

not used to nuances or diplomatic ways of thinking and speaking.

The “Catholic” Spain has to learn to live in a pluralistic society where other Christians are raising—legitimately enough—their voice, and their voice is not always in the line of the Roman Catholic Church. There are also a growing number of people who are not interested in Church issues at all. Dialogue is urgent with non-believers, especially with the younger generations. Ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue appear to be other paths that favour the co-operation of Church and State as partners: indeed, the present Government is willing to listen to different religions. It is an opportunity that

should not be missed. The Alliance of Civilizations launched by the United Nations was first proposed by the Spanish Prime Minister and this clearly reveals that there is a possibility to work in this direction. Dialogue with Islam, apart from the daily co-operation at the local level, has become stronger thanks to the work of *Caritas* and other Christian NGOs working with Muslim immigrants, especially in the Canary Islands and in the border areas of the Mediterranean.

The internal interests of the Roman Catholic Church—such as education, economic, family and bioethical issues—seem to follow a good path of negotiation with the Government. If the Catholic Bishops

were able to involve lay people and also non-believers in their pro-life campaigns, their struggle against poverty and in other activities, their actions may be more successful. In a global situation of alliances and co-operation, the Catholic Church in Spain knows that she needs to work together with the civil society, with the State and also with people who believe themselves to be far from God, faith and Church structures.

In this lies a big challenge which concerns not only the bishops but the whole community of faithful. Dialogue and co-operation must replace the ancient attitudes of condemnation or ignorance. This is not just a human duty—it is also an Evangelical precept.

Jovanie Serge TANKEU KEUSSEU

Youth - Empire: Our Crisis... Our Mission!

“We are not orphans because we have lost father and mother, but because we have lost hope.” This African saying brings us to cruel consideration of our actions as youth, and especially as Christians, confronted with the decisive question of the Empire. Thinking about empire today implies presenting the world forces and dynamics that are ruling the current practices in our societies and their prospects for the future. This crude reality in our societies results in happiness for the minority at the expenses of the miserable majority.

The present reflection originates from my formal and informal exchanges as youth leader of the Protestant University Chaplaincy network of Cameroon and from international exchange meetings with other youth from Africa and abroad. Within this purview, we will glance at our conscious or unconscious complicities with the ruling order, but above all, we will make proposals likely to transform our state of passivity into mission.

OUR CRIMES

A careful glance at the general situation worldwide as a whole and that of Africa in particular makes it difficult not to picture the despicable state of women and men, as well as the increasingly rapid growth of misery in some of our countries.

1. OUR POLITICAL MISTAKES

The international geopolitics is seemingly trying to convince us that if we, as Africans, want the advent of a peaceful planet, then we are not going the right way about it. This same reality leads us to think that fighting for energy resources (gas, oil, gold, diamond, copper, etc.) is sufficient and the ultimate security for the future of nations.

According to figures, the battle for an African policy for Africa and Africans seems to be lost. Rebel movements are present here and there, from the north to the south and from the east to the west, always fiercer, and always trying to grab power only to reproduce

the same rule as their predecessors. Powerful multinationals, “ex-metropolis” in connection with some of our fathers, mothers, grand-fathers and grand-mothers, are still using our divisions, tribes, and religious denominations as means to monopolise the power, crush resistance and interposition forces. We are all conscious of the fact that the West is using our internal potentialities and wealth to position their “tramps” at the helm of our states and their international “experts” at the bedside of our governments’ structures.

