THE CHRISTIC MODEL OF EBOUSSI BOULAGA
A Critical Exposition And Evaluation Of An African
"Recapture" Of Christianity

by

Eugène Didier A. GOUSSIKINDEY

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Abstract

Most theological investigations in Africa center around cultural elements such as religious rites (sacrifice and ancestor worship), social practices (naming ceremony, initiation and marriage), or traditional cults. They are often characterized as “inculturation.” In this dissertation, we offer a systematic presentation and a critical appraisal of an African reappropriation of Christianity which deliberately gives little attention to the cultural problematic and, even discards the whole dogmatic period as a proper ground for its elaboration. So Eboussi Boulaga’s “Christic Model” challenges the main current theological reflection in Africa as well as the main line theological inquiry in the Western Churches. Our contention in this study is to show that, from a systematic point of view, Eboussi’s endeavour recapitulates “inculturation” and offers a better critical horizon for a responsible encounter between Africa and Christianity. Could this approach go beyond Africa? Our presentation assumes it.

This study puts forward that, in discarding the dogmatic period of Christianity as well as the cultural problematic of inculturation, Eboussi was positively choosing the Second Temple Judaism with its crisis and the African historical subject as a better grounded starting point for African theological investigations. Emerging from a dramatic historical situation, Africans will only find new life in living up to the Christic model which is but the Jewish-Christian way of solving the problem of universality to which Israel was confronted from the Maccabean revolt (175 B.C.) up to the insurrection of Bar Kochba (A.D. 135). The basic assumption is that from Israel’s first serious revolt against a foreign Power to its last rebellion, the various Jewish movements or “sects” (Josephus) of the time, including Christianity, were answering the unique requirement of Israel’s survival: “...be very steadfast to keep and do all that is written in the Book of the law of Moses...” that you may
not be mixed with these nations left among you... For if you turn back, and join the remnant of this
nation... they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a scourge on your sides, and thorns in your eyes,
till you perish from off this good land.” (Joshua 23:2-13)

Methodologically, this dissertation attempts to reconstruct the inner logic of Eboussi’s
thought from topical writings, i.e., writings first intended to address specific and timed events. The
systematic presentation of the foundation, the process, the achievement and the implications of the
Christic Model are grasped essentially from reading Eboussi’s work and discussing this issue with
him. It presupposes, nevertheless, as an indispensable background a constant discussion with efforts
at African theologies of inculturation and liberation, as well as an inquiry into the second Temple
Judaism with historians and exegesis of the two Testaments. The final result is a synthetic
argumentative process rather than an analytic presentation.

Part One clears the ground on which Eboussi Boulaga’s reflection is rooted. The fundamental
problem upon which all the subsequent choices, theses and hypotheses of Eboussi depend, i.e., the
emergence of African consciousness of "self" and its implications for problems involved in paving
a new path to the problematic of God in Africa. Part Two logically follows as an exposition of
Eboussi’s reappropriation of Christianity for Africa. It also considers what the “Christic model”
entails for "God-talk" in Christianity. Part Three offers a critical appraisal of the Christic model by
extending the reflection triggered by Eboussi’s overall contribution to the various attempts of making
Christianity African. The Christic model paves the way for a transforming faithfulness which goes
beyond exclusivism in cults, rigorism in the practice of the law, and discrimination towards people
with other human and religious worldviews.
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This dissertation would hardly be readable in English without the patient and tedious correction of the manuscript by Pearl Simon, Michael Lapierre SJ and Jean-Marc Laporte SJ. I am greatly pleased with their contribution. I am solely responsible for any mistakes that remain. I would like to extend my deep gratitude to the staff of Regis College especially to Caroline Marshall, to my Jesuit companions of Arrupe House, to the parishioners of Sacré-Coeur, and to Jean-Marie Archambault SJ, Thérèse Laforest, Kono Damien SJ, and Clémentine Ngalula for their “labor of love”. Finally, I am particularly indebted to Marcellin, Thérèse, Anselme, Faustine, Bernadine, Antoine, Claude, Irène, Benoîte and Henriette. Their concern and constant encouragement through the unpredictable itinerary of their son and brother and his hardly expressed inner drive have more than once brightened this austere academic investigation.
A Note On Citations And Footnotes

Many citations of Eboussi's works appear in the footnotes in their original French version. This deliberate technical choice aims to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding due to the difficulty of properly translating Eboussi. More positively, we sought by giving the original to preserve his subtle usage and perfect mastery of the French language, and to focus the discussion on his own words. Finally, we intended, by placing most citations in footnotes to avoid interrupting the flow of the argumentation in the text.

The Footnotes are not merely references to sources. In many instances, they are ex-cursus, i.e. they are outside the normal course of the exposition or the argumentation, intended to explain or enlarge ideas suggested in the main text. Recourse to this procedure has shortened the length of the dissertation.

The translations of Eboussi are my responsibility, except where a definite source is given. The English translation of Christianisme sans fétiche by Robert R. Barr: Christianity Without Fetishes. An African Critique and Recapture of Christianity, New York: Orbis Books, 1984, is referred to under the abbreviation CWF. In discussion with Eboussi, we agreed that this translation has reinterpreted many passages and, as such, could not be relied on for scholarly discussion.
INTRODUCTION

The Coming of the Third Church\(^1\) in the landscape of the two thousand years old complex of Christian traditions has triggered waves of questions which have broadened and further complexified the scope of present-day theological inquiries. In effect, since echoes of the muffled voices of the poor in Latin America have been heard and amplified from within the small Christian communities, the trumpet of "liberation" has made its way into theology as a legitimate concern of the Church.\(^2\) But, more striking, and perhaps more challenging, is the recognition of the spiritual and religious values of non-Christian traditions of Asia and Africa following centuries of the Christian West's imperial rule over these continents. If "dialogue" has become the keynote of the confrontation with Asia, "inculturation" appears as the catchword in Africa's quest for the rehabilitation of its cultures. Indeed, since the 1957 manifesto of African and Haitian priests: Des Prêtres noirs s'interrogent\(^3\), tremendous efforts have been made in this prospect to reappropriate Christianity in Africa.\(^4\) It has even been commonly agreed that unless Christianity subsumes and permeates African cultures, i.e. unless Christianity is "inculturated" in Africa, it is doomed to die like the once flourishing Church of North Africa.

\(^1\) This is the suggestive title of the translation of Walbert Bühlman, Es kommt die dritte Kirche. Eine Analyse der kirchlichen Gegenwart und Zukunft. This English translation was edited by R. Woodhall and A.N. Other, revised and updated by the author (Slough: St Paul Publications, 1976). The "Third Church" is understood as "the Church of the south as distinct from the Churches of the east and west." (p. ix).

\(^2\) Cf. its echo in the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus.


Eboussi seems to be running against this current of thought. Indeed he has another view of the task of reappropriating Christianity in Africa. Our earnest attempt in this dissertation has been to systematically present and critically appraise his "Christic Model" as a creative and distinctive approach toward appropriating Christianity in Africa. Our implicit argument is that this approach recapitulates "inculturation" and offers a better critical horizon for a responsible encounter between Africa and Christianity. Before unfolding the process by which we intend to grasp the inner logic of Eboussi's reinterpretation of Christianity, we think it is important to indicate the scope of our argument. From the outset, and negatively expressed⁵, this dissertation is not about the "Historical Jesus"⁶, even though with Eboussi we will revisit the origin of Christianity with Jesus as the focal reference. Furthermore, this dissertation is not about "Judaism during the Second Temple" even though this period constitutes a crucial element in Eboussi's reflection. Finally, our focus here is not on the whole complex thought of Eboussi, - which includes a philosophical and a political dimension -, but essentially on the "Christic Model"⁷.

We endeavour to grasp systematically the foundation, the process, the achievement and the implications of the Christic Model as an attempt in which the data offered by the historians of the Second Temple and New Testament exegetes are reinterpreted reflexively so as to present the meaning of the "Christic phenomenon", from the standpoint of an African (Eboussi) eager to critically reappropriate his faith. The rationale which defines our method is an insight found in three remarks serving as signposts on the path of each of the three parts of this dissertation.

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⁷ The Christic Model is indeed the title of the second part of Christianisme sans fétiche, (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1981), pp. 87-156. [CWF, 85-161].
The first, from Martin Heidegger, states: "Still, the closer in time, the more nearly our contemporary a thinker is, the longer is the way to what he has thought, and the less may we shun this long way. Thus, too, we must still learn to read a book such as Nietsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra, in the same rigorous manner as one of Aristotle's treatises; the same manner, be it noted, not the identical manner. For there is no universal schema which could be applied mechanically to the interpretation of the writings of thinkers, or even to a single work of a single thinker."8 This remark inspires the first part of this dissertation as we explore the background of the Christic Model in search for foundational elements.

The second, from Marxsen reads: "In my opinion, the scholarship method does not mean commenting on all previous opinions or attesting one's wide reading through voluminous notes. The man who has read everything and can quote everything is not necessary a scholar. Scholarship means being able to grasp the essence of a problem and to present the material in logical form."9 This is precisely what we try to do in the second part of this dissertation as we present the Christic Model.

The third and last remark is Michel de Certeau's commentary: "Many dissertations which are said to be theological, one has to admit, are simply literary analyses of an author, and are only distinct from other literary studies by their 'religious' subject matter, - as if describing theological ideas comprised in a work is «doing theology»."10 As far as possible, the last part of our dissertation will follow this remark. It will be critical, more reflective than descriptive.

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So, in a sense, the "way" ahead is not paved by a well defined and tested "model". To grasp Eboussi's insight, we have deliberately taken the risk and responsibility of following our own "cognitional activity" in drawing from the literature available and in direct discussion with Eboussi what appears to be the essence of the problem he was grappling with. As already indicated, this dissertation consists of three parts.

**Part One** clears the ground on which Eboussi Boulaga's reflection is rooted. The fundamental problem upon which all the subsequent choices, theses and hypotheses of Eboussi depend, i.e. the emergence of African consciousness of "self", is presented in the first chapter. The second chapter tackles the methodological problems involved in paving a new path to the problematic of God in Africa. Here, the Western approaches as well as the African attempts are examined in theory and practice. The third and final chapter of this first part offers the horizon within which Eboussi envisions the future of Christianity in Africa.

**Part Two** logically follows as an exposition of Eboussi's reappropriation of Christianity for Africa. Chapter one elaborates the context of this reappropriation by showing that Eboussi's focus on Christ and Christianity prior to dogma is in fact a positive choice of Second Temple Judaism with its crises as a paradigm for Africa's situation. Chapter two sets forth Eboussi's formulation of

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11 As John Maquarrie has pointed out, in theology "the tendency nowadays is to talk of 'models' rather than 'analogues" (God-Talk, An Examination of the Language and Logic of Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 212). In any case, a model remains a theoretical construct paralleling a scientific "hypothesis", i.e. a controllable way put forward to understand or explain a "reality".

12 See, B. Lonergan, Insight, pp. xxi-xxii : "But what ultimately is the nature and ground of method but a reflective grasp and specialized application of the object of our inquiry, namely, of the dynamic structure immanent and recurrently operative in human cognitional activity?"

13 Once my thesis proposal was accepted, I travelled to Yaoundé (Cameroon) and met Eboussi on several occasions (January 5-20, 1995). We discussed my project and its outline. I had a unique opportunity to collect Eboussi's published and unpublished material and to established an initial bibliography. After I completed writing this dissertation, I flew back and discussed (June 29 to July 16, 1996) the final draft with him. I am indebted to him for many of his comments and clarifications.
the problems emerging from this context as a "problematic of universality", and scrutinizes the various attempts at a solution by the Jewish "groups" or "sects" of the Second Temple. Chapter three focusses on the Christic Model as the appropriate response which should inspire and renew Africans and the African Churches. Chapter four considers the implications of the Christic Model for "God-talk" in Christianity.

**Part Three** offers a critical appraisal of the Christic Model by extending the reflections triggered by Eboussi's overall contribution to the various attempts of making Christianity African. In this part, the first chapter takes up Eboussi's turn to the "subject" asserting itself. The second chapter explores the role of tradition (African and Christian) in this context. The third and final chapter revisits the Christ of the Christic Model.

Throughout the dissertation, the truth of Christianity in Africa will appear constantly and recurrently as that of the relation between human beings; a relation where no one, from whatever standpoint, can claim a God-given right to "reduce" others' views to one's own interpretation of "self", the "world" and "God". This drastic shift in emphasis has often suggested a "sharp rejection of much of the received message." ¹⁴ As a consequence, Eboussi's contribution has been sidetracked. We hope the following pages recover his insight and expound it in a way that offers and fosters a new responsible reappropriation of Christianity in Africa.

PART ONE

FOUNDATIONS
Ch.1. The Quest for Selfhood

Le surgissement d'un «nous-sujet» africain est le phénomène majeur de ce siècle en son second versant, du moins pour nous.

Eboussi Boulaga

Introduction

The question of the "identity" or the "humanity" of the African which has long haunted the Western "imagination" and which still triggers the African will of self-determination is the focal point of this chapter. Indeed, Eboussi's essential articulation of the Christian Mysteries unfolds

1 "Pour une catholicité africaine." in A Contretemps, pp. 67-68: "The emergence of a collective African subjectivity is the major event of the second half of this century, at least for us."


itself as a specific "form" of his many treatments of the same question of "self" or the "African Subject". Thus, the "Christic Model" is, in a way, the translation of his understanding of the "self" in the Christian doctrine and cult.

Any interpretation or critique of Eboussi's view has to measure up to this fundamental understanding. Three early articles will help us to grasp and present Eboussi's insight as it gradually evolves. With "L'Aventure ambiguë de Cheik Hamadou Kane, the question of identity is re-situated in its original matrix, i.e. the encounter with the West. Here, tragedy is rejected as the fatal outcome. Furthermore, *Le Bantou problématique* warns us against a quick and naive poetic reconciliation after the destabilisation of African society. In fact, it unequivocally sets the whole task of re-appropriation under "critical suspicion". More explorative, *L'Identité négro-africaine* indicates an understanding of the "subject" as ethically responsible for its historicity: this will appear as a decisive criterion in the relation of Africans to themselves, to the "world", to "others" and, to "God".

**A - Dramatic Encounter: beyond fate**

It should be made clear at the outset that Eboussi's concern with the question of "identity" does not start with, and is not directed toward, the "category of being" in the traditional, modern

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6 See, "Pour une catholicité" in *A Contretemps*, pp. 67-68.
and contemporary philosophical sense. It is not an a priori conceptual determination ("en-soi")
given in an "affirmation" or attained through "phenomenological" analysis. Moreover, Eboussi
does not envision the question of identity from the perspective of social and cultural anthropology
or ethnology. So, one should not look for an "essence" or, composite "characteristic traits" which
can be reconstituted from contrasting various ethnic groups. Such perspective can only lead to a
chimera.

