

## A DECOLONIAL STYLE OF MISSION IN AFRICA

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### **Abstract**

The article analyses the historical relationship between Christian mission and colonisation in Africa, proposing a model of "decolonial mission" capable of overcoming the ambiguities of the past. After acknowledging that evangelisation and colonialism have often been intertwined, the author highlights the Church's progressive role in the decolonisation process, beginning with the separation between mission and political power, already promoted in the modern era and developed in 20th-century magisterial documents. In particular, texts such as *Maximum Illud*, *Ad Gentes*, and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* have helped redefine mission as a reality rooted in local cultures, oriented toward inculturation and the valorisation of African identities.

The essay then highlights the profound wounds left by colonialism—political, economic, and cultural—and the forms of neocolonialism that remain, emphasising the need for authentic African self-determination. In this context, currents of African theology are presented as fundamental instruments for the decolonisation of Christianity, capable of promoting a faith expressed from local cultures and not imposed from outside. Central to this is the recovery of identity, the overcoming of a welfare mentality, and the valorisation of endogenous resources.

Finally, the author proposes a shift from a "decolonial" mission to a "glocal" mission, integrating local and universal dimensions, based on dialogue, reciprocity, and respect for differences. This model rejects both Eurocentrism and closed Afrocentrism, promoting instead a Church capable of building authentic intercultural relationships. The decolonisation of mission, the text concludes, entails a profound conversion: not only structural, but also cultural and spiritual, oriented toward the freedom, dignity, and co-responsibility of African peoples.

### **Summary of the main ideas**

The article develops a critical and proactive reflection on the relationship between Christian mission and colonisation in Africa, aiming to outline a truly decolonial style of mission today. The starting point is the historical recognition of the intertwining of evangelisation and colonialism: for a long time, missions were exploited by European powers as instruments of political, economic, and cultural expansion. However, the author emphasises that the Church was not only complicit in this process but also a protagonist in a progressive journey of emancipation and critique of colonialism.

From this perspective, the role of important historical milestones and magisterial documents that promoted the separation between mission and colonisation is highlighted. The establishment of the Propaganda Fide in the 17th century already demonstrated the intention to free missionary activity from the control of colonial powers. This path finds a decisive moment in the apostolic letter *Maximum Illud* (1919), which calls for depoliticising mission, valorising local cultures, and training a native clergy. Subsequently, the Second Vatican Council and the documents of twentieth-century popes deepened this vision, proposing a mission understood as inculturated evangelisation, respectful of cultural identities, and oriented toward the integral liberation of the human person.

The article then focuses on the consequences of colonialism in Africa, described through powerful images and biblical references. The continent appears marked by profound political, economic, and cultural wounds: institutional instability, foreign interference, exploitation of resources, economic dependence, and an identity crisis. So-called neocolonialism perpetuates dynamics of domination through unequal agreements, unjust economic systems, and forms of welfare that hinder the self-

determination of African peoples. In this context, Africa is portrayed as a rich but impoverished continent, endowed with immense resources but lacking the capacity to manage them autonomously. Faced with this situation, the author identifies African theological currents as a decisive response to cultural and religious colonisation. These currents aim for a decolonisation of Christianity, understood as liberation from imposed models and the reappropriation of one's own identity. Central to this is the theme of inculturation, that is, the expression of the Christian faith within African cultural categories. This involves a process of self-awareness, valorisation of local traditions, and overcoming both inferiority complexes and forms of uncritical imitation of the West. Decolonisation thus becomes a path of self-determination that involves not only the religious, but also the social, economic, and political dimensions.

A particularly relevant aspect is the critique of the "welfare mentality," considered one of the main obstacles to authentic development. The author emphasises the need to valorise local resources and promote endogenous development, capable of making African churches and African societies protagonists of their own destiny. In this sense, decolonisation is not only a process of liberation from external influences but also an internal responsibility, requiring a change of mentality and a collective awareness.