The infernal cycle of power seizing through arms in Chad, as from the beginning of the 1980s, testifies of the way our leaders and their barons understand the ruling in Africa. Nowadays again, instead of figuring out deep questions within themselves as concerns the source of their disagreement and strife, they spend most of their time travelling abroad to explain why they are still holding the power or how they intend to rule once home. Yet, so far in the reality, our leaders’

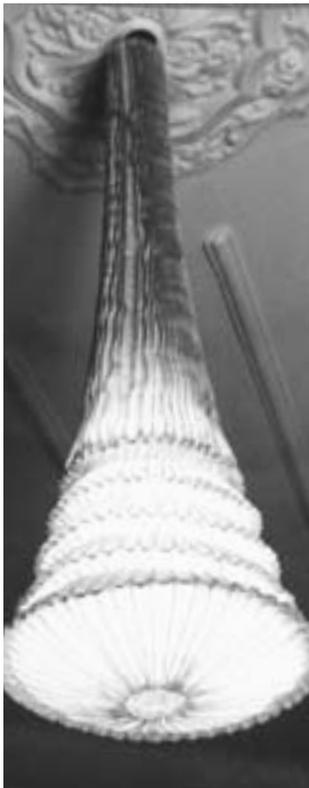


actions have proven to be rather different even upon their returns.

Our complacency as youth was to believe that we could build our states and destinies through military rule or democracy as conceived in the West. We were exploited and used as tools by the power mafia (which were also exploited and were tools of their barons) through structures created to anaesthetize, enslave and stultify: In Cameroon, I will name the President BIYA Youth (PRESBY) and the Active Youth for Chantal BIYA (JACHABY); the same applies to many other regions of Africa.

2. OUR ECONOMIC MISTAKES

Today, more than in the past, the world is laughing at Africa, but worse still, Africans too are laughing at their Africa. How is it understandable that more than four decades after the wave of independences, our economies are still depending on the International Community and donors like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) with all of the wealth and human intellectual potential, natural resources and world forest reserves Africa is bestowed with? Our fathers and grand-fathers have taken the West to be a destination to mourn about our situation. Hence, they spend their time fighting not to satisfy the population, but rather to please their western "barons." With the left hand they offer grants, only to take them back tenfold with the right hand. We have too easily forgotten that Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) were presented by the IMF and



the WB during the 1990s as the ultimate solution to fight poverty in Africa. Now again, we are brought to believe that the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) or the Debt Relief Initiative (C2D), as concerns Cameroon, will bring promised answers to the social service, the structure of health care, basic education and infrastructure. I wish I were making a false diagnosis here. Yet, when we consider our calamitous managing which continues to rest on the drip of international experts, the majority of whom studied in the same prestigious universities as our leaders, we have no need to wait for the resounding effects of these initiatives whose aim is to make us more backwards than we are today. Each time we believed that it was for our good, and this was our mistake; this prevented us from understanding the economic reality of our countries.

3. OUR SPIRITUAL CRISES

One of our reflexes as Africans is always to boast that Christian values are rooted in us. This reflex is only the extension of a long missionary tradition of the past, which made us believe that the ultimate Christianity is that of the West. This reality can still be felt in our churches, parishes, local communities and movements, and brought us to deny our culture, customs and rites, as if prior to the advent of the missionaries our ancestors had been lost.

Nowadays again, the not less fierce yet more destructive war that wages in Africa is one of spiritual alienation. The West and its preachers, priests and pastors found in our continent a fertile ground. Scenes were opened to them; the red carpet was unrolled for them to come in and alienate us with their preachings and so-called miracles that are meaningless and void of the deep Christian realities of the African.

We were complacent because we accepted this distortion of Christian faith rooted outside of our traditions and rites; we accepted to be moulded by tales, teachings, and preachings and trainings foreign to our deep affects. The majority of us became foreigners, unable to firmly, confidently and energetically defend our actions and Christian values based on our own canons. In short, we lost the courage and strength before the battle, but above all, our Gospel remained verbose and inactive.