The question of identity first arises in Eboussi's writings as the question raised by a "living
subject" who has witnessed the disintegration of his own "certitude", and who has experienced
his "worldview" as a vulnerable "particularity"; indeed, a particularity which was defeated and


8 See, Eboussi, "L'Identité Négro-africaine", pp. 3-5.

9 In La Crise du Muntu, he wrote not without irony: "Mais qu'est-ce que le negro-africain? une
sorte d'"homo africanus", un «type» qui, s'il est correctement établi, ne serait pas absurde en vue de la
recherche et de la méthode, comme une sorte de démon de Maxwell. Quand on l'hypostasie, on est dupe de
sa propre fiction et on disserte sur une chimère" (p. 32).

10 Cf. infra: Logic of self. For Eboussi, the "living subject" has the responsibility of the past, the
present and the future. The "subject" is definitively not determined by the past: see, Notes de synthèse, p. 4.

11 This refers to something more than a "particular philosophy or view of life", a "conception of the
world", or a "Weltanschaung", as defined by the Concise Oxford Dictionary, 8th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon
Press, 1990). Worldview here bears a formal a priori of absoluteness. It is precisely the encounter with
other "worldviews" which reveals that it is but a "particular" worldview.

12 The question of defeat has been recently reassessed. See: S.C. Anignikin, "Les Résistances
africaines à l'invasion européenne: le cas des peuples du Bénin" in Centenaire de la conférence de Berlin
pp. 299-310. If, in most cases, the arms struggle has failed, it seems that Africans have never totally
submitted themselves to the colonialists. This is said to have continued even today; see, A.J. Mbembe,
negated by another particularity claiming "universality". Eboussi singles out the problematic of identity as follows:

Can the African resign himself to surrender to the idea that his values have now demonstrated objectively their futility by their inability to oppose a successful resistance to the invader? Can he who has witnessed the collapse and the decomposition of his certitude, of what once has constituted the unchallenged substance of his life, find another one? Or is he condemned to the disenchanted skepticism of he who belongs to no culture, abandoning to the "Power of Things" the direction of history?

In spite of the abstract character of this early formulation, the question of identity is more about a "crisis" than an "essence". Indeed, the crisis reveals a particular history under judgment. It appears as a life-and-death decision vis-à-vis what once constituted the "unchallenged substance"

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14 The whole idea of "civilization" was used to specify the distinction between culture and people: "civilized" versus "primitive"/"savage". One owes to Hegel the systematization of the taxonomy: "particular" and "universal"; see, G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. The lectures of 1827; ed. Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 201-387. It is interesting to note that Hegel's classification of religions is coextensive to his understanding of the humanity of the people of these religions. According to Hegel, the "Negroes... with their still wild sense have not yet attained a universal rationality" (*op.cit.*, p. 233); they are still at this stage "where humanity has not yet emerged from its subjective particularity, not yet gone out into the separation of something universal in and for itself..." (*op. cit.*, p. 235).

15 "*L'Aventure ambiguë*, p. 211. See also, *Christianisme sans fétiche*, p. 8.

16 "La crise est jugement de l'histoire, décision qui la partage en un avant et un après. C'est à partir d'elle qu'elle s'ordonne, qu'elle devient compréhensible dans son passé." (*La Crise du Muntu*, p. 115).
of one's life. It is a question about the future of "things" which have fallen apart\(^{17}\); or, ultimately, about the "living subject" and what/who should determine the course of history. This is the matrix within which the question of identity emerged. It is also, for Eboussi, the matrix of its solution.\(^{18}\)

By grounding his reflection on identity in the encounter with the West, Eboussi does not primarily seek to confront and criticise the West. Throughout, his focus is on Africans and their responsibility\(^{19}\). The journey back into the heart of the dramatic encounter only intends to protect the quest of identity from a major pitfall, i.e becoming a formal reiteration of an "abstract" identity. So, with \textit{L'Aventure ambiguë de Cheikh Hamidou Kane}, the paradigm is set. Here, it is the spiritual leader of the People who is overwhelmed by uncertainty: he who was the guide into the path of absolute wisdom is unable to shed the light of Truth after the encounter with the West.\(^{20}\) The values he long "incarnates" and "represents" are in decline, unable to sustain the People any more.\(^{21}\) Even the Chief, the most representative symbol of the People is baffled. Worse, he has now

\[17\] Eboussi used the images of trade (bankruptcy) and decay: "Lui qui a vécu la faillite et la décomposition de sa certitude, de ce qui constituait la substance incontestée de sa vie, pourra-t-il en trouver une autre?" ("L'Aventure ambiguë", p. 211). Both images convey the idea of a termination of the life of a living organism.

\[18\] "Nous n'avons pas à choisir entre les termes d'une alternative, mais à porter haut notre charge d'hommes pour bâtir cette civilisation qui sera l'oeuvre de tous et de chacun... La tâche que l'histoire nous assigne, c'est l'homme concret méprisé dont la substance doit devenir partie vive de l'héritage humain." ("L'Aventure ambiguë", p. 213).

\[19\] The call for personal responsibility pervades all the writings of Eboussi. It is the only compelling ethical demand which Eboussi advocates for the African as a "living subject". See, \textit{A Contretemps}, p. 258: "Quand il est fait mention des «autres», il s'agit toujours d'en venir à «ce qui dépend de nous»: assumer notre tâche d'homme... Voilà pourquoi en ces textes, on ne règle ses comptes qu'avec soi-même, ou plutôt avec... sa propre peur de la liberté risquée, le recours aux alibis et aux victimes émissaires."

\[20\] "Le Maître, le plus pur joyau de la sagesse traditionnelle pétrie de l'Islam et informé par lui. Familiar des cimes, il n'en tâtonne pas moins, comme les autres, au milieu des événements, sans parvenir à en déchiffrer le sens; il se fraie un chemin parmi eux dans l'incertitude, lui le guide." ("L'Aventure ambiguë", p. 208).

\[21\] "Il éprouve comme l'inutilité de son combat pour Dieu. Le déclin de sa vie est aussi celui des valeurs dont il était le défenseur." ("L'Aventure ambiguë", p. 208).
become the obstacle that everyone tries to avoid, he who was the central figure and the point of "reference".  

The quest of identity begins when "things fall apart". It springs from within, in a face to face struggle with oneself, as one clearly perceives that one can no longer continue to hold on to one's "old" particularity without a major change. In locating the question of identity within the encounter with the West, Eboussi deliberately aims at two fundamental issues. Firstly, the situation of "crisis" calls for a "new beginning". The crisis reveals that one can no more carry on, not even by means of recombination, what has been disqualified. What is needed is a "higher form" which indeed totally "transforms" the previous system. Secondly, the situation of crisis calls for a "decision". The latter implies full responsibility. For Eboussi, there is no alternative: Africans are responsible for their situation in that it is theirs.

Speaking of Africans being responsible for their situation does not entail a short memory of the historical resistance against Western domination. It fundamentally implies that the "exercise

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22 "Le Chef était la montagne, le repère, le recours dont la présence rassure: «Si le repère bouge où vont les hommes? Maintenant qu'il ne s'identifie plus avec le pays, son immobilité devient un obstacle, autour duquel tout fuit et s'écroule... le Chef vit cet effritement de son autorité et de sa communauté." ("L'Aventure ambiguë", p. 208).


24 Eboussi frequently uses the term : "un autre commencement". The new beginning is often associated with the idea of "life" and "death"; life emerging from death.

25 See, Eboussi, Les Conférences Nationales, p.89: "une forme supérieure dont l'émergence bouleverse de fond en comble l'économie du système antérieur."

26 He writes: "Il n'y a que l'être libre qui est susceptible d'aliénation. Aussi, le Négro-Africain est-il responsable de son passé et de sa situation, non parce qu'il se les donne ou se les représente, mais parce qu'ils sont siens." ("L'identité négro-africaine", p. 11).

27 The early resistance to the European penetration was followed by a continuous and multifarious resistance during the colonial period, see L'Afrique noire française: l'heure des Indépendances, sous la direction de Ch.-R. Ageron et M. Michel (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1992). In Centenaire de la Conférence de Berlin (1884-1885), see: Sylvain C. Anignikin, "Les Résistances Africaines", pp. 299-310; also, the same book, Mohamed Said Samantar, "Les Conséquences de la Conférence de Berlin dans la Corne de l'Afrique
of decision" cannot be waived. The future is not predetermined in any way; the outcome of the crisis cannot be left to the care of fate as suggested by Cheikh Hamidou Kane. For Eboussi, life has to triumph here and now, vigorous enough to sustain and survive other crises; thus, his plea for the responsibility of a "free" subject within this world. In this sense, the crisis is foundational: it is a "Judgement of history" in this, that from African crisis the past becomes comprehensible and the future receives its measure. In effect, the crisis renders possible a new appreciation of the old constitutive narratives (myths) and so, opens the way to new narratives more in correlation with the present and future responsibility to assume, in thought and in action, one's situation.

B - Poetic Reconciliation

Already, in *L'aventure ambigüe de Cheikh Hamidou Kane*, Eboussi has rejected any predetermination of the future. His appeal to African responsibility within this world receives further elaboration in *Le Bantou problématique*. The latter is a severe critique of Father Placide

et la résistance du peuple somalien à la pénétration coloniale", pp. 313-328; and, Adam Ba Konare, "Les Grandes Figures de la Résistance au Mali (après la Conférence de Berlin de 1885)"), pp. 331-350.

28 Samba Diallo, the hero sent to the colonial school to learn "the art of conquering without being right", was killed upon his return because he abandoned his roots. Eboussi's judgement on this tragic end is instructive: " Aussi surprenante que cette affirmation puisse paraître au premier abord, nous sommes d'entrée de jeu dans le monde de la Fatalité, où l'ambiguïté humaine, si elle est perçue, ne peut être que tragique, parce qu'elle n'est pas et ne peut être assumée par une liberté agissante, visant l'absolu dans la position de soi par soi." ("L'Aventure ambigüe", p. 211).

29 What has been lacking in Cheikh Hamidou Kane's solution is: "une liberté médiatrice, rencontrant l'absolu dans la fragilité et l'incertitude de la situation, dans l'actualité de celle-ci, vérifiant par son opération les idéaux abstraits auxquels elle adhère." ("L'Aventure ambigüe", p. 212).

30 *La Crise du Muntu*, p. 115.

31 *La Crise du Muntu*, p. 116: "la crise a quelque chose de transhistorique, pour autant qu'elle est fondatrice... Elle est un mythe inaugural qui récupère le silence des origines en le rompant d'une bénace qui permet le jeu du récit, la démiurgie des mises en ordre."

32 The expression "poetic reconciliation" has been suggested by Eboussi's later characterization of some attempts to bridge African and Western cultures as, "synthèse verbale" (*La Crise du Muntu*, p. 73). *Synthèse verbale* is a disguised ideological discourse, i.e. a discourse which states what the discoursing subject is not living in order to hide what it is living.
Tempels' controversial "apology" of African intellectual and spiritual heritage, as expressed in Bantu Philosophy.

Eboussi perceives at the heart of Father Tempels' apology and rehabilitation effort one of the essential shifts of our century: "the recognition of humans by human beings, the beginning of the end of the barbaric era when the other was but a strange animal with a human face." However, in the lavish praises of the book by Africanists, in the frequent call upon Tempels' authority to counteract those who despise African culture, there is still a failure to notice the ambiguity and "bias" which it carries. Indeed, the many uses and misuses of his "theory" require a critical appraisal to dispel the persistence of the perception of the other as a "strange animal with a human face".

33 The word is understood here in the sense of apologia, a formal and reasoned defence of a position, i.e. via arguments and facts. In this case, the intellectual and cultural value of African thought.


35 "Le Bantou problématique", p. 5: "... nous discernons l'enjeu majeur de notre temps: la reconnaissance efficace de l'homme par l'homme, le commencement de la fin des temps barbares où l'autre était nécessairement un animal étrange à face humaine, un ennemi au lieu d'un partenaire pour la même aventure." No doubt, this is what makes Tempels' endeavour very compelling for many Africans and Africanists and, interesting for Eboussi.

36 See, Présence Africaine 7 (1949) 252-278. Well known names like Gaston Bachelard, Albert Camus, Marcel Griaule, Gabriel Marcel, hailed their praises. Our purpose at this point is not to discuss Tempels' work. Neither are we going to discuss the fairness of Eboussi's critique; for this, see J. Fabian, "Placide Tempels et son oeuvre vus dans une perspective historique" in Philosophie africaine. Textes choisis II, ed. A.J. Smet (Kinshasa: Press Universitaire du Zaïre, 1975), pp. 383-409. Our task is to grasp, through Eboussi's critique of Tempels' views, his fundamental concerns and their formulation.

37 See, "Le Bantou problématique", pp. 5-6; 22. For those who have no sense of history, this may sound like an overstatement. But one is overwhelmed and puzzled by the doubt that hangs over the "humanity" of the African through centuries. In Christianity, "blackness" has acquired a spiritual and theological connotation of its own; see, F. de Medeiros, L'Occident et l'Afrique, especially Chapter IX, "La Thématique Chrétienne de l'Aethiops", pp. 227-266. There has been a shift from symbolic to ethical considerations and, finally to ontological considerations. In effect, there were few steps in going from the contrast of "black" and "white" as symbols of light and darkness to the ideas of impurity and "purity"; and then, to the notions of "evil" and "good". During Vatican I, a motion was introduced to deal with the malediction of the sons of Ham; see, "Postulatum pro Nigri Africae Centralis Sacro Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano" in Acta et Decreta Conciliorum Recentiorum, Collectio Lacentis, t.VII. (Fribourg-en-Brisgau:
According to Eboussi, the means and the ways used by Tempels to rehabilitate Africans 1) cast doubt on their ability to reflect\textsuperscript{38}, 2) predetermined what they are and should be\textsuperscript{39} and, 3) denied them ultimate responsibility as subjects\textsuperscript{40}. The critiques voiced by Eboussi do not however intend to be either "a judgment of an intention or of a person."\textsuperscript{41} No doubt, Tempels was moving against the status quo with his attempt to prove that Africans possess their own specific philosophy, an ontology whose central concept is "vital force": "La force c'est l'être, l'être est la force"\textsuperscript{42}. Paradoxically, by asserting that Africans themselves cannot bring to language and formally express this philosophy and by subsequently entrusting the responsibility of examining, appreciating and judging to the "West", Tempels was far from dispelling the idea that "Africans have not gone beyond the pre-conceptual stage"\textsuperscript{43}. Worse, what taints Tempels' project and renders it unacceptable for Eboussi is his subordination of the ethical demand to the ontology of "force":

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\textsuperscript{38} See, "Le Bantou problématique", p. 9.