In the final section, the article proposes the transition from a decolonial mission to a "glocal mission." This new paradigm overcomes both Eurocentrism and a potential closed Afrocentrism, promoting a balance between the local and the universal. Glocal mission is defined as inter-gentes, that is, as an encounter and dialogue between peoples, cultures, and religions, based on reciprocity and mutual enrichment. It implies a missionary conversion that prioritises relationships over imposition, dialogue over domination, and the testimony of life over purely functional action.

Finally, the author emphasises that decolonisation is not just a structural or political issue, but also a spiritual and cultural one. It requires a rediscovery of human dignity as a fundamental and non-negotiable value, and a freedom that must be earned and lived responsibly. From this perspective, mission is not simply an activity, but a way of life: "being mission" means embodying an identity open to others, capable of building bridges and promoting authentic communion between peoples.

In conclusion, the article proposes a vision of mission as a dynamic process of liberation, inculturation, and dialogue, oriented toward building a more just Church and world, in which Africa can fully express its identity and its contribution to humanity.

## **A DECOLONIAL STYLE OF MISSION IN AFRICA**

Colonisation and mission are undoubtedly long-standing companions. However, the Church remains at the forefront of the decolonisation process. In this short essay, which is neither apologetic nor polemical, we will begin with the Church's leading role in the decolonisation process, then present the currents of African theology as counter currents to colonisation, and conclude with a proposed set of guidelines for a decolonial style of mission in Africa today.

### **1. The Church as protagonist of decolonisation**

The establishment of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith by Pope Gregory XV in 1622 represented an unprecedented turning point in the affirmation of ecclesiastical authority over the missions and their emancipation from colonial powers. The appointment of its first apostolic vicars starting in 1637 was a sign of a true separation between evangelisation and colonisation and of the desire to centralise, coordinate, and supervise all the missionary activities of the Catholic Church

throughout the world. Particular attention was also paid to the cultural and religious formation of missionaries. The founding of the Urban College of the Propagation of the Faith (1627) and the commitment to the indigenous clergy constituted the logical continuation of this vision, to which must be added a strong commitment to languages and the printing of local languages. However, creating a structure is one thing; successfully preventing the demons of nationalism from continuing their civilising mission is another. With the publication of the mother of magisterial missionary documents, the apostolic letter *Maximum illud*, published on November 30, 1919, by Pope Benedict XV, missionaries were urged to depoliticise and decolonise the missions. It promoted a new vision of mission, detached from political alliances, more rooted in local cultures and respectful of their specificities. The letter also called for the formation of a native clergy and the involvement of all the faithful in prayer and financial support. Aware that Eurocentrism is the original sin of the missions (cf. G. Colzani), Benedict XV warned that missionary commitment did not consist in Westernising the world. Beyond the break with Eurocentric and colonialist thought, one of the document's merits was the redefinition of the principles and priorities of Catholic missions, rooted in the valorisation of cultural diversity.

