



**Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe**

Commission des Eglises auprès des Migrants en Europe

Kommission der Kirchen für Migranten in Europa

# Theological Reflections on Migration

A CCME Reader

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*Theological Reflections on Migration. A CCME Reader*

*Editors: Benz H.R. Schär (Bern) and Ralf Geisler (Hanover)*

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## Theological reflections on migration

Should migration be a stepchild of theological reflection? It could well be. Mainstream theological thinking does not naturally put us in touch with the field of migration. Migration doesn't occur in the indices of current works on dogmatics or ethics. This is not surprising where systematic theologians live in ivory towers, secluded from the needs of society and the plight of migrants. What is more astonishing is the fact that often even those within the churches taking sides for the migrants and refugees can easily live on a rather small ration of theological reflection of their involvement: Usually their needs for theology can easily be met with occasional hints to biblical passages referring to the "stranger".

We hope this collection of essays makes it evident that thinking about migration is not a marginal theological undertaking but touches central points of every theological reflection: What is humankind? What does it mean to be obliged to this God of the Old and New Testament? How can our confused human history be reconciled with a divine plan? How are theology and ethics related? And what, after all, is the task of the church?

Reflecting on migration from a theological perspective is touching on these topics in a holistic manner, and this would be for two reasons:

a) First of all, migration is omnipresent in the Bible as well as in church history as a kind of "red thread". Experiences of migration have not only left their traces throughout the scriptures, they have also been at work in the shaping of theology itself. Imagine how deeply the concepts of salvation in the Bible are "migration-bearing", beginning with the promise to Abraham, continuing with the exodus experience right down to the Babylonian exile which forced the Jews to reconsider their traditional faith and make it suitable for their life in dia-

pora. The Christian church from its very beginnings took advantage of this achievement and considered itself as the "wandering people of God" (Hebrews 13,14).

b) If we change our perspective and look at this liaison of theology and migration from the angle of today's migration experiences, we have to admit that finding oneself thrown in a migration situation highlights in a very clear way what has to be said about the human condition in general. No surprise then that the biblical accounts - often about people finding themselves in precarious situations - meet so well the plight of those getting stranded in a globalised and estranged world! And no surprise again if these situations often underline the precariousness of human nature, in theological terms: man missing repeatedly his divine destiny.

"Migration" as a core theme of theology and the Church? We believe it is worthwhile considering this idea. The present collection of texts could be seen as a beginning thereof. These documents are small offerings of a larger complex which we hope will gradually reveal itself in our theological research and through our practical work - for both belong together. We are glad to open our choice of texts with an essay written by the Cameroonian liberation theologian Jean-Marc Éla who traces the questions of theology and migration right back to the heart of the very concept of God.

We hope that the anthology will encourage others to step in and add further texts objecting to what is said here or complementing it.<sup>1</sup> The form under which our anthology is presented is open for this kind of interaction: it is a simple electronic file, easily delivered by e-mail and similarly easily updated. It has been conceived as a

<sup>1</sup> Please, send your contributions to info@ccme.be - cf. also: [www.oikoumene.org](http://www.oikoumene.org) (Global platform for theology and analysis).

work in progress, and we hope this will make up for some shortcomings: So far there is only one women contributor; also among the authors there are few who have been directly affected by migration. And, last of all, the texts in our reader come in various languages. While it is true that this reflects

the composition of CCME's member churches and agencies we still hope that one day we shall be able to present all of these texts in English to make them more accessible. In the meantime we hope that the abstracts we have added to the non-English essays will at least convey an idea of their contents.

Berne and Hanover, September 2008

Benz H.R. Schär and Ralf Geisler

## Un Dieu métis

*Quand les frontières se ferment et quand les pays riches sont peu enclins à abandonner leurs monopoles sur les ressources de la planète, une question se pose avec acuité: où donc est Dieu dans le système actuel des obsessions sécuritaires du Nord?*

Les pays du Nord se mobilisent pour gérer le contrôle des frontières selon les critères du libre-échange en faisant le tri entre gens utiles et gens inutiles. D'après ces critères, les pauvres ou les «naufragés de la planète» sont une humanité de surcroît dont les pays riches n'ont que faire. Ces Barbares doivent être enfermés dans leurs enclos au moment où les orphelins de la guerre froide réinventent l'ennemi à partir du Sud, la nouvelle menace.

Dans ce contexte, on ne peut que s'interroger sur l'impact et les dérives des politiques restrictives qui, en matière d'immigration et d'asile, mettent en cause l'État de droit et le lien social. Aucune civilisation digne de ce nom ne peut exister sans donner toute sa place au principe d'hospitalité. Aussi, faut-il redouter les ravages du déficit humain dans les pays occidentaux qui se ferment à l'immigré et aux personnes en quête de protection.

Si l'on juge la démocratie à la manière de respecter les droits humains et de traiter l'étranger, on prend conscience des effets pervers des politiques d'immigration et d'asile qui se fondent sur l'idéologie du bunker. On ne peut que constater l'érosion des droits à l'égard des réfugiés: en Occident, les pays d'asile deviennent rares. Les gouvernements refusent de reconnaître que l'immigré ou le demandeur d'asile, à titre d'être humain, est sujet de droits. À la limite, ces gouvernements n'hésitent pas à violer un lieu de culte pour expulser les réfugiés vers des pays où ils risquent la torture ou la mort. Bien plus, à Ottawa, la ministre de l'Immigration va jusqu'à vouloir interdire aux Églises d'exercer leur ministère d'accueil et

de compassion en les sommant de cesser d'offrir l'asile aux réfugiés menacés d'expulsion. En tentant d'assimiler le droit d'asile au crime, on tend à gérer les menaces par l'enfermement, la violence et l'arbitraire.

Devant une opinion fabriquée par les manchettes du téléjournal qui n'aident pas toujours à saisir les vrais enjeux des systèmes sociopolitiques mis en place à travers les lois antiterroristes, il est urgent d'insister sur la pertinence de la reconnaissance et du respect de l'autre jusque dans l'espace du politique, de désamorcer la peur de l'autre en vue de civiliser l'État et de réinventer la citoyenneté.

### Vers une théologie de l'altérité

En tenant compte du choc de la différence, de la tendance à la fermeture des frontières et de la crise du droit d'asile dans le système actuel des obsessions sécuritaires, le théologien doit pouvoir saisir à bras-le-corps la question actuelle du sens de l'autre dans la Révélation afin de contribuer au débat fondateur qui s'impose en ce début du millénaire: accueil ou rejet des immigrés et des demandeurs d'asile?

À cet égard, les consulats, les aéroports et les centres de détention, vitrines de l'Occident, constituent de véritables lieux théologiques. À partir de ces lieux, Dieu lui-même est à l'épreuve du cri de l'immigré et du réfugié. L'enjeu de Dieu dans la rencontre avec l'étranger est un axe central du message de la Bible. Le risque de «sortir de chez soi» et d'aller ailleurs est indissociable de la révélation de Dieu dans la Bible. Les chemins de l'exode et de l'exil sont le passage obligé pour accéder à la vie en plénitude. Cet itiné-

raire de masses d'hommes et de femmes jetés hors du sol natal et privés de leur univers familier évoque le drame de l'humanité écrasée sous le poids d'événements qui prennent souvent le visage de la précarité et de la souffrance, de l'exclusion et même de la mort.

Exode et exil sont deux mots de la Bible qui renvoient à la condition même du peuple de Dieu, comme de nombreux textes le soulignent, entre autres: «Mon père était un araméen errant qui descendit en Égypte» (Dt26,5); «Je suis un étranger chez toi, un passant comme tous mes pères» (Ps39,13). Le souci de l'autre s'impose à partir de cette condition d'étranger: Dieu a rencontré son peuple dans les situations de servitude, d'humiliation et de honte. La relation à l'étranger s'enracine dans le mémorial de la sortie d'Égypte qui structure la conscience religieuse des Israélites: «Tu n'opprimeras pas l'étranger. Vous savez ce qu'éprouve l'étranger, car vous-mêmes avez été étrangers au pays d'Égypte» (Ex23,22). Ainsi, le sens de l'autre est une exigence de fidélité au Dieu de l'Exode: « Si un étranger réside avec vous dans votre pays, vous ne le molesterez pas. L'étranger qui réside avec vous sera comme un compatriote et tu l'aimeras comme toi-même, car vous avez été étrangers au pays d'Égypte. Je suis Yahvé votre Dieu» (Lv19,33-34). À l'évidence, ce Dieu n'est pas neutre. Il se range toujours et avec passion du côté des faibles et des indigents. Il prend le parti de ceux auxquels le droit et les priviléges sont refusés. Les exigences de justice et de protection de l'étranger se situent dans la logique du Dieu des pauvres. Ainsi, il s'agit toujours de considérer et de traiter l'étranger en prenant en compte le sort du peuple de Dieu en Égypte.

Cette attitude est profondément enracinée dans l'horizon prophétique. Au-delà des séparations entre Israël et les païens, l'admission de l'étranger s'étend sur le plan social, cultuel et salvifique. Dans cet esprit, la vision d'un salut total et universel réalisé à travers la figure du Serviteur de Yahvé, dans

le livre d'Isaïe, permet d'approfondir la réflexion. L'Hébreu entend, avec étonnement et surprise, Dieu appeler l'Égypte «mon peuple» et l'Assyrie «ma créature». La Bible annonce un bouleversement total des rapports entre Israël et l'Égypte dont le nom est lié à l'histoire de l'oppression et de la servitude. Face à la haine et à la vengeance qui rappellent les souffrances des juifs de la part de l'étranger et de l'opresseur, il faut plutôt retrouver le sens de l'accueil de l'autre qui, sans annuler l'élection d'Israël, invite à vivre l'union dans la différence. Au nom de ce Dieu, s'impose la résistance contre toute forme d'intolérance susceptible de conduire au rejet et à l'exclusion de l'immigré.

En fin de compte, le destin des immigrés est au centre des manifestations de l'amour et de la compassion de Dieu. Plus encore, Dieu se révèle, à travers le visage de l'étranger (Gn18,1-15). Ce passage où Dieu prend la figure de trois voyageurs annonce la figure messianique du repas où Dieu et l'être humain sont à la même table. L'hospitalité d'Abraham à l'égard des trois voyageurs fatigués annonce la rencontre ultime avec l'étranger selon la logique de l'Incarnation. Le théologien doit pouvoir rappeler que Dieu porte avec lui les figures de l'altérité qui trouvent leur valeur et leur fondement dans le mystère de la Trinité.

## Du Dieu métis

Trois axes thématiques s'offrent à la réflexion dans une perspective chrétienne, pour fonder la visée d'un monde d'où l'exclusion est bannie et résister à la tentation du mur et des replis identitaires. Ces thèmes soulignent la fécondité des entrelacements anthropologiques qui résultent de l'ouverture à l'autre. Ils s'articulent autour du Dieu métis dont il nous faut reconnaître le visage à l'ère des nouvelles mobilités.

1) Le lien intime entre soi et l'autre trouve un enracinement fécond dans le Dieu trinitaire. Dans la célèbre scène de l'apparition des trois étrangers sous le chêne de Mambré, comme figure de Dieu, les Pères de l'Église

ont vu l'annonce du mystère de la Trinité dont Jésus est le révélateur. Le Dieu que l'on accueille sous la figure de l'hôte ne cesse de faire revenir notre regard vers celui que nous préférions ne pas voir, il appelle à vivre avec les autres au-delà de toute discrimination et ostracisme. L'accueil de l'étranger s'inscrit ainsi en profondeur dans la foi au Dieu des chrétiens.

2) L'acceptation de la différence et de l'autorité est un défi à l'affirmation de soi. La foi trinitaire invite à s'ouvrir à la diversité en affirmant que l'identité ne se bâtit pas par le rejet et le bannissement de l'étranger, mais par l'intégration des différences sous l'égide d'un Dieu qui aime. La genèse de soi exige l'acceptation et la rencontre de l'autre. Dans un monde où une culture d'assiégés contribue à développer des réactions négatives et répulsives à l'égard de l'étranger en n'acceptant pas le fait de la différence de l'autre, la construction de soi ne peut se faire, car il manque cette part d'une humanité étrangère grâce à laquelle chacun peut s'enrichir et s'épanouir.

3) Jésus Christ partage le destin de l'étranger. En effet, en Jésus de Nazareth, celui qui est «sorti de Dieu», c'est le Verbe qui assume la plénitude du mouvement de la vie à travers un corps par lequel il vit son propre exode jusqu'à la croix. Dans ce mouvement de sortie qui est constitutif du Verbe de vie (Jn8,29), retenons le moment de l'Incarnation. On se heurte ici au drame du rejet: «Il est venu chez lui et les siens ne l'ont pas accueilli» (Jn1,11). Ainsi, en Jésus Christ, l'enjeu de Dieu s'inscrit dans la dramatique humaine des rejetés de l'histoire. Né hors de chez lui (Lc2,4-7), il est confronté à l'exil, assumant et récapitulant ainsi l'expérience de son peuple (Mt2,13ss.). Durant son ministère, il mène une véritable vie d'itinérant, parcourant «villes et villages» (Lc13,22; Mt9,35). En mourant «hors des portes de la ville» (He13,11-12), il révèle le Dieu qui n'exclut pas ceux qui sont frappés par l'exclusion. Dans cette perspective, Jésus de Naz-

reth s'identifie lui-même à l'étranger, l'exclus pendu sur la croix.

La question de l'autre telle qu'elle se pose avec acuité dans les pays où le visage de l'invisible se dessine à travers cette nouvelle figure sociale que sont les sans-papiers nous oblige donc à repenser et à vivre autrement le message chrétien. Plus que jamais, l'autre est un défi fondamental à la mission de l'Église dans les mutations contemporaines où le droit d'asile est remis en cause par la «mentalité forteresse» dans laquelle s'installent les pays d'Occident. Dans ce contexte précis, l'Église a un rôle décisif à jouer pour défendre les causes humaines: il lui faut faire signe de ce Dieu qui entretient une sorte de complicité avec l'étranger. Ce défi doit être relevé dans un monde d'inégalités et de conflits où le flot d'exilés est loin d'être tarie.

### Dieu dans notre histoire

L'enjeu des questions d'immigration et d'asile mérite d'être précisé en mettant l'accent sur le caractère eschatologique de la rencontre de l'étranger (Mt25,31-46). Dans cette rencontre, le Seigneur, juge des nations que l'on attend «dans la gloire», est présent dans la condition des hommes et des femmes qui n'ont d'autre qualification que leur autorité même qui les condamne à la fragilité et à l'exclusion dans les milieux où les stéréotypes et la force du préjugé sont un frein à toute relation interculturelle. Il importe ici d'inventer une manière de faire Église en assumant le destin des étrangers.

En effet, Jésus rappelle que l'attente de sa venue ne saurait être vécue authentiquement en dehors de l'attention à l'autre en situation de précarité. En prenant fait et cause pour les hommes et les femmes sans patrie, sans insertion et privés de toute dignité sociale, il montre que c'est par la médiation de «ces plus petits qui sont ses frères», en apprenant à voir en tout étranger le Seigneur lui-même, que l'Église est appelée à rencontrer son Seigneur. L'Étranger est l'icône de l'Envoyé du Père. Le Christ renvoie donc l'Église à l'exi-

gence d'une attention à l'autre dans la quotidienneté humaine. C'est là qu'il entend être attendu. Ce qui importe, c'est de le servir dans les lieux où la citoyenneté s'exerce. C'est dans ces lieux que Dieu nous rencontre aujourd'hui sur les chemins de notre histoire.

Il n'y a pas de christianisme en dehors d'une fidélité vécue dans le geste et la parole. La rencontre avec l'étranger est un

événement de salut dans les trajectoires du quotidien. On ne peut réexaminer ce que signifie faire mémoire de Jésus sans faire référence à l'étranger et à l'exilé dont l'accueil est un enjeu de Dieu et un test fondamental de fidélité à l'Évangile. Le mot de Camus exprime bien cet enjeu: «Je vais vous dire un grand secret, mon cher: n'attendez pas le jugement dernier, il a lieu tous les jours».

*The above essay is taken from the canadian revue "Relations" (nov. 2004, p. 32-34). We thank for the permission to reproduce this text; cf. [www.revuerelations.qc.ca](http://www.revuerelations.qc.ca)*

*Abstract: In the Northern countries we observe a shocking tendency to close borders as a response to the arrival of asylum seekers. There is a crisis in the legislation to do with asylum seekers as well as an obsession for security. Against such a background this article insists on the importance of appreciation and respect of the stranger in the political realm, of reducing the fear of the stranger and thus of civilising the State and reinventing citizenship.*

*These norms are not just stated, but the author traces them back to the very fundamentals of christian faith. Not only is God - as can be seen in the accounts of Exodus and the Exile - passionately on the side of the weak and the needy, Ela also refers to those Biblical texts which portray God as a "Dieu métis" ("crossbreed God"). In doing so he finds the roots/basis of this opening towards the stranger in the very essence of God himself. In the famous story of Gn 18, 1-15 God takes the form of three tired strangers to reveal himself to Abraham. This scene reminds us of the Trinitarian God whose being is characterised by difference and communion and who reveals himself fully in Jesus Christ. In opening ourselves to diversity we strive to emulate this model: Jesus Christ, the stranger who was excluded and at the same time the one who did not reject the excluded. Remembering Christ cannot be separated from remembering the stranger in exile. The churches trying to live up to this insight are called to defend humanitarian values and affirm their faith through action and words.*

*Biographical note: The author, born in 1936 in Cameroon, is a Roman-Catholic theologian and sociologue. He is a member of the working group on refugees of the jesuit "Centre justice et foi"; in 2003 he published "Repenser la théologie africaine. Le Dieu qui libère".*

## Monothéisme et fraternité: L'étranger dans la Bible

Nous allons voir comment derrière la question de l'étranger, se joue celle de la réconciliation et de l'unité de l'humanité en elle-même, de l'humanité avec Dieu, et peut-être aussi de l'humanité avec la terre qui l'accueille. L'enjeu est de considérer que nous ne faisons partie que d'une seule et même «maison» (*oikos* qui désigne autant la maison-terre que la maisonnée-humanité), qui se dit en grec *oikouméné* et qui a donné le mot oecuménisme qui est bien plus qu'un simple projet de rassemblement d'Eglises chrétiennes ; c'est l'unité «bienheureuse» de toute notre humanité dont il est question ; c'est une autre façon de parler du «royaume» ou du «règne de Dieu» annoncé et ouvert par Jésus-Christ.

