INTRODUCTION.

The image of Africa and Africans in the world today is thoroughly misunderstood if separated from the role racism played in the history of the making of the African experience. For a long time that image has been determined by accounts portrayed by visitors to the continent. The general impression created by such accounts is that Africans have been passive to European activity and would remain for ever an object of the white man’s compassion and humanitarianism. This paper argues that present-day Africans are working towards changing that image which, they are convinced, has been a colossal misrepresentation. The forgotten values of their ancestors uncovered through their cultural renaissance and buoyed by the enrichment of Christian doctrine on human dignity and equality have enabled them to recover their self-hood and to work towards the reversal of the negative image created for Africa by its slavery and colonial experience. It has been generally assumed that Africans were incapable of anything else than coveting the white man’s scientific and technological products. Such would be arguably a racist assumption.

My reflection begins with a consideration of the racial legacy left by European explorers engaged in mapping out the continent. Then I shall examine the colonial
policies constructed on the assumption of European racial superiority that followed exploration. Finally, I shall stress the resistance of Africans to the white racial superiority posture as it has come to be disclosed in the post-colonial era of the continents history. The conclusion will point to the possible direction Africas rediscovered self-confidence will lead to in its conversation with the erstwhile imperial race.

THE LEGACY OF AFRICAS EXPLORERS.

It is necessary to distinguish between the laudable motives of the explorers of the fifteenth and later of the nineteenth century Europe, and the mental furniture they brought along with them. On the one hand, there was the scientific motive of exploring the Dark Continentwhich was of special concern for the cartographers. On the other hand there was the mental attitude of a social Darwinismthey brought along, a late Victorian dogmatism, which assumed that the measure of humanity was its emergence on the continent of Europe. This attitude espoused the inferiority of dark-skinned persons and promoted a decidedly unfavorable opinion about the innate capacity of dark-skinned people1. Moreover the Spaniards and Portuguese had earlier defended the natural inferiority of the Indians on the basis of Aristotles proposition in his Politics that some people were by nature slaves.2 From our point of view, it was unfortunate that the first chapter of Africas encounter with Europe opened up in 1444 CE with the first human cargo, namely two hundred Africans, brought back by one of the expeditions sent to explore the West African coast by Prince Henry the Navigator. These Africans were to be sold as slaves in Lagos, Portugal.3 The explorers were thus bearers of a fatal impactwhich turned out to be the introduction of a long history of racial misunderstanding that has left a prevalent public attitude of disdain toward matters and persons African.
The explorers did not simply solve the perplexing problems of geography and of bringing light to the dark continent through measuring and mapping Africa's relative distance, they also sent home reports about their impressions of the people among whom and on whom they carried out their scholarly expeditions. Their reports provide a striking insight into the European mind at a strategic moment when Europe and Africa came face to face for the first time. Their standard of evaluation was rooted in the Weltanschauung, the climate of opinion, not to say prejudice, held by the educated middle class of late nineteenth century Europe. They clung to such views tenaciously even in the face of contrary evidence. For them, the Africans were savages, albeit gentle savages. Some of these reports were extremely bigoted, for example, Joseph Thomson's whose activity was in the transition period from exploration to partition of Africa. Although he greatly admired the Masai, he could not overcome his obstinate prejudice against the Africans: "the barbarian Negro has not the power of rising to the level of the civilized man either in his lifetime or in the second or third generation." Thomson believed that most Africans were culturally inferior to whites and that dark-skinned people were by and large inherently incapable of rising above a preordained station of life.