\textsuperscript{39} See, "Le Bantou problématique", pp. 38-39; also, 23-24; 31-34.

\textsuperscript{40} See, "Le Bantou problématique", pp. 18-19; 21.

\textsuperscript{41} "Non un procès d'intention, ni celui d'une personne." ("Le Bantou problématique", p. 21). Johannes Fabian in "Placide Tempels et son œuvre vus dans une perspective historique" (Philosophie africaine, ed. A.J. Smet (Kinshasa: P.U.Z., 1975), pp. 383-409) has questioned Eboussi's critique of Tempels. According to Fabian, Eboussi overlooks the historical context within which the book was written. In an interview I had with Eboussi (17.01.95), Eboussi recognized the need to take into account the larger historical background of Tempels' work. But he remains adamant on maintaining the validity of the core of his critique.

\textsuperscript{42} P. Tempels, \textit{La Philosophie Bantoue}, p. 32.

\textsuperscript{43} See the Congress of Rome quoted in "Le Bantou problématique", p. 6. Hegel had already expressed this view in his Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion., pp. 229-235. Tempels himself wrote: "Nous ne prétendons certes pas que les Bantous soient à même de nous présenter un traité de philosophie, exposé dans un vocabulaire adéquat. C'est à nous qu'il appartient d'en faire le développement systématique. C'est nous qui pourrons leur dire d'une façon précise, quelle est leur conception intime des êtres..." (\textit{La Philosophie Bantoue}, pp. 20-21); and, further: "C'est à nous que revient la tâche d'en rechercher les éléments, de les classifier, de les systématiser suivant la pensée et les disciplines intellectuelles du civilisé... Nous avons la lourde responsabilité d'examiner, d'apprécier et de juger cette primitive philosophie..."(p.9).
What taints Tempel's project at its roots is the presupposition of an ontology found upon behaviour, upon customs, not as symbols of human language but as something that "is there", observable. Such a presupposition suppresses the human "act", not only in the culture but in the ethical realm.44

What Eboussi seems to reject in this attempt, and any attempt of this sort, is its ultimate denial to Africans of the ethical demand of responsibility. This quick rehabilitation of African culture and thought still treats Africans as an "object of discourse" and not yet as a "subject of discourse"45. The fascinating power of the cultural argument put forth by Tempels is certainly understandable in a context where African traditional cultures were theoretically and practically treated as "inferior", "uncivilized" or "barbaric".46 But when the proclaimed "vital force" left no room for "human responsibility"47 in the life of Africans, then the violence at work during the early repudiation of these traditions continues to be exercised48. So, in spite of his goodwill, Tempels has kept Africans outside the "human species"49.

44 "Le Bantou problématique", p. 18. In this perspective, "les primitifs ne connaîtraient pas l'obligation morale: ils ne tâcheraient qu'à se conformer à la hiérarchie des êtres, recherchant ce qui est, mais non ce qui doit être." (ibid.)

45 "Le Bantou problématique", p. 21.


47 "Le Bantou problématique", p. 19.

48 "Le Bantou problématique", p. 18. : "La force est refus de discours, elle est muette et brutale, elle n'articule rien." By denying the African the possibility of being a "subject of discourse", Tempels condones the "violence of interpretation" which led to the doubt over the humanity of the African.

49 "Le Bantou problématique", p. 29: "Le Bantou se situe en deçà de la raison, il se nourrit de fantasmes. Que ceux-ci forment système, comment les appeler pensées? Tempels lui aussi rejette «ses» malheureux Bantous «de la classe des hommes», malgré ses bonnes intentions déclarées."
Eboussi's severe and uncompromising judgement can only be understood in the light of what he wants to safeguard: the "living subject" and its "historicity"\textsuperscript{50}. In this line, the concluding paragraph of *Le Bantou problématique* clearly hints at his own perspective:

For, after all, from whom could we expect our "being", if not from ourselves. shaping ourselves in the uncompromising rigour of the present? Contemporary with everyone, rooted right in the heart of our time, we have been there, always, working to build anew the fraternal city of human beings.\textsuperscript{51}

Awareness of the original matrix of the crisis of identity and the present inequality in the relations between Africa and the West seem to have forced Eboussi to be suspicious of the "verbal synthesis" of Tempels. He has later qualified such a poetic reconciliation as "insupportable esthétisme"\textsuperscript{52}. The future lies in a deliberate decision of becoming the "agent" of one's own existence in this world. This can rightly be done only from a critical stance. In a way, poetic reconciliation is just a moment in the process of re-appropriation: a "fabulous moment" with a "mythical" flavour.\textsuperscript{53} The critical moment has to follow.\textsuperscript{54}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{50} "*Le Bantou problématique*," p. 34: "C'est parce que Tempels refuse toute historicité au Bantou, qu'il accable l'évolué, qu'il ne mesure pas le rôle déterminant que joue le Blanc dans la désagrégation des sociétés noires, qu'il n'en pressent pas non plus la restructuration." See also, *ibid.*, p. 38.

\textsuperscript{51} "*Le Bantou problématique*," p. 40: "Car, enfin, de qui pouvions-nous attendre «l'être», sinon de nous-même, nous faisant, dans la rigueur sans concession du présent? Contemporains de tous, plantés droits au coeur de notre temps, nous étions là, depuis toujours, à pied d'œuvre pour bâtir à neuf la cité fraternelle des hommes."

\textsuperscript{52} *La Crise du Muntu*, p. 78.

\textsuperscript{53} See, *La Crise du Muntu*, p. 116: "Le mythe de la crise est le premier langage d'appropriation et d'élaboration des exigences du désir, le premier qui définit le champ de l'action et de la pensée requises pour un nouveau mode d'existence dans la pleine conscience des antinomies de la continuité et de la discontinuité, de l'identité et de la non-identité, du sacré et de l'historique."

\textsuperscript{54} See, *La Crise du Muntu*, p. 116: "La critique est le passage de la poésie à un autre langage plus sobre, plus soumis en ses rêves aux procédures définies de vérification et de contrôle."
C - The Logic of Self: a pragmatic re-appropriation

The tone set in the concluding remarks of Le Bantu problématique is maintained and the modulation further refined in L'Identité négro-africaine. Here Eboussi sketches his view on a systematic approach to the question of African "identity". It is summarized in the following sentence:

If the "identity" of Black-African is that of a subject and not of an object, it is that of a being who determines himself to be by re-appropriating as his own what he has discovered, by establishing aims in order to fulfill himself.

For Eboussi there is a premiss which needs to be clearly stated in order to avoid misunderstanding: the "identity" in question is that of a "subject" and not that of an "object", i.e. a dead reality incapable of will and desire. This premiss bears the promise of a new beginning. In effect, by positing the question of identity on the horizon of the "subject", Eboussi gives primacy to the acts of responsibility by which the subject determines itself. The African subject is a "faciendum". This emphasis on the subject is not merely a swing to the "modern" tune. It is a logical stand based on a pragmatic viewpoint. Indeed, if the African crisis of identity springs from the encounter with the West as the experience of the negation of "the unchallenged substance of

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55 Pragmatic does not entail a flight from theoretical elaboration. Rather, pragmatic suggests the rootedness of the re-appropriation into a historical context and the subsequent determination of the "will" to transform the situation. Pragmatic re-appropriation has to do with "strategy".

56 See note # 51.

57 "L'Identité négro-africaine", p. 3: "Si l'identité du négro-africain est celle d'un sujet et non celle d'un objet, elle est celle d'un être qui se détermine lui-même à exister, en reprenant comme lui appartenant en propre ce qu'il a trouvé, en se donnant des fins pour s'accomplir."

58 "Modernity" has been variously characterized. The return to the subject is most probably one of its determining features. I. Kant is in my view the best representative of the modern mind.
one's life", then any re-appropriation of "self" should start with the re-appropriation of the initiative of determining one's future through acts of responsibility, i.e. through becoming "subject". By taking the subject as the basis of his understanding, Eboussi dismisses the idea of a "permanent substratum".  

The shift to the subject, or more precisely, to the African as a "living subject" brings to the forefront a human being with a distinct "will" and "desire", who acts in the world to achieve a goal. Initiative and responsibility in the present historical context for subsuming and transforming one's condition, one's "facticity" into a destiny are now the constant invariable elements in the equation of "identity". The past is not simply discarded; it becomes an integral part of the memory (to be kept alive) of what had contributed or had rendered possible the historical treatment of the African as object, that is, "being a means in regard to other things or other people, being integrated into someone else's project as raw material and ingredient."  

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59 See, "L'Identité négro-africaine", p. 3. He wrote in La Crise du Muntu: "... la volonté de raison est volonté d'autonomie et de libération de l'homme de tous les destins, même culturels". (p. 78).  

60 "L'Identité négro-africaine", p. 5. In Christianisme sans fétiche, he wrote: "Ici, on ne reconstitue pas un fossile, on a affaire à quelque chose de vivant, qui réagit, se mobilise et crée des anticorps pour repousser l'agression extérieure" (p. 79).  

61 See, La Crise du Muntu, p. 115: "Ici, l'on voit comment la volonté de fonder un nouvel ordre, de créer sa propre société et sa propre histoire doit se doter d'une praxis adéquate à ce projet et donc de forger une instance de contrôle et de vérification rationnelle."  

62 Here is a contrasting picture of the African understood as "subject" or "object" : "L'absence de sujet vivant fait qu'il s'agit toujours d'un discours sur le négro-africain, c'est-à-dire en tant qu'il est object, et non d'un discours du négro-africain, en tant qu'il se veut, se projette, se fait, au présent. On affirme de lui ce qu'il a de moins humain: on ne dit que ses conditionnements, sa facticité et non l'acte de les déterminer, et non ce qu'il en fait en les inscrivant dans une destinée, dans une temporalité et une présence à soi..." ("L'Identité négro-africaine", pp. 5-6.).  

63 "Celui dont la «certitude» a été ébranlée et subjuguée, ne serait-ce qu'un instant, la sait mortelle. Il ne peut éviter la question axiologique la concernant, celle de la justification eventuelle d'en effectuer la reprise, pour en vivre." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 79).  

64 "Etre le moyen d'autre chose ou d'autres hommes, d'être intégré dans le projet d'autrui au titre de matière première et d'ingrédient." ("L'Identité négro-africaine", p. 10).
The deliberate orientation of the question of identity in the dynamic of a "relation", the relation with the West, sets the quest of self in a historical context where physical as well as hermeneutical violence are at play. But, even within this context, the focus remains entirely on Africans and their responsibility. In this, Eboussi offers a distinctive approach to the problem of Identity. One may wonder if such a trend does not lead to an exaltation of one's particularity, and promote a kind of autarchic mind? The objection has been somehow anticipated: the universal is "in the making".

Nothing is given except what we give ourselves. But what we give ourselves is properly human only if it can become part of the common heritage of the many traditions of the world and be assumed by anyone. The "universal" is a "particular" in a position to be shared by anyone as part of human heritage without a predetermined user guide. Eboussi is very much aware that the world is not a big market where civilizations barter in an equal exchange, that is precisely why Africans cannot evade work on their own particularity. They have to assume in a responsible way their historicity.

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65 "Il faut se garder de réduire la violence à la contrainte physique et à la brutalité permanente. Elle fonde un ordre et s'institutionnalise, elle est une relation humaine" ("L'Identité négro-africaine", p. 11).

66 See, "L'Identité négro-africaine", p. 17: "On s'autorise souvent de la nécessité de l'universalité ou de la fatalité d'une universalisation de fait pour esquiver le travail sur sa particularité. Une telle position oublie seulement que l'identité négro-africaine se constitue de part en part en confrontation avec le problème de l'universel... L'universel est à faire."


68 "Y a-t-il harmonie préétablie entre les cultures? Le monde est-il bien ce lieu innocent du donner et du recevoir? Il ne semble pas. Il y a échange inégal, détérioration continue des termes de l'échange..." ("L'Identité négro-africaine", p. 13.).
As it appears, Eboussi did not offer a formal "definition" of identity. He did not even describe it. He did however offer a horizon within which the question of identity evolves as the African's ability to relate responsibly to the world through a "project". The project is but one's assumption of the determinations of his/her situation and one's deliberate orientation of his/her will and actions toward a chosen goal; it is another name for the "making of self". What is offered then is a vision of the African subject: a living being who bears the will to determine the future through choices and deeds. This living subject who has to assume his responsibility in this world is altogether an "individual" and a "mortal":

It is the demand of consistency which has our elaboration hung on the enigma of individuality and death, that paradigm of any crisis and its ambiguity: any practical or dialectical success is thereby stamped by uncertainty, if not derision.69

How does this understanding of identity relate to our initial and fundamental concern, i.e. Eboussi's re-appropriation of Christianity in Africa? At this stage of our dissertation, his work: L'Africain chrétien à la recherche de son identité70 offers a concise answer to this question:

We have to measure up the extent of this transformation which advocates a type of individual of a worrisome novelty, which the past in no way determines, even though it still conditions him. Continuity is no longer based on representations of life, schemes of

69 La Crise du Muntu, p. 9: "C'est l'exigence de rigueur qui impose de suspendre notre construction à l'énième de l'individualité et de la mort, ce paradigme de toute crise avec son ambiguïté: tout triomphe pratique ou dialectique en est frappé d'incertitude, sinon de dérision."

action, loyalty to tribal traditions. There is nothing to copy, to reproduce. It is a question of a new beginning, the creation of new human relations, the invention of new ways of living, the shaping of new cultures.\textsuperscript{71}

Such is the African engaged in the process of reappropriation of Christianity, the subject who will submit the "Gospel" and the Christian understanding of God to fundamental reexamination.\textsuperscript{72} The "new beginning" which this African embodies forces Christianity to enter into the "dynamic"\textsuperscript{73} of the new creation which implies "the will to emancipate oneself, the will not to live by proxy, and the will to «do truth» at one's own risk"\textsuperscript{74}. In this perspective, Christianity is perceived in its historical dimension with its many denominations and its internal struggles.\textsuperscript{75} More significantly, it is perceived in a context, i.e. in the situation of Africans creating new meaning.\textsuperscript{76} Toward this end, faith can no longer be a "lifeless" common reference because common reference

\textsuperscript{71} "L'Africain chrétien", p. 42; \textit{A Contretemps}, p. 47: "Il faut prendre la mesure de cette mutation qui promeut un personnage d'une inquiétante nouveauté, que le passé ne détermine pas tout, même s'il le conditionne encore. La continuité n'est plus celle des représentations de la vie, des schémes d'action, des fidélités à des traditions tribales. Il n'y a rien à recopier, à reproduire. Il s'agit d'un autre commencement, de créer de nouveaux rapports humains, de nouveaux modes de vie, de nouvelles cultures." For the English translation, see: \textit{The Churches of Africa}, p. 28. The present translation is mine.