In the 1960s, Africa witnessed the dawn of a wave of independence that called for the recognition of black African cultural values, reawakening the sense of dignity of African peoples, the need to recognise their roots and reconnect with their own culture, freeing themselves from Western domination not only politically and economically, but also culturally. Within the Church, it is enough to recall the 1956 publication of the work entitled *Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent*<sup>1</sup>, (On Black Priests Raising Questions), which marked a turning point in the dialogue between African cultures and Christianity, decolonising a Christianity imported from the West. Furthermore, by developing a theology of mission as an *actio Dei*, of which the Trinitarian God is the source and in which the Church cooperates through the *Missiones Ecclesiae*<sup>2</sup> (missions of the Church), the conciliar decree *Ad Gentes* clearly distances itself from colonial missions, which were human initiatives intended to dispossess Africans and trample on their cultures. The *Motu Proprio Africae Terrarum*, published by Pope Paul VI on October 29, 1967, and commonly referred to as the "cultural charter of Africanness," encouraged Africans to seek their own identity. A few years later (in 1975), Paul VI, in the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, initiated a conceptual and semantic decolonisation in the preferential use of the term evangelisation rather than mission, which rhymes with colonisation. Furthermore, at a time when concerns in Africa were linked to the evangelisation of cultures and the Africanization of Christianity, the Holy Father called for a generous evangelisation of cultures for an authentic, non-decorative inculturation<sup>3</sup>. For Paul VI, evangelisation is a process of liberation (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* n. 30) of the whole person (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* n. 32) and of all men. For John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio*, dialogue centred on Christ is the path to decolonization and true and definitive liberation (*Redemptoris Missio*, no. 55). Closer to home, Pope Francis's legacy is rich in teachings on decolonization: his preferential option for a Church that is poor and for the poor has led him repeatedly to denounce the plundering of the poor by the rich, as well as the ideological colonization and one-track thinking that hinders cultural and economic exchanges between peoples. For Francis, decolonisation begins with constructive encounter and dialogue to avoid a monocultural and one-sided Christianity (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 117).

More specifically, the two synods for Africa denounced the spectre of colonialism in Africa and laid bare its consequences and *modus operandi*. The first special synod, held in 1994, compared the continent to the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho; he fell into the hands of robbers who

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. ABLE et Alii, *Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent*, Cerf-Présence Africaine, Paris 1956, 16: The time has passed in which African issues were considered without, for or despite of the Africans.

<sup>2</sup> CONCILIO VATICANO II, Decree *Ad gentes* on the missionary activity of the Church (7 December 1965), n. 6. It is interesting to note that the Decree also deals with the question of the formation of native clergy in n.16 and that of particular Churches in nn. 19-22.

<sup>3</sup> PAOLO VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1984) n.20.

stripped him, beat him, and departed, "leaving him half dead" (cf. Luke 10:30-37). For the synod fathers, Africa remains a continent in urgent need of good Samaritans to come to the aid of its many sick, mistreated, paralysed, and despised children who languish in poverty in the corners of the world. According to John Paul II, the first Good Samaritan is the Church, which, with pastoral care, can help the sons and daughters of Africa rediscover their dignity and their "potential for action and reaction," that is, their freedom to be and to act (cf. *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 41). The other Gospel narrative to which the Second Synod for Africa refers to denounce the colonial wounds in Africa is the passage from John 5:3-9: according to Benedict XVI, the African continent is like the paralytic under the porticoes of the Pool of Bethesda, healed by Christ. He comments: "Africa desires to rise again like the man in the Pool of Bethesda; it desires to have confidence in itself, in its dignity as a people loved by its God. It is therefore this encounter with Jesus that the Church must offer to wounded hearts, longing for reconciliation and peace, thirsting for justice" (*Africae Munus*, no. 149).

