup>

In fact, efforts and laws were made to abolish African beliefs which were seen to be pagan.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, this type of Christianity claimed to be universal, leaving no room for other forms of believing and celebrating. Since we are talking about violence, one can easily see how we can apply

the principle of cumulative causality as already explained above. One can therefore say that Western Christianity, in as far as it impacted negatively the African family, is the root, not necessarily the direct, cause of the breakdown of some families. With time there are types of Christianity evolving in America, Africa, and Asia, but they have not yet assumed a specific and a distinctive character. Of course, along with the Western Christianity, we have Eastern Christianity as found in the Catholic Eastern and Orthodox Rites.<sup>17</sup> These types of Christianity, should not, and can never, be identified with the gospel, or the message of God, wanting to save and live with us. However, even this message as found in the scriptures and teaching of the different churches, is also culturally and historically marked. But for purposes of our discussion, we can say that in principle the distinction must be made between the gospel and the concrete form it takes when a people are trying to live, celebrate (worship) and explain (theology) it.

### The Original Predominant Place of Africa

Sometimes explanation of Africa's sorry state in some areas is refers to Africa's inability to manage its affairs, and sometimes the explanations are openly racist. However, most available research affirms that *Homo sapiens (Africanus)*, the first modern human being, evolved in Africa and comes on the scene about 200,000 years ago. Some say 300,000 years ago.<sup>18</sup> These human beings coexisted with nature for a very long time. Later some of these people migrated to other continents, about 120,000 years ago, some say about 30,000 years ago.<sup>19</sup> Africans (black) are the only people who have not migrated from other continents to come to where they are now. They are indeed the oldest human

<sup>14</sup> Christianity. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christianity>

<sup>15</sup> I have made a quite detailed presentation of some representative views on this matter. See Peter Kanyandago, "Violence in Africa: Pastoral Response from a Historical Perspective", in Douglas W. Waruta and H. W. Kinoti, eds., *Pastoral Care in African Christianity: Challenging Essays in Pastoral Theology* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1994), especially 38-45.

<sup>16</sup> A very well-known example is the abolition of the anti-colonial Nyabingi movement by the British, which was led by a female warrior, called Muhumuza, sometimes written as Muhumusa. See Murindwa Rutanga, "Nyabingi Movement: People's Anti-Colonial Struggles in Kigezi 1910-1930".

Working Paper no. 18/1991, (Kampala: Centre for Basic Research, 1991), especially 83-88.

<sup>17</sup> Ken Parry, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Eastern Christianity* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> Serena Tucci and Joshua M. Akey, "Population Genetics: A Map of Human Wanderlust," *Nature*, 538, no. 7624 (2016): 178-179. See also Eleanor M. L. Sceiri, "Did Our Species Evolve in Subdivided Populations across Africa, and Why Does It Matter?," *Trends in Ecology and Evolution*, 33 no. 8 (2018): 581-594.

<sup>19</sup> Serena Tucci and Joshua M. Akey, 178-179.

beings on the globe.<sup>20</sup> These are not gratuitous observations: they have very serious ethical, anthropological, and theological implications. In our discussion of the root causes of violence this fact cannot be put between brackets. If all humans come from those who originally evolved on the African continent, the pseudo-scientific theories espoused by some, especially by racists who claim to be superior to others, are totally discounted. The approach of attributing some of the problems facing the African continent often attributed to his/her inferior status of being African, ultimately his/her genetic constitution, has no basis in science. Therefore, racism and its attendant evils find no justification because we are all “Africans”! Theologically and anthropologically, we have to revisit our understanding of the Genesis creation stories. Without having to oppose science and the Bible, we are invited to appreciate the place and responsibility of the African(s) in the history of humanity. Africans were in charge of humanity from its beginning to the time some migrated.<sup>21</sup> There is no indication that up to the time Africa was invaded successively by different people, as we will see here below, now the original people had failed to manage humanity and its affairs.

### Exogenous Violence against Africa

Before we focus on how Africa was affected by external violence, and without idealising Africa, we can say without any hesitation that from the beginning of the appearance of the first modern humans, through the time when these people migrate towards other continents, to the time of the first recorded violent incursions, Africans had evolved a way of living with nature without violating it. If they did, at least it was not in such a way that this threatened the existence of people and of other living things as is the case now. They had their own social and political systems. They had their own medicine and education system and did need to import knowledge or religion from outside.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 178-179.

<sup>21</sup> Eleanor M. L. Sceiri, 581-594.