Il existe un lien indéfectible entre l'unicité de Dieu (il n'y a qu'un seul Dieu) et l'unicité de l'humanité (il n'y a qu'une seule humanité, sans hiérarchie) qui passe par son unité. Oikouméné et monothéisme sont inseparables ; elles sont un projet, une promesse, une utopie, un rêve qui passe par la subversion des frontières qui séparent et enferment, alors qu'elles ne devraient servir qu'à distinguer, établir des ponts, relier, solidariser.

Dans tout cela, l'étranger est à la fois celui qui perturbe l'unité ghettoisée et permet de subvertir les enfermements. En un sens Dieu est le grand Etranger qui vient vers nous, embrasse notre histoire pour y établir son règne, pour que le mot «étranger» ne serve plus jamais à qualifier un seul être humain ; seul le mot «frère» ou «soeur» demeurant l'étiquette dont on puisse habiller l'un de nos semblables. Seule la fraternité est conciliable avec le monothéisme.

### I. Les «inséparables»

#### *Dieu et l'humain: L'humain, image de Dieu*

«Dieu créa l'Humain à son image...» (Genèse 1,26-27) C'est la base et l'aboutissement de la foi, l'alpha et l'oméga de la théologie : Tout être humain, quel qu'il soit, est image de Dieu ; il est appelé à être une «parole en acte» de Dieu, à être porteur et supporteur de Dieu. C'est là le fondement théologique du respect des Droits humains.

Mais c'est aussi l'aboutissement, car nous sommes appelés à «devenir ce que nous sommes» potentiellement, en tout cas ce que Dieu aimerait que nous soyons ; tel est l'objet de la promesse du «règne de Dieu». En ce sens, toute discrimination, que ce soit à travers le racisme, le sexism ou le classisme social, est une forme d'hérésie, car en tant qu'atteinte à l'égale dignité de tout humain, elle est également une atteinte à la dignité de Dieu, comme les deux points suivants le confirment.

#### *Dieu et l'humain: L'amour indivisible*

«Tu aimeras le Seigneur ton Dieu ... c'est le premier commandement, et voici le deuxième qui lui est semblable : tu aimeras ton prochain comme toi-même.» (Mat 22,37-40)

On ne peut séparer Dieu et l'humain, l'humain et Dieu ; l'amour de Dieu passe immanquablement par l'amour de tous les humains, ce qui signifie l'amour de chaque humain.

Maintenant, une question se pose : Qui est mon prochain ? (Luc 10,29).

#### *Le prochain et moi: L'étranger, image du prochain*

«Qui est mon prochain ?», telle est la question posée à Jésus dans le fameux récit du «Bon Samaritain». (Luc 10,29ss)

La réponse très claire de Jésus est que le prochain n'est pas celui qui vient vers moi, mais celui qui va vers l'autre et spécialement celui (ou celle) qui a besoin de moi. Dans le texte, le prochain n'est pas le blessé, mais le Samaritain. «Lequel des trois s'est montré le prochain...?» demande Jésus. Etre le prochain n'est pas un titre, mais une démarche d'amour et de courage. Or, nous sommes invités à être le prochain de tout être humain, qui qu'il soit et où qu'il soit. C'est peut-être pour cette raison que nous sommes invités également à nous comporter comme des «étrangers et voyageurs sur la terre» (Hébreux 11,13) ; nous y reviendrons.

Relevons que le Samaritain est ici l'image de l'étranger et du mécréant. Les Samaritains étaient considérés comme les descendants des habitants du Royaume d'Israël (ou Royaume du Nord dont la capitale était Samarie) qui n'avaient pas été déportés à Babylone, avaient été mélangés aux colons étrangers que Babylone avait déporté d'autre partie de l'empire, et étaient restés attachés aux anciennes «superstitions».

Ce texte fait à certains égards écho au vieux texte du Lévitique (19,33) : «...cet étranger installé chez vous, vous le traiterez comme un indigène, comme l'un de vous. Tu aimeras comme toi-même...». L'étranger est en quelque sorte un «indicateur» (dans le sens de la sociologie de l'évaluation) qui me renseigne sur la nature de mon amour ; il est inspiré par Dieu, si je suis capable d'aimer celui ou celle qui a-priori ne m'attire pas, voire me repousse, par peur ou indifférence ; «Que faites-vous de plus que les «païens», si vous n'aimez que ceux qui vous aiment ?» demande Jésus.

#### *Le prochain et moi: L'étranger, image du Christ*

«... recevez en partage le Royaume... car j'étais étranger et vous m'avez recueilli... Chaque fois que vous l'avez fait à l'un de ces plus petits qui sont mes frères, c'est à moi que vous l'avez fait.» (Matthieu 25,34-40).

Deux points forts ressortent de ce texte sur le «jugement dernier» : Accueillir le

Christ est d'abord un comportement de solidarité active à l'égard des pauvres, des faibles, dont l'étranger est une figure, comme nous l'avions déjà noté concernant l'Ancien Testament (la Torah). D'autre part, cette attitude prépare le Royaume de Dieu.

#### *Le prochain et moi: L'étranger, image de moi-même?*

Marie Balmay, psychanalyste qui s'est lancée dans la théologie, affirme que l'on peut traduire le commandement d'amour par : «Tu aimeras ton prochain (il est) comme toi-même». Le rejout entre parenthèse est possible au niveau linguistique car en Grec ancien, le verbe être peut être sous-entendu, mais il est également parlant au niveau psychologique et philosophique. Mon prochain et à plus forte raison l'étranger, celui qui est différent de moi, est dans le fond comme moi. Sa différence compte, elle est même souvent très visible à travers la couleur de la peau, les vêtements, les habitudes, les langues..., mais sa similarité est la plus profonde et importante ; c'est elle qui doit primer dans nos relations. En clair, lorsque je rencontre un «autre», un «étranger», je dois voir en lui un semblable, avant même de reconnaître ses différences.

#### *La Bible «anti-différentialiste»*

«...et Dieu créa l'humain à son image, homme et femme il les créa.» (Genèse 1,27) Cette question de la double facette de l'humain qui fait son identité, se trouve au début de la Bible, comme pour nous donner une clé de lecture pour la suite, voire pour nous vacciner contre une perversion dans le rapport à l'autre : le racisme différentialiste.

Comment justifie-t-on les deux premières attitudes? Dans les années 1970, la Nouvelle Droite qui avait compris les enjeux de la bataille idéologique (reprenant en cela l'intuition géniale de Gramsci, leader et penseur communiste italien), a fait l'apologie d'un néo-racisme dit «différentialiste». Elle récupéra «le droit à la différence» cher à la Gauche, et le poussa à l'extrême en rajoutant

que la vraie différence ne peut se vivre que «chacun chez soi». Certes, chacun est libre d'aller provisoirement et «utilement» à l'étranger, pour le tourisme, le commerce ou le travail, mais une fois la mission terminée, il faut rentrer «chez soi». Les relations humaines entre personnes d'origines différentes ne peuvent être que fonctionnelles.

En grattant cette nouvelle idéologie, on s'aperçoit qu'elle a baptisé «différence» ce qui n'est en fait qu'un ensemble d'inégalités de plus en plus criantes.<sup>1</sup>

Ce néo-racisme est apparu dans un contexte bien précis de mutation du mode de production qui aggrave le chômage, la pauvreté et les inégalités. Le vétéro-racisme de type colonial servait à justifier le pillage des ressources et de la main d'œuvre des pays du Sud. Face au chômage de masse et aux délocalisations entraînées par la mondialisation montante à partir des années 70, on cherche surtout à justifier le renvoi «chez eux» de quantité de travailleurs étrangers devenus beaucoup moins «utiles» (si ce n'est, pour une partie d'entre eux, comme travailleurs illégaux).

#### *La dialectique de l'altérité*

Revenons maintenant à la question de l'identité à deux facettes. Le langage français est à ce titre très parlant, car «identité» a en fait deux sens opposés et en même temps complémentaires; on peut parler d'une véritable dialectique: Identité donne l'adjectif identique qui signifie semblable, c'est-à-dire de même nature; d'autre part l'identité marque également une unicité, une différence qui permet justement d'identifier la personne.

C'est ainsi que la carte d'identité présente à la fois une appartenance et une particularité. Tel est la dialectique et le défi de l'identité: être semblable et différent en même temps. Je suis moi parce que l'autre est autre, et que moi-même je suis autre que les autres. Mais dans le même temps, je suis moi,

humain, parce que j'appartiens à une humanité une et commune. Nous sommes condamnés ou plutôt promis, voire promus à être irrémédiablement différents et semblables.

Ceci dit, quelle face devons-nous mettre en avant, placer en premier dans cette dualité? Au regard des événements et de l'histoire, cette question n'est pas du tout anodine.

Je constate en effet que la peur de l'autre qui peut déboucher sur la violence de l'exclusion ou de l'élimination, commence par la prise en compte de la différence et s'y arrête. Car prise indépendamment, la différence fait peur, elle qui fige l'être dans l'apparence, elle confond l'être et le paraître, l'être et le faire: «Ta peau est noire, donc tu ES noir!», comme si la couleur pouvait constituer en elle-même une identité, un programme de vie. «Tu as volé, donc tu ES un voleur!», comme si l'action d'un instant pouvait embrasser l'éternité, interdisant l'amendement, le pardon et la conversion.

Mais alors, où est la solution? Elle s'impose par défaut: Si mettre en avant la différence mène au casse pipe, il nous faut commencer par l'autre face: Nous sommes d'abord semblables, nous sommes en tout premier lieu frères et sœurs, avant d'être différents, car être semblables n'est pas être identiques.

Reprendons maintenant le texte de la création : «Dieu créa l'humain à son image, homme et femme il les créa». Dieu nous crée d'abord tous humains, tous «égaux en dignité et en droit», et en second lieu, il nous différentie.

#### **II. L'alpha et l'oméga**

##### *Etranger, nos racines*

«...cet étranger installé chez vous, vous le traiterez comme un indigène, comme l'un de vous ; tu l'aimeras comme toi-même, car vous-mêmes aviez été des émigrés dans le pays d'Egypte.» (Lévitique 19,33).

Deux approches complémentaires ressortent de ce court extrait : La raison avancée

1 cf. P.A. Taguieff, *La force du préjugé*, 1990.

pour justifier l'amour de l'étranger est que nos ancêtres l'ont été, autrement dit que l'étranger est notre ancêtre, il fait partie de la famille, c'est lui qui nous a engendré, il fait partie de nos racines et par là de notre identité profonde. Une fois de plus, le rejeter revient à nous rejeter ou tout au moins rejeter une partie de nous-mêmes.

Les auteurs ont fait une double inversion des termes : L'étranger (celui qui est d'ailleurs) doit être considéré comme un indigène (celui qui est natif d'ici), et les lecteurs ou auditeurs qui se considèrent comme indigènes (d'ici) doivent se souvenir qu'ils sont par héritage, émigrés (d'ailleurs). Le résultat est le même : Etre d'ici ou d'ailleurs ne constitue pas une notion qui peut servir à qualifier les humains, et encore moins à les diviser, voire à les hiérarchiser.

#### *Etranger : notre avenir*

Au regard de la foi, l'étranger est aussi notre avenir souhaité ; nous sommes appelés à devenir des étrangers, à nous comporter comme des étrangers. En fait, être un étranger devient, dans la perspective biblique et particulièrement néo-testamentaire, un projet de vie et peut-être l'un des secrets de la foi.

« La foi est une manière de posséder déjà ce qu'on espère, un moyen de connaître des réalités qu'on ne voit pas... Par la foi, Abel... Hénoch... Noé... Abraham... Sara... Dans la foi ils moururent tous sans avoir obtenu la réalisation des promesses... et après s'être reconnus pour étrangers et voyageurs sur la terre.» (Hébreux 11).

« Bien aimés, je vous exhorte comme des gens de passage et des étrangers, à vous abstenir des convoitises charnelles qui font la guerre à l'esprit.» (1 Pierre 2,11).

Je retiens pour notre thème deux personnages :

1. Abel le nomade qui, par sa simplicité de vie, est beaucoup plus proche des valeurs de partage, communion, justice... et donc du règne de Dieu. (Les «convoitises» ne concernent pas la sexualité, mais la du prochain.

Est «charnel» chez l'apôtre Paul ce qui tend vers la mort, et spirituel ce qui tend vers la vie ; l'esprit n'est pas l'antithèse du corps, mais de la mort, d'où son expression de «corps spirituel»). Le nomade est aussi celui qui risque beaucoup, quand ce n'est pas tout pour aller ailleurs, vers un mieux, une terre plus propice, accueillante, heureuse. En cela, il est un être d'espérance, d'utopie dans le sens du terme : celui qui espère, qui croit qu'un lieu (topos) de bonheur (Eu ou U) est possible.

2. Abraham, présenté comme le «père de la foi», car celle-ci est une démarche avant d'être une croyance (foi vient de fidélité), et comme le mot démarche l'indique, elle est basée sur une «marche» vers un ailleurs promis et espéré, car le croyant est celui qui croit à la fidélité de celui qui promet : Dieu. Le mot d'ordre de la foi, le résumé de sa démarche, ce sont les premiers mots de l'histoire d'Abraham, mis dans la bouche de Dieu lui-même : «Le Seigneur dit à Abram : Pars de ton pays... vers le pays que je te ferai voir !» (Genèse 12,1) ; autrement dit, laisse ce que tu possèdes et devient un étranger, un migrant ! Jésus reprend un peu les mêmes termes lorsqu'il dit au paralytique : Lève-toi (presque le même mot que résurrection qui signifie se relever de ce qui «courbe, domine, écrase») et marche !

#### *Etrangers à ce monde?*

Dans quel sens devons-nous devenir des étrangers ? S'agit-il de changer de pays comme l'aurait fait Abraham ? Bien sûr que non, la foi n'est pas le jeu des chaises tournantes. Faut-il entendre cela dans un sens spiritualiste :

Des expressions comme «Mon royaume n'est pas de ce monde» (Jean 18,36) se retrouvent assez souvent chez l'évangéliste Jean. Elles ne signifie pas que Jésus n'est pas un «terrien» (c'est le sens du nom «Adam», cad celui qui est tiré de la *adamah*, la terre), sinon l'incarnation n'aurait plus aucun sens. Le mot grec employé par Paul et traduit par «monde» est *kosmos* dont le premier sens est

«ordre», bon ordre, organisation, ordre du monde. Pour Jean, Jésus dit en fait : Mon règne, ma conception du pouvoir n'a rien à voir avec ce monde tel qu'il est organisé... toute sa vie l'a montré.

#### *Il n'y a plus d'étranger*

L'étranger est le cœur de notre identité, notre alpha et notre oméga, mais en même temps, ce mot «étranger» ne doit pas servir à nous qualifier les uns les autres. Soyons précis : nous sommes exhortés par Paul à devenir des étrangers, mais pas à être entre nous des étrangers.

«... vous êtes, par la foi, fils de Dieu en Jésus-Christ. Oui, vous tous qui avez été baptisés en Christ, vous avez revêtus Christ. Il n'y a plus ni Juif, ni grec, il n'y a plus ni esclave ni homme libre, il n'y a plus l'homme et la femme, car tous, vous n'êtes qu'un en Jésus-Christ.» (Galates 3,26-28)

«Vous n'êtes plus des étrangers, ni des émigrés ; vous êtes concitoyens des saints, vous êtes de la famille de Dieu.» (Ephésiens 2,18-19)

Toutes ces expressions concourent à signifier que dans le projet du Dieu unique, l'humanité vivra heureuse si chacun de ses membres acceptent de voir en tout autre un semblable, un égal en dignité et en droit... et en amour. Le mal commence dès qu'un humain se voit et cherche à être au-dessus d'un autre ; alors, il se voit comme un petit dieu et devient irrémédiablement un démon, un «diable», c'est-à-dire quelqu'un qui veut diviser l'humanité... pour mieux régner. Cette division – domination peut être sexuelle, sociale, économique, religieuse, eth-

nique ou à justification raciste... cela revient au même.

La domination est donc en elle-même polythéïste ; elle est une négation du mono-théisme puisque que des humains veulent devenir «comme des dieux».