Such assessments of the African character enormously influenced public opinion in Europe. They were read avidly and the opinions of the explorers were solicited as experts on African questions. Their influence upon the minds which formulated foreign policy was by no means negligible. Even Hegel who never visited Africa depended on such reports for his pronouncement on the African as exhibiting what he called the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. Many a traveler provided similar impressions of backward societies all over Africa with disorder and chaos, from European perspective, as the normal order of the day. It has also been noted that for some, as for example, the great explorer of the Upper Nile and Egypt Samuel White Baker, his Africans are stereotypes of what he had expected them to be, not what in reality they were. Some other explorers have been accused of their incredible inability to identify and sympathize with African aspirations in
Few would disagree, however, with the observation that the European explorer, traveling so rapidly through the country side, could hardly form adequate conceptions of the nature and character of the diverse peoples of Africa. Only with a thorough command of the local language, which they did not have, or a long stay within a given district, which was not the case, could any European venture with confidence to make pronouncements on the indigenous way of life.

The explorers have been credited with discovering and baptizing with the names of reigning European monarchs African mountains and sources of rivers. One must compliment them for their nerve and audacity to have ventured into the unknown. Such a daring has merited them mention in African history. Their journeys also initiated another phase in African history namely, the European conquest of Africa. It was the explorers who exposed the military inadequacy of African kingdoms, the absence of an effective army that could resist Europe's armament. They also disclosed the potential wealth of Africa for Europe hungry for commerce and industry. Africans have inhabited the fertile land for centuries and remained poor. It was suggested that Europeans who had the scientific know-how should occupy the land and make it yield fruit. Africans who did not seem to know what to do with their fertile land could be dispossessed of it by being driven into the Sahara and Kalahari deserts. In order to render the continent pliant, the introduction of Christianity was suggested.

THE COLONIAL EXPERIENCE.

David Livingstone was perhaps the greatest advocate for Africans in the nineteenth century. He regarded himself as the channel of Divine Power, a divinely appointed agent for Africa's betterment. A great missionary and explorer, he was touched by the human misery he encountered in his far-flung expeditions into the interior of South-Eastern Africa. With a zeal that rivaled the Apostle Paul and the Jesuit missionary to the Far East, Francis Xavier, he worked for the material and spiritual well-being of the Africans. He believed that evangelization and commerce
were the two hinges of civilization which should never be sundered. He wrote his travel accounts to persuade Europeans to come to redeem Africans either through commerce or Christianity. Although he admired and respected Africans, he nevertheless played to the pride and prejudice of his white compatriots in order to win their benevolence. Hence he was able to write: We come among them as members of a superior race and servants of a government that desires to elevate the more degraded portions of the human family.9 Africans looked beyond his derogatory language to honor him for his concern and for his efforts to alleviate their social embarrassment. A bustling city in present-day Zambia bears his name as a living monument to his memory.

His contribution to Africa's future has been associated with colonial rule. It was considered important for the civilized countries, in his case the British government, to shoulder, for humanitarian reasons, the responsibility of giving the Africans a lifestyle worthy of human beings. This was to be achieved both through imperialism, the so-called white man's burden, and through evangelization arguably a moral booster for the depraved Africans assumed to be savages. Imperial rule attempted to make of the African a new man in the model of the civilization Europe represented.10 The introduction of the European school system was the major vehicle for achieving this colonial enterprise. Evaluations of European colonialism have not been uniform. The prevailing western view is that European presence had been largely positive. John Gunther, for example, writes: The Europeans may have ravaged a continent, but also they opened it up to civilization. Colonialism made today's nationalism possible, and opened the way to democracy. The Europeans abolished slavery, and ended tribal warfare. They created communications, improved the standard of living&. Most important, they brought Christianity and western education&.11 The journalist and explorer, David Lamb, disagrees: The benefits he mentioned were not lasting. They vanished almost as soon as the Europeans left. The Europeans built artificial foundations for Africa's fledgling nations, and when the tide changed, they crumbled like sand castles. Only one aspect of colonialism was strong enough to survive the transition to independence economic enslavement.12 With the political upheavals
and pogroms that have bedeviled post-colonial African peoples, David Lamb would seem to represent a more realistic picture of the result of European colonialism. His further observations are, to be on the conservative side, devastating. The colonialists left behind some schools and roads, some post offices and bureaucrats. But their cruelest legacy on the African continent was a lingering inferiority complex, a confused sense of identity. After all, when people are told for a century that they’re not as clever or capable as their masters, they eventually start to believe it. The disdain with which some of the whites in Africa treated the blacks reached its apex in that form of the racist Boer extermination of Hottentot tribes and the setting up of the Apartheid government in South Africa. What the Boers erected openly as a public policy, is what the British administration set up subtly by the so-called Government Reserved Areas (GRA), lands which were exclusively reserved for white residents only. The second major colonial power, France, initiated the policy of Assimilation in its African colonies. This represented the French commitment to the gains of the French Revolution as applied to her African colonies: liberty, fraternity, equality. This policy, however, turns out to be a cultural imperialism since it promotes France overseas. French colonies are tied tightly to the apron strings of French lifestyle and civilization. But a totally negative appraisal of racism especially as represented by the Apartheid in South Africa must, however, reckon with it unintended consequence, the emergence of Nelson Mandela as a symbol of African pride and integrity. He represents Africa’s pride in her identity, her determination not to cave in to arrogant injustice or the denial of the dignity of African personhood. Likewise he is the proof of the Christian paradox of strength in weakness. He was, however, not the only African, although the most prophetic, that defied being regarded as a second hand human species.