\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Christianisme sans fétiche}, p. 19: "Nous ne pouvions exempter de l'examen ni l'«évangile», ni la conception de Dieu, sous peine d'entériner et de reconduire aussitôt la certitude et la prétention de l'universel qui font corps avec les discours et les pratiques, les institutions et les modes de vie d'une civilisation impérialiste."

\textsuperscript{73} "Nous avions donc à exiger du christianisme qui nous sollicitait qu'il entrât dans la trame en mouvement de notre liberté la plus concrète, et prit la forme du «pouvoir africain», de son autodétermination retrouvée et rectifiée" (\textit{Christianisme sans fétiche}, p. 19).

\textsuperscript{74} "L'Africain chrétien", p. 43.

\textsuperscript{75} "L'Africain a une autre perception du christianisme: il le voit dans la dimension de l'histoire, dans son déploiement temporel et spatial, avec ses variations, sa diversité, ses éclats, ses luttes intestines." ("L'Africain chrétien", p. 42).

\textsuperscript{76} Cf. "L'Africain chrétien", p. 43.
to a creed, to Christ has not prevented the inhuman treatment of others.\textsuperscript{77} It follows that "scripture", "traditions", "dogma" and "the books of the Reformers" will not be viewed as depositories of "frozen" meaning.\textsuperscript{78} They are not to be abandoned or rejected; they have to be re-appropriated.\textsuperscript{79}

As it may already appear, the ground in which Eboussi's thought is being rooted is rich with potential challenges. The advent of the African in his "worrisome novelty"\textsuperscript{80} augurs a radical reappraisal of Christianity in its "content" and in the methodological process by which it is understood. Truth is to be attained by Africans here and now.\textsuperscript{81} The new metaphor is that of the "paschal mystery": the necessity of dying in order to rise to a new life\textsuperscript{82}: "elsewhere and further."\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{77} "La possession captatrice d'un credo, des mêmes articles, l'adhésion aux mêmes formules, à l'unique «salut» qui vient de la foi seule, de la seule grâce et du seul Christ n'ont pas abattu le mur de séparation et l'opposition entre l'homme et la femme, l'esclave et l'homme libre, le croyant et le païen. Elles n'ont pas empêché l'esclavage, la discrimination raciale et économique, les débordements de la concupiscence des yeux, de la chair et la présomption de l'esprit." ("L'Africain chrétien", p. 46.).

\textsuperscript{78} See, "L'Africain chrétien", p. 46.

\textsuperscript{79} See, "Pour une catholicité africaine", in A Contretemps, p. 67: "La lettre qui tue par sa positivité massive et inerte n'est autre que celle qui a véhiculé l'Esprit, celui qui a parlé par les prophètes et donne vie. Elle le voile pour ceux qui ne la reprennent pas en intériorité pour y découvrir le principe de leur existence et de leur liberté en leur nouveauté sans précédence."

\textsuperscript{80} Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 24: "l'avènement de l'Africain dans son inquiétante nouveauté."

\textsuperscript{81} "La vérité est à faire par lui, ici et maintenant; il ne peut la faire pour autrui et nul ne peut se mettre à sa place" ("L'Africain chrétien", p. 47).

\textsuperscript{82} "Le syncrétisme est le destin de toute vérité qui se conçoit comme contenu, un dépôt localisable, de tout ce qui refuse la nécessité pascal de mourir pour ressusciter et se contente de «synthèses», de «greffes», de «métissages» et de «symbiose» illusoires. L'on voit pourquoi l'Africain est appelé à laisser les morts enterrer leurs morts: pour toi, viens et suis-moi, sur les chemins que toi-même te frayeras, en subissant sans vaciller le choc du futur, celui du Dieu-qui-vient" ("L'Africain chrétien", pp. 46-47). It should be noted that there are today many attempts to salvage the idea of "syncretism"; see: Dialogue and Syncretism: An Interdisciplinary Approach, ed. J. Gort & als. (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1989); Carl Starkloff, "The Problem of Syncretism in the Search for Inculturation" Mission 1 (1994) 75-94. Eboussi is not dealing with this issue.

\textsuperscript{83} "Ailleurs et plus loin" ("L'Africain chrétien", p. 48).
Ch. 2. Revisiting the Paths to God in Africa

Introduction

Having made clear the premiss upon which Eboussi's re-appropriation of Christianity is based by specifying the encounter with the West as its original matrix, we now proceed further with the methodological questions involved in making the "new beginning". Through Eboussi's rigorous scrutiny of most of the prominent approaches to the question of God in Africa we are to discern what new and unpaved path he is suggesting for Africa.

The key to Eboussi's methodological orientation is given in L'Enjeu de Dieu en Afrique\(^1\). This article deals with six of the major "scientific" and most recommended approaches\(^2\) to the question of God\(^3\) in Africa. However, instead of presenting and analyzing each of these methodological trends\(^4\), our task will be to understand Eboussi's core criticism of each of them. This should enable us to focus on what is essential and to grasp what is at stake for Eboussi: the


\(^2\) The lexical approach; three phenomenological approaches (cosmological orientation, psychological orientation and transcendental orientation); the functionalist approach and the structuralist approach.

\(^3\) The question of "God" in Africa has interested two distinctive groups: the anthropologists and the missionaries. In recent years, Africans interested in the question have essentially been priests or men and women in religious communities, using almost exclusively the methods set up by anthropologists.

\(^4\) Our goal in this chapter as well as in this dissertation is Eboussi's understanding. So, none of the methods or approaches under scrutiny are taken in themselves but they are viewed from Eboussi's perspective. Our focus should not move away from our initial goal.
question of "mediation" at the crossroads of the relation between God and the human being. Accordingly, the six approaches will be reduced to two, corresponding to the role assigned or denied to "mediation".

A - Lexical and Phenomenological Approaches:

Cultural Mediation Underplayed

Truly, the lexical approach to the question of God in Africa is but a comparative religion approach with a special emphasis on "words". In the African context, the lexical approach has consisted in the collection and categorization of various names and attributes of God from hundreds of ethnic groups. The typical expression of this trend is John Mbiti's pioneer work: \textit{Concepts of God in Africa}. As the title suggests, the primal and essential focus is on the "concepts".

According to Eboussi, this way of proceeding simply ignores the "context" within which the names and attributes of God are meaningful. What is lacking is what can be called: "le procès 

\footnote{1} We should keep in mind the foundational question as it is put forward in the first chapter. Relation or relationship has become the core question; mediation is one of its expressions.

\footnote{2} In "La Sémantique de Dieu chez les Beti" (cf. \textit{Dieu en Afrique}, p. 57), Eboussi named this approach "étymologie spéculative" (speculative etymology) or better, "étymologie théologique" (theological etymology).

\footnote{3} I am indebted to Jonathan Z. Smith, \textit{Drudgery Divine. On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), for the critical knowledge of the problems involved in "comparative religion".


\footnote{5} A typical example is the following presentation of God as omnipresent: "The Bena believe that God is everywhere at once"; and the same concept comes out in the Bamum name for God which means "he who is everywhere". The Banyarwanda express the same belief when they speak of him as "God who is met everywhere". With almost identical words, the Kono say that God is "the One you meet everywhere" (J. Mbiti, \textit{Concepts of God}, p. 5). Now, one should note that the Bena are from Tanzania (East Africa), the Bamum from Cameroon (at the fringe of West and Central Africa), the Banyarwanda from Rwanda.
de nomination", that is, the process by which "God" and his attributes come to signify a specific relation within a distinct context.\textsuperscript{10} In effect, for Eboussi,

The content of the word "God" can only be given when it is reinserted in a particular "religion" as a language game, within the internal structure of a totality whose elements mutually define one another and which, in turn, are defined in relation to the global social system.\textsuperscript{11}

When the African concepts of God are taken in themselves, i.e. out of their own immediate context, and boxed in Western and Christian categories\textsuperscript{12}, the "mediative" power of the "language game" and that of the "global social system" are underplayed. On "comparing concepts"\textsuperscript{13} taken out of context, what is concealed behind the claim of "identity" and "universality" is the apology of African religions which were long looked upon as "magical", and "un-godly".\textsuperscript{14}

(Central Africa), and the Kono from Sierra Leone (West Africa).

\textsuperscript{10} See, Eboussi Boulaga, "La Sémantique de Dieu chez les Beti" in Dieu en Afrique, pp. 56-58.

\textsuperscript{11} "L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 158: "Le contenu de mot «Dieu» ne s'obtient qu'en le restituant dans une «religion» donnée mais abordée comme un jeu de langage, dans la structuration interne à un ensemble dont les éléments se définissent les uns par rapport aux autres et qui se définit lui-même par rapport au système de la société globale."

\textsuperscript{12} It is sufficient to have a glance at the table of contents of Mbti's Concepts of God to realize what has been done: Part I: The Nature of God - 1. The Intrinsic Attributes of God (omniscience, omnipresence...) 2. The Eternal Attribute of God (self-existence, pre-eminence and greatness...) 3. The Moral Attributes of God. Part II: The Active Attributes of God - 4. God as Creator 5. The Providence and Sustenance of God 6. The Governing Work of God as King, Lord, and Judge etc.

\textsuperscript{13} For a critical review of such a comparative task, see J.Z. Smith, Drudgery Divine, pp. 54-84. According to Smith, "the issue of comparing words... has never been primarily a philological issue, but always an apologetic one" (p. 83). Smith, a Jewish scholar, tries to track an apologetical project concealed in the attempts by Christian scholars to prove the "uniqueness" of Christianity vis-à-vis the pagan religions of Late Antiquity. Eboussi tracks an apologetical project concealed in J. Mbti's attempt to prove the "universality" of the concept of God.

\textsuperscript{14} "Le résultat d'un si grand labeur n'est-il pas maigre et décevant? Non, il est hautement significatif, prouvant que l'Africain est un homme comme les autres, qu'en religion les peuples africains ne sont pas analphabètes." ("L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 156).
The various names of God, the wealth of meaning which can be gained from their etymological components, the many meanings of the attributes found in each group studied, certainly offer an insight into the question of God. But in the process, the lexical approach bypassed the socio-cultural reality and, inevitably ended up with an abstract consideration: God, everywhere, always appears as the "Supreme" being. He is "Omniscient", "Omnipotent", "Infinite", "Good", "Just" and "Holy" with regard to his intrinsic attributes; and, he is the "Creator" of everything that exists. Ultimately, a basic presupposition underlies this methodological trend: the concept of God is but a name of one and the same "Reality" which is referred to differently by the groups studied. Now, the starting point is not the reality of God in an African context, but a certain understanding of God of the Christian West. Therefore, according to Eboussi, there is a major misunderstanding: a confusion about the "object" of the quest and the "means" of the quest.

If the lexical approach confuses the "means" of the quest with its "object", the phenomenological approaches seem to offer some clarity. In the latter case, the context receives priority because "description" is important since it focusses on a "specific" manifestation, i.e. a "phenomenon". However, description is not an end in itself; it is a way to the "essence" of the

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15 See, A Contretemps, pp. 155-156.

16 "Il s'ensuit une double méconnaissance de ce avec quoi on cherche et de ce qu'on cherche." ("L'Enjeu de Dieu", p. 157.).

17 Since Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1973), especially pp. 3-30, has popularized Gilbert Ryle's idea of "thick description", the phenomenological description can be best presented as a gigantic but meticulous venture in "search of meaning", "right down at the factual base, the hard rock, insofar as there is any, of the whole enterprise" of "establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary, and so on." (see, Geertz, The Interpretation, pp. 5-9).

phenomenon, i.e. its "meaning". So, when the phenomenological approach takes the "cosmos" as the horizon of its understanding of the question of God, God or the sacred appears as a distinct "reality", i.e. not a human construct, mirrored in the various cosmological entities through "hierophanies". The "visible" simply expresses the "invisible". When the human psyche becomes the ground of phenomenological exploration, what ultimately appeared to be essential is only the "psychic process": God or the sacred is an "archetypal" expression of some constitutive and primordial "images" of human "aboriginal" experience. As to the transcendental perspective in the phenomenological approach, meaning is manifested in consciousness as an expression of religious intentionality. God or the sacred is perceived as the "schema" or "structure" of the consciousness as it signifies itself through what is intended.

What is common to all these phenomenological approaches and is the subject matter of Eboussi's criticism is their treatment of God as a "positive" reality, i.e. an absolutely (not relatively) distinct entity in itself. Nature (cosmos), human psyche and the intentionality of consciousness, in the final analysis at least, are sacraments of God. The initial specific context of the

have ignored Hegel's problematic to renew with Kant; but, with the addition that "essential form" (eidos) can be attained.

19 See, G. Van der Leeuw's perspective; cf. Eboussi, A Contretemps, p. 159.


21 Cf. C.G. Jung's perspective.

22 "Dans la religion, ce qu'il faut chercher à voir, c'est cette activité spontanée et autonome de la psyché, c'est-à-dire de l'inconscient, antérieure à toute pensée dirigée et contrôlée." ("L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 160).

23 "L'ordre qu'ils [les phénomènes religieux] signifient serait celui de la conscience comme pure constitution se saisissant ou se présupposant, mieux, se signifiant à travers et par ces phénomènes" ("L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 161).

24 Eboussi uses the word "sacramentelles" to signify this role: "La phénoménologie se déploie de la cosmologie à la psychologie collective et individuelle. Elle présente d'abord le sacré comme une positivité
phomenological analysis seems, paradoxically, to play an insignificant role in the constitution of the understanding of God. For Eboussi, just as there are no "hierophanies" "in themselves," there are no "archetypes" "in themselves." The transcendental illusion has consisted in reducing the historical process into a "schema" of the intentionality of consciousness. Ultimately, what Eboussi is rejecting in these trends is the lack of serious consideration given to the role of "mediation" in the constitution of the meaning of "God". What then is at stake?