<sup>22</sup> Ancient Egypt, <https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-history/ancient-egypt>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

What had been put in place can be seen in the Africans’ knowledge and science of plants and their values. What is nowadays called indigenous knowledge is in fact science. But this was to be successively violently interrupted. As we continue our discussion, let us focus briefly on the violence that came from successive invasion over a long period, which disrupted the normal social economic development of the continent. According to written records, the first external invasion of Egypt by the Hyksos from the east took place between after 1675 BC.<sup>22</sup> This was followed by the invasion of Egypt by the Assyrians in 669 BC,<sup>23</sup> and in 525 BC by the Persians.<sup>24</sup> For some time Egypt was independent but in 343 BC, they were again conquered by the Persians.<sup>25</sup> In 332 BC Egypt was invaded by the Greeks under Alexander.<sup>26</sup> In 31 BC, Egypt came under the control of the Romans.<sup>27</sup> In 32 AD, Christianity came to Egypt and although this might not be considered as an invasion, from the cultural point of view it was, since by end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD this religion had largely replaced Egyptian religion.<sup>28</sup> The onslaught on Africa continued relentlessly. In 642 AD Northern Africa was invaded and overrun by the Arab Muslims. By 709 the whole of North Africa was under their control.<sup>29</sup> This event changed drastically the face of the continent to the extent that the Maghreb region changed from being “Africa” to “Arab” and “Moslem” and this has remained till today. It is important to mention this very important detail lest some think that North Africa has always been as it is.

In the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Portugal started taking exploring and taking some areas along the West African coasts; this also came with the beginning of slave trade.<sup>30</sup> In 1517, Egypt was brought into the Turkish Empire ambit, and thereafter the invasion of Africa continues until the systematic and organised looting of Africa by different European countries, especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>31</sup> Between the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century till

<sup>28</sup> Yosef A. A. ben-Jochannan, *Africa: Mother of Western Civilisation* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1988), 306-309.

<sup>29</sup> M. El Fasi, ed., *General History of Africa*, vol. III. *Africa from the Seventh to the Eleventh Century* (Berkeley: University of California 1988).

<sup>30</sup> The Portuguese in Africa 1415-1600. [https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/agex/hd\\_agex.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/agex/hd_agex.htm)

<sup>31</sup> J. Ki-Zerbo, ed., *General History of Africa* (Paris: UNESCO, 1981).

the 19<sup>th</sup> century, during a period of about 400 years, Africa's development was interrupted by slave trade which was also encouraged by some African chiefs, and had the worst destructive influence on Africa.<sup>32</sup> Slave trade is not just something of the past: using the anthropological history analysis, we can say that Africans on the continent today and those in the diaspora are still suffering from its effects.

The very short historical summary of the external invasion of Africa as given above cannot be put between brackets when discussing the root causes of violence on the African continent. When all is considered, it is a miracle that despite all these external aggressions, we can still find something we can call African. This shows, without any doubt, the resilience of the African people faced with this assault which started in the 18<sup>th</sup> century BC and has been going on under different forms for over 3,700 years.<sup>33</sup> Of course, not the whole of Africa was affected in the same way geographically and historically at the same time, but at one time the whole of Africa had been affected by different forms of exogenous violence, except Liberia and Ethiopia.<sup>34</sup> Whatever intensity the external (exogenous) violence had, Africa could not survive being wounded in its cultural and social identity. The invasions started off by destroying African religion, especially in Egypt, and later were accompanied by looting of people and natural resources. I can confidently say that this process has not stopped. Let us now turn to a specific form of violence hardly ever talked about namely violence against nature which is paradoxically related to a biblical to an interpretation of the Bible by Western Christianity. In Africa, this has created grounds for the current ecological crisis because of how the African worldview of relating to nature was altered.

## IS WESTERN CHRISTIANITY THE ROOT CAUSE OF ECOLOGICAL CRISIS?

Since one form of violence that is threatening the survival of humanity and creation is environmental in character, I would like that we spend some more time on this. The interest in this also comes from the fact that Western Christianity is said to have the root causes of this crisis. Lynn White is at the beginning of this allegation.<sup>35</sup> Let us examine what he wrote about it.

### White's Position

On 26 December 1966, Lynn White, a Presbyterian Professor of history at the University of California delivered a lecture on the historical roots of the ecological crisis. This lecture was eventually published 1967 in the *Science* journal under the title: "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic<sup>36</sup> Crisis".<sup>37</sup> I will present this article in some detail because its publication has generated a debate which is still going on. The article also has the advantage of situating properly the question in the nexus between Christianity and the Western worldview. The author starts by noting that all forms of life modify their contexts and that human beings have notably affected the environment. He observes that while people have "been a dynamic element in their own environment... in the present state of historical scholarship we usually do not know exactly when, where, or with what effects man-induced changes came. As we enter the last third of the 20th century, however, concern for the problem of ecologic backlash is mounting feverishly".<sup>38</sup>

White observes that a new development in this area came about when attempts to understand the nature of things, science, combined with the accumulation of technological skills about four generations ago when:

<sup>32</sup> Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 1994).

<sup>33</sup> See the references that have been given above beginning with on the invasion by the Hyksos.