#### *Si tu crains Dieu, tu n'as plus peur de rien ni de personne*

Pour dominer, on a besoin de diviser, mais également de faire peur, de terroriser. C'est l'écrivain deutéronome qui avance, me semble-t-il cette «théologie du courage» sous cette forme : Derrière toute domination se trouve une idôle ; derrière toute idôle se cache une peur. Autrement dit, toute libération politique ou plus largement, existentielle, passe par notre capacité à maîtriser nos peurs ; car la peur (qui nous domine) nous pousse à diviniser, idolâtrer ce qui nous fait peur en lui attribuant des pouvoirs supra-naturels. Nous avons peur de manquer, alors nous adorons l'argent et la richesse ; nous avons peur de la guerre, alors nous adorons et nous en remettons aux armes, y compris nucléaires.

Mais, me direz-vous : nous avons peur des étrangers et pourtant nous ne les adorons pas ; ce serait plutôt le contraire. Justement, nous en faisons des démons, des sortes de divinité négatives, ce qui ressort de la même démarche. Nous pouvons alors nous rappeler les paroles de certains prophètes (Ezéchiel 20,32 ; Jérémie 2,27 par ex) : Les idoles, ce ne sont que «de la pierre, que du bois» ; les étrangers ne sont «que» des êtres humains comme vous et moi.

*Abstract: The article starts with the notion that monotheism and "oikoumené" (in a wider sense referring to the unity of humankind) are indelibly linked to each other. Drawing on Gen 1, 26-27 and the double commandment of love it is argued that God and humankind cannot be separated and that any kind of discrimination between men amounts to a violation of God's own dignity. This is taken as a strong argument against the ideology of differentialism of the (French) New Right in the 70's. In a fundamental way difference is the very heart of a Christian identity, but this should not lead us to establish divisions amongst us, but rather give priority to an understanding of humankind as equals, as brothers and sisters, before taking into account any differences. In fact every*

*division (and therefore domination) negates the basic "oikoumené". It negates monotheism and amounts to idolatry: Where it's propagated humans want to be like gods. But at the same time they live in fear because idols are terrifying. The article thus promotes a "theology of courage" calling for overcoming the distorted picture of ourselves as well as the equally idolatrous misconception of the stranger as an almost supernatural and awesome power.*

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## Am Nullpunkt der Begegnung

### Anthropologische Brocken vom Rand der Migrationsszene

*Wo soll ich anfangen? Vielleicht bei der Landung in Italien. Meine Mittel waren äusserst knapp. Zuerst suchte ich mal einen Platz, wo ich übernachten konnte. Damit ich nicht im Flughafen herumhänge. Das ist ja immer ein schwieriges Terrain.*

*Am nächsten Tag versuchte ich, einen Kontakt zu knüpfen, fand aber niemand. Ich konnte ja kein Italienisch. Der dritte Tag war gleich. Am vierten Tag fand ich jemand, der eine Art Laden hatte, ein Depot für Leute, die Waren nach Afrika schicken wollen. Er sprach Französisch. Er war auch aus dem Kongo, so dass sich im Gespräch Gemeinsamkeiten abzeichneten. Er führte mich dann zu einer andern Person, die mir nützlich sein könnte. Sie betrieb eine Pension oder eher eine Art grosser Wohnung, wo ich übernachten konnte – für weniger Geld als es die normalen italienischen Pensionen forderten. Aber auch dort: Ich musste bezahlen und mir folglich überlegen, wie weit es reichen würde. Stets musste ich mich fragen: Was kommt danach?*

Die Beschäftigung mit Migration gibt einen besondern Blick auf das menschliche Tun frei. Ihm zeigt sich etwas, das zunächst eben für Menschen gilt, die sich in mehr oder weniger prekären Migrationssituativen befinden. Zugleich aber, so behaupten wir, wird etwas sichtbar, das für Menschen generell zutrifft, das aber in Situationen der Sesshaftigkeit und Sicherheit kaum auffällt und sich vielleicht bloss als Angst und Abwehr zeigt. Hier soll versucht werden, diesem Etwas nachzugehen.

In den Gedankengang eingestreut sind Zitate aus dem Bericht eines ehemaligen

Flüchtlings<sup>1</sup> aus dem Kongo. Sie dienen der Illustration, sollen aber auch die Reflexion anstoßen.

*Als ich merkte, dass meine Mittel langsam zu Ende gingen, fragte ich, ob es irgendwelche Verdienstmöglichkeiten gebe. Da kriegte ich weitere Kontakte. Die waren für mich sehr entscheidend, weil ich dort z.B. erfuhr, wo ich gratis essen könne: Im Vatikan, beim Priester X etc. Ich weiss nicht mehr, welche Kirche das war. Alles war mir neu. Zwei Kantinen gab es, wo wir essen konnten. Das war immer ein Kampf. Dorthin gehen – je früher desto besser – und warten. Aber das war auch immer ein bisschen schwierig. Die Stärkeren setzten sich durch und gingen nach vorn. Meist waren es Bohnen und Brot und sonst nichts. Das war schnell fertig. Es waren schliesslich so viele Leute. Ich war ja froh, und doch: Dass man auf diese Weise Essen kriegt, hätte ich mir zuhause bloss bei Hunden vorgestellt. Da hast Du! Der Nächste!*

### Regel und Ausnahme

Migration, sind sich die Historiker einig, ist der Regelfall des menschlichen Daseins, jedenfalls, wenn wir grössere geschichtliche und geographische Räume überblicken, Sesshaftigkeit dagegen ist die Ausnahme oder vielleicht besser: ein Spezialfall der Migration, der Moment relativer Ruhe.

Es ist nicht zu übersehen, stellen Klaus J. Bade und Piet Emmer fest, dass die meisten Europäer "Nachfahren Zugewanderter sind und dass das ein Stück europäischer Identität ist. In den letzten 300 Jahren waren ständig Menschengruppen von fast allen Län-

<sup>1</sup> Wir verwenden den Flüchtlingsbegriff alltags-sprachlich und nicht im Sinn der völkerrechtlichen Definitionen.

dern in fast alle anderen Länder unterwegs. Im 18. Jahrhundert etwa reichte die Spannweite von dem jungen Adligen auf Kavaliertour über wandernde Handwerksgesellen, schwer bepackte Wanderhändler, Aus- und Einwanderer, Glaubensflüchtlinge, Söldner und Seeleute bis hin zu wandernden Kleinkriminellen. [Oder denken wir an] Paris, Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts: Da waren auf allen sozialen Ebenen Deutsche zu finden. Im höfischen Milieu ebenso wie in den Salons, wo Heinrich Heine unterwegs war, in den Vorstädten, wo vorwiegend deutsche Möbeltischler arbeiteten, genauso wie bei den Strassenkehrern, die aus dem Elsass und dem Hessischen kamen.<sup>2</sup>

Auch in der Geschichte eines Landes wie der Schweiz, das von der Weltgeschichte weniger als andere Länder gebeutelt wurde, ist Migration sehr gegenwärtig. Sie hat Geschichte und Landschaft förmlich imprägniert, zum Beispiel in Form der Arbeitsmigration: Dazu zählt der Italiener, der in den fünfziger Jahren in die Schweiz kam und dort erst als Saisonier, dann als Jahresaufenthalter und schliesslich als Niedergelassener lebte.<sup>3</sup> Dazu zählt aber auch die junge Frau aus dem Oberaargau, die um 1900 jahrelang als junge Frau in Bern bei Patriziern "diente", was keine Einzelentscheidung war, sondern einem gängigen Muster entsprach. Zur Arbeitsmigration zählten die Tessiner Kaminfegerkinder, die in europäischen Grossstädten ihrem Handwerk nachgingen<sup>4</sup>. Arbeitsmigration ist die Massenwanderung vom Land in die Stadt und in die industrialisierten Gegenden,

Arbeitswanderung ist aber auch der sehr ausgedehnte "Massenexodus in die Neue Welt" (Bade).

Im 19. Jahrhundert hatte die Schweiz recht offene Grenzen, und es wurde grosszügig eingebürgert, so dass die Fremden bald nicht mehr auffielen.<sup>5</sup> Obwohl sich dies im 20. Jahrhundert rasch ändern sollte, ging die Einwanderung, vor allem nach dem 2. Weltkrieg weiter, und am Ende des Jahrhunderts liess sich feststellen, dass rund  $\frac{1}{4}$  der Wohnbevölkerung entweder selbst in den vergangenen 50 Jahren aus dem Ausland zugezogen oder aber Nachkommen von solchen Zuzügern waren. Diese Quote ist beachtlich, und die Schweiz, auch wenn sie sich nicht als Einwanderungsland sieht, lässt sich in dieser Hinsicht durchaus mit Ländern wie Kanada oder Australien vergleichen. Die Spuren geschehener Migration sind jedenfalls deutlich. Zum Beispiel gehören dazu die Generation der "Italos", aber auch die deutsche Grossmutter, der italienische oder französische Grossvater oder die amerikanische Tante, die in sehr vielen Schweizer Stammbäumen ihren Platz haben.

Erst in jüngster Zeit ist die Asylmigration als politisches Problem prominent geworden. Rein numerisch ist die Zahl der Menschen, die dem Flucht- und Asylsektor zugehören - knapp 1% der Einwohner - nicht überwältigend. Dennoch bestimmt, wie auch in andern europäischen Ländern, gerade dieses Thema via Angst und geschürte Angst die politische Diskussion.

### Die Sorge um den morgigen Tag

Für die Betroffenen sind Migrationssituationen immer durch ein gewisses Mass von Unsicherheit geprägt. Allerdings ist es von Fall zu Fall sehr verschieden. Die Migration Stadt-Land war in ihren Risiken absehbar. Die transatlantische Migration war schon eher ein Sprung ins Ungewisse. Sehr viel Unsicherheit implizierte die Entscheid-

<sup>2</sup> Interview im Berliner Tagesspiegel vom 25.6.01. Vgl. Klaus J. Bade: Europa in Bewegung. Migration vom späten 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart, München 2000 und Piet Emmer: Migration und Expansion. Die europäische koloniale Vergangenheit und die interkontinentale Völkerwanderung, in: *Reformatio. Zeitschrift für Kultur, Politik, Kirche*, 1989, 183-191.

<sup>3</sup> Vgl. Werner Haug: „....und es kamen Menschen“. Ausländerpolitik und Fremdarbeit in der Schweiz (1914-1980), Basel 1980.

<sup>4</sup> Vgl. Lisa Tetzner: Die schwarzen Brüder (1942).

<sup>5</sup> Vgl. Willi Wottreng: Ein einzig Volk von Immigranten. Die Geschichte der Einwanderung in die Schweiz, Zürich 2000.

ung des Portugiesischen Familienvaters, in der Schweiz als Saisonier zu arbeiten und seine Familie zurückzulassen, noch mehr der Entscheid, ein Kind als Kaminfeuer nach Oberitalien zu verdingen. Sehr wenig bis gar keine Gewissheit und Planbarkeit gab es schliesslich für den kongolesischen Flüchtling.

An sich gibt es bewährte Strategien, auch dort eine gewisse Verlässlichkeit der Situation zu schaffen, wo sonst jegliche Fixpunkte zu fehlen scheinen. Dazu gehört, dass Migrationen meist familiär und sippenmässig vorgezeichneten Wegen folgen. In Umbruch- und Krisensituationen ist oft nur noch auf sie Verlass.<sup>6</sup> Manchmal fehlt aber auch dieses Netz oder ist kaum vorhanden. Kriminelle Organisationen können dann ihre Hilfe anbieten, zum Beispiel Schlepper. Sich ihren Diensten zu überlassen, ist aber gefährlich und der Erfolg ist stets unsicher.

Unser Flüchtling kann sich auf keinerlei solche Hilfe verlassen. Er sieht sich in einer Situation, die man mit dem Begriff der "Geworfenheit" umschreiben könnte, wenn hier nicht etwas viel Handfesteres gemeint wäre als bei Heidegger. Wer in solchen Umständen lebt, macht zwar Pläne, weiss aber auch, dass sie die Qualität eines Versuchs haben, dreimal hintereinander eine Sechs zu würfeln.

Von unserem Planen und Sorgen ist dies alles himmelweit entfernt. Es kommt aber in die Nähe der Bergpredigt, die gebietet, sich nicht um den morgigen Tag zu sorgen – mit einem entscheidenden Unterschied: Die Sorge ist zwar noch da, sie ist sogar sehr gross, aber ihr Horizont ist auf einen sehr unbürgerlichen Rest zusammengeschmolzen.

*Irgendeinmal kommst du an den Punkt, wo es nur noch die Sorge um den morgigen Tag gibt.*

<sup>6</sup> Vgl. René König: Die Familie der Gegenwart. Ein kultureller Vergleich, 3. Auflage, München 1978, 14ff.

## Anthropology of Suffering

Der britische Anthropologe John Davis hat solche und ähnliche Situationen im Blick, wenn er von der *anthropology of suffering*<sup>7</sup> spricht. Er hebt hervor, dass wir – auch in der Wissenschaft – meist geneigt sind, relativ stabile Verhältnisse vorauszusetzen. In der Ethnologie zum Beispiel seien überblickbare Situationen bevorzugt worden, wo möglichst alle Elemente des sozialen Systems (Ritual, Wirtschaft etc.) aufeinander abgestimmt waren, wo es wenig sozialen Wandel gab und wenn schon, dann einen sehr langsamem.

Das sei aber nicht der geschichtliche Normalfall. Normal sei vielmehr das Nicht-Normale: Situationen, denen eher eine *emergency anthropology* oder eben eine *anthropology of suffering* entsprechen könne. Es seien Situationen eines oft krisenhaften Wandels, wo es für die Betroffenen unabdingbar sei, sich mit Kreativität und Improvisation über Wasser zu halten. Schliesslich sei auffällig, wie schnell solche Situationen von den Betroffenen wieder als einigermassen normal erlebt würden. Man gewöhne sich an die verrücktesten Situationen – selbst an Krieg und Katastrophe.

Wer, wie unser kongolesischer Flüchtling, unter extremen Bedingungen lebt und handelt, hat keine Voraussetzungen, die ein eigentliches Planen zulassen. Seine Möglichkeit, sich in der Geschichte handelnd zu situieren und sich in eine Zukunft hinein zu entwerfen, ist sehr eingeschränkt. Sein Tun steht im Zeichen des Versuchs. Er macht zwar Pläne, muss aber stets damit rechnen, dass alles sehr wohl ganz anders herauskommen kann und dass er schliesslich nicht Kalifornien landet, sondern im Luzerner Hinterland oder auch in den Händen der Ita-

<sup>7</sup> Titel seiner am 11.3.1992 in Oxford gehaltenen Vorlesung, abgedruckt unter dem selben Titel in: Journal of Refugee Studies 5, 1992, 149-161. Vgl. auch Roy A. Rappaports *anthropology of trouble*, deren Aufmerksamkeit speziell dem sozialen Umbruch, der Unrast und der Irregularität gilt.

lienischen Küstenwache.<sup>8</sup> Er verhält sich deshalb eher wie ein Spieler. Er setzt viel auf eine Karte und ist nicht einmal gewiss, wie die Spielregeln genau lauten.<sup>9</sup>

Er versucht immer neu, einen Weg zu finden und das Zerbrochene zusammenzuflicken – und hält dabei stets den Atem an, weil es höchst fraglich bleibt, ob das Erstrebte je eintrifft.

Ob man für ein solches Tun den klassischen Handlungsbegriff bemühen kann, wäre noch abzuklären, gehört es doch zu dessen Voraussetzungen, dass der Handelnde vom Vorsatz bis zur Realisierung auf einen Boden der Berechenbarkeit und Verlässlichkeit zählen kann.<sup>10</sup>

*Da war ich wieder und musste einen neuen Ausweis auftreiben. Das war ganz schwierig. Niemand wollte mir einen geben, denn den ersten hatte ich ja gemietet gehabt – und jetzt verloren. Es ging wie ein Lauffeuer herum: Ich sei dumm und habe mich erwischen lassen. Ich musste nun also sehr lange suchen und fand erst mal gar niemand, der mir helfen wollte. Später kam dann das mit dem Lastwagen. Da sagte mir jemand: Du kannst dort und dort hin gehen. Ich versteckte mich darauf in einem Gemüselastwagen. Der fuhr und fuhr, ich weiss nicht, wie lange. Eine Ewigkeit. So kam ich unkontrolliert über die Grenze. Dazu noch*

*schlafend, denn mit der Zeit war ich trotz allem eingeschlafen. Schliesslich hielt der Lastwagen an, und der Fahrer deponierte mich. Ich war in Luzern, am See, und es war mitten im Winter. Hier musste ich erst auch wieder Landsleute finden. Doch ich hatte Glück. Sofort sah ich dort einige Leute. Es waren auch Asylbewerber. Sie begleiteten mich zur Fremdenpolizei. Dann meldete ich mich dort an.*

### Dialog der Stummen und Tauben

Die Berührung der Flüchtlingsexistenz mit der bürgerlichen Welt geschieht zunächst an Empfangsstellen und bei offiziellen Befragungen. Der Kontakt mit den amtlichen Stellen ist ein Kulturkonflikt eigener Art. Kontinuität, Planbarkeit, Verlässlichkeit stehen auf der einen Seite. Sie sind das Interesse des Ziellandes, dem die Beamten Nachachtung verschaffen und für das ihre Person Symbol ist. Sie sind mithin Inbegriff dessen, was für den Flüchtling nicht gilt. Bei ihm hingegen geht es um die Notwendigkeit, irgendeine Lösung zu finden, selbst wenn sie bloss provisorisch ist. Die Voraussetzungen des Verstehens sind hüben und drüben so verschieden, wie sie es nur sein können, und die Kommunikation kann kaum gelingen.