Each time, the question to be answered concretely is: how that which is different from a human being enters into relationship with him, is experienced by him, transforms him and characterizes him? How is what is external internalized?

It is the process by which we come to know God and relate to him that is now put in the forefront, in the quest for God. Eboussi suggests that culture should be given due consideration here. In effect, for him, "culture shows" that what has been externalized is not pure individualist "interiority", but the inner historical and cultural (dimension) corresponding to the means of de données extérieures, néanmoins «sacramentelles» par lesquelles des forces surnaturelles ou divines parviennent à l'homme sans médiation d'aucune sorte... On passe de là a une subjectivité commune et inconsciente qui est aussi une positivité profonde de l'altérité du sacré. L'âme est une donnée sacrée, en elle-même." (A Contretemps, p. 163)

25 See, "L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 163: "Il n'y a pas de symboles ni de hiérophanies en soi. Ils n'apparaissent signifiants que par l'intermédiaire d'une structure sociale, d'une totalité à laquelle ceux qui les reconnaissent participent."

26 See, "L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 164: "Il faut donc dire que les cultures même primordiales ne révèlent pas des archétypes en soi. Ceux-ci s'inscrivent dans une expérience relationnelle constitutive."

27 See, "L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 165: "la phénoménologie réflexive" he wrote, "deterre des essences intemporelles, réduisant l'historique à la simple schématisation d'un esprit éternel et de ses visée pures."

28 "L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 164: "Il s'agit chaque fois de répondre concrètement à cette question: comment ce qui est différent de l'homme entre en rapport avec lui, est vécu par lui, le change et le situe? Comment l'extériorité est-elle intérieurisée?"
production, to the social organization: the cultural and religious expressions mediating the relation of one to the other."

So, in this perspective, religious expressions themselves serve as a mediation between social organisations and the means of production, as human beings strive to "master the «non-human» in order to live with it, to neutralize it or to reconcile it with themselves, within a (particular) cultural community." It is within this constitutive relational experience that God becomes meaningful for Eboussi.

"God", with his attributes, genies and other spiritual beings do not refer primarily to their ontological "nature", but to the processes and strategies of a relational experience of order and of differentiated beings.

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29 "L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 164: "La culture "montre" que ce qui est extérieurisé, ce n'est pas la pure intériorité individualiste, mais celle historique et culturelle qui correspond au mode de production, à l'organisation sociale: les expressions culturelles et religieuses fonctionnent comme la médiation de l'un à l'autre." Eboussi synthetizes here evidences from his courses on the history of religion given at the Faculty of Theology of Lyon-Fourvière (France) by Fr. Joseph Goetz; see, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 132, note # 1. I found only the following book of J. Goetz, L'Esperienza di Dio nei Primitivi (Napoli: Morcelliana, 1983). On the relation between "deity", "mode of production" and "social organization", see E.O. James, The Ancient Gods (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1960).

30 "L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 164: "maîtriser le non-humain, le vivre, le neutraliser ou se le concilier, au sein d'une communauté culturelle."

31 "L'enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, pp. 164-165: "«Dieu», avec ses attributs, les génies et d'autres êtres spirituels ne renvoient pas d'abord à leur «nature» ontologique, mais à des procédures et à des stratégies d'une expérience relationnelle d'ordres et d'êtres différenciés."
B - Functionalist and Structuralist Approaches:

Cultural Mediation Absolutized

The functionalist and the structuralist approaches to the question of God have been brought together because the critique voiced by Eboussi against them is fundamentally the same: cultural mediation becomes an end in itself. In this process, Eboussi thinks that initiative is simply denied to the "living subject", individual and group.

Very consistently, the functionalist and the structuralist approaches seriously take social interactions as the matrix where religious expressions first appear and, also, as the milieu within which God or the sacred becomes meaningful. If both give priority to society, the functionalist approach, according to Eboussi, distinctively contends that social structures bear an inner teleological intent. In effect, in the functionalist perspective, the different components of society are not randomly related: each contributes in a specific way to an overall finality which is internal to the system. God is part of the system of symbols which denotes values objectively desired as necessary to the maintenance and the fulfilment of social existence. He can only be understood from this dynamic:

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32 For a historical presentation of these approaches, see: Adam Kuper, Anthropologists and Anthropology. The British School 1922-1972 (London: Allen Lane, 1973); two names have to be mentioned here for their theoretical contributions to the functionalist approach: Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. For a typical structuralist approach, see: Lévi-Strauss, Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté (Paris-La Haye: Mouton, 1967).

33 "Avec les notions de besoin, de satisfaction, de fonction, elle [l'approche fonctionnaliste] introduit l'idée d'une sorte de télologie objective" inconsciente, celle d'une identité auto-centrée et auto-réglée qui obéit à des normes pour se maintenir dans l'être et le faire" ("L'Enjeu de Dieu" in Δ Contretemps, p. 166).
"God" will be understood from the way he brings about the process of legitimizing and guaranteeing the "system of finalities", the authority of institutions, the processes of integration, the resolution of conflicts, the reestablishment of (social) balance and the solution to crises.  

Eboussi suspects that this assertion of a teleological dimension internal to the social structure entails a denial of the living subject's freedom to use and create social institutions. "Intentionality", for him, is on the side of the "subject" and not on the side of society. The latter has no goal in itself. Concretely, if God, in conjunction with other symbols of value, contributes to the social integration of individuals through the validation of certain norms, behaviours and authoritative figures within a group, this function of God is subject to change in keeping with the goal people (individually and collectively) are pursuing. In other words, the role that God plays in society and the understanding that people have of "him" depends not on an internal finality of the social system, but on the people and the goal they assign to themselves.

Eboussi's rejection of a teleological dimension as an integral part of social structures does not imply a rejection of the main insight of the functionalist approach, namely, the constitutive dimension of "social mediation" in the understanding of God. The dismissal of the teleological dimension only intends to safeguard the freedom of the core constituent of society, i.e. the people, and their ability to direct and redirect their lives according to a chosen goal. Eboussi is uncompromising when the initiative of the living subject is threatened.

34 "L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 166: "«Dieu» sera compris à partir des effets qu'"il" exerce sur le processus de garantie et de légitimation du «système des fins», de l'autorité des institutions, sur les procédures d'intégration, de règlement de conflits, de rétablissement des équilibres et de résolution des crises."

35 "La rigueur demanderait qu'on analyse les institutions comme des choses sans intention, que les hommes utilisent selon les objectifs qu'ils poursuivent, collectivement ou individuellement. La structure sociale est un donné qui ne contrôle pas d'avance les conditions de son action que lui imposent le «dehors», et la mobilité des relations au-dedans" ("L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 167).
The structuralist approach falls under the same criticism. The major distinction between the functionalist approach and the structuralist approach is that the latter rejects any goal as part of the dynamic of social structures. Society is understood as a closed system where the various structures interact without any predetermined or privileged orientation except the possibility of compatibility or incompatibility due to the "nature" of given structures within the system, independently of the people.37

Claude Lévi-Strauss, who promoted this approach, seems to have translated the linguistic theory of F. de Saussure into an anthropological context.38 The end result is a denial of any initiative to the living subject. Just as the interplay between the linguistic signs to form meaningful words eludes the speaker (human being), so the correlation of the social entities to constitute a meaningful structure eludes the people. Religious structure in this perspective could either be a "reference" or a "symbolic element" without any defined value. In the first instance (reference), God would be homologous to any other central element of a social structure, i.e. a principle of cohesion and explanation as well as a catalyst.39 In the other instance (symbolic element), God

36 "Il n'y a pas d'intention inconsciente à la base des institutions. Il y a seulement un insconsent structuré sous la forme d'un ensemble de relations formelles et objectives, là où l'esprit se manifeste à l'état «sauvage», dans la structure sociale comme dans la langue, qui est ici le modèle d'intelligibilité" ("L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 168).

37 See, "L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 168: "... ce qu'on peut alors suivre, c'est la genèse purement logique d'un système, sa transformation réglée par le jeu d'écarts différentiels dont les éléments se définissent les uns par rapport aux autres, «se pensent entre eux», «dans les hommes et à leur insu».

38 This does not exclude the possible influence of the American cultural anthropology of F. Boas upon Lévi-Strauss. The risk is high that a strongly relativistic view of culture finally erects strict boundaries around a given people by reducing the behaviour of individuals to what it has defined as characteristic to that particular culture. Anything else will be seen as a foreign element. For a discussion of such a risk, see: Jean-Loup Amselle, Logiques métisses (Paris: Payot, 1990), pp. 34-37.

holds an undetermined flexible position which allows all possible combinations with any structure in the system and thus, always keeps the system meaningful. 40

Unlike the functionalist approach, the structuralist approach openly denies any active role to the living subject in the constitution of meaning, including the understanding of God. Social mediation here becomes an end in itself. People appear as pure mechanical elements in the whole system: they act and react as if they were just fulfilling a predetermined programme set in their "unconsciousness". According to Eboussi, there is a gross misunderstanding in the structuralist approach: the "model" of understanding reality has been transformed into "reality":

To take the model for normative reference is to transform it into an original nature, slipping from the model of reality to the reality of the model, giving «the things of logic for the logic of things» (K. Marx). 41

In addition to its insight into the social fabric of the society studied, the structuralist approach offers an equally important insight into its producers (anthropologists) and their relation to their society, its ideologies and understanding of other societies. 42 In the structuralist perspective,

40 "«Dieu», comme la valeur symbolique zéro, s'oppose à toutes les autres valeurs symboliques du système, car contrairement à celles-ci, il n'a ni caractère différentiel ni valeur symbolique constante. Sa fonction est de s'opposer au manque de signifiant. Par-là, il garantit le système contre la menace de manquer à un moment et à un endroit quelconque de signification et, par cette brèche, de devenir tout entier insignifiant..." ("L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 169).

41 "L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 170: "... prendre le modèle pour la référence normative, c'est le transformer en nature originaire, glissant du modèle de la réalité à la réalité du modèle, donnant «les choses de la logique pour la logique des choses» (K. Marx)."

42 At this point there emerges the most difficult problem of "conceptualizing" other societies. See, Conceptualizing Society, ed. Adam Kuper (London-New York: Routledge, 1992). Things are not as simple as Clifford Geertz suggests: "catching of «their» views in «our» vocabularies" (C. Geertz, Local Knowledge, Further Essays in Interpretative Anthropology (New York: Basic Books, 1983), p. 10. What is at stake and needs discussion has been put forward by Michel Foucault, Les Mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines (Paris: Gallimard, 1966): "l'ethnologie s'enracine, en effet, dans une possibilité qui appartient en propre à l'histoire de notre culture, plus encore à son rapport fondamental à toute histoire, et qui lui permet de se lier aux autres cultures sur le mode de la pure théorie." (p.388)
one has a better appreciation of the "cultural distance" between the anthropologist and the "object" of his/her study. Eboussi's understanding of what constitutes this "distance", that is, the reification of other people, seems to have determined his resolution to distanced himself from all the methodological approaches he reviewed as he tries to understand what is at stake when the "question of God" is dealt with in Africa.

C - Recapitulation and Perspective: "God's Strategies"

Whether they fail to appreciate or overestimate the role of social mediation in the constitution of religion, the lexical and the phenomenological approaches as well as the functionalist and the structuralist approaches have revealed a significant "distance" between the object of their inquiry (God in Africa) and the "condition of possibility" of their knowledge (theoretical understanding of others). By ignoring social mediation, the lexical and phenomenological approaches ipso facto ignore the people (individuals and collectivities) without whom there could be no religion. By turning social structures into a "totality" with its own internal goal or without any goal at all, the functionalist and the structuralist approaches in effect ignored the people's ability to use the structures they created for their own goal.

The inability of these approaches to grasp the unalienable responsibility of the "living subject" in the constitution of any social structure and meaning is, for Eboussi, the ultimate reason for discarding them as having a right perspective in tackling the question of God in Africa. An understanding of others which does not take into account their ability as "living subjects" capable

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43 "On peut accorder une valeur anthropologique aux modèles abstraits proposés par le structuralisme: ils nous renseignent sur les auteurs qui les produisent... Ils donnent aussi la mesure de la distance culturelle qui sépare l'anthropologue de ses «objects», la manière non-humaine et dominatrice de les comprendre en les réifiant." ("L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 171.).
of initiatives and freedom simply transforms them into a "theoretical object". A theoretical construct follows its own agenda and its own rules: what others say about themselves is but raw material for conceptualization. Relating oneself to others on the basis of "theory" seems to have been a typical "Western" practice.

For Eboussi, this can only be possible in a context of "domination". The latter does not just imply military or political coercion, it involves a "hermeneutical" coercion, i.e. a power to translate, to interpret and to conceptualize what others do and think in such a way that they hardly recognize themselves. There is perhaps something deeper than a rational confrontation here: the theoretical relation to others has a specific determination; it is a "theory of history" of which the West appears to be both the consciousness and the unique realization.

44 The practical consequences of this theoretical constructions are well known. Eboussi recapitulates them under the concept of "domination". On the relation between anthropology and colonialism, see: Gérard Leclerc, Anthropologie et Colonialisme. Essai sur l'histoire de l'africanisme (Paris: Fayard, 1972).

45 Eboussi explicitly refers to Michel Foucault's analysis and conclusion on Western "rationality": "Les approches scientifiques s'enracinent toute dans une possibilité qui appartient en propre à l'histoire de notre culture, plus encore à son rapport fondamental à l'histoire, et qui permet de se lier aux autres sur le mode de la pure théorie", écrit M. Foucault dans Les Mots et les Choses (Op. Cit., p. 388). Cette manière singulière "contourne les représentations que les hommes, dans une civilisation peuvent se donner d'eux-mêmes, de leur vie, de leurs besoins, des significations déposées dans leur langue." (p. 390). ("L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 185).

46 Cf. "L'enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 185: "Se lier aux autres «sur le mode de la pure théorie» n'est possible que si l'on jouit du pouvoir de traduire «en vérité» et en «raison consciente» le mutisme, la confusion et l'inconscience des pratiques et des paroles des autres."

47 Maurice Bloch, "What goes without saying: the conceptualization of Zafimaniry society" in Conceptualizing Society, ed. A. Kuper (London-New York:Routledge, 1992) puts it this way: "A problem which lurks uneasily in the prefaces of most anthropological monographs and worries, or should worry, all fieldworking anthropologists is that the way anthropologists conceptualize the societies they have studied in their ethnographic accounts almost always seems alien, bizarre, or impossibly complicated to the people of those societies." (p. 127).