PATTERNS OF RESISTANCE TO RACISM.
It would be wise to consider the workings of the African mind before affirming, as some have done, that Africans were passive to European racism in the period of slavery and imperial presence. There is an African proverb that is a dynamic equivalent of Shakespeares saying that prudence is the better part of valor. African wisdom, often encased in stories and proverbs since writing as channel of communication had not developed everywhere before the arrival of the explorers, exploits the results of empirical observation of nature in its oral tradition. In the case of our theme, what they observed of the bedbug, informed their mode of operation during the colonial period. The Igbos of Nigeria (onetime Biafra) express this position picturesquely: Chinchi siri umu ya, wetuo nu obi maka ihe di oku ga emsia juo oyi. The bedbug was said to have advised her brood to exercise patient endurance because what was presently hot would eventually become cold. Another proverb has it that the visitor will eventually leave for his/her home. Onye biarabia ga emesia lachigha azu. These two observations indicate that Africans expected an end to the white mans presence in their land; a future when they could regain their independent charge of their life and conduct their affairs without direction from, or fear of, the white intruder. What they experienced of the white man was awe-inspiring; it overwhelmed their native capacity to control. Hence patience was advocated until the opportune moment arrived to fight back. The above-cited proverbs are indicative of the situation as it eventually developed.

They did not always collaborate with the white intruders. There were cases when they consciously misinformed the explorers by speaking in the native idiom. Moshweshwe, the leader of the Lesothos and the Ashanti monarch in Ghana who fooled the British over the Golden Stool are prominent examples. They were mistrustful of the real motive of the white visitors. How could they have left their countries, bear all the hardship of tropical life only simply to look at lakes and mountains? It is on record that the whites did not hesitate to use their superior firepower to silence resistance. Carl Peters of Germany in Tanganyika and Lord Kitchener of Britain in the Sudan (1898) were ruthless in suppressing native
uprisings. Put together their atrocities could put the Holocaust of the Nazis to shame. How could bows and arrows withstand machine guns and mortar? In the knowledge of the futility of an open confrontation, Africans took to guerrilla harassments. The Mau Mau in Kenya, the Maji Maji in Tanganyika were samples of such resistance. Occasionally some of the whites disappeared without trace and some were sometimes openly humiliated like the Clapperton brothers who were seized and left naked in the sun as they were making their way to the mouth of the Niger. The same was true of explorer Thomson among the Masai. Igbo women of Nigeria also defied the British in the famous Aba riots when they were asked to pay tax on market wares. Many of the chiefs sold slaves to the white and Arab merchants because they received guns and ammunition in return. Although a despicable crime in itself, engaging in slave trading was a means for them to build up a more effective arsenal for their tribal warfare. Among the Africans themselves slavery was a dehumanization. Among the Igbos of Nigeria, for example, a slave is a non-person, one who had no rights of the free-born, and without inheritance rights (Ohuabunwa). The Christian missionaries who founded the Church of freed slaves were despised. Not until they switched to the Diala, the free-born, did the mission at Onitsha blossom, a mission that today has yielded a rich harvest of missionaries and church officials including a curia Cardinal. The Igbos have a deep sense of the worth of human beings and they were not ready to surrender it to the white man’s technical superiority, as the British discovered with utter amazement. For the British, the Igbo even without a Cromwellian experience, were more ungovernable than the Irish.