In an incisive and eloquent manner, these two passages describe the traumas<sup>4</sup> and the painful stigmata of colonial wounds on Africa, depicted as a tormented and needy continent. The impacts of colonialism are primarily political: in Africa, one can deplore, along with John Paul II, the misgovernance caused by the manipulation of constitutions to remain in power indefinitely, by a sham democracy through elections financed and controlled from abroad, and finally by military coups that establish regimes of exception (see *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 112). All of this often degenerates into armed conflicts with their attendant collateral effects, which we can imagine. But if Africans are primarily responsible for the violations of their freedoms, they are not the only ones responsible and guilty. External factors and actors work against decolonisation and the sovereignty of African states. Indeed, colonial powers officially ceased to exercise their supremacy and hegemony over African countries after "granting" them independence. But unfair and toxic agreements, made between masters and slaves, continue to fuel unequal North-South relations. The interference of international powers in African affairs and elections creates a form of remote government that seriously undermines the political autonomy of African states. We recognise with John Paul II that "in a world controlled by rich and powerful nations, Africa has practically become an unimportant appendage, often forgotten and neglected by all" (*Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 40). Paradoxically, it is coveted and exploited at will precisely because it overflows with resources. From an economic standpoint, in addition to being like the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho or the man at the Pool of Bethesda, Africa is like a wealthy landowner besieged by hungry and ruthless thieves, whom he watches as they greedily devour his possessions, pityingly contenting himself with crumbs. The African paradox is that of a continent immensely rich and economically, yet scandalously poor. Africa's economic precariousness is often caused and fuelled by a system of pauperisation. Some corrupt leaders, in collusion with local or foreign actors, steal national resources, appropriate common goods, and incur debts that keep their people in a state of permanent and servile indebtedness. These unhealthy practices, with a colonial flavour, give the impression that some leaders are doing everything they can to keep their people in poverty and ignorance, in order to further undermine their freedoms. Internationally, injustices in trade create a situation of economic neocolonialism. Development projects and programs are often cleverly plotted by predators to strip the poor of their assets, or even a kind of drug that paralyses their efforts at self-determination and exacerbates an endemic welfarist mentality. Africa certainly needs the Good Samaritan for a certain time, but not this toxic and condescending charity, much less that aid that offends its dignity<sup>5</sup>. Still referring to the parable of the Good Samaritan, we believe that the effort at decolonisation requires identifying and cataloguing these unrepentant and greedy bandits who prey on the continent. We must unmask these criminals lurking under the guise of a supposed benefactor, both within and outside Africa. One of their mottos is divide and conquer. "It has been rightly observed that within the borders inherited from colonial powers,

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Instruction *Libertatis Nuntius* on aspects of the « Theology of Liberation » (6 August 1984), n.8.

<sup>5</sup> A publication that deals broadly with this problematic is that of D. MOYO, *L'aide fatale. Les ravages d'une aide inutile et de nouvelles solutions pour l'Afrique*, JC Lattès, Domont 2022.

the coexistence of different ethnic groups, traditions, languages, and even religions often encounters difficulties due to grave mutual hostility" (*Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 49). These borders constitute walls and prisons within which each people is imprisoned and held hostage. Yet, "the identity of African communities is played out in these intercultural encounters" (*Africae Munus* 38), which strengthen African unity and integration, severely challenged by drastically and arbitrarily imposed borders. In the cultural sphere, Africa has experienced and continues to suffer the shock of the man who descended from Jerusalem to Jericho. Indeed, in addition to the theft of works of art, colonial imperialism and a certain missionary proselytism have vandalised African cultures in certain places and at certain times, sometimes to the point of practising a tabula rasa. The plundering of cultural heritage by some colonial powers and the Westernisation of Africa through the imposition of European civilisations have profoundly and indelibly damaged the identity and dignity of Africans. To such an extent that even today, Africans suffer from an identity complex and crisis. This is expressed in a blind mimicry of everything that comes from the so-called developed countries, to the detriment of authentic African values. This uncritical and blind imitation, fuelled and sustained by media manipulation, inexorably leads to a cultural alienation that uproots many Africans. However, it must be recognised that today the myth of the West is in decline and that the process of decolonisation could accelerate thanks to the Pan-Africanist movement and currents of African theology.