48 Cf. Gérard Leclerc, Anthropologie et Colonialisme, p. 23. The whole construction of Hegel seems to be crafted with this conviction. His idea of Christianity as an "absolute religion" is not alien to this perspective, see: Carl E. Braaten, "The problem of the Absoluteness of Christianity" in Interpretation 40/4 (1986) 341-378.
One can now understand the importance of Eboussi's decision to make an epistemological shift at this point. The startling newness of the African as a "living subject" means that "nothing" can any longer be taken for granted. The "unilateral" translation, interpretation and conceptualization which acknowledges no value to others except what has been recast and reinterpreted in "scientific" explanations or by consistent "acceptable" reflexive reason is the point of contention at the heart of Eboussi's epistemological trail. Here, the missionary Christianity as Eboussi sees it is at bay with these methodological approaches.\textsuperscript{49}

The next chapter will focus specifically on Christianity as it encounters and understands Africans during its missionary activity. For the moment, one can ask: did Eboussi envision an alternative method after these critical reflections on the lexical, the phenomenological, the Functionalist and the structuralist approaches?

The inquiry into the methodological approaches to the question of God in Africa has brought to the forefront the "living subject" as the most important element in the necessary mediated constitution of the meaning of God within a historical group. For Eboussi, the role of the subject is best explained with the category of "strategy". This, category taken from Bourdieu\textsuperscript{50}, is a key concept that matches Eboussi's idea of a "living subject". Taken together, the concept of "strategy" and the idea of a "living subject" redefine the limit of previous approaches and open the way for "another"\textsuperscript{51} view of God and religion. The scientific or systematic approaches (lexical, 

\textsuperscript{49} See, "L'Enjeu de Dieu" in \textit{A Contretemps}, p. 187: "L'homologie de fonctionnement des sciences humaines et de la «religion absolue» s'impose même s'il est difficile d'établir au-delà de toute discussion et de tout doute, la genèse théologique de leur interprétation de l'altérité et de leur emprise dominatrice sur leur «objet». Il suffit de cette similitude de fonctionnement pour signifier la non-neutralité et l'enracinement d'un savoir dans les réalités du pouvoir et les enjeux de l'histoire." Éboussi goes further in this remark: "la religion absolue est un monologue, qui réduit les autres au silence par leur mise à mort symbolique, de manière à parler en lieu des autres, à les entendre autrement qu'ils ne parlent." (\textit{A Contretemps}, p. 183).

\textsuperscript{50} See, P. Bourdieu, \textit{Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique} (Genève-Paris: Droz, 1972); also, \textit{Le Sens pratique} (Paris: Minuit, 1980).

\textsuperscript{51} "Another" does not imply an idea of "opposition" or "contradiction".
phenomenological, functionalist, or structuralist) transform a "living body" (society and its people) into a "dead reality" in order to have a better grasp of it. Paradoxically, this reification finally homogenizes a complex and fluid heterogenous reality. An analogy with nuclear Physics may be suggestive here: just as any attempt to locate and fix a "particle" in order to have a better observation of it simply transforms the "nature" of the particle, so any attempt to reify society and its living subjects into a definite structure deals with an altered reality; the "instrument" used has to become part of the definition of the reality.

To avoid the danger of reifying society and dissolving the responsibility of the living subject into a self-centred "system" with or without a goal, the integration of the concept of "strategy" in social mediation reveals the unprecedented active role of the living subject in the constitution of meaning. Actually, in this perspective religion appears primarily as a "practical performance", i.e. it is an "action" initially and most frequently expressed in a "cult" and, only after, in a "discourse" (doctrine). According to Eboussi, even the discourse is "performative" rather than "declarative".

52 "... c'est la transformation d'un corps vivant, en un cadavre muet offert au regard et à la décomposition ou à la recomposition." ("L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 175).

53 See, Jean-Loup Amselle, Logiques mélanges, p. 10: "toute anthropologue ayant une réelle expérience de terrain sait que la culture qu'il observe se dissout dans un ensemble sériel ou dans un réservoir de pratiques conflictuelles ou pacifiques dont les acteurs sociaux se servent pour renégocier en permanence leur identité. Figer ces pratiques aboutit à une vision essentialiste de la culture qui à la limite est une forme moderne du racisme."

54 The example given here is mine. For a more detailed scientific exposition, see: B. d'Espagnat, A la recherche du réel: le regard d'un physicien, 2nd. ed. (Paris, Gauthier-Villars, 1981). One finds the summary of this perspective in L. Rosenfelds statement: "C'est maintenant le tout indivisible formé par le système et les instruments d'observation qui définit le phénomène" ( cf. p. 50).

55 "L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 179.

56 See, "L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 179: "La religion est une performance qui opère sur des données mouvantes et des situations sans cesse renouvelées. Du fait qu'elle est une pratique, ses concepts eux-mêmes jouissent d'une grande marge d'indétermination et d'ambiguïté... Les concepts religieux ont ainsi d'abord un sens performatif et non pas «déclaratif», parce que la religion est action."
Discourse on God cannot be cut off either from the particular social environment in which it appears or from the people for whom it is part of a "language game". A close look at contemporary societies shows that none of them can be analysed as a "total" "system" with clear cut common values which impart a common behaviour. For Eboussi, the fragmentation of the social fabric according to individual or collective involvement in different types of works and in many interest groups compels us to give priority to the multiple ways by which people define and redefine their goals and find the means to attain them. In this situation, where what was once perceived as one system now appears as many systems (situation of pluralism), the "strategic" approach opens the way to:

1) the integration of change, even radical change into the social matrix. The precariousness of the "present" allows not only one but many interpretations or solutions to human problems. It also follows that the "past" can no longer be looked upon as normative;

2) the understanding of God in the realm of human interaction. As Eboussi puts it: "The symbol «God» is relational in nature. When one calls upon it, one does not aim at an invisible solitary presence. «God» is the tiers-inclus who structures or institutionalizes a relationship comprising at least three persons." The strategy here consists in people's using God to promote

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57 "La situation présente échappe partiellement à cette approche systémique. Sa condition nécessaire et ses supposés se sont souvent effondrés. C'était l'appartenance à des communautés fortement structurées, globalement productrices de leur substance matérielle et symbolique... L'organisation sociale du travail, les sciences de la nature et de l'homme multiplient les découpages, les points de vue... qui interdisent toute vision du monde et toute image de l'homme éprouvables par chacun et par tous." ("L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 196.).

58 "Car on se trouve alors avoir affaire à un univers de faits et de situations en expansion, que des opérations, des décisions et des déplacements contribuent à changer, à transfigurer." ("L'enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 210.).

59 "Pour saisir «ce qui se passe» dans cet univers mouvant, ouvert et pluriel, il faut renoncer aux modèles a priori du dogmatisme et du constructivisme." ("L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 211).

60 "Il ne faut pas en chercher les règles ni les orientations dans les normes et les schèmes d'un passé qui ne demanderait qu'à être repris, dilaté et extrapolé." ("L'enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 211.).

61 A Contretemps, p. 211.
an order, to foster laws or to solve conflicts within the social realm, based on a reciprocal agreement;

3) the possibility of "believing" differently, without transforming our belief into a deadly opposition. In this perspective, God does not take sides in favour of one party against the other party, with the risk of becoming compromised in the fight for power.62

By calling attention to a "strategic" approach to the question of God as an alternative to the previous methods: lexical, phenomenological, functionalist and structuralist, Eboussi intends to safeguard the living subject and its will to live in daily confrontation with a specific situation and its conditions. Religion or God is part of this strategy of living. Here, God is used63, according to the situation, either simultaneously or successively as a "offensive power" or a "defensive power", to act or re-act against "death". "Deus sive mors? Religion, according to Eboussi, is a set of strategies against death and, the appeal to «God» is its foundation, the essential element, by turns and sometimes all at once, homoepathic and allopathic."64

62 "...«Dieu» ne saurait être un «allié» des hommes sous peine de devenir partie prenante pour les uns contre les autres dans la lutte pour le pouvoir et d'être compromis dans les jeux de la puissance." ("L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 214).


64 "L'Enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, p. 215: "La religion est un ensemble de strategies contre la mort et le recours à «Dieu» en est le fondement, la pièce essentielle, homéopathique et allopathique, tour à tour et, parfois, tout à la fois." As troublesome as this sounds, it has an ambiguous similarity with Paul's remark on Christ's resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:12-32; v.32 reads quoting Isaiah 22:13: "If the dead are not raised, Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."
Ch. 3. Inter-mission

Introduction

The present chapter focusses exclusively on the enunciation of Eboussi's reassessment of Christianity as inherited from 19th century missionary activity. In keeping with our process of reasoning, it follows upon the exposition of the "question of foundation" (ch.1) and of the "question of method" (ch.2). "Intermission" should be properly termed: Eboussi's "problematic" on Christianity in Africa.

Intermission, as the term ambiguously suggests, is here both a call for a "temporary pause" and a "break in the continuity" of the ongoing activity of Christian mission in Africa. Indeed, the "temporary pause" takes us back to the beginning where the "essential things" that have been silenced by the "uproar of propaganda" and the "amusement of collectivity" are redeemed from oblivion and are given expressions. Two levels of argument are operative here. On the first level, elements or facts which are, in Eboussi's thought, essential and constitutive dimensions of Christianity in Africa are put forward. On the second level, these same elements or facts are

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2 The break of continuity sketched in this chapter will be the essential topic of Part II of this dissertation as a way of re-appropriation of Christianity. In *Pour une catholicon*, Eboussi speaks of this break as «continuités vivantes» and «ruptures créatrices, salutaires» (*A Contretemps*, p. 57). The aim is a move forward: «proposer d'autres voies», «suggérer d'aller plus loin» (*La Démission*, p. 276 [A Contretemps, p. 29]).

3 "Il nous faut revenir à notre point de départ, remonter des abîmes de silence, faire parler celui-ci, c'est-à-dire l'essentiel tu, étouffé par le vacarme de la propagande et du divertissement collectif." (*L'Africain chrétien à la recherche de son identité* in *A Contretemps*, p. 55).
scrutinized in order to grasp and pinpoint their condition of possibility. "Dismission" should then appear as a logical conclusion of the argumentation. The "break of continuity" follows the call for an end to the missionary activity of the West; it suggests the horizon of re-appropriation of Christianity in Africa; its new beginning.

A - Missionary Impulse: motive and practice

In a book review of the English translation of *Christianisme sans fétiche*, J. P. Hogan voices the following critique: "Both the image of the missioner condemning all things African and the positivistic notion of revelation which is criticized seem outdated." Surprisingly, he immediately adds: "However, Eboussi. is by no means out of touch either with current missionary efforts or with contemporary theological developments. He is rather offering a critique of the tradition and missionary practice as received." The most important aspect of this remark is its

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4 "Dismission" is a Middle English expression which derives from the past participle of *dismissus* (Medieval Latin), and old French: *desmis*. See, "dismiss" in The Shorter Oxford Dictionary, 3rd ed. (vol.1, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1973). The ideas behind this word: "leave to depart", "letting go from oneself", "giving up" have been put forward in a controversial article by Eboussi, "La Démission" in *Spiritus* 56 (1974) 276-287. [A Contretemps, pp. 29-42].

5 The call for an end to the missionary activity of the West is not peculiar to Eboussi. Before him, a "moratorium" was suggested. On a possible end to mission in Africa, see: W. Bühlmann, *The Missions on Trial: Addis Ababa 1980* (Nairobi: St Paul Publication, 1978).


8 *Ibid.*, p. 565. It is very much true that Eboussi is well informed on the current development in theology as well as in missionary activity. In spite of its critical tone, "La Démission" bears witness to his knowledge of these changes for which, obviously, he has some questions: "Aujourd'hui, il n'y a plus un dogme parmi les plus essentiels qui ne soit soumis à révision jusqu'à exténuation... La question serait de savoir d'où l'on parle; qu'est-ce qui garantit contre l'erreur l'une des nouvelles versions du christianisme, qu'est-ce qui la protège d'être le reflet de la société occidentale?" (p. 284). See also, "Métamorphoses africaines" *Christus* 77 (1973) 38: "Tant de majorations subitement rabaisées, tant de discours retournés de fond en comble ne seront que palinodies lamentables et révisionnisme honteux, si nous manquons le courage d'en tirer les conséquences théoriques et pratiques, d'en élucider les implications relatives à la nature de l'Eglise, au respect et à la recherche de la vérité en christianisme."
suggestion that what is essential is somewhere else. But, J.P. Hogan missed this *locus* by failing to notice *why* it is essential for Eboussi to point to "the tradition and missionary practice as received". Indeed, Eboussi's focus is not ultimately on the "missioner condemning all things" and the "positivistic notion of revelation", but on the *condition of possibility* of the condemnation and, on the *foundation and implication* of the then prevalent positivistic notion of revelation. That is precisely why the starting point is "not missiologists but missionaries... not theory but practice and history". In this perspective, three elements appear to constitute for Eboussi the essential but not exclusive dimensions of Christian mission in Africa: condescension, structural organization and theoretical reflection.

*Condescension.* In his contribution to the symposium: "Civilisation noire et église catholique", Eboussi offers a rare insight into the missionary enterprise in Africa. One of the first constitutive elements of the destiny of mission which he puts forward is what he calls "a popular impulse of Christendom." In effect, the 19th century Christian mission in Africa can only be understood through this popular mobilization in Europe which ardently fostered and sustained

9 "Métamorphoses africaines" *Christus* 77 (1973) 33-34: "Il ne s'agit pas des missiologues, mais des missionnaires, il ne s'agit pas de théorie, mais de pratique et d'histoire."


11 The mid-seventies were characterized by a severe critique of mission in general. See Eboussi's own article: "La Démission" which appeared in *Spiritus* 56 (1974).

12 "éléments constitutifs de la destinée missionnaire" ("Pour une catholicité" in *A Contretemps*, p. 57).

13 "un élan (populaire) de la chrétienté" (*A Contretemps*, p. 58).