*Ich wusste nicht, was die hören wollten, damit einer Chancen hat. Nur ganz vage. Aber das waren Gerüchte und Spekulationen. Auch heute ist das noch so. Es kursieren Informationen und Tipps, darunter sehr viele, die völlig falsch sind, aber wenn Du nichts anderes hast, dann musst Du auch das als Wahrheit entgegen nehmen.*

*Die Begegnung mit den Behörden und den amtlichen Mechanismen war schwierig. Am Anfang war es sehr schwierig, überhaupt zu verstehen, was läuft. Bis hin zur Mimik der Beamten. Ich konnte sie nicht einschätzen. Ich hatte noch nie mit Weissen zu tun gehabt und konnte zum Beispiel nicht sehen, ob einer ein*

<sup>8</sup> Flucht ist eine Form einer prekären Existenz. Es sei nicht bestritten, dass sich ähnliche Überlegungen auch ausgehend von einer Betrachtung extremer Armutssituationen angestellt liessen.

<sup>9</sup> Was die Zielländer von Migrationen betrifft, werden die Spielregeln (Gesetze, Verordnungen) auch laufend abgeändert!

<sup>10</sup> Vgl. Max Weber: Soziologische Grundbegriffe, in: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte, hrsg. v. Joh. Winckelmann, 4. Aufl., Tübingen 1973, 562ff. Gewiss, es gibt bei Weber auch Handlungen, die nicht zweckrational sind und nicht auf einen künftigen Erfolg zielen. Wir reden aber, wenn es um die Bemühungen eines Flüchtlings geht, durchaus über ein Tun, das auf Erfolg aus ist. Allerdings steht die vorauszusetzende Erwartbarkeit auf so wackligen Füßen, dass möglicherweise der Begriff des "Handelns" selbst davon berührt ist.

*Italiener, Spanier oder ein nordischer Typ war.*

Die Kommunikation erschwerend kommen natürlich auf Seiten des Asylsuchenden Erfahrungen mit der Beamtenchaft im Herkunftsland hinzu. Hier gab es zwar eine bestimmte Berechenbarkeit. Sie war aber ganz anderer Art:

*Nun musste ich Geld suchen für ein Flugbillett. Das ist aber dort etwas einfacher als in der Schweiz. Das System war so korrupt, dass man alles kriegte, z.B. auch ein Visum. Ich reiste mit einem ordentlichen Visum nach Italien. Einen Pass kriegt man in zwei Stunden. Es gibt keine Datenbanken.*

### **Der Schatten**

Wenn Flüchtlinge mit ihren minimalen Chancen sind, was auch wir sein könnten (und auf keinen Fall sein möchten), nämlich zur Migration Gezwungene, ins Ungewisse Geworfene, dann spricht uns ihre Existenz in einem ganz besondern Punkt an. Vielleicht ist er mit einer psychologischen Metapher am kürzesten zu bezeichnen: Die Flüchtlinge sind unser Schatten. Sie sind das, was wir an unserer eigenen Existenz nicht wahrnehmen möchten. Das macht verständlich, weshalb sich auf sie so viel Abwehr richtet, obwohl sie numerisch nur einen kleinen Teil der Gesamtmigration darstellen.<sup>11</sup> Es macht auch verständlich, weshalb ihre Gegenwart so viel Angst mobilisierbar macht. (Und wenn sie als unser Schatten auch noch dunkelhäutig sind, dann sind die Reaktionen erst recht vehement.)

Die meisten Ansichten über den Fremden sehen das nicht so hart. Sie gehen gewiss von einer anfänglichen Fremdheit aus. Sie ist aber von Anfang an bestimmt, überwunden

<sup>11</sup> Wenn die Flüchtlinge unser Schatten sind, dann sind sie nicht nur der Schatten der Xenophoben, sondern auch der Xenophilen. Auch an sie wäre also die Frage zu richten, was hinter ihrem Umgang mit dem Anderen steckt und ob er nicht ebenfalls eine Art sein könnte, dem Bedrohlichen aus dem Weg zu gehen.

zu werden: Von Anfang an ist eine irgendwie geartete Form des kulturellen oder ökonomischen Mehrwerts im Blick, den wir aus der Begegnung ziehen können, wenn wir uns bloss darauf einlassen. Der Weg zum Andern führt also zu uns selbst zurück und macht aus uns Bereicherter.

Bei der Begegnung mit dem Flüchtling, dessen Existenz völlig ungesichert ist, kann davon keine Rede sein. Dass der Weg zum Andern Vorteile brächte, ist hier nicht plausibel. Der Andere verspricht nicht das, was wir gerne hätten und gerne sein möchten. Stattdessen deckt er unsren Schatten auf: die latente Unsesshaftigkeit und die Bedrohung auch unseres Lebens durch Diskontinuität.

Damit ist nicht gesagt, der Fremde könne schliesslich nicht doch auch anders denn als Schatten und Unbehagen in unsere Welt treten. Dies ist aber ein Weg, der nur möglich ist, wenn sich trotz allem wieder eine zeitliche Perspektive öffnet, wenn jemand bleibt und sich am neuen Ort etabliert – wie es unser Gewährsmann Noël Tshibangu getan hat, dem wir dankbar sind, dass er uns mit seinen Erfahrungen zum "Mehrwert" verholfen hat, der schliesslich in diesen Aufsatz eingeflossen ist.<sup>12</sup> Dies alles ist aber nicht Thema dieser Zeilen. Vielmehr versuchen wir, dem "Etwas" nachzudenken, das im "Nullpunkt" der Begegnung ins Spiel kommt.

### **Das Aufleuchten des Antlitzes**

Ein Denker, der solchen Erfahrungen Rechnung tragen kann, ist Emmanuel Lévinas.<sup>13</sup> Wir skizzieren einige seiner

<sup>12</sup> Tshibangu plant, seine Erfahrungen in absehbarer Zeit selbst in Buchform zu publizieren.

<sup>13</sup> Emmanuel Lévinas: Die Spur des Anderen. Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Sozialphilosophie, 2. Auflage, Freiburg/München 1987, 209- 235; ders.: Wenn Gott ins Denken einfällt. Diskurs über die Betroffenheit von Transzendenz, Freiburg/München 1985; ders.: Gott, der Tod und die Zeit, hrsg. v. Peter Engelmann, Wien 1996; vgl. Theo Sundermeier: Den Fremden verstehen. Eine praktische Hermeneutik, Göttingen 1996. Sunder-

Grundgedanken und folgen zum Teil der knappen Zusammenfassung, die Theo Sundermeier gibt, allerdings ziehen wir etwas andere Schlüsse und versuchen nicht, über Lévinas' Grundsätzlichkeit hinauszugehen.

Nach Lévinas darf der Weg zum Fremden auf keinen Fall ein verkappter Weg zurück zu sich selbst sein. Er ist ein "Exodus ohne Heimkehr", nach dem Vorbild Abrahams. Am Anfang der Erkenntnis steht deshalb auch nicht das eigene Bedürfnis, das wie der platonische Eros darauf aus ist, den eigenen Mangel aufzufüllen. Im Erkenntnisprozess der Begegnung bin ich daher "ausser mir": Der "désir" nach dem Andern ist zwar Anfang der Erkenntnis, es geht ihm aber nicht um das "Wesen" des andern und auch nicht um dessen Geschichte, denn damit könnte ich mich allenfalls auch wieder identifizieren und es mir aneignen. Stattdessen ist es Lévinas wichtig, dass der Andere dekonstruiert wird und reduziert auf das "Aufleuchten" seines "Antlitzes".

Nur in diesem "Antlitz" begegnet mir der Andere. Die Begegnung ist zwar intensiv und total, aber das Aufleuchten ist nicht von Dauer und hinterlässt kein Erbe, sondern blass eine "Spur". Es verstrickt mich aber mit dem Andern, zieht mich in die Verantwortung und ist so Beginn der Ethik: "Das Antlitz zitiert mich in seiner Sterblichkeit vor das Gericht. Es lässt mich mein Schuldigsein erkennen, es stellt meine Selbstgerechtigkeit infrage."<sup>14</sup> Das Vorübergehen des Andern erinnert aber auch an Gottes Vorübergehen.

Die in der Begegnung mit dem Fremden an-

meier referiert Lévinas zustimmend und sehr schön. Der Begriff der Hermeneutik im Untertitel steht allerdings etwas quer in der Landschaft, die S. zeigen will, denn er selbst – und auch Lévinas – verweigern sich gerade dem Aneignungsdenken, das in der Hermeneutik, z.B. in der "Horizontverschmelzung", zum Ausdruck kommt (vgl. H.-G. Gadamer: Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik, Tübingen 1960). Zu Lévinas vgl. auch Matthias Zeindler: "Wer ist mein Nächster?" – Überlegungen zu einer ethischen Grundfrage, ZThK 93, 1996, 561-585.

<sup>14</sup> Sundermeier, a.a.O., 65.

hebende Ethik bekommt dadurch den Charakter der "Liturgie" und der "Diakonie".<sup>15</sup>

Sundermeier stellt diesen Gedankengang dar und fragt dann, ob Lévinas nicht doch zu wenig konkret bleibe: Was wäre denn eine Begegnung, wenn sie nur bis zum "Antlitz" des Andern führte? Was wäre Verpflichtung, wenn sie keine Dauer haben darf?

Die kritischen Fragen sind verständlich. Unseres Erachtens decken sie aber keine Schwäche Lévinas' auf, sondern werfen nochmals Licht auf das, was er gerade will: die radikale Andersheit denken, die im Augenblick der Begegnung aufscheint, im Augenblick, den wir den "Nullpunkt" genannt haben und der in der Begegnung mit dem Flüchtling exemplarisch und eben "nackt" sichtbar wird.

Die Begegnung mit ihm, dem so radikal die Mittel des Handelns zerronnen sind, erschreckt. Er besteht tatsächlich nur noch aus seinem "Antlitz", wobei es nicht die philosophische Dekonstruktion ist, die ihn dahin gebracht hat, sondern, wie wir gezeigt haben, die Brüchigkeit der Umstände, unter denen er sein Leben fristet und in denen er uns schliesslich begegnet.

Wenn wir vom "Schatten" gesprochen haben, dann möchten wir, Lévinas folgend, die Fremdheit nicht einebnen. Auch vom Schatten liesse sich ja zudringlicher reden. Man könnte ihn flugs zum Anfang einer Dialektik machen und so die Begegnung wieder "heimführen": Der Andere macht mich dann auf meinen Schatten aufmerksam und würde mir letztlich helfen, ganz zu werden, den Schatten zu integrieren als das Andere meiner selbst.<sup>16</sup>

Doch so war es gerade nicht gemeint. Vielmehr wollten wir deutlich machen, dass die Begegnung mit dem Andern, der hier *sub specie* des Flüchtlings auftritt, an jenem

<sup>15</sup> vgl. Franz Rosenzweigs "Stern der Erlösung", wo die Ethik im Zusammenhang mit der Liturgie auftritt.

<sup>16</sup> vgl. Julia Kristeva, Fremde sind wir uns selbst, Frankfurt 1990.

Ort geschieht, den auch Lévinas ihr anweist. Es geht nur um die Begegnung selbst. Kein erhoffter Mehrwert kann und soll ihr Sinn verleihen. In Anlehnung an Lévinas gesagt: Die Begegnung mit dem Schatten ist Gericht und nicht bereits Gnade.

### **Ein Postskript: Scheingefechte – und die List der Gnade**

Wenn in der Begegnung menschlich gehandelt wird, dann nicht mit Hintergedanken. Man erinnert sich an Freuds Feststellung, der Andere sei nicht liebenswert<sup>17</sup>, ihn zu lieben sei alles andere als plausibel. Es ist deshalb konsequent und realistisch, dass die Nächstenliebe eben in der Form des Gebots auftritt.

Als Normen sind auch die völkerrechtlichen Bestimmungen formuliert, die den Umgang der Staaten mit Flüchtlingen regeln. Seit einigen Jahren stellen wir jedoch fest, dass diese Bestimmungen im Interesse der Abschottung und Abschreckung aufgeweicht werden, - verständlicherweise, meinen wir: Wer die "äusserste Ausgesetztheit" der Begegnung mit den Elenden nicht erträgt, der kämpft gegen seinen Schatten und verfällt auf zweifelhafte Methoden, mit der Bedrohung durch den Fremden umzugehen. Wo die einen in äusserst prekären Situationen leben und immer wieder alles ans Überleben setzen müssen, da bestimmt bei den andern, den besser Situierten, die Angst vor dem Verlust der Ordnung das Handeln.

Ob es wirklich ein "Handeln" ist, mag freilich auch hier manchmal fraglich scheinen, denn das politische Tun der Zielländer von Migrationen hat oft etwas Panisches und Irrationales, das eher an die Angsttriebe von Bäumen erinnert als an wohlüberlegte Massnahmen. Für Beispiele beschränken wir uns wiederum auf den Fall der Schweiz:

<sup>17</sup> vgl. Sigmund Freud, Das Unbehagen in der Kultur, Abschnitt 5, in: S.F., Studienausgabe, Band 9 ("Fragen der Gesellschaft, Ursprünge der Religion"), Frankfurt 1974, 237ff.

Seit Jahrzehnten jagt eine xenophobe Volksinitiative die andere. Mal für Mal wird vorgegeben, jetzt werde endlich etwas Mutiges gegen den Ansturm der Fremden getan. Tatsächlich aber sind die Versprechen irreführend. Sie vernebeln die Tatsache, dass der Spielraum des politischen Handelns sehr klein geworden ist, - angesichts wohlerworbener Nachzugsrechte und völkerrechtlicher Verpflichtungen, aber auch deshalb, weil man angesichts wirtschaftlicher Notwendigkeiten gar nicht im Ernst handeln will.<sup>18</sup>

Im selben Tempo folgen sich auch Gesetzesrevisionen (Asylgesetz, Ausländergesetz, Zwangsmassnahmen im Ausländerrecht etc.). Manchmal wird die nächste Revision an die Hand genommen, bevor die vorhergehende überhaupt in Kraft getreten ist und man feststellen könnte, ob sie hält, was man sich von ihr versprochen hatte.

Nicht eben rational, sondern ein Schattengefecht ist auch die Abschreckungspolitik gegen Flüchtlinge, denn im Grunde ist allen klar, dass es nicht gelingen kann, für Asylsuchende den Aufenthalt in der Schweiz so unattraktiv zu machen wie es nötig wäre. Selbst als Sans-papiers, die durch alle Fürsorgenetze gefallen sind, haben sie oft mehr Lebensperspektiven als im Herkunftsland.

Zur Abwehr des Fremden gehört auch die Polemik gegen die neu ankommenden Gruppen von Flüchtlingen und Migranten. Aber auch sie ist kaum als wirkliches "Handeln" zu qualifizieren. Hinter ihrem Rücken setzt sich regelmässig das durch, was sie gerade vermeiden wollte: Während die jeweils neuste Gruppe im Kreuzfeuer der Vorurteile leidet, gibt sie ihren Vorgängern Deckung und erlaubt ihnen, sich still und heimlich zu integrieren. Die Zeit tut das ihre und lässt das, was vorher skandalös schien, allmählich in eine milde Normalität absinken. Als Lösung bleibt dies gewiss "sub-ethisch". Vielleicht ist es aber, jenseits von Handeln oder Nichthandeln, der Hauch einer ganz

<sup>18</sup> Jede Begrenzung der Einwanderung beschränkt sich heute in d. Schweiz ohnehin auf Einwanderer, die nicht aus dem EU/EFTA-Raum kommen.

prosaischen Gnade, der sich so bemerkbar macht, – trotz und in aller "confusio hominum".

*Ja, es war ganz schwierig. Heute staune ich, wie ich das bloss geschafft habe.  
Auch heute gibt es natürlich einige Din-*

*ge, die mir auf dem Magen liegen. Sie sind weniger gewichtig, aber fallen mir heute viel schwerer als damals. Ja, wie habe ich es nur überstanden. Ich glaube es selbst fast nicht. Vielleicht hatte ich auch einfach Glück.*

*Abstract: Reflecting on the condition of migrants opens one's eyes to a very deep insight on humankind in general. In human history migration has rather been the rule, while sedentary life has been the exception - quite unlike the general assumption in western countries. If we fear that much the arrival of asylum seekers it might well be due to the fact that we feel the fragility of our own stable lives. The asylum seeker reminds us of what we fear to acknowledge: our 'shadow'.*

*At first sight, he does not seem to bring us any "added value", anything which would seem desirable to us. In this sense he is "naked". He is, as Emmanuel Lévinas states, an "exodus without return" or he is reduced to the "epiphany of the face". Encountering him is not "grace". Facing my shadow is rather "judgement": It brings me to the anthropological "zero point" of encounter.*

*This holds true for whole societies as well. For years we have seen western governments trying to avoid real encounter, but keeping themselves irrationally busy tightening the last loopholes of their legislation (and even violating the fundamental rights of their own constitutions) against the influx of asylum seekers - and yet they know that their business is in vain. Slowly, as the years go by, despite all the xenophobic actions, each new generation of immigrants while suffering from unfair attacks provides cover to their predecessors thus allowing them to tacitly integrate themselves. This is not part of a conscious policy. It's rather sub-ethical. But why should there not be a covert action of a very prosaic "grace" at work? As Calvin says: The world is governed by God's providence - and men's confusion.*

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## **Negotiating Vulnerability and Power**

### *The construction of migrant religious identity*

People continuously move and relocate themselves into new contexts. Economic structures mutate and create new foundations for societal cohabitation. In many parts of the world remarkable shifts not only on the level of economy, technology and communication means have occurred. However, globalisation comprises not only an economic and political facet, but impacts also the global religious landscape in its various cultural settings. The recurrently described growth of Christianity in the global South covers only one side of the trend to be observed.