4. OUR SOCIO-CULTURAL CRISES

A glance at our private and public African televisions is frightening. Another glance at how our brothers, fathers, sisters and mothers are making use of information and communication technologies within our communities and their excitement by their discovery of its advantages makes one sick. At a time where we should adapt those technologies to answer to the needs of our societies in the areas of education and organisation, they are rather merely making a shameful use of them, looking for husbands and wives in a bid to escape misery. In my opinion, misery is more a state of the mind than an experienced material reality. In Cameroon, between 1-2 p.m. and 7-8 p.m., instead of listening to national and international news, our youth concentrate on watching westerner series, most of which have no links with our reality and identity. Unconsciously,

Suggested reading

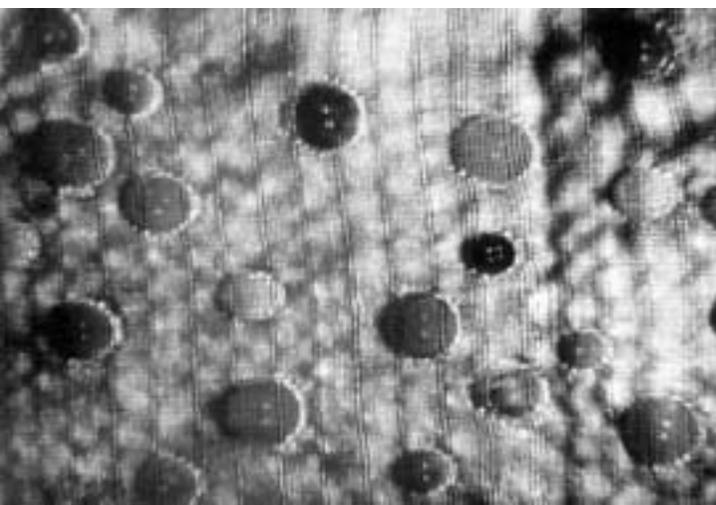
YINDA Hélène, *Lettre ouverte à tous les protestants et toutes les protestantes du Cameroun: notre crise, notre mission, notre avenir*. Yaoundé, 2006.

FOKAM KAMMOGNE Paul, *La Misère galopante du sud, complicité du nord: jeux, enjeux et défis*. Paris 2005.

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our analyses, ways of dressing, and our behaviours are imported and they distance us from our countries, making us always surprised by the decisions that are falling on us.

At the end of this overview, I would like to say that our major mistake has been to keep quiet on the major evils of our societies, on fundamental issues relating to our future as leaders and managers of public affairs. Worse still, we left our future hostage of our fathers, mothers, grand-fathers and grand-mothers. They are spending their lives in positions that are ours and are reducing us to the eternal role of ball boys and girls and small spectators of matches they are playing at our expense to dilapidate the heritage-patrimony which is supposed to be our inheritance. It is possible to reverse the trend. We have no other choice: either we fight or we perish!



OUR MISSION

The overall situation we just outlined may seem too gloomy to be true. Yet it does not seem to be taking into account all the initiatives and commitments made in our continent in a bid to bring about change, through missionary actions and transforming dynamics in a difficult context. More than ever, it is time to launch a true crusade against our true enemies.

1. OUR POLITICAL MISSION

It has to do with breathing a new evangelical democracy, not according to the Western pattern, but based on our traditional ancestral values. In the past, they were the strength of our chiefdoms and kingdoms through their capacities to organise, educate, decide and resist. To be more solid and human, our political mission should gain inspiration from Jesus Christ who, in washing the feet of his disciples, is the example of a leader. This approach should start within our groups and movements at the local, national and continental level. It should start within the framework of elections, service and animation of exchanges. This should be carried out in simplicity, deepness, sincerity and truth. Whatever the difficulties, it is the occasion par excellence to test our capacity to take the destiny of our countries in our hands.