14 France has played a leading role in this missionary activity. It is not surprising that for more than half a century, the headquarters of *Propaganda Fide* was in Lyon. What should be surprising is that this missionary drive occurred during the *Revolution* when the Churches lost their properties and influence within the civil society. Here is the description of the situation by Cardinal Bizzari during a session of the First Vatican Council: "Le clergé est exclu des écoles, la jeunesse est livrée à des maîtres sans foi, l'Eglise, spoliée de ses biens, voit ses droits foulés aux pieds, l'incrédulité est ouvertement proclamé et la papauté en
both the missionaries and their works. From a close scrutiny of the literature and the attitudes
generated by the missionary impulse, Eboussi discovered condescension at the root of the
mobilization within Europe and of the zeal out in the mission field. Indeed, the misery of Africa
appeared to have been to a large extent the driving force behind missionary activities.\textsuperscript{15} The ravage
done by the inhuman slave trade, the incredible ignorance of the people combined with the
innumerable diseases which infect the Continent had prompted massive support in vocations,
prayers and generous gifts, as the written accounts and live testimonies of missionaries poured into
Europe. In Africa, evangelization did have the "form of an active compassion\textsuperscript{16}. Slaves were
redeemed and baptized; hospital and community health centres were opened to cure sickness and to
prevent it by instruction in sanitary improvements; schools were created to promote new and better
human and social conditions. As such, none of these acts of compassion which characterized the
pioneer work is wrong in itself. None can be condemned. Still, for Eboussi, there is an aspect of the
situation which needs to be reflected upon: in a context of condescension, Africans were not really
"partners" in their encounter with Christianity. Thus, this crucial question:

\footnotesize{bute à toutes les attaques. Les parlements retentissent de maximes anticatholiques et antireligieuses, l'Etat omnipotent s'est séparé de l'Eglise..." (Th. Granderath, Histoire du Concile du Vatican depuis sa Première Annonce jusqu'à sa Prorogation d'après les Documents Authentiques, t.1. (Bruxelles, Librairie Albert Dewit, 1907), p. 35).}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{15} This missionary perception has not been without influence on the later colonial enterprise: "humanitarianism" has made its way right into our own days. See, Gérard Leclerc, Anthropologie et Colonialisme, p. 23. The humanitarian view of the situation is simple: "Plutôt que de parler, comme les évolutionistes, de sociétés «arriérées», il préfère les désigner comme des sociétés «misérables». Plutôt que de les «civiliser», il s'agit de les «soulager» de cette misère physique et morale qui les opprime, d'«améliorer» leur condition." (p. 23).}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{16} A Contretemps, p. 63. some in the later generations of missionaries have criticized this "model of evangelization"; see, V. Donovan, Christianity Rediscovered. An Epistle from the Masai (Notre Dame, Indiana: Fides/Claretian, 1978). Donovan is right to point out that missionaries in Africa never have the time to focus exclusively on what is essential: the proclamation of the Good News. "Humanitarian care" has always overshadowed what should be their primary goal. But, his radical attempt to bring the Good News to the Masai reveals its ambiguity and bias when one of the Masai tribe refused to be converted to Christianity; he never again visited this tribe up to the moment of his final departure from the land. The question is simple: did he ever consider this people as human beings with whom one can have a simple human relation? Were they for him anything else than "objects of conversion"? Donovan still needs to "rediscover Christianity" precisely at the moment when the other stands as a "subject" in his presence.}
How are the truths, commandments, and rites to be inscribed in one's flesh, when they are received from below, in a state of social, political, economic, and cultural subordination and minority of age?\textsuperscript{17}

**Structural Organization.** Condescension alone is not sufficient to characterize the unprecedented, successful, single-minded missionary operation achieved by Christianity in less than a century, since the conversion of Constantine\textsuperscript{18}. According to Eboussi, the creation of *De Propaganda Fide* (1822) and the resolute involvement of the papacy in assuming the effective responsibility for missionary activity are a constitutive dimension of the 19th century mission in Africa. Let's call this dimension, "structural organization". The structural organization first deprived the secular "powers" (*padroado* and *patronato*) with their unavoidable national rivalry of the opportunity to hijack the cause of Christ, and thus save the future of the mission as a relatively autonomous enterprise. Under the authority of the Church there appeared a more consistent coordination of the many congregations specializing in overseas missions. New directives were issued by the *Propaganda* which divided the mission territories into prefectures and vicariates, and also named its delegates. From this better control over the missions emerged a whole set of doctrines to which the papal encyclicals\textsuperscript{19} are privileged witnesses.

On the theoretical level, the task of finding a theological foundation for Christian outreach and the imperative of solving new problems that emerged from its practices has already found

\textsuperscript{17} *Christianity without Fetishes*, trans. R. Barr, p. 2.


\textsuperscript{19} Benedict XV, *Maximum Illud* (November 30, 1919); Pius XI, *Rerum Ecclesiae* (1922); Pius XII, *Fidei Donum* (April 2, 1957).
favourable echo in the faculties and institutes of missiology. But, before we present this third constitute dimension of the Christian mission, we should notice the pending question surrounding "structural organization": the "responsibility" of Africans in this great affair. 20 Eboussi puts it this way:

How is one to think and to live the necessity, the supremacy and universality of Christianity when the latter is imposed as the dominant religion, or the religion of the dominant? 21

Theoretical Reflection. The historical importance of the contribution of missiology as a specific field of theological studies is still to be evaluated. But, for Eboussi, the Faculties devoted to mission studies are an integral part of the essential dimensions constitutive of the missionary activity of the 19th century. 22 Indeed, in these Faculties and Institutes, the fieldwork of the dauntless missionaries was taken up and given "rational" consistency: books were written, journals edited, reviews offered and symposia held to define what Eboussi calls "les contours d'un objet mobile et fuyant" 23. This effort at a theoretical foundation with its usual split according to schools and countries often opened up ways for new orientations. 24 No doubt, most of the time, the need

20 Fr. Engelbert Mveng puts it in the most straightforward way I have ever read; he speaks of an "Impression d'être totalement étranger dans une aventure où l'on vous dit que votre destin et celui de l'humanité sont engagés, mais où vous sentez que c'est sans vous, parfois contre vous et malgré vous, dans l'impossibilité où vous êtes de vous sentir responsable de cette aventure, et donc libre et adulte, dans le sens traditionnel du mot." (L'Afrique dans l'Eglise: parole d'un croyant (Paris: Harmattan, 1985), p. 81). The italics are mine.

21 Christianity without Fetishes, p. 2.

22 "Le mouvement missionnaire n'est pas simple pétulance, il se réfléchit sur lui-même et, dans sa maturité ou vers son déclin, il s'efforce de recueillir son essence accomplie dans le «discours»" ("Pour une catholicité" in A Contretemps, p. 61).

23 "Pour une catholicité", p. 62.

24 "Des écoles se forment, suivant de traditionnels clivages et des passions nationales. Mais les idées circulent, un vaste champ de communication s'ouvre où l'ethnologie, l'histoire comparée des religions, la critique de l'art, la musicologie, dévoilent, au-delà des simplifications du prosélytisme, les véritables dimensions d'une évangélisation intégrale, catholique." ("Pour une catholicité", p. 62.)
for change was due not to a theoretical impasse or breakthrough, but because new parameters occurred which upset the missionary work on the "ground". So, the failure of the policy of assimilation based on certain anthropological theories of evolution made for the shift from the creation of "Christian villages" where new converts were to live a radically different life style to the early studies of customs previously repudiated as "demonic". Growing nationalism and the rise of movements of independence which sounded the death knell of the colonial period also hastened the transformation of mission territories into "dioceses" with much talk about "respect for traditional African values". Nevertheless, this theoretical development has been an indispensable element for what has been accomplished in Africa. It is sufficient to refer to one of the last marketed concepts of missiology: "inculturation", the new theoretical catchword which takes the place of the old controversial "African Theology" hailed by the "natives". The question which Eboussi raised in relation to this dimension is that of the origin of this "discourse": it is a

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26 Life of freedom, the freedom of the sons and daughters of God.


conceptualization of the African situation done by the missionaries or their fellow countrymen for Africans.29

B - Anthropology of the Pagan

The most important elements which appear to be constitutive of missionary activity in Africa are not primarily concerned with wrongs which the missionaries may have done to cultures or to peoples. For Eboussi, when those wrongs are mentioned, the intention is not to condemn the past30, but to discern what renders such wrongdoings possible in order to promote a new beginning.31 Two main conditions of possibility of the wrongs done to cultures and peoples appear when one further scrutinizes three essential dimensions of missionary activity. The first, with which we are dealing in this section is the prevalent "anthropology of the pagan". The second, which will be presented later, is the "logic of the absoluteness of Christianity".

For centuries, Christians have used the term "pagan", which they coined to define those who do not belong to their community.32 The initial religious meaning of the term also comprises


30 "La rétrospection qui va suivre se fait quand l'Africain se récupère, en principe, sur les «extériorités» où il se trouvait perdu et comme étranger à soi-même. Les mises en perspective qu'il effectue ne visent pas à traduire le passé en jugement. Le présent est son souci..." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 23).

31 "Les formes d'aliénations anciennes sont décrites pour promouvoir un autre commencement, pour dénoncer leur persistance, leur présence latente et en prévenir les résurgences sous d'autres figures." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 23).

32 Cf. Robin L. Fox, Pagans and Christians (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987): "In antiquity, pagans already owed a debt to Christians. Christians first gave them their name, pagani. The word first appeared in Christian inscriptions of the early fourth century and remained colloquial... In everyday use, it meant either a civilian or a rustic... but of the two meanings, the former is the likelier. Pagani were civilians who had not enlisted through baptism as soldiers of Christ against the powers of Satan." (pp. 30-31). In the process of "naming" we already find this tendency of relating to others from the Christian perspective. It will become evident later that, not being Christian, is more than "not [being] enlisted as
an anthropological connotation. Indeed, because in Christ humanity has been redeemed and restored to its original image, those who do not belong to the community founded by Christ were thought to be living in the state of the "old man", sinful and corrupt. Being Christian is to belong to the new humanity because in baptism one died to the old self in order to become one with Christ. During the missionary activity in Africa, the whole continent was thought to be engulfed in total depravity due to its ignorance of Christ.

Truly, the pagan in the African context of the 19th century missionary "campaign" did not present the Christian missionaries with the same intellectual challenge with which the pagans confronted the Fathers of the Church or Thomas Aquinas. Under the wings of a Western civilization mighty in expansion, missionaries were strong enough to look down on Africans without being seriously challenged. For the Western missionaries, African pagans were not simply outside the Christian community, they appeared "uncivilized", very close to a sub-human soldier of Christ against the powers of Satan; but, it is being under these powers.

33 The ecclesiological saying: "Outside the Church there is no salvation" has its christological formulation: "There is no other name in the whole world given to men by which we can be saved." (Acts 4:12).


35 See, Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, Opera Omnia, iussu edita Leonis XIII P.M., Tomus Decimus Quintus, Summa Contra Gentiles, Romae, Typis Riccardi Garroni, MCMXXX. I am following the translation of A.C. Pegis, J.F. Anderson, V.J. Bourke & C.J. O'Neil: Saint Thomas Aquinas, On the Truth of Catholic Faith, Summa Contra Gentiles, Books: One to Four (Garden City:New York, Image Books, 1955-1957). In his introduction to Book One, Anton Pegis linked the Summa Contra Gentiles with the intellectual culture of the Moslem world: "The objection that the SCG is too intellectual in character to be a manual of apologetics for missionaries is not a very strong one. St. Thomas himself may very well have thought that the SCG was precisely the work needed by Christian missionaries in Spain face to face with the high intellectual culture of the Moslem world." (p. 21).

condition.37 There is a logic to this; it stems from a religious belief: to belong to a "nation or community which does not worship the true God"38 is to lose the sense of God; and, to lose the sense of God is to lose the sense of values.39 By and large, he who loses the sense of values has fallen either into the condition of "childhood" or the condition of "animal".40 For Eboussi, such is the ground on which the initial relation between Africans and missionaries stands. African pagans do not just constitute a humanity under the bondage of sin; depravity has affected the most important trait of their human condition, i.e. the intellect. So, childhood in this situation resembles an animal state.

It is not surprising that missionary activity as a whole turns out to be an immense business of compassion.41 African pagans are first and foremost an "object" of "care", not a "subject" with whom one enters into a relation of partnership. Such a "care" may require the use of force, of

37 One of the great missionaries of Africa, Cardinal Lavigerie echoes the conviction of the time: "Auprès de nous, les débris d'une nation autrefois chrétienne, mêlés à ceux des invasions barbares. Au-delà, sur la surface de ce continent immense, la plus affreuse barbarie, l'ignorance, le sang, l'anthropophagie, l'universel esclavage..." (Lavigerie cited by A. Picciola, Missionnaires en Afrique, Paris: Denoël, 1987, p. 117). The italics are mine.


39 "L'oblitération ou l'absence de la compréhension correcte de Dieu tel qu'il est, entraîne la dégradation de l'homme ou bien en est la conséquence néfaste. L'homme qui perd la perception de «valeurs» perd aussi celle de celui qui les fonde ou mieux de celui qui les prescrit. La proposition converse est également vraie: qui nie, implicitement ou explicitement, la véritable nature de Dieu devient la proie des passions et des vices. Il suit de là que le paganisme n'est pas un pur état de fait... il est un état de culpabilité, de rébellion contre Dieu, de déchéance au-dessous du seuil de l'humanité." (Christianisme sans fétiche, pp. 25-26).

40 "Là où [le christianisme] est absent, l'immobilisme règne et la régression suit. Cette dernière est d'abord d'ordre intellectuel: l'homme est demeuré ou est redevenu un grand enfant par ses idées, ses modes de raisonner... ses croyances. Elle est aussi d'ordre moral: l'homme est devenu un paquet d'instincts, pis encore d'instincts dénaturés." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 26).

41 "L'évangélisation aura la forme de la compassion active et voudra mettre fin à ces maux, en libérant de l'esclavage, en abolissant, en soignant les malades, en donnant à manger aux affamés... Mais l'oeuvre de compassion par excellence sera l'activité médicale et sanitaire." ("Pour une Catholicité", in A Contretemps, p. 63.).
punishment, but also of reward.\textsuperscript{42} Within this perspective, the conversion of African pagans to Christianity is, paradoxically, an expression of subjugation.