<sup>34</sup> M. B. Akpan, "Liberia and Ethiopia, 1880-1914; the survival of two African states", A. A. Boahen, ed., *Africa under Colonial Domination 1880-1935*, vol. VII (UNESCO: Paris, 2000), 249-282.

<sup>35</sup> Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis", *Science*, 155, no. 3767 (1967): 1203-1207.

<sup>36</sup> In his article, White uses the adjective "ecologic"; I have used "ecological" instead.

<sup>37</sup> Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis", *Science*, 155, no. 3767 (1967): 1203-1207.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 1203.



Western Europe and North America arranged a marriage between science and technology, a union of the theoretical and the empirical approaches to our natural environment. The emergence in widespread practice of the Baconian [related to Bacon] creed that scientific knowledge means technological power over nature can scarcely be dated before about 1850, save in the chemical industries, where it is anticipated in the 18th century. Its acceptance as a normal pattern of action may mark the greatest event in human history since the invention of agriculture, and perhaps in nonhuman terrestrial history as well... Today, less than a century later, the impact of our race upon the environment has so increased in force that it has changed in essence.<sup>39</sup>

For White therefore, the ecological crisis has its roots in the marriage between science and technology whose beginnings are found in the work of Francis Bacon (1561-1626) work to which he makes reference. This marks an important phase in the idea of having power over or controlling nature. For him the many calls for action seem too partial and negative. He thinks that proper action must include thinking about fundamentals otherwise “our specific measures may produce new backlashes more serious than those they are designed to remedy”.<sup>40</sup> This is what led him to suggest looking deeply at the “presuppositions that underlie modern technology and science. Science was traditionally aristocratic, speculative, intellectual in intent; technology was lower class, empirical, action-oriented. The quite sudden fusion of these two, towards the middle of the 19th century, is surely related to the slightly prior and contemporary democratic revolutions which, by reducing social barriers, tended to assert a functional unity of brain and hand. Our ecologic crisis is the product of an emerging, entirely novel, democratic culture”.<sup>41</sup>

He also asserts that both modern technology and modern science are distinctively *Occidental* (Western), although the West has borrowed a lot from the Asian and Moslem scientists.<sup>42</sup> It should be

noted here that despite abundant records from Europeans and Africans there is no reference to the contribution of Africa to human civilisation.<sup>43</sup> In his analysis, White sees in the relationship between people and nature an exploitive attitude which he traces back towards the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. I do agree with White for whom the intellectual works of the time influenced what was happening. “What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny—that is, by religion”.<sup>44</sup> He continues his analysis to show that when Christianity overcame paganism it brought about the “greatest psychic revolution in the history” of Western culture, and although certain forms of their:

...thinking and language have largely ceased to be Christian, but to my eye the substance often remains amazingly akin to that of the past. Our daily habits of action, for example, are dominated by an implicit faith in perpetual progress which was unknown either to Greco- Roman antiquity or to the Orient. It is rooted in, and is indefensible apart from, Judeo-Christian teleology.<sup>45</sup>

White goes on to specify what Christianity told people about their relationship with the environment. He says that Christianity inherited from Judaism a “concept of time as nonrepetitive and linear but also a striking story of creation”. According to him:

A loving and all-powerful God created all. The human being named all animals “thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes. And, although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God's image.”<sup>46</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 1203.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 1204.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 1204.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 1204.

<sup>43</sup> For example, of authors who show how Africa contributed to human civilisation in a unique way see: ben-Jochannan, *Africa*, 306-309.

<sup>44</sup> White, 1205.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 1205.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 1205.

For White, therefore, Christianity, especially in its Western form, is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen. He says:

In antiquity every tree, every spring, every stream, every hill had its own genius loci, its guardian spirit. These spirits were accessible to men, but were very unlike men; centaurs, fauns, and mermaids show their ambivalence. Before one cut a tree, mined a mountain, or dammed a brook, it was important to placate the spirit in charge of that particular situation, and to keep it placated. By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.<sup>47</sup>

It is interesting to take special note of what White says above. For those familiar with traditional or indigenous worldviews, the link between people and nature as indicated above is not unfamiliar.<sup>48</sup> Therefore it is important that in our discussion we recall the anthropo-theological approach and the distinction made between Christianity and the good news. The worldview of the people who are trying to understand God necessarily influences their theology. In the West, their Christianity, necessarily a product of their history and culture, has been identified with a Christianity which has been presented with a universal character.<sup>49</sup> This has not only led to violence against the environment but also against other cultures which have been suppressed as paganism. The author further says that the Christian dogma of creation found in all creeds sheds some light on the understanding of today's ecologic crisis.<sup>50</sup> While for the "Greek East, nature was conceived primarily as a symbolic system through which God speaks to men". The Latin West by the early 13th century natural theology "was becoming the effort to understand God's mind by discovering how his creation operates". For him, "modern Western science was cast in a matrix of Christian theology. The dynamism of religious devotion,

shaped by the Judeo-Christian dogma of creation, gave it impetus".<sup>51</sup>

In view of the foregoing analysis, White affirms that in order to get out of the ecological crisis, we must find an alternative Christian view to the environment. He foresees that his conclusions might not be palatable to many Christians. Let us first look at his conclusions. For him, when science and technology joined, they gave people power whose ecologic effects are out of control. "*If so, Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt*".<sup>52</sup> It is this statement that has been a source of criticism of, and attacks on, White. We will come back to this later. Suffice to say for the moment that White doubts:

Disastrous ecologic backlash can be avoided simply by applying to our problems more science and more technology. Our science and technology have grown out of Christian attitudes toward man's relation to nature which are almost universally held not only by Christians and neo-Christians but also by those who fondly regard themselves as post-Christians... Despite Darwin, we are not, in our hearts, part of the natural process. We are superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it for our slightest whim... To a Christian a tree can be no more than a physical fact. The whole concept of the sacred grove is alien to Christianity and to the ethos of the West. For nearly 2 millennia Christian missionaries have been chopping down sacred groves, which are idolatrous because they assume spirit in nature.<sup>53</sup>

These are strong assertions whose truth and validity are borne out by the contemporary failures to address the environmental crisis by using more science and technology. For White, we need a new religion, or rethink the old one. That is how he comes in with his proposal that we should bring on board the greatest radical in Christian history since Christ: Saint Francis of Assisi who believed in and

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 1205.

<sup>48</sup> Modern anthropology has deconstructed the terms "paganism" and "animism" as used by White because they have been found to be pejorative and inadequate.

<sup>49</sup> Albert Muller, *Principes chrétiens et colonisation* (Christian principles and colonisation) (Bruxelles: Cité Chrétienne, 1927), gives one of the best justifications on why the West must be taken as a model in everything since it is superior. See my critique of this, Peter Kanyandago, "From Negative to Positive

Universality: Anthropological and Ethical Implications for Africa", Beat Sitter-Liver, ed., *Universality: From Theory to Practice. An Interdisciplinary Debate about Facts, Possibilities, Lies and Myths* (Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2009), 313-335.

<sup>50</sup> White, 1206.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 1206.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 1206.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 1206.

lived the virtue of humility thus repositioning humanity to nature by trying to “depose man from his monarchy over creation and set up a democracy of all God's creatures.”<sup>54</sup> White concludes his four-page reflection which must be considered as a watershed in the Christian writings on Christianity and the environment saying that the increasing disruption of the global environment originates in the Western medieval world against which Francis rebelled and its growth must be must be situated historically in the ensuing as said by White:

Distinctive attitudes toward nature which are deeply grounded in Christian dogma...Both our present science and our present technology are so tainted with orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature that no solution for our ecologic crisis can be expected from them alone. Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not... The profoundly religious, but heretical, sense of the primitive Franciscans for the spiritual autonomy of all parts of nature may point a direction. I propose Francis as a patron saint for ecologists.<sup>55</sup>

Interestingly and coincidentally enough, Pope Francis' already cited Encyclical Letter on the environment has its official title as “*Laudato Si*”, taken from the canticle of St. Francis addressing our planet as “Sister, Mother Earth”. Let us also note that the new Pope, a Jesuit, took St. Francis as his guide and inspiration.<sup>56</sup>

### Some Reflections on White's Position

Other authors corroborate White's contribution to our understanding of the ecological crisis. In her detailed study about bioprospecting in which she refers to the power of knowing and owning, Monica Michelle Seini endorses what White says about Bacon.<sup>57</sup> For Seini, Bacon believed that human power is attained through knowledge acquisition, but all this in view of attaining salvation and

likeness of God, for sharing domination over nature. She says that Bacon advocated a “tighter link between science and technology in the struggles to dominate nature”.<sup>58</sup> For her, Bacon believed that nature could be manipulated and improved, but within the teaching of the Church. Despite his emphasis on an empirical approach towards science, Bacon therefore was not opposed to the teachings of his Church as such.<sup>59</sup>

For Michael Paul Nelson, the aspect of White's article that poses problems even after fifty years after its publication was the author's claim that “our environmental crisis is first and foremost the product of our Western worldview. That is, our problem is fundamentally philosophical or ideological: we bring our ideas about the world into existence, ideas about what humans are, what the world is, and how the human and the non-human world ought to interact”.<sup>60</sup> Nelson goes to say that according to White, “Our problems are not going to be solved, therefore, simply by the application of more science and technology”.<sup>61</sup> I do agree with White's view. The environmental crisis will not be solved by looking and applying more science and technology: there is need to look at the worldview that produces the problems.