## 2. Currents of African theology counter to colonisation

In the theological and theological sphere, we believe that all currents of African theology constitute courageous efforts to decolonise Christianity in Africa. This begins with the total liberation of Africa and Africans from all that hinders them and from all those who imprison them in economic, political, and spiritual prisons, etc. Despite these efforts, for many African theologians and Christians, the Church-Family of God in Africa is still under tutelage and in a state of dependence, constantly enslaved and assisted. There is therefore an urgent need to free ourselves from certain yokes, actors, and burdens, both internal and external<sup>6</sup>. African countries claim to have achieved independence, while in reality, they have not yet freed themselves from dependencies. In both the civil and ecclesiastical sectors, we are witnessing a sort of persistence, resistance, and even resurgence of the demons of welfare in Africa<sup>7</sup>. However, the era of colonial missions, in which local Churches were evangelised, nourished, and supported by the European and American mother Churches, is over. Hence, the urgent need for "a more thorough exploration of local resources, better management of available means, an objective assessment of Africa's real needs, and a creative approach to meeting those needs with available local resources. This is the thorny issue of self-determination, without which no lasting, dignified, and integral promotion of the human person is possible. In a world affected by a multidimensional crisis, African nations and local Churches in Africa must free themselves from the "welfare mentality" to equip themselves with the human, material, and economic resources they need. Decolonisation is that culture of self-determination and endogenous development, original and integral in every aspect, since he who depends entirely on others is not free.

African countries claim to have achieved independence, while in reality, they have not yet freed themselves from dependencies. In both the civil and ecclesiastical sectors, we are witnessing a sort of persistence, resistance, and even resurgence of the demons of the 19th century. Instead, the era of colonial missions, in which local churches were evangelised, nourished, and supported by the European and American mother churches, is now over<sup>8</sup>. Hence, the urgency of "a more in-depth exploration of local resources, better management of available resources, an objective assessment of

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<sup>6</sup> LES ÉVÊQUES DU BURKINA FASO, « 50 ans de souveraineté du Burkina Faso : quel avenir ? Message des Evêques du Burkina Faso », 2010, 6–7.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. H. THIANDOUM « Rapport Introductif », M. CHEZA (éd.), *Le synode africain. Histoire et textes*, Karthala, Paris 1996, 46.

<sup>8</sup> A. RAMAZANI BISHWENDE, *Eglise-famille de Dieu dans la mondialisation : théologie d'une nouvelle voie africaine de l'évangélisation*, 91.

Africa's real needs, and a creative approach to meeting those needs with available local resources. This is the thorny issue of self-determination, without which no lasting, dignified, and integral promotion of the human person is possible. In a world affected by a multidimensional crisis, African nations and local Churches in Africa must free themselves from the "welfare mentality" to equip themselves with the human, material, and economic resources they need<sup>9</sup>” Decolonisation is that culture of self-determination and endogenous development, original and integral in every aspect, since he who depends entirely on others is not free<sup>10</sup>.

Decolonisation is a reappropriation and assumption of one's own identity for authentic inculturation. In reality, it is about being oneself so as not to live by proxy. The African himself self-decolonises by struggling against a certain inferiority and superiority complex. After the plundering and sabotage of African cultures, the question of African cultural identity arises acutely, especially in these times when African cultures are in crisis and where tendencies to return to origins are strong. Furthermore, inculturation remains even today "a requirement of evangelisation, a path toward full evangelisation»<sup>11</sup>."—in short, a fundamental challenge for the evangelising mission in Africa. Isn't this a *kairos*? Knowing that the process of inculturation and decolonisation begins with self-awareness and self-knowledge, every African could undertake this examination of conscience: what is my level of knowledge of my culture and of Black-African civilisation? Today, is the advent of an African Christianity in which every son or daughter of Africa can express their faith as an African, a reality or an illusion? Without ethnocentrism, how can every African participate in decolonisation by appropriating their Africanness without vanity but with legitimate pride and a critical spirit? Are Africans bold enough in their efforts at inculturation? The answers to these questions will allow Africans to be the protagonists of decolonisation and thus respond to Pope Paul VI's invitation in Kampala in 1969, which challenged any desire for colonisation: "Africans, be missionaries to yourselves." Certainly, in matters of inculturation, prudence, patience, and discernment are required. However, we have the impression that Africans are allowing the fear of a certain syncretism and relativism to hamper their good initiatives. While relativism must be avoided, let us not forget that mission is a relationship based on positive relativity. While it's true that harmful syncretism must be avoided, let's not forget that the Church's missionary history is marked by constructive and enriching syncretism. A kind of deconstruction of African thought and culture could help.