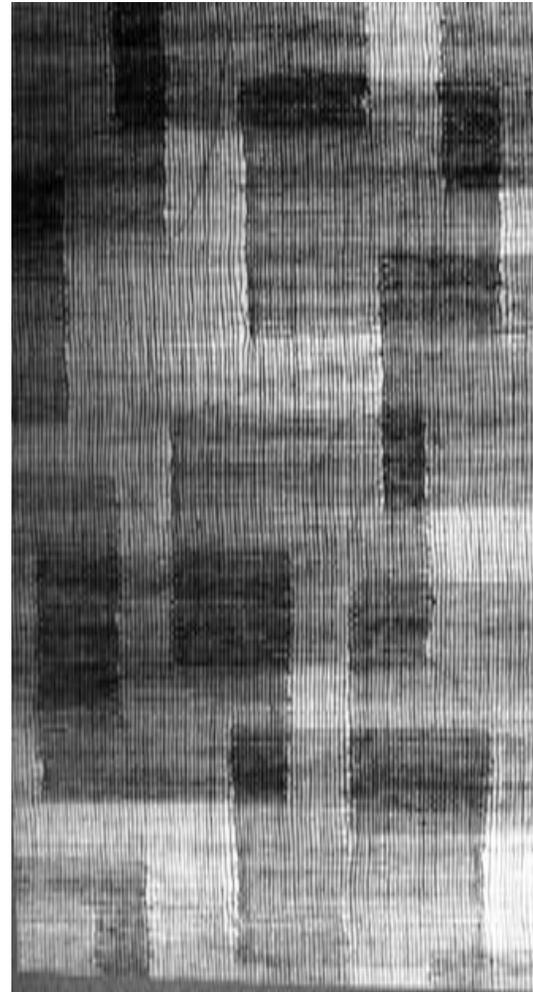
As for relationship with the emerging youth of the West, during our intercultural and worship fellowships, professional and academic trainings, common reflections pertaining to vital issues of faith, we should not remain mere observers or spectators of debates that sometimes have nothing to do with world exchange dynamics, as I sometimes sadly witnessed. We must respectfully and humbly express the pertinence of our viewpoints. This would lead to our living together co-responsibly for the world order to which our contribution is also expected. But let us first be courageous enough to have a critical look at ourselves and note not only our mistakes and weaknesses, but also recognise our strengths.

2. OUR ECONOMIC MISSION

We are certain that Africa can live without always depending on the

eternal drip of the external world. It must achieve this state because it has the natural potential and the human means, women and men trained for their jobs and educated in the most prestigious schools and universities worldwide.

We should personally involve ourselves in the macro- and micro-economic theories that



the International Community and donors are using to drain us. We must reverse the trend of the generations before us; they have not only deliberately confused their pockets with that of the state, but, worse still, are keeping them abroad to enrich foreign banks and perpetuate the infernal cycle of misery. As many of our elders, we should create local development networks drawing inspiration from our deepest nature. In Cameroon, I have in my heart the success story of MC² (Community Growth private insurance) managed by the NGO

ADAF (Appropriate Development for Africa Foundation) and sponsored by a bank grounded in African values. At this cost, our intelligence will result in productive values and relieve our States from predators that are injecting us with water to remove our blood.

3. OUR SPIRITUAL MISSION

As youth, it is our duty to refuse the development of mind-numbing beliefs in spirits and the collapse of the intelligence in our societies. Our spiritual battle is not to reject Christianity from the West, but to acculturate our values, customs and rites that present men and women as the focus of God's projects for society. Let's stop thinking that it is only through prayers, preachings, Bible studies, spectacular sensitization campaigns and miracles that we are going to change the world order. Is Christ not speaking to us when he admonishes his disciples for not feeding the crowd?

Today more than ever, we should not only get rid of religious patronage, but also we should help our elders, father, mothers, grand-fathers and grand-mothers to understand that the battle remains that of African Christianity by and for Africans, reflecting our fundamental and living values.

My experience at the local and national level brings me to the certitude that this is the only approach that can help us to clear our complexes and to get at the core of a missionary reflection, based on African values, to provide a worldwide solution of beliefs where faith and action are indissociable.