The true attitude of Africans to European rule surfaced in the policies of politically independent African states. Generally, African governments rejected European imperialism and its racial arrogance. Three reactions can be given as samples of this rejection. First, there was a political and cultural call for a radical return to pre-colonial state of affairs first initiated by President Mobutu in the former Belgian Congo. The country was renamed Zaire and all foreign names were reversed to indigenous ones. This project of an African renaissance was code-named Authenticity. Secondly, there was an attempt to achieve the same aim gradually
through a re-education. The first indigenous university in Nigeria, the University of Nigeria at Nsukka, built to coincide with the celebration of Nigeria's independence from Britain (1960) has as its motto, To Restore the Dignity of Man. The third reaction was the demand for compensation from the former colonial powers as a sort of restitution for the exploitation of Africa's natural resources as well as for the shipment of its manpower to America through the slave trade. President Mugabe's land policy in Zimbabwe is based on this call for restitution and compensation. For him, Africans were, in the colonial era, unjustly deprived of their native farms by white foreigners informed by a racial bias about the black man's agricultural backwardness.

What has the Church's social thought to do with Africans reacting to European mistreatment of their ancestors? The response to the question must be set within an ecumenical horizon. The many Christian churches that came to Africa contributed to forming the present self-understanding of Africans. Not only the missionaries like David Livingstone in Southern Africa and Joseph Shanahan among the Igbos of Southern Nigeria but even the Christian explorers, merchants, and colonial officers that worked with them contributed to Africa's appreciation of Christianity and the period of European colonial occupation of their continent. Initially, Africans could not distinguish the missionary who was preaching the Gospel of freedom and equality before God, from the explorer who was mapping the geography of the continent, or the merchant whose interest was commercial from the colonial officer who was executing the imperial policy. This confusion of identities is well brought out in the words of the first president of independent Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta: The whites taught us to pray the Bible with eyes closed; when we opened our eyes we discovered they had taken our lands! A new and bolder generation of Africans has today emerged from colonial ruins and is equipped with the spoils of the Egyptians namely, the cultural and religious legacy it inherited from the Europeans which is added to the traditional ancestral heritage. Unlike the famed dispute between the ancients and the moderns in the eighteenth century Europe, present-day Africans know that they stand on the shoulders of giants, their ancestors who left them a
legacy of coping with injustice. How they choose to administer their multi-dimensional heritage depends on the depth of their wisdom and the breadth of their perspicacity. In the schools established by the colonists they learnt about the gains of the French Revolution; in the churches built by the missionaries they were introduced to the Bible. The word of God, they were taught, does not return empty; it is efficacious. That word of God has transformed their self-understanding with the energy and empowered them to strive for a just societal order.

THE LEAVEN OF THE GOSPEL.