Regarding the roots causes of the ecological crisis, Pope Francis devotes the whole of chapter 3 of his Encyclical to this matter. While White did not extend his analysis to the present in detail, Francis gives more details, but also linking up with what White says about the link between science and technology. He says that what he calls technoscience can be beneficial if well directed but sometimes the power it has given us is, and should not be, misdirected but should be used with responsibility.<sup>62</sup> More specifically he critiques what he calls “the globalisation of the technocratic paradigm” relating to how:

*Humanity has taken up technology and its development according to an undifferentiated*

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 1206.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 1207.

<sup>56</sup> See Francis, *Laudato Si*, no. 10.

<sup>57</sup> Monica Michelle Seini, *Bioprospecting and Access to Indigenous Flora: Policy Implications of Contested Ways of 'Knowing' and 'Owning'* (Griffith: Griffith University, 2003), 123, unpublished PhD thesis.

<sup>58</sup> Seini, 123.

<sup>59</sup> Seini, 123.

<sup>60</sup> Michael Paul Nelson, “The Long Reach of Lynn White Jr.'s ‘The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis’”, *Ecology and Evolution*, <https://ecoevocommunity.nature.com/posts/14041-the-long-reach-of-lynn-white-jr-s-the-historical-roots-of-our-ecologic-crisis>

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Francis, *Laudato Si*, nos. 102-105

and one-dimensional paradigm. This paradigm exalts the concept of a subject who, using logical and rational procedures, progressively approaches and gains control over an external object. The effects of imposing this model on reality, human and social, are seen in the deterioration of the environment, but this is just one sign of a reductionism which affects every aspect of human [material] and social life.<sup>63</sup>

We can see from these statements that, as already noted above, the concept of causality must be taken in its complexity. The Pope is saying that the root causes of our ecological crisis are grounded in the technoscience paradigm which comes from what has been called the scientific revolution where Bacon is a key player.<sup>64</sup> While White makes a similar observation, he associates it with Western Christianity which cannot be separated from the Western worldview.

The objections that White foresaw would arise from the position he takes are very well documented.<sup>65</sup> However, a reading of these positions seems not to have very well understood White.<sup>66</sup> He does not create a direct cause-effect between Christianity and the ecological crisis, but only says that the crisis is rooted in Western Christianity. In fact, nowhere does he examine Christian teaching as such, apart from making reference to the Christian dogma on creation and the creeds. I think what should be highlighted is that what is at stake is the western worldview which has produced the type of Christianity that is the most prevalent. This Christianity has also, of course, influenced the Western worldview. Recalling here what I have said about anthropo-theology above is very helpful. Let us briefly look at some biblical texts which seem to be the source of discussion.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 106-107.

<sup>64</sup> Refer to what has been said above by White and Seini on Bacon.

<sup>65</sup> See, for example, Michael Paul Nelson, "The Long Reach of Lynn White..."

<sup>66</sup> Bruce Shervey, "Christian Thought in the Age of Ecology: Historical Roots of a Religious Crisis", *Historical Papers 2001: Canadian Society of Church History*; Ernest M. Conradie, *Christianity and Ecological Theology: Resources for Further Research* (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2006); Preston Bristow,

Before we close our discussion on this topic, it is important that we look at some verses of Genesis which seem to be the source of ecological controversy. Normally, we should have started with this part, but I chose to bring it later after seeing the questions. The verses in question are found in Genesis 1: 26 and 28. In the *Jerusalem Bible* (1985 edition), the text reads: "God said, 'let us make man in our image, in the likeness of ourselves, and let them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild animals and all the creatures that creep along ground'." The key words here are: "let them be masters." The Hebrew word which was translated is *radah*<sup>67</sup> which can be translated as rule, tread down, or have dominion over.<sup>68</sup> *The Good News Bible* (1979 edition) translates the word as "they will have power".

Part of verse 28 we are interested in reads as follows in the *Jerusalem Bible*: "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Be masters of the fish of the sea". The phrases and words we are looking at are "subdue" and "be masters". The two are translated as "bring under control" and "putting in charge" respectively by *The Good News Bible*. The Hebrew verbs which are being translated are *kabash* which can be translated as subdue, bring into bondage, to humble. The second verb is another form of *radah*. Pope Francis advises that when trying to understand what the Bible says we have to read the words in their contexts and with an appropriate hermeneutic.<sup>69</sup> In an earlier text, he had said that the creation accounts of the book of Genesis contain profound teachings using a symbolic and narrative language and should not be taken literally.<sup>70</sup>

A look at the verses in question, brings out the idea of having dominion over, controlling, and subduing nature. Whether this is what the authors originally meant, the subsequent understanding and application of the texts, at least in the context of the

"The Root of Our Ecological Crisis", *Journal of Creation*, 15, no. 1, 2001.

<sup>67</sup> The transcription from Hebrew is borrowed from Robert Young, *Analytical Concordance to the Holy Bible*, 8th ed., (Guildford and London: United Society for Christian Literature, 1939), 268.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. See also George V. Wigram, *The Englishman's Concordance Hebrew, and Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons Ltd., 1866).