Undoubtedly the most profound change is related to the fact that religious affiliations can no longer be conceptualised in concordance with specific regions, nor ethnic groups or social strata. This is particularly valid for the religious communities in the global South, where the history of the mission gives us ample evidence for the implantation of ethnic churches, as well as for the situation in the Western world characterised by rapid secularisation and a widespread decreasing plausibility of Christianity. What binds these complex situations together may be described as a phenomenon of "religious de-contextualisation". People not only move in search for new social and economic perspectives, but are involved in processes of fluid change between different religious milieus.

People change and are changed. In the course of these inner transformations they are constructing their identities anew, shape their world-views, create a home abroad, and they construct religion. There is no longer a settled religious certitude. As people move, they bring along their versions of religiosity and new, spontaneously initiated communities are inceptioned, in which in-

dividuals change religious loyalties in foreign cultural contexts. However, we still do not possess sufficient knowledge about the inner processes of this change on collective and individual levels: What are the driving forces for this change? How do people construct their religious identities in new societal contexts? What are the motives, metaphors and symbolic representations influencing the construction of new religious identities?

The present contribution seeks to explore these questions in relation with the impact migration has on the construction of religious identities. I will first discuss in which way migration influences religious identity, and more specifically how the experiences of migrants shape their construction of identity, and hereafter focus on three dimensions, evil, vulnerability and power, which I deem central to the understanding of the construction of migrant religious identity, and which is based on research conducted among African migrants in Europe. My interest is to provide insight into the interrelation between the factual experiences of acculturation, exclusion and devaluation and the self-directed initiatives of responding creatively to these experiences on the level of cognition and symbolic action.

#### **1. Religious identity and migration**

As one of the features in contemporary global migration, the impact of religion and the formation of religious identity in relation with the experience of migration have gained more attention.<sup>1</sup> However, there is

<sup>1</sup> An increasing publication on the intersection of religion and migration is the proof for this. Cf. For the European context the still classical monograph of Roswith Gerloff: A Plea for British Black Theolo-

still much uncertainty and imprecision about the motives and driving forces for the construction of religious identity in processes of migration. The confusion is partly due to the terminological inconsistency. How do we define religion and in which way does it contribute to the forging of an individual and collective identity? Some differentiations with regard to some currently debated observations in the field of religious identities of migrants will help to gain a more concise grasp of the topic.

One general discernment has to be made from the outset: on the one hand, we have to consider the organisation of religious life on the official level, which entails the adherence to a specific community or congregation, and on the other hand the individual and collective moulding of religious world-view on the level of popular religion, in which symbolic representations and actions play a significant role.<sup>2</sup> It is to a great extent in this latter domain that significant arrangements

and re-arrangements of the spiritual, cognitive and ritual inventory can be observed.

With regard to the level of official religion, time and again the assumption has been emphasised, that migrants would frequently be inclined to adopt a "floating style" in seeking their religious affiliations, sometimes also over against their original religious or confessional background.<sup>3</sup> While there is some evidence for a degree of flexibility in the adherence of religious communities, most migrants rather opt for stability than for navigating "two or three Christian denominations at the same time"<sup>4</sup>, and instances of conversion from one religion to the other are rather rare. The choice of a particular religious community or congregation does not only depend on the migrant's denominational background, ethnic origin and language, but even more so on the deliberate option for a plausible interpretation of the situation of migration which is interwoven with a religious meta-story. Thus, Catholics may find their spiritual place in an interdenominational congregation, Methodists may adhere to a Pentecostal-mega-church and Presbyterians to a charismatic Reformed church for pragmatic reasons, or cultural and ethnic affinities, but the decisive criteria remains the migrant's perception that her/his life story and situation can be symbolically de-coded in such a way that it resonates with a meta-story offering motives and answers to existential questions which migration brings to the fore.

In this perspective migrants continuously construct their religious identities in the context of the other, the local believers, and the way they perceive their religious articulations. This can take place in a form of apologetic rejection: we offer the *true* version of Christianity! But this construction takes also place in respect with narratives about oneself and the interpretations of the chal-

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gies. The Church Movement in Britain in its transatlantic cultural and theological interaction with special reference to the Pentecostal Oneness (Apostolic) and Sabbatarian Movements. Frankfurt/M. etc.: P. Lang, 1982; Gerrie Ter Haar: "Strangers in the Promised Land: African Christians in Europe", Exchange 24, 1995/1:1-33; Id.: Halfway to Paradise. African Christians in Europe. Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998; Marc Spindler/ Annie Lenoble-Bart (Eds.): *Chrétiens d'Outremer en Europe. Un autre visage de l'immigration*. Paris: Karthala, 2000; and for the American scene: Pierrette Hondagneu-Soleto (Ed.): Religion and Social Justice for Immigrants. New Brunswick, NJ.: Rutgers University Press, 2007; Karen Leonhard et al.: Immigrant Faiths: Transforming Religious Life in America. Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2005; Helen Rose Ebaugh/ Janet Saltman Chafetz: Religion across Borders: Transnational Religious networks, Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2002 and Stephen R. Warner/ Judith G. Wittner (Eds.): Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> I am following Jacques Waardenburg/ Pieter Vrijehof (Eds.): Official and Popular Religion: Analysis of a theme for religious studies. The Hague etc.: Mouton, 1979.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Gemma Tulud Cruz: Singing the Lords Song in a Strange Land. Religious identity in the context of migration. Forum Mission Yearbook 4/2008: 60-87.

<sup>4</sup> Op. cit.: 62.

lenges a particular situation in life poses. Undoubtedly migration is such a situation which people experience as transitional, between the rejection by the host society, experiences of denigration and exclusion, they attempt to negotiate the process of acculturation. Who am I? Where do I come from and where do I belong to in future? These are some of the questions which arise on the individual level, and to these questions many Christian migrant communities succeed in providing relevant responses.

The attractiveness of the migrant churches is not restricted to the feeling of cultural ease they sponsor, but more so to their ability in creating spaces where this transitional situation can be articulated in a familiar symbolic language, drawing from a common world-view and in ritual action. In worship, in the religious praxis, migrants are sending strong signs of self-esteem, pride and belief, but also signs against the experience of injustice, suffering and alienation. The churches founded by migrants respond to this tension between vulnerability and empowerment and succeed in offering an adequate articulation.

In this respect the understanding and interpretation of evil, encompassing forces and realities, which impede a good flow of life constitutes one of the collective motives continuously worked on in migration churches. Where Western analysts would prone sociological, political or social-ethical explanations for situations of exclusion and racism, Christian migrants would hold that these experiences become understandable on the background of the real existence of evil forces in the world that prevent just relations and equitable distribution of wealth. It is thus in opposition to the overarching theme of evil, experienced as concrete suffering, that Biblical narratives convey messages of consolation and empowerment. The Biblical narrative context contains a multitude of such stories of leaving, separation and seeking a home abroad. The exodus story is such a prominent illustration, which is ap-

pealing for migrants because it tells also about the possibility of safeguarding collective identity without the maintenance of the original territorial or national context.<sup>5</sup> The story of the exile is read as a story of articulating oneself in a foreign land: Israel succeeds in singing the Lord's song in a foreign land, after it has dried the tears over the loss (Ps 137). Through this kind of biblical *relecture* migrant communities become places where collective religious identity is formulated against the background of the daily experienced paradox of being at home abroad, and in relating to the suffering that migration generates on the level of social and economic deprivation. In attributing meaning to this situation, as part of a "larger plan of God" for instance, and in ascribing it to a transitional phase that will not last forever, but will be transformed by Jesus, who also suffered adversities, migrants become the actors and protagonists of their own stories. I will subsequently show, how the triangle of evil, as collective world-view and important theological theme, as well as power and vulnerability are important for the conceptualisation of migrant religious identity.

## 2. Talking about evil as theological theme

In the cultural milieus into which Christianity is embedded in most Western societies, talking about evil has no longer a prominent status.<sup>6</sup> It is either "domesticated", as inner-psychological problem or relegated to the level of socio-political action. In the context of Christian migrants from the global South talking about evil is the reflection on

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Frank Crüsemann: "Ihr kennt die Seele des Fremden! (Ex 23,9). Eine Erinnerung an die Tora angesichts von neuem Nationalismus und Fremdenhass. Concilium 29, 1993: 339-347, part. 345ff. Id.: Fremdenliebe und Identitätssicherung. Zum Verständnis der "Fremden"-Gesetze im Alten Testamente. Wort und Dogma 19, 1989:11ff.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. For a general discussion Peter van Inwagen (Ed.): *Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil*. Grand Rapids/ Cambridge: CUP, 2004.

real experiences. Evil, here, is understood as reality with a theological relevance and not a phenomenon transferred into abstract "evil structures" in the world.

Without making a claim to be exhaustive, three aspects seem to be important in respect of the construction of religious identity. First, evil in the discourse of migrant Christians appears as divine counter-instance: Satan/ devil. Evil is understood as the reality that stands against God. It has a destructive, powerful character, able to interfere into peoples' lives, to disorientate them and to lead them astray from God. It is interesting to note that this discourse on evil in its personification of the devil can be traced back to the missionary period of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in West-Africa for instance, where converts to Christianity on the background of their traditional religious repertoire, in which evil is believed to be caused by spirits, argued with missionaries on the accurate interpretation and genesis of evil.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Archive material of the Bremen Missionary Society documents this prominence of evil as locus theologicus in the missionary speech and in the experience of people in the African traditional religious context. Jacopo Afiadenyigba, a missionary assistant wrote in this period on the dualistic conceptualisation of Satan: "This is the reason why the gentiles still follow the Satan up to this day, thinking that their gods are more powerful than ours. But you need not argue about this; who never knew that God Jehovah is mightier than Satan?" (Arch.NM, StAB Afiadenyigbe/Jiagge: Gods: 1, undated). In other documents we encounter the understanding of the life-threatening impact of the devil in relation with conversion: "I always put it in mind to give up my position as a fetish-priest and convert to be a Christian. (...) But I am afraid ... the devil will display a havoc upon my family because it is an act of sacrilege." (Arch.NM StAB Ansre: Heathenism is a worship resulting from fear: 4 undated). Cf. also Birgit Meyer: If you are a Devil, you are a Witch and, if you are a Witch you are a Devil. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 22, 1992, 2: 98-132, in which she describes the how missionaries induced representations of the devil into the religious inventory of Ewe-Christians in Ghana, as well as her monograph: Id.: Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999.

Has evil its roots in the misdirected human freedom, the estrangement from God, or a "satanic anti-God" with the power to lead people into temptation? These conflicting lines have to be borne in mind when considering the motive of Satan in many migrant narratives. The individual narrations of migrants seeking responses to the adversities experiences are reflected in collective forms of speech, like the following sequences taken from a sermon held in a church with predominantly African migrants in Germany, illustrating how biblical motives, contextual theological interpretation and the concrete experience of migration is intertwined.

*"Who is the enemy? It is the devil who is behind all the troubles we are going through... God gave him power to choose. God is a God of love."*<sup>8</sup>

The devil is depicted as the fallen angel having made the bad choice and who is standing against the God of love who ensures a life in fullness. And he is also the source of the problems many migrants encounter:

*"Let us be very careful in our Christian life. The devil has several names... Sister Elizabeth lost her work, you have problems in your marriage, with your status and papers, you have problems everywhere. Stand firm, you have to go through it, and the devil will go away."*

The individual integrity and ethical conduct is related to the possibility of overcoming adversities in daily life. This is not to presume that the factual problems are ignored or diminished in their impact, but the spiritual strength and firmness is conceived as a way to cast the devil away – he is has no infinite impact - and to regain forces for the struggle of life.

Another connotation can be observed when evil is attributed to asymmetric social relations, especially the ethnic antagonism (black and white), racism and the resulting feelings of inferiority.

<sup>8</sup> The subsequent quotations are taken from the author's field research archive (AE 2001-2006).

*"If you face opposition in your life, don't worry, even Jesus faced opposition. And don't look down on yourself. ... Some want to use creams to become like Europeans. Africans, you are also human beings! Go and sin no more!"*

This gives us another interesting hint in the direct link established between the story of Jesus, especially his suffering, and the experience of ethnic exclusion, often translated into a feeling of inferiority and externally expressed in the wish to resemble white people. However, the most surprising turn occurs here with the appeal to refrain from sin. The cognitive change implied lies in the connection of evil with the inner, anthropological status of the individual coping with external adversities.<sup>9</sup> Not Satan, or not exclusively him, nor diffuse external conditions are held responsible for present experiences of racism and rejection, but motive of repentance, which relocates the evil within the inner self of a human being, and his/her self-directed capacities to recognise and strive against it. It seems that the collective moulding of religious identity in migration is successfully drawing upon these existential-theological questions arising particularly in situations when life is tested.

By way of a preliminary conclusion from these selected vignettes, we can note, that evil is a locus theologicus in the migrant discourse and narratives about both real life experiences of social disintegration and segregation which is creatively interwoven with the story of Jesus Christ, whose suffering is standing as a model to overcome own suffering. Biblical texts interpret the situation of migration and vice versa. At the same time the experiences of multiple exclusions, loss, grievance, shame and disrespect are – in continuity with a thread initiated in the missionary period – as pertaining to the influence of a force opposing God (Satan) and infringing the *force vitale* of migrants lives

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Robert W. Jenson: Thinking Wickedness. In: Id.: On Thinking the Human. Grand Rapids/ Cambridge: CUP 2003: 59-73.

marked by high levels of tensions and frailty. Evil is also conceptualised as the perverted relations between ethnic groups, the resulting inequality, and the racist images, all without exception concrete experiences of migrants, and often interiorised feelings of inferiority.

And Christian migrant life is also marked by the challenge to work profoundly on evil as anthropological constant, as pertaining to the human heart, and thus enabling migrants to discover an active role of resilience, at least on the level of symbolic action against adverse experiences in a situation of transition.

### **3. Revisiting power in the construction of migrant religious identity**

Closely connected to the representation of evil in the construction of migrant religious identity is the inclination to emphasise "power" in the religious discourse. This discourse can range from the every-day life conversations and interventions, "*Jesus will give you power!*", to inter-textual Biblical exegesis and ritual praxis. It plays also an important role in the evangelistic ministries of healing, exorcism and deliverance particularly in the Pentecostal/charismatic churches ("power evangelism")<sup>10</sup>, which have become appealing for many migrants because they are suggesting a plausible symbolic system of interpretation for evil and are offering solutions (*empowerment*) in a situation which they experience as denigrating and offence to their dignity.

In this line the militancy in language, ("prayer warrior", "spiritual warfare" etc.)<sup>11</sup>,

<sup>10</sup> I share the view with J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu: "Pulling down Strongholds: Evangelism, Principalities and Powers and the African Pentecostal Imagination". *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 96 Nos. 382/383, July/ October 2007: 306-317.

<sup>11</sup> J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu: op. cit.: 311, hints to the historical and theological continuity of the conception with AICs as well as with rituals in ATR.

indicates a sociological and theological implication. The need to fight and conquer evil is for many migrants the struggle for economic survival, for political recognition and a social status. Theologically this refers to an interpretation of Eph. 6:12: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against rulers, the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm". Recurrently this motive, without any hermeneutical perspective<sup>12</sup>, is taken to legitimise the opposition, or at least the capacity to break through all the conditions that prevent migrants to realising a positive life.

Against this background some deep-rooted convictions, "God answers always, if you are strong in faith!", or "God shows his power in healing and miracles!", "the Bible is infallible!" are tested in times of weariness: "Sometimes when the problems are coming, you will think as if there is no God (...) as if the whole world rejects you. But God says: I am with you... Problems may come, trials may come,... I am the solid rock"<sup>13</sup> It is evident from these utterances that there is sensitivity for the imponderables of a Christian existence that do not only for a "ready-made" interpretation of God's gracious intervention and the transfer of power in human live.

A narration from field research among African migrants in Germany<sup>14</sup> illustrates how the implicit understanding of power, without mentioning the term itself, is nuanced along the various psychological stages and set in relation with the religious interpretation of migration experiences.

*"I was taking my Christianity very seriously all the time. I was praying. And I*

<sup>12</sup> Finbar Benjamin: "The Politics of Preaching to Exiles". International Review of Mission. Vol. 89, No. 354 July 2000: 354-360, rightly stresses: ... an urgent need for exilic preachers and theologians to reflect critically on the theological content and hermeneutical factors that presently govern and shape their biblical and pastoral work." (358).