The decolonisation of African<sup>12</sup> thought and knowledge comes by way of the deconstruction-reconstruction of Africanness. «A fundamental restructuring of African culture in which the seed of the Gospel, planted by God himself in his word, renews African reality, transforming it into a new place of revelation of humanity, a new opportunity for humanity, which will receive from Africa all the riches God has placed there to build a world according to his heart. Renewed by the Gospel, which in turn renews itself to offer it enriched to all civilisations and peoples, Africa truly appears as Christ's new homeland, a new possibility of being and living for every African»<sup>13</sup>. It is therefore a process of objective, exhaustive and constructive re-evaluation of African resources, aimed at the birth and promotion of a new Africa faithful to itself<sup>14</sup>. This approach aims to question, test and even undermine «the assumptions, criteria, points of reference and fundamental elements of a political, economic and philosophical tradition in which a country or continent finds itself»<sup>15</sup> to arrive at concrete and ethical proposals capable of reconciling and harmonising the vital forces of Western and African life in a synergy

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<sup>9</sup> For example, fourteen (14) Francophone African countries are not monetarily independent since they still depend on the French Metropolis. Cf. A. d. P. Pooda, *L'État de droit et l'économie en Afrique francophone à l'aune du don. Le tiers paradigme peut-il sauver le Tiers-Monde ?* l'Harmattan Italia, Turin-Paris 2023, 42-44.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. A. RAMAZANI BISHWENDE, *Ecclésiologie africaine de famille de Dieu. Annonce et débat avec les contemporains*, l'Harmattan, Paris 2007, 134–135.

<sup>11</sup> JEAN PAUL II, Exhortation apostolique post-synodale *Ecclesia in Africa* (14 septembre 1995), n.59.

<sup>12</sup> To further study the issue, see E. M. MBONDA, *Une décolonisation de la pensée. Études de philosophie afrocentrique*, Sorbonne Université Presses, Paris 2021.

<sup>13</sup> K. MANA, *La nouvelle évangélisation en Afrique*, Chrétiens en liberté, Karthala ; Clé, Paris, Yaoundé 2000, 153–154.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. F. APPIAH-KUBI, *Église, famille de Dieu*, 227.

<sup>15</sup> A. RAMAZANI BISHWENDE, *Église-famille de Dieu dans la mondialisation*, 79.

aimed at the common good and interests in the economic, social, political, and other spheres. But all this begins and passes by way of self-esteem and self-understanding, which imply self-assessment and updating, or rather, a continuous and constant reform of one's identity in the vortex of today's changes<sup>16</sup>. Openness to otherness, that is, moving from the local to the global, is a must!

### 3. From the Decolonial Mission to the Glocal Mission

The glocal mission is neither Eurocentric nor Afrocentric, since it connects the global and the local. It is *inter-gentes* because it builds bridges between different cultures and religions in a dynamic of mutual (re)cognition, constructive dialogue, and mutual enrichment, safeguarding the identity, or rather the quintessence, of each entity. Pan-Africanist orthodoxy and orthopraxy constitute an antidote to decolonisation. The historical conflation of colonisation and mission has created so much confusion that it has given rise to anti-ecclesiastical and anticlerical positions in the minds of many Africans. In our view, these radical positions of these pseudo-Pan-Africanists betray and distort authentic Pan-Africanism, whose vision and objectives are noble and shared by Christianity. While some forms of reaction against certain missionary practices are understandable, the fury and all-out attacks against the Church appear to be a lack of recognition for those white heroes who defended the cause of Africans tooth and nail, those missionaries who served Africa at the cost of their own lives<sup>17</sup>. The wind of decolonisation did not come from Africans or Africa, but from missionaries and the Church, who called for an end to the exploitation of the evangelising mission for political, economic, ideological, and other ends. It is undeniable that men and women, in the name of the Church, endorsed the slave trade and colonial missions. Some popes have acknowledged and denounced these errors and offered *mea culpas* on behalf of the Church. Conversely, countless historical facts demonstrate how Catholic missionaries defended Africans and their cultures. The authentic Pan-Africanist is a person of integrity and balanced judgment.