<sup>69</sup> *Laudato Si*, no. 67.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., no. 66.

West and its Christianity, seems to have been linked to the present environmental crisis. As some authors have remarked while critiquing White, one cannot state this in absolute terms. However, it cannot be by coincidence that a largely Christian civilisation has also produced and lived with a gradual destruction of the environment without any drastic interventions to check this. Pope Francis' Letter refers to his predecessors' attempts to address this matter, especially John Paul II's.<sup>71</sup> But still, it is rather surprising that in the Catholic Church we have had to wait until 2015 to get an official document fully devoted to this question. Let us now briefly see the link between the African worldview and management of violence. If the Western worldview has tended to violate the environment and even those who are not Western, the African worldview has another approach which can serve as a remedy. Let us now turn briefly to that.

#### AFRICAN WORLDVIEW AND VIOLENCE

I do not need to repeat work that has been done by others on the African worldview which must be celebrated. They show that Africa does not have to be discussed in terms of what it is in relation to other people.<sup>72</sup> In fact, one can say that Africa does not have much to borrow from outside for its survival, except in the areas of correcting mistakes that have been made. I just want to repeat for our argument that Africans are credited with an approach to life which does not dichotomise realities between the here and after, between the sacred and profane. This harmony extends beyond human beings to encompass other animate and inanimate beings. That is why for thousands of years they have lived with nature without bringing extinctions of species as is the case of recent after having adopted cultural, economic, and religious systems and practices which violate nature. In the environmental crisis we are facing, we have to point out the African approach to nature which does not aim at extracting

and exploiting but at integration and coexistence. They are also credited with having a sense of community which promotes individual and community life.<sup>73</sup>

The African's hospitality which, unfortunately has been sometimes abused, and sense of welcoming, have been written about.<sup>74</sup> These attributes have caused Africa some problems because naturally the African usually welcomes the stranger without suspecting. Some have even suggested that Africans should change, but I wonder how this can be done without adding more violence of self-denial. But in the present changing circumstances there is reason for finding out how hospitality can be practiced without endangering the host. The sense of communion is linked with the importance attached to the ancestors who are part of and participate in life of the community. Communion includes the unborn, living, and the living dead. The absurdity in the debates in some African countries about whether abortion should be legalised or not,<sup>75</sup> cannot be appreciated without taking into account the African worldview which makes room for the unborn as.

Considering what I have briefly sketched above about the role of Africa in managing human affairs until it was invaded, one can say that we still have the original spark which should not be lost but should be protected, enhanced, and shared, not for the benefit of Africa but for the whole of humanity. In cases where we still have African endogenous approaches, these should be jealously guarded and promoted. Where violence has led to adopting of practices and systems which are not helping Africans, let us use endogenization to restore the African character and borrow where this helps to enhance who we are and what we have.<sup>76</sup> In the worldview that has been briefly presented, there are certain violence that are not endogenously African. Let us present a few of these.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., no. 5.

<sup>72</sup> Two examples about such work include: Laurenti Magesa, *What Is not Sacred? African Spirituality* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2014); Bénézet Bujo, *The Ethical Dimension of Community: The African Model and the Dialogue between North and South* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1998).

<sup>73</sup> University of Pretoria, "Chapter Four: The African Ubuntu Philosophy". <https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/28706/04chapter4.pdf?sequence=5>

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Guttmacher Institute, Fact Sheet: Abortion in Africa, [www.guttmacher.org](http://www.guttmacher.org)

<sup>76</sup> On the concept of endogenization as a process of reappropriating the African character, see Peter Kanyandago, "African Endogenous Knowledge Systems", Raúl Fornet-Bentacourt, ed., *The Encounter of Knowledge Cultures in the North-South Dialogue* (Frankfurt am Main: IKO, 2008), 63-73.

Before I propose what can be done to remove some forms of violence, we need to do some diagnosis before we prescribe the medicine. The following are types of violence which, although are now in Africa, are not originally African. Considering Africa's worldview, I would like to suggest that the following forms of violence are not endogenously African.

- **Legalised abortion:** All of a sudden Africa is getting consultants to tell us that we do not respect the rights of women to control their bodies with regard to what is euphemistically called getting rid of unwanted pregnancies. The Francophones gives an even “cleaner” name: *interruption volontaire de grossesse*, (voluntary interruption of pregnancy).<sup>77</sup> In a period of a few years, these consultants believe that Africans have lost the capacity they have from millennia of years to manage their affairs and so have to be assisted in aggravating the already existing generated by exogenous violence. The challenge of unwanted pregnancies cannot be solved by legalising abortion but by squarely facing why they are coming.
- **Violence of and in courts of laws:** The legal and judiciary systems we inherited from our colonial masters have many forms of violence imbedded in them. These include: incurring many expenses when one wants justice done, divorce and “dividing children”, a prison system which is very expensive and increases violence among those who are convicted, capital punishment and its justification.<sup>78</sup> Another form of violence is the sacrosanct famous principle: one is presumed innocent until proved guilty.<sup>79</sup> Even when the community has seen that a member has committed an offence, you have first to take the person to court, get witnesses, and where possible get a lawyer who can even prove that