The explorers had originally recommended the introduction of Christianity as a way of raising the standard of morals in Africa. The Christian Bible did more than that. From the beginning of the twentieth century, Africans learnt from the very first chapter of the Bible that all humans, without prejudice to color, are created in Gods image (Gen.1: 26-27). This teaching is, from the African point of view, subversive of the white mans disdainful stance to the blacks. Genesis thus confirmed their traditional self-appreciation of their worth as human beings equal as humans with other human beings. The Creator of heaven and earth who made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of earth (AA. 17: 26) does not discriminate the people of Israel from the Ethiopians (Amos 9:7) because He accepts from every nation whoever fears Him and acts uprightly (AA.10:34). The Apostle of the Gentiles Paul reproached Peter for not implementing this doctrine of the equality of Jew and Gentile before God in his dealing with the Gentiles at Antioch (Gal.2:11-14) a doctrine, which together with Peter, he had defended in the crucial Council of Jerusalem (AA.15:17f.). In the community of Gods dream, the usual differentiations that led to divisions in human society; male from female, Jew from Gentile, the free from the slave, Greek from the barbarian (Gal.3:28) have lost their divisive edge. In
Christ, God has made a new man in place of the two such that in the one body you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God (Eph. 2:13-22). In this community of the people of God, composed of every nation, race, people, and tongue (Rev. 7:9), every person is a first born (Heb. 12:23). It is the Gospel destined for all nations (Mt. 28:19). It has been appropriated with passion by present-day Africans, because it resonates with the inherited appreciation of what the situation ought to be.

This Gospel was a great encouragement to Africans under European imperialism. Their aspiration was to see that its message becomes a reality in their lived experience. Politically, the freedom fighters for independent self-governing Africa, mostly alumni of Christian schools, initiated policies informed by Christian values to assume responsibility for national affairs. On a parallel stream indigenous religious leaders also initiated measures to assume spiritual leadership. They felt that the white missionaries denied them the right to assume spiritual leadership of the church in Africa. The obvious reason was the unwillingness of the foreign white missionaries to relinquish leadership of the church on the suspicion of the black man's incompetence to lead. The leadership of the Presbyterian Church in Kenya forced the issue when it called for a missionary Moratorium in 1971. A call for the suspension of further importation of white missionaries into Africa and the rejection of all foreign funding of the African church was issued. Their continuation were seen as a means of perpetuating the assumed immaturity of the African Church and its being continued to be manipulated by foreigners. In May 1974 the Third Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches met in Lusaka, Zambia and endorsed this proposal in its communiqué while, of course, recognizing the uncertainties: The call for a Moratorium may undoubtedly affect the structures and programs of many of our churches today. But a halt to receiving financial and human resources from abroad will necessitate the emergence of structures that would be viably African and programs and projects of more urgent and immediate priority. A Moratorium on funds and personnel from abroad will also enforce the unifying drive of Churches in Africa. 16
The official reason given for the moratorium was: to enable the African Church to achieve the power of becoming a true instrument of liberating and reconciling the African people, as well as finding solutions to economic and social dependency, our option as a matter of policy has to be a Moratorium on external assistance in money and personnel. We recommend this option as the only potent means of becoming truly and authentically ourselves while remaining a respected and responsible part of the Universal Church.17

The unofficial motive is hinted at by the words respected and responsible. Their pride as human persons has long been ignored by the foreign missionaries who continued to support the church they founded by foreign funding and thereby making their African co-workers only marginal associates who contributed nothing to the decision-making process that shaped the future of the Church in Africa. Although the African church cannot support itself without foreign finance, its leaders were ready to forego such financial assistance in order to salvage their personal pride as human beings. The same sentiments prompted a number of the clergy in Eastern Nigeria at the end of the Biafra War in 1969 to privately request that the expelled missionaries be not sent back to former Biafra. Officially, of course, they were welcome. The local clergy was convinced of its competence in leading the local church there, if given the chance. This opportunity to exercise responsibility was denied them by the presence of foreign missionaries. The expulsion of the foreign missionaries offered them thechairos to prove themselves.