4. OUR SOCIO-CULTURAL MISSION

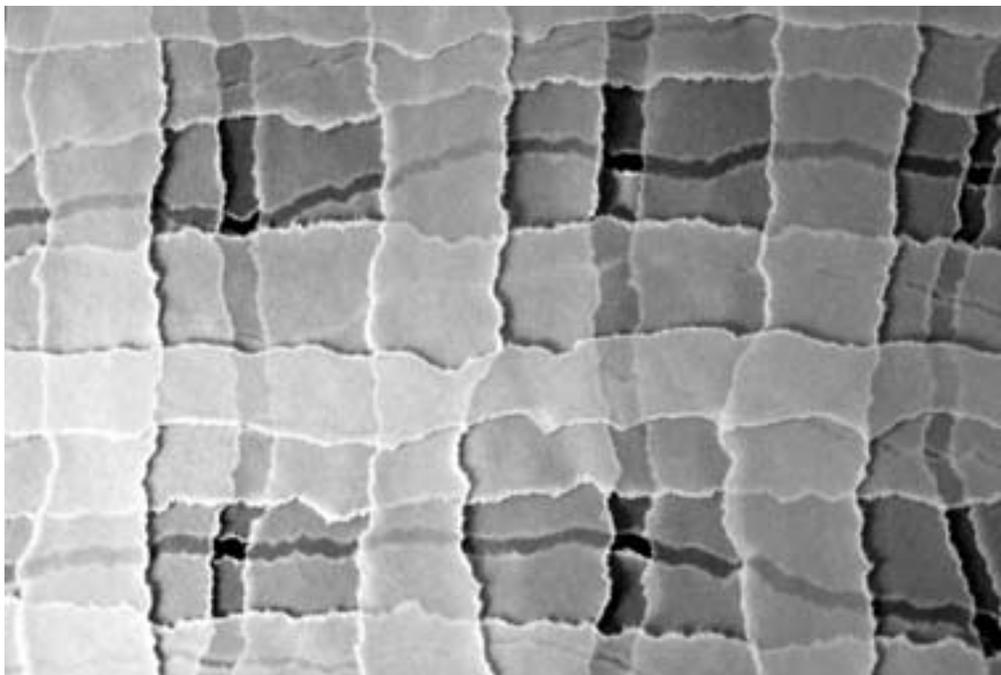
What does patriotism mean? What kind of commitment does it imply? Which fundamental standard does it require for the true building of our societies?

This question is directed to each of us, not in order to provide an academic or philosophical answer that would reactivate the cramming of our teachings, which are mere speculations that envelop our intelligence like water in "cocoa leaves."

The aim of this battle is to give rise to a new type of Africans, men and women concerned about the social and cultural realities of our continent. The aim would be to produce a new reading of our history and of world history from our cultural references, to stop featuring western societies as models and rather to take up the challenges of originality and authenticity of their countries in Africa.

the Defence of Students' Rights in Cameroon (ADDEC) for a quality education in universities. Such lobbying and pleas should be concerted, oriented, planned and cleared from individual quests or battles to position the clan or to seize power. Such action aims at opening the floodgates of the deep and innovative dialogue with our immobile heads whose sole preoccupation is to balkanise our education, to deprive our States from their resources and to use our energies as weapons of destruction. We are already very late. We should act fast and appropriately.

At the end of this reading of sad realities inherent to our African



Our ultimate understanding of this challenge is to restore our personalities and our peoples in their creative dynamics and their capacity to live according to the project that God prepared for humanity with Africa as spring-board. Here and there challenges for restoration were undertaken. They need only to be intensified, coordinated, and perfected. Confronted with issues of education, poverty, corruption, impunity, HIV/AIDS, we should launch pleas and lobbying.

I can share my experience with the battle of the Association for

societies confronted with the world Empire and despite the promising initiatives undertaken here and there, only one thing remains fundamental. We must have a motto of work—always be working. It is our sole inheritance in this decisive battle for our participation in the world order as partners, like China and India today. There is no need to be afraid, because the time has come for Africans, wherever they are, to reverse this trend with the Gospel of Matthew 28:17-20 as the launch pad.