<sup>13</sup> Private archive AE: M. Sika, 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Private archive AE: C.M. 2004.

*knew that God had a plan with me. It has now become a battle of identity and although I am still on the expulsion list, I will not give up. (...) I was overwhelmed with anxiety and fear, but I still had hope in God. (...) This existence is a prison! And I have decided to vocalise it now. Because God is a strong tower and I have entered it. After so many pains I have experienced, ..., living from 150€ social welfare support. Wordlessness, rejection, hopelessness ..., if one has not God, what could have happened to me? Thank God, I have survived!"*

Three elements in the narration are striking and informative for our reflection on power and related understandings. First, the narrator speaks of a "battle of identity"<sup>15</sup> which becomes comprehensible against the background of her undocumented residential status in a Western European country. She is referring to a symbolic level of action. Her battle constitutes the articulation of her indignation at the missing official recognition and the loss of her self-esteem. At the same time, and this directs us to the second aspect, she is expressing her desperation in very concrete terms and links them to disgracing living conditions. Thirdly, we can note the centrality of the motive of the strong tower (2 Sam 22,2; Ps 18,3; 91,2; 144,2), in which she has entered.

It seems to be a way of empowerment, of regaining the capacity to speak and to communicating the suffering. At the intersection of the discovery of her own weakness and the strength of her faith, she finds not only consolation, but encouragement and the per-

<sup>15</sup> Monika Wohlrab-Sahr: "Conversion to Islam: Between syncretism and symbolic battle". *Social Compass* 46(3), 1999:351-362, describes "symbolic battle" in the context of conversion narratives to Islam and highlights that as a conceptual figure it may serve to demonstrate radical difference and its symbolic expression. Although this understanding is not applicable as a whole to our situation, I would contend that migration is a form of crisis experience in which symbolic action especially in religion plays an important role.

spective of a transformed existence as she embeds her story of migration in "a larger plan of God".

The notion of power is thus nuanced in such a way that becomes a non-manipulative element of a religious identity, marked by confidence and trust, dignity and hope. This is theologically relevant because it corrects the widely debated assumption that through power all evil, every misfortune of life can be brought back into balance.<sup>16</sup> The salient point is that the individual stories of migration are narrated in resonance with biblical stories, and that this dual hermeneutical process of mutual interpretation provides a meaningful sense for the concerned people without obscuring the view of the factual situation.

#### 4. Negotiating vulnerability and power

If the situation of migrants can, *cum grano salis*, be adequately described as vulnerable, how can we evaluate the impact of notion of power we have reflected on previously?

I would hold that in the context of migration people experience vulnerability not because, they themselves as persons become vulnerable, but rather because the situation is characterised by high voltages of insecurity, instability and uncertainty. At the same time we observe a high capacity of maintaining a religious interpretation of reality in order to cope with crisis situations. The religious identity of migrants is certainly not completely changed, but transformed through the interpretation of a new situation. It is within this context that the experience of vulnerability has a formative role to play for the self-understanding of Christian migrants and the construction of their religious identities, first, in form of historical

and contemporary wounds, originating from oppression and inequality, exclusion and racism.

Secondly, migration narratives illustrate the vulnerability of faith itself. Can this vulnerability be held in tension with the aspiration of an inclusive life, of participation and of dignity? The selected vignettes of migration stories have indicated that the answer depends on the notion of God, since it is only through the relationship with God that the experience of vulnerability can be endowed with meaning. It appears that the religious imagery, and foremost the biblical narrative, is in the view of many Christian migrants offering an adequate symbolic inventory (the servant God, the vulnerable love of Christ, the migrating God) for making their stories of migration, despite the real wounds, meaningful. The permeability of the stories around the focal point of vulnerability opens the space for empowerment and hope beyond any manipulative, perverted or concealing misinterpretation of power.<sup>17</sup>

#### Conclusion

Migration will remain a global phenomenon of multifaceted ethical challenges for contemporary societies, and it has engendered a new ecclesial landscape. We have only started to decrypt its topography and inherent implications. The individual and collective initiatives of migrant Christians, which we reflected upon in this contribution, are not only relevant for the understanding of the formation of migrant religious identity, but also for a wider debate on

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Stephen Ellis/ Gerrie Ter Haar: *Worlds of Power. Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa*. London: Hurst, 2004; Ogbu U. Kalu: *Power, Poverty and Prayer: The challenge of poverty and pluralism in Africa, 1960-1996*. Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 2000.

<sup>17</sup> Finbar Benjamin: op.cit., gives a valid contribution with regard to the pastoral task in a migration community: "The sermon would interpret the congregation and offer to them the Word, Jesus Christ, who Himself became exiled that He might liberate all captives and transform their habitation. Such preaching becomes a salvation moment. It builds true self-esteem and fosters liberation, empowerment, self-determination and hope." (360)

intercultural theology.<sup>18</sup> In this discourse the biblical narrative can serve as common point of reference, which opens a space of reflection about the Word *and* the realities of life.

In the construction of migrant religious identity, immediacy can be seen as the formative element, with an immediate access to the images and narratives of the Bible and their permeability for the life stories of migrants. We have also argued that beyond the contextual aspects of the situation of migration, but not totally isolated from it, three selected elements of broader theological relevance can be highlighted. Evil cannot be excluded from human life and needs to be addressed also as a reality affecting the spiritual existence of people.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Marc Spindler: "L'implantation des Eglises d'outre-mer en Europe: aspects missiologiques". In: Id./ Annie Lenoble-Bart (Eds.): Op.cit.: 21-47:30.

In negotiating their religious identity anew on the background of experiences of disintegration and devaluation, migrants articulate authentically their vulnerability and their aspirations for a transformed reality. In this process of negotiating vulnerability and power on a symbolic level of action, conventional associations with abusive forms of power can be attenuated.

In this sense, the viability and sustainability of Christian migrant communities will pose a serious theological challenge to the Church and its vision of unity, as the universal claim of Christianity will continuously collide with its multiple versions and expressions. Migrants can help to sharpen the attention for the themes that have to be set on the agenda of a fresh debate on contextualisation."

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## Encountering Otherness

### Christian Anthropology for a Culture of Peace

Hans Andersen's "Ugly Duckling" is perhaps the most clear-cut illustration of what it means for a creature not to be a closed, static essence. The feathered prot-agonist of the story is not what-he-is, but *what-he-will-become*. And what does he become? He becomes what is laid down by his DNA. The ugly duckling ultimately becomes a swan, because this "instruction" is integral to his nature. It is his *entelechy*. In reality, this fairy tale records the encounter between Andersen and Aristotle. The little duckling's relationship with his mother and his rejection by the other creatures of the lake are not, of course, matters of negligible importance; they cause the duckling to be seized with joy or sunk in misery, respectively. But they are not the *cause* of his transformation. His transformation would have taken place even if the other creatures had not existed at all!

In a similar way, the Christian perspective accepts both the notion of human nature, and the vision of a final, eschatological realisation of the human being. There is, however, a fundamental difference. In the Church's understanding, the human being becomes authentically human precisely when he is *not* restricted to his own constituent elements. It happens when he encounters the Other - a self beyond his own self. His nature does indeed provide something fundamental; but that something is not his ultimate end point, but the *possibility* of progressing towards the end point. It is the possibility of desiring the Other, of opening himself up and communing with it. So, precisely because an encounter is demanded with someone who is not included among the components of the subject, the *achievement* of the encounter is neither scripted in advance by some evolutionary mechanism, nor guaranteed *a priori*. It is an adventure, a wager.

We often say that man is an image of God. This may be said with the best of intentions, but it is not strictly accurate. Scripture and the Fathers do not say that man was created as an image of God, but in accordance with the image of God (Gen. 1: 27). In other words, somebody else is the Image of God, and man is created on the prototype of that Other. St Paul deciphers this riddle: the Image of God the Father is the Son, the second Person of the Holy Trinity (2 Cor. 4: 4). Man, then, is created with the Son as his archetype. He has the possibility of encountering his archetype, and thus of becoming what the Son is: a citizen of the Holy Trinity. This dialectic between that-which-he-is-not-by-nature and that-which-he-is-called-to-become is expressed by St Paul when he speaks, not of man's "sonship" by nature, but of his "adoption" (Eph. 1: 5). This scheme (the human being's passage from being "in the image" to becoming an image) implies a *dynamic* anthropology. Man can become fully human only in communion.

In that sense, the ultimate archetype of man is the Trinity (Gen. 1: 26) and the foundation of Christian anthropology is Trinitarian. For man, this means an invitation to the radically different. In contrast to the standards of this world, God is life that does not end and that does not exist in any other way than as love. So if man accepts this invitation from God, he then has the possibility to pass into a new mode of existence, one that his constituent elements on their own cannot give him. According to the Fathers, the Trinity does not exist of necessity, i.e. as a result of the properties of an impersonal divine essence. It exists as an event of *freedom* and personal *communion*. God the Father willingly and out of love (that is, freely) begets the Son and brings

forth the Spirit, eternally.<sup>1</sup> In the mystery of the Holy Trinity existence is not prior to co-existence. Besides, the essence of each Person is the divine essence in its entirety (not one third of it), and at the same time each Person of the Trinity is an actual hypostasis, not a transient one. That is why God is love. I mean to say that the person is not something like a mirror, which (as we said earlier) has no content of its own but simply takes its content from whatever form is standing in front of it at any given moment. It is not like the subject described by Jean Baudrillard in the world of glamour, or by Buddhism at the stage of Nirvana. This is of particular importance, because only if each person is unique and unfading can there be true otherness and, in consequence, true openness to those who represent the not-I.

We said above that if man comes into relationship with God, he becomes a participant in a different mode of existence, one that he cannot experience if he remains trapped within the components of his own makeup. It is therefore of especial importance that although God and man are *compatible* beings (in other words, man was created in such a way as to be able to encounter God), there is absolute otherness between divine and human natures. We really are talking about a relationship between truly different subjects. In Christian anthropology, man (to be precise, the entire universe) is totally *created*, in contrast with the *uncreated* God. That means that no part of man (absolutely none - not the soul either) is a droplet or fragment of the divine essence. Thus, a very delicate point here is the distortion of Christian anthropology into an ideology that I might call a "theology of components".

The principle manifestation of this anti-theology is the belief that man is composed of two ontologically distinct components, a

divine soul (or spirit) and an earthly body. It is well known that the soul has often been understood to be the human being proper, while the body is its wrapping (seen sometimes as a valuable aid, sometimes as a dingy prison). It is also true that for some time now it has been underlined that this view is problematic, and it is now emphatically stressed that man is the harmonious coexistence of soul and body, with neither one being depreciated, etc. But that is not precisely correct either. To the extent that it confines itself to describing a being who is the sum of his (albeit upgraded) components, it is once again flirting with essentialism and individualism. In other words, it does not succeed in showing that relationality, the openness to the wholly Other, to God, is a structural element in man. Let me give another example: a mobile phone is truly and fully a mobile phone not when it remains simply the sum of its components (even an armchair may be made of plastic, metal, glass etc.), but when it is linked to some *other* being, electricity, and becomes part of a life that its own components cannot generate. Its very structure is such that it cries out for it to open up.

By contrast, in anthropologies such as that of Platonism, Hinduism, the New Age etc., it is the soul's release from the body or focussing on the spiritual element of man that constitutes salvation, which (in these anthropologies) can be achieved through constant ascetic effort by man on his own. In that case, man is saved by the divine element in himself, or by the liberation of that element from its outer covering. Either way, what saves him is not the God who acts in history, not God in the context of achieving a free relationship. At most, God may be the instrument for this liberation. Salvation, in short (again, in these anthropologies), does not coincide with an event of *communion* nor with a *movement* towards the radically Other God.

<sup>1</sup> See Rowan Benedict Sheehan, "The Freedom of the Person in Christ: The concept of *hypostasis* in John Zizioulas and Panayiotis Nellas", *Souroz* 100 (2005), pp. 35-47.

It is characteristic that, in contrast to the Platonic theology of Origen who saw *movement* as a falling-away from the original, ideal immobility of bodiless souls, St Maximus the Confessor (7th century) showed the radically positive character of movement, precisely as the journey of the entire cosmos towards its eschatological realisation, towards its encounter with the source of its meaning.<sup>2</sup> In this perspective, neither the journey nor the encounter has any end; for if they had, the event of communion would cease to be an *integral component* of the self, and would be reduced merely to an occasional instrument. Gregory Palamas indeed gives us the exciting assurance that the eschatological Kingdom will not be something static; the faithful (the "sons of the age to come", as he calls them), including the saints (i.e. those who respond wholeheartedly to the common calling of all humanity) will progress ceaselessly in the bosom of the infinite God.<sup>3</sup>

From the Christian point of view, then, the term "spiritual" must not be understood on the basis of a "theology of components", i.e. as an emphasis on one "component" of man (his spirit / soul), but as a matter of the whole person being imbued with the energies of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.<sup>4</sup> The Church's ultimate vision - we should repeat - is not the eternal existence of a disembodied spirit, but the final resurrection of the entire human being. Furthermore, what we have said about the realisation of man needs to be understood in the context of the eschatological faith of the Church, its expectation that the entire universe will be renewed and be decisively freed from death in all its forms. In this perspective, anthropology is not divorced

<sup>2</sup> Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua, Patrologia Graeca* (hereinafter PG) 91: 1112-1116.

<sup>3</sup> Gregory Palamas, *In Defence of the Holy Hesychasts* 2.2.11, in P. Chrestou, ed., *Gregoriou Palama Syggrammata* [Gregory Palamas' Works], v. 1, Thesaloniki 1962, p. 517.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Irenaius, *Against Heresies* 5, PG 7, 1154A.

from the entire world and its various realities.

Eschatological cosmic renewal is not understood as a return to some ideal past. It is awaited as the actualisation of something altogether new, something that has never existed hitherto, something made possible by God's initiative and His work in history. This means that opening up to the not-yet, to the unexpected, even to the surprising, is also a fundamental parameter of human existence. An important philosopher of our day who declared himself an atheist, Cornelius Castoriadis, has said that every human being is a well of *infinite depth*, open to the *infinite depth* of the world.<sup>5</sup> I wonder whether this noble conclusion of his could not find a point of contact with the theology of creation in the image, referred to above. If the archetype according to which man is constructed is God, an infinite and incomprehensible being, then man too is a mystery, and anthropology has also an apophatic aspect.<sup>6</sup> The relationality of man, his capacity for imaging God and his futurism (in a word, the refusal to limit man to his component parts and interpret him in himself) is, to my mind, a valuable contribution that Christianity can make to an encounter with the surprises brought us by modern physics and biogenetics. But we cannot explore this now.

By definition, the designation of the Trinity as the ontological archetype of man cannot refer to a two-way relationship (between the individual and God alone), but rather calls for the subject to open up to every other. If I do not live in a way that is trinitarian, I am not living authentically. Inter-human relationships are something directly required by the trinitarian model; they are not secondary consequences of it.

<sup>5</sup> "Une Interrogation Sans Fin; Entretien avec Cornelius Castoriadis", *Esprit* 33-34 (1979), p. 242.

<sup>6</sup> Panayiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspectives on the Nature of the Human Person*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood 1987, pp. 22, 28. See also Ware, op.cit, pp. 14 f.

Coexistence and oppression, war and peace are inextricably related to anthropology. It is no coincidence that the spiritualising anthropology mentioned above has often led to a devaluing of the world and a tendency to withdraw from history. And furthermore, it has often been used by Church people in West and East in totally the opposite direction: in order to establish a dominion that is altogether of this world. For example, the adoption of a neo-platonic cosmology (i.e. the belief that the universe is constructed according to a pyramidal stratification, from the multifarious at the bottom to the one at the top) was very heavily influential in an area directly connected with social anthropology: the encounter between European Christians and the peoples of the new world. Roman Catholic mission in the 16th century and 19th century Protestant mission alike had a very low estimation of the natural goodness of the peoples whom they went to evangelise. The distinguished Roman Catholic missiologists Stephen Bevans and Robert Schroeder aptly describe the world-view built up at that time:

"Particularly under Neoplatonic influence, the world was seen as ordered in terms of higher and lower beings... Thus *inequality* was built into the system: some people were naturally better than others, not because of personal merit, but by accident of birth. As the horizons of the world widened with the discoveries of the fifteenth century, this hierarchical understanding of people carried over into Europeans' attitudes to the peoples of the New World."<sup>7</sup>

In the perspective opened by triadologically conditioned anthropology, otherness, far from being the enemy of identity, is on the

contrary *constitutive of it*. The key point in the Gospel is where Christ specifies love for the neighbour as the highest goal. But – behold! – what he defines as the neighbour is the person most distant from us! It is the wholly Other, the one who represents the most intense otherness: the *enemy* and the *stranger* (we recall, respectively, the parable of the Good Samaritan and the description of the Last Judgment). The "anthropological place" *par excellence* is the person of Christ, which he himself defines as the meeting point with the broken and the marginalized.

This message of Christ's, so intolerable to common sense, marks the greatest repudiation of essentialism.