Adrian Hastings’ commentary on the declared Moratorium is sensitive to the situation that has emerged in Africa. What is undeniable, he avers, is that by and large missionaries today are no longer central to the Christian situation of Africa, despite their continued presence in sizable numbers. Their overall impact is steadily decreasing and, of course, a very considerable proportion among them are decidedly elderly. This does not mean that many are not doing excellent work or that in some places they do not control the church. But essentially their day is past. Their
presence can now be an embarrassment and even, a disservice to the cause of African Christianity. While they cannot solve the problems of the African Church they can defer a solution to those problems. One may add that the Moratoriums real intention is to get the foreign leadership relinquish power to Africans because the Assembly in Lusaka did indeed launch a grand appeal, at the end of its sitting, for overseas funds to build its new headquarters in Nairobi. Recent developments in the Anglican/Episcopalian Church exhibits, however, m the conviction of the African hierarchy to forego the financial support of the American community for sake of what it considers orthodoxy.

THE IMPACT OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

In a very real sense, Catholic social teaching is at the service of the Kingdom of God preached by Jesus the Christ. As it is in heaven so be it on earth, is what we ask for in the Lords Prayer. In his discussion of what he termed the politics of compassion Marcus Borg sees the phrase, the Kingdom of God as the metaphor for the dream of God for humankind: the social situation God would like to see. Such a situation would be vastly different from the situation of people under the kinships of Herod or Caesar when Jesus was on his mission. The Bible as a whole is about the dream of God; it is a vision of shalom, of peace, well-being in a comprehensive sense. Shalom includes a social vision: the dream of a world in which a well-being that assures freedom, in the words of Borg, from negatives such as oppression, anxiety and fear, as well as the presence of positives such as health, prosperity, and security belongs to everybody. It is correct to say with Kenneth R. Himes that the human person is the fundamental concern of social teaching. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World of Vatican II affirms that the church is at once a sign and a safeguard of the transcendence of the human person. Part of
the Churchs concern for human person includes the value of human dignity. That
dignity derives from the human being as made in the image of God. When the
Nigerians on achieving political independence from Britain mandated their first
university to restore the dignity of man, they were thinking of the indignity Africans
had suffered under colonial slavery and imperialism. Their formation in the Christian
social teaching has thus added a theological and not just exclusively nationalist
dimension to their human aspirations.

In spite of scattered racial slurs in papal documents of the past (for which
John Paul II apologized in the name of the Catholic Church at the threshold of the
third millennium), the preponderance of papal directives to Catholic missionaries
outside the European continent has been directed to urging a respect for foreign
peoples and their cultures. For example, Benedict XV (Maximum Illud, 1919) in his
time shared the common attitude of a superior European culture and saw calling
people to a higher culture as part of the Churchs role; missionaries as priests of
civilized nations, going out to announce Christ to uncivilized nations. He was aware
of some missionaries whose missionary work became a way of spreading the
imperialism of their countries of origin. It was a fact that made very painful reading
for us; for him it was a plague most deadly to their apostolate. He reminded them:
You are not to enroll citizens into any country of this world, but that of the next. Pius
XI (Rerum Ecclesiae, 1926) used the language about the heathens, particularly those
who are still savages and barbarians. Yet it was he who justified the sentiments at the
back of the African churches demand for a moratorium. He affirmed that the local
clergy know better than anyone else the best methods to follow to gain access where a
foreign priest could never enter, spoke against the mentality that regarded the local
people as inferior race and of obtuse intelligence and warned against the practice that
used the indigenous clergy for the most humble offices of the ministry. His
recommendation was: Let there not be any discrimination, therefore, between
European and native missionaries. John XXIII in his Princeps Pastorum (1960)
restated the directive of his predecessor, Pius XII: The ultimate aim of all missionary
activity - and this must never be lost sight of - is to plant the Church firmly among
the peoples of other lands and to give them their own hierarchy, chosen from among their own people. Vatican II massively supported these papal teachings in its Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, Ad Gentes. In the speeches delivered by Popes Paul VI and John Paul II in their visits to Africa, they repeatedly reassured Africans in many words that they need not be Europeanized before they are recognized as fellow human beings. The teaching of Jesus Christ and his redemption are, writes Paul VI, in fact, the complement, the renewal, and the bringing to perfection, of all that is good in human tradition. And that is why the African who becomes a Christian does not disown himself, but takes up the age-old values of tradition in spirit and in truth (Jn. 14:24).