Decolonisation is a declared desire to free oneself from all forms of enslavement and subjugation. Freedom and human dignity are inviolable because they are divine attributes. Only God liberates. Humans, for their part, free themselves from their fellow humans who attempt to steal or confiscate their freedom. Consequently, human dignity, which is a divine right, must be earned, not negotiated. Waiting for someone else to grant you this divine right to freedom is a renunciation and an escape from responsibility, for it is better to fall with weapons in hand on the battlefield for freedom than to survive chained and deprived of oxygen in the palace of an unjust predator. Unfortunately, many sons and daughters of Africa feel so comfortable in their own skin and in the colonial regime that they act by proxy and subcontractor in complicity with the (neo) -colonialists. Forgetting that "he who sleeps on someone else's mat sleeps on the ground," the attitude of these uprooted and alienated people leads one to believe that vassalage guarantees more security than any attempt at liberation. We must tear down the masks of African leaders who claim to be champions of Africa's dignity and rights, when in reality they collude with neocolonial powers to the detriment of their citizens' interests. Along with them, the prophets of African integration and integrity are immediately demonised and end up martyred, handed over and betrayed by their African brothers to be assassinated.

A third style is missionary conversion based on new missionary paradigms that promote relationality and virtuous reciprocity, since Africa suffers from its lack of unity. Since colonisation is an ideological system, one might ask whether African missionaries and pastors are not colonising each other. What does this mean? It's easy to accuse external actors of colonisation; however, aren't Afro-African mechanisms of colonisation present when, in local churches, a pastor belonging to a majority ethnic group boycotts the culture of a minority ethnic group, refuses to embody the socio-anthropological realities

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. A. RAMAZANI BISHWENDE, *Église-famille de Dieu dans la mondialisation*, 72.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. A. D. P. POODA, «La missione evangelizzatrice al servizio delle libertà e della liberazione», in *Θεολογία* 92 (2021)3, 104-106.

of the communities to which he is sent, or openly combats them? It's fair to say that colonisation is colourless. Decolonising does not consist of a retreat into identity. "Far from being realised in a total autarchy of the self and the absence of relationships, freedom truly exists only where mutual bonds, governed by truth and justice, unite people. But for such bonds to be possible, each person must be authentic. Freedom is not the freedom to do just anything; it is freedom for the Good, in which alone happiness resides»<sup>18</sup>

. Decolonising mission, therefore, means cultivating this African identity open to the universal, because Africa is not just one continent among many; it is a continent like all the others<sup>19</sup>. Since mission is a lifestyle and not just an act, it is necessary to "be mission" by bearing witness to a life aware of one's own identity and dignity, yet open to otherness. The paradigms of multifaceted, symbolic, and poetic<sup>20</sup> mission could help break through the vision of a single, unilateral model, allowing an era of glocal mission capable of interconnecting people, cultures, and religions to emerge.

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<sup>18</sup> CONGREGATION POUR LA DOCTRINE DE LA FOI, Instruction *Libertatis conscientia* sur la liberté chrétienne et la libération. « La vérité nous rend libres » (22 Mars 1986), n.26.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. A. d. P. POODA, « The gift of Africa », in C. Koné -M. Kaufmann (eds), *Africa-in- the-World*, Peter Lang, Berlin 2021, 139.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. L. SANTÉDI KINKUPU, «*La missio ad gentes de Maximum illud à Evangelii gaudium : receptio africaine*», in A. d. P. POODA-V. DABIRÉ (eds.), *Les chantiers de la mission en Afrique francophone aujourd'hui*, 35.