We should note at this point that Christ is not introducing a fetish about relationship. What makes the human being fully human is *loving* relationship, not just "any relationship" in the abstract. A rapist and his victim are in a relationship, but it is precisely the sort of relationship where one is made into a mere instrument of the other. That is more or less the sort of relationship that the devil wants to have with man. It is characteristic here that René Girard explains the origin of violence on the basis of "mimetic desire". Human desire, says Girard, is dependent upon the other. Because of a feeling of deficiency in ourselves, we fall into a fascination with persons who symbolise for us the fullness of life. Wanting to be like them, we imitate their desire. The other person possesses various things all around us, and for this reason those things take on a value in our eyes. So we want to acquire what the other has in his possession. If something stands in the way of our desire, most often the desire does not go away but intensifies, precisely because the resistance comes from the same person who inspires the desire in the first place. The tenth and final injunction of the Ten Commandments is therefore wise and very much to the point, for it seems to have understood that the roots of violence lie in desire: "You shall not covet your neighbour's house,... your neighbour's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his

<sup>7</sup> Stephen B. Bevans – Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context. A Theology for Mission Today*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 2004, p. 46. On the Aristotelian origin of the evaluation of slavery as a natural institution, see M. I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, Penguin Books, Middlesex 1983<sup>2</sup>, pp. 18, 119.

ox or donkey..." (Exod. 20: 17). Here we see the source of a vicious circle. Man is trapped in a curious adoration of the neighbour, which turns into hatred.<sup>8</sup>

One may ask whether this is so very different from the "culture of survivalism" and of ruthless competition bred by today's developed societies. As Christopher Lasch has said, consumer capitalism gives so much emphasis to the immediate satisfaction of infantile desires, and so cultivates preoccupation with self-image, that it creates narcissistic personalities, actually unable to form caring and open relationships.<sup>9</sup>

The hunger for acquisition; narcissism; hostile competition. Are these not the things that the Apostle James condemns as root causes of war? "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but you don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures" (Jas 4: 1-3).

There is a tragic reality here. The human being may never come to the point of being literally isolated. He or she may be constantly connected with persons and things, but connected in a way that is anti-trinitarian. The human being becomes "his own idol" - an idol which he himself worships, in the words of that superb piece of church poetry the Great Kanon, which is sung in Orthodox churches on Wednesday of the fifth week of Lent. This, in short, is the state that we referred to above. Man is enclosed within the components of his own

nature, and now his sole prospect in life is what these components – in their autonomous state – can offer him: decay and death. Anthropology and sociology are intertwined.

St Maximus the Confessor is particularly helpful to us in understanding this. The crown of virtues, he says, is a love which is *indissolubly twofold*: love for God, and love for our fellow human. This is the prime characteristic of the peace experienced by the angels and the saints.<sup>10</sup> Man, however, has the infernal capacity to go against his nature and replace love with a caricature of it – self-love. So he seeks after pleasure and clings to the world in order to gain individual satisfaction. Pleasure is intertwined with pain, inasmuch as a host of vices emerge, each of them anxious to achieve dominance. The vices here are not understood moralistically (as the contravention of a moral code) or legalistically (as a violation of divine justice) but in a way that is profoundly ontological and existential. Man is imprisoned in his individual self, and his communion with other human beings disintegrates.<sup>11</sup> Human nature becomes disorganised and fragmented.

The fragmentation, however, has also to do with another major issue in our day: the question of meaning in historical events and human acts. The final book of the New Testament, the Book of Revelation, outlines in its own mythological language the way in which history proceeds, and at the same time gives us an anthropology. History is truly a war; no stage in history is final; man has the capacity to oppose the will of God. Two distinct wills, that of man and that of God (notice again the

<sup>8</sup> René Girard, *I See Satan Fall like Lightning* (tr. James G. Williams), Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 2001, esp. pp. 7-11. See also his "Things hidden since the foundation of the world" (tr. Stephen Bann - Michael Metteer), Athlone Press, London 1987.

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism. American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, W. W. Norton, New York 1978.

<sup>10</sup> Maximus the Confessor, *Chapters on Love* 4. 36, PG 90, 1056B.

<sup>11</sup> Maximus, op.cit., 3. 56-57, PG 90, 1033B-C. On Maximus' anthropology more generally, see Demetrios Bathrellos, *The Byzantine Christ. Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of St Maximus the Confessor*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004.

otherness of God and man) can be in real conflict. The conflict is not always the result of misunderstanding, nor does the trial of strength between tiny man and the infinite God inevitably drag human will into "compliance". Man has the shocking ability to taste the bitter fruits of his own choices

and yet stick to them (cf. Rev. 16: 9). This historical adventure is nothing other than the adventure of the invitation that God addresses to all without exception: the invitation to participate in an ultimate renewed world.

*This text is a fragment taken from the longer essay "Christian Anthropology for a Culture of Peace. Considering the Church in mission and dialogue today", in: Violence and Christian Spirituality. An Ecumenical Conversation, ed. Emmanuel Clapsis, WCC Publications/Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Geneva - Brookline 2007, pp. 87-106. It does not touch directly the topics of migration directly, but it's outlining, from an Orthodox point of view, an anthropology designed at doing justice to the complexity of a world, characterized by the tensions of war, uneven development, displacement, racism etc.*

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## **Responding to the Challenges of Migration and Flight from a Perspective of Theological Ethics**

"Migration and Flight" is a highly contested political theme because it is emotionally charged. How to deal with migration and flight touches upon deep layers of human existence. In the face of the deep fears that rise in the heart of the electorate when discussing migration and flight, a matter-of-fact treatment of the questions connected to this theme is hard to achieve. At the same time, this is the very reason that elections can be decided by this theme. It is a complex theme. And as it seems obvious that Christian ethics aim at integrating migrants, not at social exclusion, intensive theoretical efforts appear unnecessary, or even superfluous. Yet communicating this „obvious" Christian principle encounters such weighty difficulties in the institutional context that simply expressing goodwill is surely an inadequate reaction, at least from the perspective of an ethics of responsibility. A sound theological-ethical treatment of migration and flight should not define its objective as primarily addressing „society" in order to simply "hand down" the thoughts of Christians in our countries on these issues. Theological Ethics, first and foremost, and especially with regard to this theme, is self-critique. It is open to question whether the attitudes towards foreigners held within our churches differ visibly from the attitudes commonly held in the respective societies in which the churches live.

Therefore the following argument will proceed in three steps: After a short introductory reflection on the challenges posed by flight and migration (I), the main part will discuss the theme's background from the perspective of theological ethics, including the reality of sin and the reality of love (II). The third part will delineate consequences for the political process and the

civil-societal discourse in Europe (III); the fourth and final part will focus on the contribution that the churches may be able to offer on the way towards a culture of social life shaped by empathy and justice. Connoisseurs of ecumenics will recognize therein the well-known triadic method of ecumenical ethics „See-Judge-Act".

### **I. The Challenges**

The global phenomena of flight and migration present the European societies with three major challenges:

- A considerable number of people in the receiving countries view the phenomena of migration and flight as a threat. In numerous European countries, populist politicians repeatedly succeed in exploiting xenophobia for their political goals. Obviously, sections of the population react negatively to immigrants who are "different", especially in socially unstable situations, when they are seen as an additional destabilizing factor and thus as a threat.
- The enormous relevance of our theme cannot be grasped adequately as long as its economical and social dimensions are neglected. One reason for experiencing flight and migration as a threat lies with the confrontation between poverty and wealth implied by them.
- In the context of intra-national migration cultural differences can lead to friction or even conflicts in a similar way as it is the case with international migration. In Germany, two kinds of intra-national migration movements occurred after the Fall of the Iron Curtain (1989) and German reunification (1990): migration within Germany between the Eastern

and the Western part and immigration of German settlers from the former Soviet Union. A comparable phenomenon can be observed in France: the immigration of French citizens of North African descent.

How can theology help respond to these challenges (admittedly sketched only roughly here)?

## II. Reflections from the Perspective of theological Ethics

Theological discourse on flight and migration is based on the fundamental belief in the infinite value and dignity of every human being as it is expressed in the Biblical creation narrative. No human being can deny another this gift of creatorial grace. The gift and mandate of humanity's being created to the image of God should remind us sharply of the vulnerability of migrants and refugees who seek permission to stay in our countries.

### II.1 The Reality of Sin

Human vulnerability can hardly be underestimated. Refugees and migrants, who hope for shelter and security (even though they may not expect cordial hospitality), often find themselves confronted with hostility, hatred or even open violence. Their vulnerability all too easily turns into actual injury. From a theological perspective one may here think of manifestations of sin and therefore start with a reflection on the reality of sin. Accordingly, the Croatian theologian Miroslav Volf has defined sin as social exclusion. His definition echoes the bitter experiences of ethnic „cleansing“ in the conflict between Serbs and Croats.

Entering into a theological reflection by way of sin does not imply a pessimist or destructive point of view. Rather, the Biblical reference to the reality of sin aims at supporting, not at hindering life. This can be illustrated by comparing the creation narrat-

ive with the story about God's covenant with Noah. In the creation narrative, God seems to accept sin as part of the reality of his relationship with humanity – though certainly not approving of it. In his covenant with Noah, however, God proclaims his will to reveal how to live a rightful and good life under the conditions of sin (cf. Gen 8:21-9:17). The legal traditions of the Hebrew Bible insist on the protection of the outsider. This can be seen as an expression of the covenantal will of God that wants to enable humanity to live peacefully and prosperously even under the conditions of sin.

With regard to the theme of flight and migration, the reality of sin has to be viewed in its social and personal dimensions. Martin Luther's famous definition of the „homo incurvatus in seipsum“, of the human individual as desperately self-centered, has lost nothing of its persuasive power. It refers to a failure and destruction of community brought about by human self-isolation. Luther's characterization of sin remains pertinent today because it expresses the insoluble connection between the separation from God and separation among humans. The danger of moralism can only be avoided by maintaining that isolating oneself from one's human neighbours (including the stranger facing me) inevitably implies isolating oneself from God as well, and from God's powerful resources of life. Appeals against xenophobia that ignore this dimension and content themselves with moral disapprovals of xenophobic attitudes deflagrate without effect because they cannot communicate that fear or hatred of foreigners cuts off God's resources for one's own life.

Yet sin is not a personal reality only. Sin also manifests itself in its social dimension. Self-enclosure can also characterize communities. Taking our cue from Luther, we can speak of a „communio incurvata in se ipsam“. A community can also be "curved in upon itself". Especially in community contexts, a dynamic of reciprocally intensifying the discrimination of others may emerge -

and it proves difficult to allocate the blame within this dynamic of discrimination to individuals. When reflecting on how to deal with flight and migration, we need to include the reality of sin as it manifests itself in self-enclosing communities. How can life flourish and prosper in the face of this reality?

Biblically inspired visions of living together peacefully despite diversity and in a world without boundaries need to be translated into institutional regulations that reckon with the reality of sin. In the first place, this applies to the receiving countries and their populations. Dreams of a multicultural society can be relevant for the future only as far as they do not underrate the potential for friction that emerges in the transition from a mostly homogeneous society to a socially and culturally diverse society. However: If one aspect of sin is "exclusion", then adherence to ideals of social homogeneity – which can only be held up by exclusion – has to be addressed as a manifestation of sin.

Yet taking the reality of sin seriously is not only an obligation of the receiving countries and their populations. It is also an obligation for those who seek permission to stay as migrants or refugees. Mostly, abuses of the right of asylum and the idea of "economic asylum seekers" are brought up by populist politicians who want to advertise „protection from foreigners" or who aim at stirring up xenophobia. But it would be erroneous to leave this theme to those who brazenly propagate the „communio incurvata in seipsam". Only those who do not close their eyes to the possibility of sin amongst the asylum seekers as well will be able to gain a constructive approach to the pacifying role of the law. Ideally, the law ensures that it is not the most ruthless who succeed in attaining permits to stay (that would equal an endorsement of organized people smuggling). Rather, it grants asylum to those who need help.

Christian ethics aim (1) at advocating legal regulations that reflect this objective and (2) at arguing for their appropriate application. All parties involved need to consider: Legal regulations have to be "fault friendly". They have to reckon with human fallibility on the part of all people involved. Therefore, taking sin seriously implies transparent mechanisms of controlling the use and abuse of power. Legal procedures have to stand in a context of a clear hierarchy of judicial authorities which correct misjudgments – any other regulation of legal procedures does not fulfil the criterion of "fault friendliness".

Remembering human imperfection is a crucial element of humanness when dealing with flight and migration. But constructive power can be released only when those individuals and communities who tend to self-isolation are viewed from the perspective of God's reality. From a theological perspective, human nature is not determined by the reality of sin, by "curving in on itself", by shutting oneself off to the other, to the stranger. Rather, human nature is determined by the reality of love.

## II.2 The Reality of Love

*Human beings – destined for love*

Karl Barth's insight in his Church Dogmatics remains unsurpassed even today: In order to define "man", theological anthropology looks at its primary source, the humanity of Jesus. Human „nature" must be delineated in the light of this Christological presupposition. And that implies: Human beings are meant to enjoy being together with other human beings. With this anthropological fundament, Barth is able to envision fulfilled humanity without falling prey to any naïve anthropological optimism.

Considering the past and contemporary experiences (and adversities) of people in diverse social situations and with diverse cultural contexts, it may be tempting to belittle visions of peaceful and prosperous life

as mere flights of fancy – visions of human individuals living together and enjoying each other's company. But theological anthropology objects: Living together in this way is natural for Christians. Resigning oneself to processes of self-isolation is no Christian possibility. Nevertheless, by now it should be evident as well that this statement is no clerical exhortation addressed to the world, but that it is first of all an incentive for self-critique on the part of the church.

The fundamental ethical orientation with regard to social interaction with the other (including the foreigner) is the twofold commandment of Love as it is expressed in the Bible. According to the witness of the New Testament, agape – loving openness towards the other – is the basic definition of human interaction before God. Otherwise highly divergent traditions within the New Testament strikingly share this constitutive emphasis on love: The cantus firmus of these highly diverse traditions is the insoluble coherence of love of God and love of neighbour. This is reflected in the classic synoptic formulation of the twofold commandment of love, which is also a pastiche of Old Testament citations (Mk 12:29-31; Mt 22:37-39; Lk 10:27): "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This twofold commandment is given as Jesus' summary of God's will with humanity. On this "depend the whole Law and the Prophets" (Mt 22:40).

*"Remember that all of you were aliens..."*

The New Testament interprets the integration of the stranger as an integral part of the insoluble interconnection between love of God and love of neighbor. This is why Christ presents the relation to the stranger as the main criterion for the relationship to himself, as he says in the famous vision of the Last Judgment: "I was a stranger, and you invited me in..." (Mt 25:35). Obviously, ethical questions cannot be separated from questions of faith. The two sets of questions need to be interrelated. Once it has been

established that the human-divine relationship and the relationship to other humans are inseparable, it becomes clear why the commandment to protect the foreigner is no moralistic demand at all. It is not to be understood solely in terms of the convicting use of the law. The Bible is very clear in this respect, stressing the merciful dimension of this commandment in almost all instances where it is cited: The authority of the commandment to protect the foreigner is founded in the salvific history of the human-divine relationship itself, no less. "Suppose a stranger lives with you in your land. Then do not treat him badly. Treat him as if he were one of your own people. Love him as you love yourself. Remember that all of you were outsiders in Egypt. I am the Lord your God." (Lev 19:33-34; cf. Dtn 10:19-20, Ex 22:20).

This rationale expresses the origin of love among humans in their human-divine relationship. The commandment does not say simply: "You ought to love the foreigner!" Rather, the commandment is being promoted in two ways. Firstly, the commandment is emphasized as comprehensible and accessible from Israel's own experience: „You know how it feels to be foreign and discriminated against. Therefore treat the foreigner just like you would want to be treated if you were in the same situation!" Secondly, the reasoning for the commandment culminates by referring to God Himself: „I am the Lord your God." „I adopt the cause of all foreigners just like I adopted your cause. I am your God, I love the foreigners. Therefore, love the foreigners just like me!"

The basis for such openness to foreigners is an Ethics of Empathy. A sentence from the Book of Exodus exemplifies the constitutive character of empathy: "Do not oppress an alien; you yourselves know how it feels to be aliens, because you were aliens in Egypt." (Ex 23:9) The commandment to treat foreigners with respect and care is made plausible by illuminating their vulnerable situation.

The constitutive character of empathy can be identified as a general characteristic of Jewish-Christian ethics – the question of how to treat the foreigner is only one, if prominent, example of it. This becomes apparent when we contemplate the close connection between the commandment of love and the so called "Golden Rule": "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." (Mt 7:12). The Golden Rule epitomizes the comprehensibility of ethical orientations and the possibility as well as necessity of empathy. This further supports the notion that the commandment of love – interpreted by the Golden Rule – can be understood as a "commandment of empathy". The commandment of love testifies to the same basic structure that also underlies the protection of the foreigner. The commandment of the foreigner's protection demands empathy by pointing to the historical experience of the people of Israel as a community united by tradition and by remembering its own oppression. The Golden Rule – interpreted in the light of the commandment of love – expands the basic empathy by involving the imaginative power of reason (which in turn is also schooled by historical experience): „Imagine yourselves in the same situation. Wouldn't you like to be treated fairly?"

The significance of such an ethical approach can be illustrated by considering how many Germans who were expellees from lost German territories after the war reacted to the streams of refugees during the Kosovo War. Relatively high numbers of the elderly in Germany were willing to accept the refugees of the Kosovo War – not least because they remembered their own experiences of expulsion from the former German territories in Eastern Europe. Therefore, contemporary experiences underline the reliability of a Biblical Ethics of Empathy as a guideline for the treatment of refugees and migrants today.