THE FUTURE OF RACISM IN AFRICA

The Church's official teaching is, as the foregoing investigation has exhibited, unabashedly against racism and discrimination on the basis of color. If that is the case, then we can repeat the question the powerful woman entrepreneur, Lydia of Thyatira, a woman full of faith and spiritual insight, put to the Apostle Paul and his companions: If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay (AA. 16:15). In the same way, many Africans are asking: If there is, theoretically, no racism in the doctrine of the Church, why does the Vatican (in some cases) still prefer white missionary priests to local priests when appointing bishops? If white missionaries can be pastors and bishops in Africa, why cannot Africans be pastors and bishops in Europe or North America? There is still a lingering suspicion among Africans that Animal Farm's dictum that some are more equal than others is the reality of their church experience.

It is necessary for the whites to outgrow the prejudices left in the white
consciousness by the tales and reports of the explorers and imperialists who were informed by an attitude of social Darwinism. A knowledge of the local language and African proverbs would be the best hermeneutical tool for understanding the Africans. Had the Europeans taken the trouble to understand the strange humanity they met at that period of initial contact, they would not have undervalued them as savages and barbarians. The African wisdom about patient endurance carried by the story of the bedbug and her brood, appears to have triumphed. The invader has exhausted his rapacious strength and the integrity and dignity of the African have been vindicated.

It is not necessary, on the basis of modern Catholic Social Thought, to unilaterally condemn the European activity in Africa, including its negative evaluation of the African personality. That evaluation is deeply resented by educated Africans but it has spurred them on to greater effort to strive for a more positive image of the human person. A number of Africans have received the Nobel Price for various accomplishments; some are leaders at the United Nations in New York and at the World Court at the Hague. In Church administration, we find them as Cardinals in the Vatican and Secretaries in the World Council of Churches in Geneva. If John Paul II could argue that the Churchs engagement with Greco-Latin thought reflects Gods providential plan, we can also see the European activity in Africa as part of Gods pedagogy. Suffering leads to glory; fullness of life is the fruit of death. Africa, which anthropologists tend to regard as the origin and mother of human kind, once despised, is awakening from its century-long slumber to assume its destiny as the laboratory for the world. By this phrase is to be understood what was realized in Vatican II that the Catholic Church has really become a world Church and that the center of gravity in Church membership has shifted from the Northern hemisphere. The future of the Church has to reckon with the escalating population, and thereby significance, of its African membership. Hence a position of racial prejudice against the African can no longer be justified as Gods will or part of his providential plan.

The achievement of the will of God for the world he created has been the motive
force of African traditional religion. Magesa, among others, argues: The fundamental element, or foundational principle, so to speak, of African religious life and thought centers on the fact of creation. Created reality, including humanity, exists on account of the will of God. To continue to live peacefully, therefore, created reality must organize itself according to that will which God established for it from the very beginning.29 As we already saw, this situation of Shalom is what the establishment of the Kingdom of God is all about. African traditional religion, as presented by its African students, evidently has achieved that insight even before Christianity announced it on the African continent. Africas hospitality to the white visitors was misinterpreted as weakness. Its generosity was reciprocated with enslavement and imperialism. Catholic social teaching looks forward to a retrieval of the situation that obtained in the early Christian community, a community that exhibited what Huston and Fiorenza described as a total absence of social barriers30, and a discipleship of equals.31 Africans look forward to a future when Catholic Social Teaching would have wiped away their grounded suspicion that their white fellow humans tend to treat them as children of a lesser god.

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