the offence was never committed. It is said that without this principle many people who are innocent would be unjustly condemned, but even with this principle, we have had cases of people who were condemned to death and were later found innocent. Of course, there can be cases where one has first to make enquiries, but I find that the principle has been pushed too far and has been abused. The Western-type of handling court cases is about providing evidence. This type of legal system does not link resolution of conflicts with reconciliation and ethics.<sup>80</sup> The African system does not principally aim at proving who is guilty but at healing the community, reintegrating the offender, and reconciling the parties and families involved. All this must ultimately be celebrated. This system has been marginalised, and where some of its elements have been incorporated, is called “native”, “indigenous”, or “traditional”.

- **Violence in education:** Africans have religiously copied and maintained a school education system which is violent in many aspects.<sup>81</sup> It excludes parents and community from participating in the education of the children. This education system is also violent where very young children are put in boarding schools, and separated from their parents and relatives. Waking up very early very young children to go to school is also a form of violence. Society should look for means of putting up schools nears communities. The negative psychological consequences of such a bad education system can be seen in practices linked to affective vacuums like substance abuse. Furthermore, the education system is violent in that it is very expensive, at least if you want to get what is called in Uganda a “good” school, meaning a school where students pass

<sup>77</sup> Interruption volontaire de grossesse (Voluntary interruption of pregnancy), 27 January 2016. <https://www.health.belgium.be/fr/sante/prenez-soin-de-vous/debut-et-fin-de-vie/interruption-volontaire-de-grossesse>

<sup>78</sup> Robert Fr. Schopp, “Justifying Capital Punishment in Principle and in Practice: Empirical Evidence of Distortion in Application”, *Nebraska Law Review* 81 no. 2 (2002) 806-838.

<sup>79</sup> Legal Information Institute, Presumption of Innocence, [https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/presumption\\_of\\_innocence](https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/presumption_of_innocence)

<sup>80</sup> T. W. Bennett, “Conflict of Laws: The Application of Customary Law and the Common Law in Zimbabwe”, *The*

*International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 30 no. 1 (1981) 59-103.

<sup>81</sup> Peter Kanyandago, “Valuing the African Endogenous Education System for Community-based Learning: An Approach to Early School Leaving”, Jacques Zeelen et al., eds., *The Burden of Educational Exclusion: Understanding and Challenging Early School Leaving in Africa* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2010), 99-113.

very well.<sup>82</sup> I think I can say without fear of being contradicted that education has become a commercial commodity in some cases.

- **Abandoning of children and orphans:** While Africa was never a perfect society, generally babies who had one or no parent were integrated either in the family or at least in the clan.<sup>83</sup> The matter of building homes for orphans would never have been contemplated. Because of the African endogenous system which was in place, children who needed care were catered for. Our ancestors must be turning in their graves when they see how so many children are being abandoned or being used to make money because they are orphans. The exogenous violence which had eroded the family and social fabric has led to this kind of scenario, and the tragic part of it is that it is not being questioned.
- **Genocide and mass killings:** I am aware that in the past few decades Africa has been shocked by the Rwanda genocide and other mass killings.<sup>84</sup> The latter can also be found in struggles for independence where different people divided during colonial times fight each other to control power. To these we can add atrocities committed by different warlords, either to control resources or to get power, or both. Among these we should mention the protracted bush war fought by Joseph Kony of the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda. His abduction and incorporation of children into his army, and using them to commit atrocities, and the psychosocial wounds left behind scars that will take long to heal. The trying of one of Kony's commanders in the International Criminal Court in The Hague orchestrated by the media hardly shows any sensitivity to these wounds.<sup>85</sup> One can refer to the violence I attributed to the court system above. What I am

trying to say in all this is that, while Africans fought among themselves, we do not find the type of violence associated with genocide and mass killings.

- To these types of violence, we can add violence in political systems which need to be endogenized, prostitution, violent crimes associated with carjacking and robberies, and violence in the dominant economic system which is creating increasing inequality, whereby the richest 8 men control the same amount of wealth as the poorest half of the world.<sup>86</sup>

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This article makes proposals that can be used to fight endogenously and exogenously generated violence. In addition, the article makes a conclusion. As a principle, Churches and higher education institutions must ensure that we use the African worldview. In this endeavour, before acting one does not have to have first to convince everybody. The question of what aspects to use will be discussed for each case, but the principle must be adopted. The non-African systems can only be adopted if they enhance what we are and have through endogenization. We must therefore study and know very well this worldview to reinforce the African self-esteem and self-confidence. This principle should be applied to religion, politics, education, and economy, and other aspects of our life. More specifically,

- In enculturating the gospel and faith in Africa, let us stop beginning with Western Christianity because its worldview cannot accommodate other systems anthropologically and ethically.