In what way may the commandment of love shape an Ethics of Empathy for the rela-

tionship with migrants and refugees? The answer to this question also depends on whether the scope of the commandment of love is defined as universal. According to popular belief, first and foremost the needy in one's own country should be taken care of. Correspondingly, some ethical approaches deeply distrust the universalism of the commandment of love.

#### *"The Near and Distant Neighbors" – the Range of the Commandment of Love*

The American theologian Stephen Post advocates a concept of agape which is centered on what he calls "special relations", i.e. relations within one's family or circle of friends that imply intimate and intense love. In addition to this orientation on „special relations", Post sharply criticizes concepts of love like the classical work of the American ethicist Gene Outka. In his concept of agape, Outka embraces the Enlightenment's universalism as expressed most influentially by the Human Rights tradition.

If the natural order of life has theological and moral dignity, that is (according to Post) if God ordains the world by way of "special relations" amongst humans, then the moral value of those "special relations" differs from anonymous, dissociated relations which are based on "equal regard" only. Of course, Post argues, we also have moral obligations to strangers. An *exclusive* concentration on family and friends is problematic. But this does not mean that some moral precedence should not be granted to our "special relations".

Post's concept is alluring because it is compatible with everyday intuitions. Naturally, we feel more directly obligated to our own children than to destitute children in other parts of the world. Yet neglecting one's own children in favour of children who live somewhere else and under harsher conditions – such conduct deserves moral critique.

Yet it is no coincidence that the New Testament illustrates the commandment of love by stories that describe love transcending the

borders of social proximity. This applies to the Rich Young Man whom Jesus commands to give all his money to the poor (Mt 19:16-26) as well as to the Good Samaritan who, as a foreigner, charitably cares for the wounded Jew, thus becoming his "neighbor" (Lk 10:25-37).

Relying, as it is intuitively plausible, first of all on one's immediate social surroundings does not contradict the universalism of love as commanded by the Bible if we understand charity's universalism as "concrete universalism" and contextualize it in an Ethics of Empathy.

To put it in a nutshell: Intensity and intimacy in one's immediate social surroundings and universal care for human well-being imply each other. Commitment to the cause of those who live far away, i.e. caring for people one does not know personally and who do not share one's religious convictions or one's world view degenerates into an abstract surrogate of love if it is not continuously nurtured by the experience of giving and receiving love in one's immediate social surroundings. Love and care for those who live far away is a realistic course of action only because our direct social relations teach our sense and sensibility about how human beings suffer, and what they hope for.

Viewed from the perspective of concrete universalism, appreciating life in the density and intimacy of our "special relations" does not obstruct the horizon of universal love, but widens this horizon. Love towards those who are far away is based on empathy. An example may serve to illustrate what is meant hereby: A father who delights in his children and who cares for them – in other words, a father who tries to practice love in his "special relations" – such a father cannot fail to open his love universally once he steps into the light of the theological-ethical understanding of love. It is exactly because he experiences the density of human relationships in his immediate social surroundings that he can love the unknown stranger

in a way that is not merely abstract. He can put himself in the troubled position of a father seeking asylum, a father who fails to receive his work permit and who cannot provide the desired security and reliability for his children and lives in constant fear of deportation. It is exactly by practising and receiving love in our "special relations" that we become "able to love" in the horizon of relationships that reach beyond those special relations.

A position that restricts Christian love to the immediate personal surroundings underestimates the universal potential of loving empathy. The conviction that all human beings are God's good creatures thus overcomes an interpretation of the commandment of love which distinguishes grades of empathy depending on proximity and distance, or which even completely deprives those who live far away from love. The momentum of empathy which is initiated by the Biblical commandment of love can place the person who lives far away into my close proximity, turning him or her into my close "neighbor".

#### *Mutual Recognition as the Basis of Sociality*

An Ethics of Empathy, based as described above on the commandment of love and on the Golden Rule, obtains immediate relevance for social ethics once we consider the rules that should govern social life in a given society. Such an Ethics of Empathy calls for a legal culture that is shaped by mutual recognition. Such mutual recognition is joined inseparably to the criterion of human dignity.

Migrants and refugees who seek asylum are entitled to being treated in accordance with human dignity. Correspondingly, those who decide on granting or denying asylum are obliged to engage in the legal traditions connected with the concept of human dignity. Refugees and migrants who seek asylum in the European democracies should not be forced to assimilate, i.e. to abandon their own religious and cultural traditions for the sake of conforming to the receiving

country. Yet they may be asked to integrate, that is, to engage in those rules that nurture a culture of mutual recognition in society and thus make a social life shaped by empathy and justice possible in a population characterized by diversity.

In order to give shape to such mutual recognition, the medium of communication is indispensable. The willingness to respect the rules of mutual recognition corresponds with a willingness to learn the language of the receiving country. An insular societal landscape marked by various cultural biotopes fails to meet the challenges of the culture of mutual recognition because it does not even allow for mutual perception. Religious and cultural communication in the spirit of mutual recognition enables regenerative processes in any society that intends to preserve and foster its orientation towards human dignity.

### **III. Consequences for the Integrating Europe**

The Christian tradition continues to have fundamental significance for the religious legacy of Europe. Even in today's religious and ideological pluralism, the churches are obliged to participate actively in a European civil society. The churches need to introduce their traditions into the public debate: Europe needs their orientation, also and especially with regard to its political discourses. Reckoning with the reality of sin and simultaneously testifying to the reality of love, the churches have to proclaim their solidarity with refugees and migrants who seek asylum in Europe. Yet the churches also need to proclaim their solidarity with those who bear political responsibility and who have to find feasible, humane rules of sociality. Ten theses may indicate the consequences that follow from an Ethics of Empathy for the political response to flight and migration:

- All attempts to tamper with the obtained standard of international law concerning the protection of refugees must be resisted firmly. The Geneva Conventions must be enacted unreservedly and universally. Yet not only the letter of the law, but also the „spirit“ of the Geneva Conventions must be respected and allowed to enter into the „soul“ of the new and larger Europe.
- Delegating the responsibility of receiving refugees to the poorer states outside of the European Union (as implied by the idea of "secure third countries") contradicts the commandment for the protection of the foreigner.
- In order to keep the legal proceedings tolerant to mistakes, an effective legal protection against all denials of asylum must be put in place. The controlling higher authority must be endowed with judicial independence. The legal protection must have suspensive effect.
- Asylum seekers who are not recognized officially and who live for many years on the basis of consecutive connivance must be granted a permanent permission to stay. Deporting the children of refugees who were born in the receiving countries, who are fully integrated and who often do not even speak their parents' original language – deporting these children to another country which they do not know at all contradicts the Ethics of Empathy. The churches should insist on permanent permissions to stay in such cases.
- All needy asylum seekers must receive accommodation, alimentation, clothing, health care and schooling for their children in all of the European Union.
- With regard to migrants the necessity of legally protecting their families must be firmly established. Families are not to be separated by state law.
- Minimum standards for "irregular" migrants need to be established in order to warrant the recognition of their human

dignity. This includes offering health care and schooling for children, both without fear of criminal prosecution. In order to fight human trafficking and sexual slavery, irregular women migrants need to be granted the right to bring a charge against the perpetrators and also the right to testify in court – both without fearing deportation.

- The culture of mutual recognition that follows from an Ethics of Empathy – and that protects the migrants from being pressured into assimilation – depends on the migrants' willingness to integrate. This includes the willingness to participate actively in the culture of mutual recognition. Migrants need to learn the common language of their new countries.
- Even where migration does not fall into the scope of the right of asylum, it is usually not a free decision but a consequence of emergency. Nobody likes to leave their home country. Therefore the connection between migration and world-wide injustice needs to be pointed out time and time again. The churches are locally established everywhere in the world, yet they share a world-wide perspective. This is why they in particular carry the responsibility of reminding the global public to "economic injustice" as a cause for migration.
- With regard to flight and migration, the churches have to embrace an advocacy role in the political discourse and in the shaping of public opinion. This advocacy role can even lead to breaches of law in cases of emergency, namely if it is impossible to maintain the deepest meaning of all law, the protection of human dignity. An example for such a breach of law is the law of the sanctuary as a place of asylum.

#### IV. Convivence and Celebration – Blessed Encounter in Diversity

The consequences that follow from an Ethics of Empathy for the political response to flight and migration in an integrating Europe ultimately point towards the living witness of the churches itself. The churches are called to become places where the diverse can live together peacefully – notwithstanding a sober recognition of remaining obstacles. This includes an invigoration of inter-religious dialogue, a fact that is coming to the fore increasingly in recent times.

Encounters between people of different cultural and religious backgrounds that are characterized by mutual respect and empathy can become seeds of a new culture of peaceful sociality – especially with regard to potential social frictions. The theologian Theo Sundermeier has called this kind of sociality "convivence". And he joined the vision of convivence explicitly with an attitude of love based on mutual recognition: "As I recognize myself simultaneously and in the same way as together with the others embraced and held by God's love, love urges me to be together with the other. Yet as a loving person I am also listening, asking, responding. Love looks for exchange, it wants to communicate itself, it means receiving and being received, participation and contribution in one." The power of convivence is love, says Sundermeier, and referring to Chrysostomus he blazes a trail that is worthwhile to follow: "... where love rejoices, there it celebrates".

Maybe this is the most urgent issue: We need to learn anew how to celebrate together with refugees and migrants. Celebrations remind us that the true source of our social life does not lie with legal proceedings or with the struggle for political compromises. Celebration makes us feel that the topic of flight and migration concerns real human beings – men, women and children. Celebrations with music and wine can be held even

if the possibilities of communication by way of language are still sparse. Celebrations are a remedy against moralistic exhortations for neighbourly love that fail to take root in the heart. Celebrations create curiosity for the other person in his or her individuality. Thus they motivate language communication. Celebrations may even help to overcome the walls between the social strata.

Celebrations of intercultural encounter can become modern experiences of the Holy Spirit. The Biblical narrative of Pentecost tells how people from different regions and with different mother tongues come together and suddenly experience a mighty wind that unhinges everything around them (Acts 2:1-13). The most fascinating aspect of the Pentecost narrative is the wondrous mutual understanding of the different people in-

volved: All use their own language, but they understand each other. This describes an experience of the Kingdom of God. Opening themselves for the experience of God's Kingdom, experiencing the Kingdom "in our midst" (Lk 17:21) – this is probably the clearest answer that the European churches can give in response to the challenges of flight and migration.

Developing a culture of celebration and convivence with refugees and migrants is a demanding and beautiful task for the churches. It is their contribution to a peaceful and harmonious social life, locally and globally. Perhaps it is not wholly presumptuous to hope that the European churches may truly become "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world".

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## **This is what we want!**

### *The churches and migration issues<sup>1</sup>*

Our Christian faith has been moulded in experiences of exile and flight. Jesus Himself experienced the fate of a refugee as a child and grew up in an occupied country with a foreign language and a foreign culture. Jesus shows us in words and in deeds the example of love; to love one another and in particular to care for the poor, the powerless and the discriminated. In the New Testament the radical view of equality is formulated that "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ." (Galatians 3:28) Welcoming the stranger into fellowship is an action in the Christian faith which carries a promise of being blessed. "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels." (Hebrews 13:2)

That is why Christian churches in Sweden – as well as throughout the world – have become involved with refugees and immigrants in different ways. This has been primarily expressed through support to persons who seek out the church – it can be the need to talk or to obtain legal counselling, economic support or even a sanctuary from persecution – as well as through visits, for example, to the Migration Board's detention centres. Migration is to a high degree an issue that knows no national boundaries. Christian churches in Sweden are working through international development aid for a world in which people will not be forced to flee from their homes. We are also involved in providing humanitarian aid to refugee camps and to vulnerable migrant workers.

However as churches and as Christians we are also called to be salt in the world, to

protest against injustices and to work for a better society for all people. Very few persons in Sweden could have avoided noting the Easter Appeal for a humane asylum policy which the Christian Council of Sweden launched in the spring of 2005. The Easter Appeal spread like wildfire throughout the country and contributed to an agreement in the Swedish Riksdag which in the spring of 2006 gave many refugees who had been in hiding a new possibility to obtain a residence permit. But our task is not over. We wish to continue to examine the law as well as political and legal practice and the work of the authorities within the migration policy field in a critical and constructive manner. This document is an expression of this ambition.

We focus here on the fundamental values and ethical principles that are the starting point for this examination. These values and principles are based in part on our Christian faith and are illustrated with Biblical quotations in this text and, in part, on the work of the international community in the field of human rights, which is illustrated by excerpts from the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as from relevant human rights conventions.

We have not just chosen refugees and asylum seekers as our focal point but also other persons who can neither be classified as refugees nor asylum seekers but who nonetheless are here in Sweden for different reasons – people who are seeking to improve their life chances here, who are in demand on the black labour market or who fall victims of human trafficking.

The aim of this brochure is to be brief and concise – this means that it does not give

<sup>1</sup> This document has been approved by the General Assembly of the Christian Council of Sweden, 25-26th April 2007.

room for deeper discussions or problematisation of the issues. Our work

will continue and provide us with the opportunity for further input and reflection.

## **1. Every person is created in the image of God and has the right to a life in dignity.**

*"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him" (Genesis 1:27)*

*"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)*

*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. (UN Universal Declaration §1)*

*"Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person" (ibid. §3)*

*"Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution" (ibid. § 14)*

*"No State Party shall expel, return ("refouler") or extradite a person to another State where there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in danger of being subjected to torture." (UN Convention Against Torture §3)*

Therefore we want

- the fears and protection needs of people seeking asylum to be taken more seriously.
- to avoid ever sending people to countries where they risk being subjected to torture or other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
- always to avoid that people be sent to a first country of asylum where there is no access to an asylum procedure.
- people who are suffering from life-threatening illnesses such as aggressive HIV to be allowed to stay in Sweden if they cannot afford or do not have access to treatment in their home countries.
- legal possibilities to be introduced to enter Sweden and the European Union in order to seek asylum.

Therefore we are critical when

- people who try to enter the European Union are forced to take life-threatening risks or live in misery at the borders of the Union.
- persons who shall be deported from Sweden are held in custody for long periods.
- much too little is done to prevent people from being lured to Sweden for the purpose of sexual exploitation or to work under slave-like conditions.

Therefore we encourage each other to

- support in a respectful manner vulnerable persons who seek asylum in Sweden or who live in Sweden without a formal legal status.
- support persons in their country of origin through development aid.

## **2. Basic rights must apply to everyone**

*"And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you" (Leviticus 19:33-34) "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ." (Galatians 3:28)*

*"Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."* (UN Universal Declaration, §2)

Therefore we want

- Sweden to ratify the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
- people who reside in Sweden without legal status to be given the same right to health care as the rest of the population.
- more ways to be opened for travel to Sweden and the European Union in order to work.

Therefore we are critical when

- persons who seek asylum in Sweden because of their political or religious beliefs or sexual orientation and who risk persecution in their home countries are expelled to their home countries with the indirect admonition not to publicly express their beliefs or orientation.
- persons who reside in Sweden without legal status are exploited in the labour market.

Therefore we encourage each other to

- welcome people, regardless of their origins, who turn up in our parishes.

### **3. The situation of children must be paid particular attention**

*"Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them: for to such belongs the kingdom of God."* (Mark 10:14)

*In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. (UN Rights of the Child Convention §3.1)*

Therefore we want

- the children's individual reasons for asylum to be taken seriously.
- children who have been in Sweden a long time to be granted residence permits.
- all children without permits to be given the right to attend school.
- children never to be used as interpreters for their parents when serious matters are discussed.

Therefore we encourage each other to

- put the child in focus and especially children who are forced to flee.

### **4. Families have the right to live together**

*"And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand"* (Mark 3:2)

*"The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State"* (UN Universal Declaration §16,3)

Therefore we want

- people to obtain quick and positive handling of their applications for family reunification.
- relatives of persons residing in Sweden to be given better opportunities to be granted visas for family visits.

Therefore we encourage each other to

- support disunited families

## **5. Everyone has a responsibility for developing a good society**

*"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavour, how shall it be seasoned?" (Matthew 5:13)  
"Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them." (Matthew 7:12)*

*"Nothing in this declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein" (UN Universal declaration §30)*

Therefore we want

- all individuals and actors in society to take responsibility for preventing racism and other discrimination.
- all individuals and social actors to take responsibility for giving people with foreign backgrounds the possibility to become part of general society not least through the labour and housing markets.

Therefore we are critical when

- prejudiced statements are spread about people based on their origins, skin colour or religion.
- that a restrictive asylum and immigration policy is blamed on a "silent opinion" which is said to be against immigration.

Therefore we encourage each other to

- contribute to increasing contacts between, respect for and cooperation with people of different backgrounds.

## **6. Our goal is peace, justice and sustainable development – "new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." (2 Peter 3:13)**

*"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." (Matthew 5:9)*

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because he has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke 4:18-19)*

*"Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized" (UN Universal Declaration §28)*

Therefore we want

- integration to be seen as a mutual process not as assimilation.
- migration policy to be regarded as a part of working for global development, human rights and a sustainable peace.

Therefore we encourage each other to

- with perseverance and joy support each other in working for a better world to live in – for all people!