<sup>82</sup> In 2020, in Ndejje Senior Secondary, in Uganda, a student was required to pay UGX 1,300,000, a term, about USD 360. This money is well above what some universities charge a day scholar in a university. See The School, "School fees structures", 24 January 2020. <https://feelschol.com/school-fees-structure-in-uganda-3/>

<sup>83</sup> Racheal Mafumbate, "The Undiluted African Community: Values, The Family, Orphanage and Wellness in Traditional Africa", *Information and Knowledge Management* 9 no. 8 (2019) 7-13.

<sup>84</sup> Starbucks Stories and News, Timeline: Moving forward 25 years after the Rwanda genocide, 1 April 2019, <https://stories.starbucks.com/stories/2019/timeline-25-years-after-rwandan-genocide/>

<sup>85</sup> International Criminal Court, Situation in Uganda: The Prosecutor v. Joseph Kony and Vincent Otti, April 2018, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/CaseInformationSheets/KonyEtAlEng.pdf>

<sup>86</sup> Inequalities created by the capitalist and neo-liberal economic system have been reported upon by Oxfam, *An Economy for 99%*, (Oxford: Oxfam, 2017).

This should be done while keeping in mind the distinction between the gospel and Christianity.

- Violence, especially the type we have identified as self-denial and self-inflicted can only be eliminated if we know its root causes. So far, efforts to do this have not borne much fruit because we stop at symptoms. There is need to use the principle of history which connects the past to the present. Africa has to have the courage to specify the role of the Arabs and Europeans and where necessary to seek compensation for the wrong and harm done. In looking for root causes let us also highlight the role of the African elite in perpetuating on the African continent. These are the people who usually endorse and put in place systems which oppress their people.
- Fighting violence requires putting in place mechanisms, systems, and structures for promoting justice. Poverty and inequalities prevailing on the African continent are not biological: they are products of an economic, political, and social system which thrives on injustices. The Churches have a specific role in promoting systems which seek justice, and they should have the prophetic courage to start in their own system to reject traces of injustices.
- The African medicine, which is holistic in its conception and practice, should be integrated in the health care systems and in the training of health workers, including doctors. African herbal medicines are available, accessible, does not require complicated and long training, requires no experimenting on people or animals, disposing of it not very costly, hardly has any side effects, linked to ancestors and spirituality, hardly ever leads to resistance, in some cases is nutritious and the same medicine can deal with more than one problem.
- It is clear that in Africa we are not only dealing with individual sickness but also with cultural and social pathology. Cases of mass killings, ethnic cleaning and corruption cannot be solved only by dealing with individual and putting in place good laws. We have to look for appropriate practices and rituals in the African worldview to rehabilitate the African soul and body.
- In our search for a better Africa, let us be aware that not all non-Africans are against Africans. We have therefore, to identify and work with allies who are not Africans, but this has to be done very carefully to avoid cases of being duped.
- It is urgent to work on environmental violence: poisoning of water, air, plants, soil, animals eventually leads to poisoning our bodies also. Instead of addressing root causes of the environmental violence, we are being reactive, for example by getting bottled water or looking for means to deal with cancers which could have been prevented in the first place. In this area we are losing time and we are spending a lot of resources related to environmental pollution instead of using nature sparingly and in a sustainable way. In this area we have to look for resources in the African worldview. We should also join other organisations and institutions in rehabilitating and restoring the global and local ecological systems including glaciers, coral reefs, forests, and biodiversity.

In conclusion, if we are looking for the root cause(s) of the different types of violence on the African continent and for their solution, we have to take the tampering with the worldview of Africa as the fundamental root cause. The endogenous violence which is largely linked to the practices and systems that the African elite have put in place, they themselves having been largely disconnected from their worldview. The continent has been subject to successive and well-planned exogenous assaults which have, with time, combined with and aggravated endogenous violence, and also in the process given birth to new forms of violence. The exogenous violence has mainly come from the West and the Arab world, with the Western strand being more persistent and relayed through internalised practices and ideologies, most prominent of which are the dominant religious, political, economic and education systems which need to be endogenized. The only way of fighting violence in Africa, especially the self-inflicted one, is to eliminate what causes self-negation, and this can only be found within the African worldview. The argument that some African practices are violent cannot do away with this need. The African worldview itself has its own self-regulating mechanisms, and where an



external intervention is needed, this has to be accepted by and integrated in the African worldview, however well-intentioned it is. The African worldview is not only needed to solve problems of violence against people and nature in Africa. Being a continent, which gave birth to humanity, Africa also holds the key, once more, to rebirthing a new humanity which promotes coexistence of people among themselves and with the environment. This is the *kairos*, opportune time, for the Churches and theologians in Africa, and their allies, to act.