The faith, in this context, calls for neither freedom nor comprehension. We are dealing with minors -- degraded beings, instruments of the forces of evil. Constraint is not only licit, it is obligatory. Or to put it another way, the faith of the colonial protégé is an effect of domination.\textsuperscript{43}

\textbf{C - Logic of the Absoluteness of Christianity}

In the dynamic of this exposition, the logic of the absoluteness of Christianity is but a condition of possibility of the historical treatment Africans were subjected to by the missionaries. So, the matter under consideration is not primarily part of the present debate over the Christian claim of absoluteness\textsuperscript{44} as it appears in the circles of theologians of "inter-religious dialogue"\textsuperscript{45}. Indeed, no attempt will be made to review the theoretical discussion of the claim of absoluteness in

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\footnote{\textsuperscript{42} "La fermeté est nécessaire pour dompter l'animal en lui; pour obtenir une obéissance qui ne saurait être l'adhésion d'une volonté raisonnable." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 27).}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{43} Christianity without Fetishes, p. 22.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{44} See, Carl E. Braaten, "The Problem of the Absoluteness of Christianity" in Interpretation 40/4 (1986) 341-353.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{45} Most of the literature in this field are concerned with the relationship between Christianity and Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Christianity and Hinduism as well as Christianity and Buddhism. For the theological questions involved, see: K. Rahner, "Christianity and non-Christian Religions", Theological Investigations, vol.5., trans. K.-H. Kruger (London: Darton-Longman, 1966) pp. 115-134; also, H. Küng & al., Christianity and the World Religions, (New York: Doubleday, 1986).}
\end{footnotes}
accordance with the situation of "pluralism"; and, no effort will be made to envision a "new universalism".

Christianity manifested its absoluteness in a very concrete way during the 19th century missionary activity of the Church. In many places, missionaries challenged the local deities and their worshippers: sacred spaces were defiantly violated and lands reputed haunted by evil spirits transformed into Christian centres. New converts or even catechumens were withdrawn from initiation rites or reclusion. The silence of the local deities and the inability of their followers to offer significant resistance were factual evidence that the Christian God is the unique and true God. The Christian God is a God who "acts"; his "deeds" are often the expression of his "words". Like the two sides of a coin, "deeds" and "words" are actually different faces of one and the same reality: his "revelation". Indeed, the history of revelation, i.e. of the true God's deeds and words, spanning from Abraham to Jesus has been a linear historical intercourse which now overflows in the Christian Church as it waits for the second coming of the Lord. Revelation and history offer the


49 "Le mutisme est le propre des idoles: «Ni voix, ni réponse, ni signe d'attention.» Le vrai Dieu parle... Les dieux qui se prêtent à rire en meurent et leurs fidèles sombrent dans le ridicule. Un dieu qui se laisse défier sans compensation, ne serait-ce que dans l'héroïsme de ses fidèles affrontant la mort ou dans la spectaculaire croissance de leur nombre, est évidemment irréal." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 36).
first argument of the absoluteness of Christianity: the Christian God is the God of a historical revelation.\textsuperscript{50} He is not to be set side by side with "myths" of pagan beliefs, objects of derision.

But the most characteristic element of the absoluteness of Christianity, according to Eboussi, is its relation with "reason". The critique of African customs, beliefs, and deities often focusses on their lack of rational consistency.\textsuperscript{51} For the missionaries, the veneration of "fetishes" and other natural elements sets common sense adrift. In their ignorance and lack of reflection, the majority of Africans had not realized that the so-called "witches", the "seers", the members of "secret societies" as well as the "elders" were taking advantage of their unreasoned credulity. In contrast, missionaries put forward the relationship in Christianity of reason and religion.\textsuperscript{52} Along with his deeds (the two major ones being creation and redemption) and words (the prophetic words as well as the incarnate Logos ), the Christian God can be known in his very "being": Father, Son and Spirit. Now, backed by revelation, reason in Christianity can grasp and expose the mystery of human origins, its tribulations and final destiny. Here, Christianity manifests its absoluteness in that it offers the past, present and future meaning of every single human act, from the beginning of time to the final recapitulation in Christ.\textsuperscript{53}


\textsuperscript{51} It is interesting to note that the appeal to reason by Christian missionaries to disqualify the pagan deities is, in fact, a Christian re-appropriation of the pagan philosophers critique towards religious belief in general and Christianity in particular: see, Origen, \textit{Contra Celsum}, I, 5.9-15 especially I,17.23.

\textsuperscript{52} See, \textit{Christianisme sans fétiche}, pp. 37-38. If with Justin, Christianity is a unique philosophy, with Thomas Aquinas philosophical reason becomes "subalternate" to revelation but never in contradiction with it: cf. \textit{Summa Contra Gentiles}, chs. 2-5.

\textsuperscript{53} See, \textit{Christianisme sans fétiche}, pp. 35-47.
The logic of the absoluteness of Christianity leads to two major conclusions regarding both African beliefs and the African as a human being. When the absoluteness of Christianity is articulated from the ideas of "revelation" and "history", the African beliefs are but "myths", i.e. products of human imagination. Even in this case, the irrationality which affects those beliefs suggests a real discontinuity with Christianity, as far as reason is concerned. There are no further steps required for Eboussi to wonder what conversion means in this context. Was the African pagan, this "big boy" entangled in his instinctive imagination, free enough to embrace Christianity as a responsible person?

D - "Dismission"

"Dismission" echoes the conclusion\(^{54}\) of the most infamous article of Eboussi: "La Démission", which appears (fortunately or unfortunately?) in one of the most significant gatherings of the Catholic Church: the Synod of Bishops dealing with the question of "evangelization".\(^ {55}\) The departure of the missionaries, even in an "orderly manner", has been and is still a highly controversial issue. But, beyond the emotional drama at stake, our task in this dissertation is to trace the various elements which enter into Eboussi's elaboration and their consistency with his foundational insight as he attempts to "recapture" or "re-appropriate" Christianity in the African context.

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\(^{54}\) Here are the three short sentences which, like a bombshell, threw missionaries as well as many bishops of the African hierarchy (missionaries and natives) into a dreadful panic: "Que faire? La réponse sera brève: que l'Europe et l'Amérique s'évangélisent elles-mêmes en priorité. Que l'on planifie le départ en bon ordre des missionnaires d'Afrique!" ("La Démission" in \textit{Spiritus} 56 (1974) 287). Emotion has unfortunately overshadowed the entire analysis which preceded this conclusion. The exclamation mark of the last sentence was not enough to temper the wave of anxiety of many missionaries.

\(^{55}\) The synod which was held during the summer of 1974 had been the occasion for the publication of Paul VI's \textit{Evangelii Nuntiandi}. 
That a reflective reevaluation of missionary activities finally suggests an "end" to the missionary presence does not imply the agony of Christianity in Africa.\(^56\) The Requiem for missionaries appears for Eboussi as the only safe exit from a relation of tutelage to a full responsibility for Africans.\(^57\) It is important to point out that the call for an end of missionary activity is not done out of anger or frustration against Europe or America. One should go further and say that it is not done because the missionaries disregard the local cultures. In Eboussi's argumentation, the end of the missionary activity of the West has its ultimate and decisive justification in the relation which was at its origin and which still persists: condescension and domination. In short, what is at stake in this whole affair according to Eboussi, is the responsibility of Africans. On can now understand what could appear as a leitmotif of all his writing: the "advent of the African in his worrisome newness."\(^58\)

Undoubtedly for Eboussi, the emergence of Africans or, as he terms it himself: "le surgissement d'un «nous-sujet» africain"\(^59\), is the major "human phenomenon" of the second half of our century. For Eboussi, Christianity is simply meant to enter into the dynamic of this emerging centre of responsibility and initiative.\(^60\) Throughout our investigation, as we deal with the

\(^56\) See, "Pour une Catholicité Africaine" in A Contretemps, pp. 57-105. He wrote: "Les actes, les méthodes, les fins qui ont constitué et organisé l'expansion du catholicisme en Afrique peuvent nous instruire des tâches et des exigences que comporte cet héritage, pour autant que nous sommes décidés à en assumer la responsabilité, en devant nous-mêmes nos propres missionnaires." (p. 57). Italics are mine.

\(^57\) Meinrad P. Hebg, Emancipation des Eglises sous tutelle. Essai sur l'ère post-missionnaire (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1978) has echoed this need of a drastic revision of the presence of the missionaries in Africa.

\(^58\) Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 24: "l'avènement de l'Africain dans son inquiétante nouveauté".

\(^59\) "Pour une Catholicité Africaine" in A Contretemps, p. 67.

\(^60\) Obviously, culture is not the primal concern here; it is not excluded from the re-appropriation. Culture, in the form of tradition, will be reintegrated in the horizon of the responsibility of the "living subject." If Eboussi's problematic sounds excessively focussed on the "subject", one may listen anew to Gregory of Nyssa's interpretation of human being as "image of God". Gregory wrote in his Life of Moses: "La naissance spirituelle est le résultat d'un choix libre, et nous sommes ainsi en un sens nos propres parents, nous créant nous-mêmes tels que nous voulons être, et nous façonnant, par notre volonté, selon le
foundation of Eboussi's elaboration, his quest for a suitable methodology and his articulation of the Christian problematic, the African subject, this "nous-sujet", constantly appears as his focal point. Paradoxically however, the insight does not "rest" on the "subject" as such, but on the "relation" which has characterized its encounter with the West. Nevertheless, the emphasis on the African subject has to be kept in full view because, at this turning point, it stands as the "pole" of a radically new relation where nothing is necessarily given or taken for granted.61

The implications of this are enormous for the re-appropriation of Christianity.62 It is well summed up in Eboussi's own words: "In this perspective, Christian doctrine can and should be entirely understood as the description of the modality of the emergence of the human being as a person through the processes of his action and word, and through his availability to the creative power that only refers to itself and justifies everything in justifying itself... With this, one is right away in the centre of Trinitarian faith."63


61 See, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 59: "On voit pourquoi celui qui a subi l'assaut critique du christianisme à l'encontre de ses propres traditions ne saurait se contenter de demi-vérités. Le christianisme ne retrouvera pas de crédibilité... aussi longtemps que les questions les plus radicales seront traitées par prétération ou éludés." [CWF, 56].

62 What is at stake is well suggested by this remarks of Gregory of Nyssa: "Les autres êtres qui naissent doivent l'existence à l'impulsion de leur parents, tandis que la naissance spirituelle dépend de la liberté de celui qui naît... Seule, cette forme de génération a le pouvoir de choisir ce qu'elle veut être, et d'être ce qu'elle choisit." (Grégoire de Nysse, Discours Catéchétique, P.G. 45, 97 C-D; cited by Christian Duquoc, "Introduction à la problématique théologique de l'anthropologie", p. 22). Italics are mine.

63 "Dans cette perspective, la doctrine chrétienne peut et doit s'entendre tout entière comme la description des modalités d'émergence de l'homme comme personne dans les déterminations de l'action et de la parole en ce monde, dans la disponibilité à la puissance créatrice qui ne se réfère qu'à soi-même, qui en se justifiant justifie tout... Ce faisant, on s'installe d'emblée au centre de la foi trinitaire." (Christianisme sans fétiche, pp. 186-187).
Introduction

If the advent of Africans in their startling newness is but their emergence as "living subjects", an effective re-appropriation of Christianity according to Eboussi has to follow the same dynamic. This means giving a deliberate priority to aspects of Christianity which are related to the "business" of living rather than to "dogmas". This decision, which is rooted in the will to assume full responsibility in the acts of faith, now defines the context of the understanding of Christianity as a living heritage for Africans.

The option to focus on Christianity prior to dogmatic formulations does not intend to dismiss the validity of dogmas as a possible expression of Christianity, but it wants to take seriously the condition of their possibility, i.e. the life of a community. In effect, as Pelikan so concisely puts it, "doctrine is not the only, not even the primary, activity of the church. The church

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1 Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 87: "To emerge from alienated belief is to experience the transfiguring power of Christ prior to dogmas". [CWF, 85].

worships God and serves mankind, it works for the transformation of this world and awaits the consummation of its hope in the next." The aim of this chapter is to show how Eboussi re-situates the role of dogmas within the life of the Christian community and, thus, justifies the priority he gives to Christianity prior to dogmas as the essential context of an African re-appropriation. To achieve this, we will first present the methodological decision and implication of Eboussi's option; second, we will offer his critique of dogmas as formal reiteration of Christian identity and, third, we will clarify his understanding of dogmas as relational.

A - Prior to Dogmas: A Methodological Decision

Unlike many attempts at "inculturation" which focus on reinterpreting classical systematic theology themes such as: God, Christ, the Trinity, the Church and particular Sacraments

A Prior to Dogmas

Dogma has not always signified a "defined" doctrine requiring "assent" as propounded by Vatican I, and assumed by Eboussi and most of the contemporary theologians; see, P.M. O'Cleirigh, "The Meaning of Dogma in Origen" in Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, vol. 1, ed. E.P. Sanders (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), pp. 201-216. In classical Greek dogma can mean either thought/opinion or decision/decree according to a transitive or intransitive use of the verb dokein (transitive: to think; intransitive: to seem good). As thought or decree, dogma was still opened to discussion and challenge.


according to categories, symbols or rites taken from the African cultural context, Eboussi makes
the choice of understanding Christianity from Second Temple Judaism. In effect, the "Christic
phenomenon"\textsuperscript{10} which suggests the "Christic model"\textsuperscript{11}, fundamentally belongs to that period which
spans the period from after the construction of the second Temple (515 B.C.)\textsuperscript{12} up to its destruction
(A.D. 70).\textsuperscript{13} What characterizes that period and decisively determines Eboussi's choice can be
summed up in a single concept: crisis.\textsuperscript{14} In effect,

Here Judaism is experiencing limit-situations, it is learning how to
survive persecution and how to preserve its identity in the midst of
an irresistible, hostile civilization and empire. Here Judaism is

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\textit{Ecclesiology} (Nairobi: Initiatives, 1990); A. Sanon, \textit{Tierce Eglise ma Mère : ou la conversion d'une

\textsuperscript{9} L. Magesa, \textit{African Christian Marriage} (London: Chapman, 1971); J. Mbiti, \textit{Love and Marriage

\textsuperscript{10} The person of Jesus Christ as subsumed in the early Christian community.

\textsuperscript{11} The Christic model is Eboussi's interpretation of the "Christic phenomenon"; for further
development see, chapter 3. of this Part II: "The Christic-Phenomenon Reinterpreted."

\textsuperscript{12} The Babylonian army destroyed the remaining Israelite kingdom and marched the people into
exile in 587. With the fall of Babylon before the Persian army in 539, Cyrus II opened a new chapter in the
life of the Israelites with the return to Jerusalem and the construction of the Temple. But, one has to wait
up to Esdras (398 ?) [cf. Esdras 7:12-26] to see the recognition both by the Samaritans and the Judeans of
the Mosaic Law as the official Law of the new "State". See: H. Cazelles, \textit{Naissance de l'Eglise, Secte Juive

\textsuperscript{13} "L'époque où s'encracine le phénomène chrétien va des Macchabées (175 av. J.-C.) à la révolte de
Bar Kochba et la destruction de l'Etat-Nation des Juifs en 135 après Jésus-Christ" (Christianisme sans
fétiche, 91). Eboussi hardly elaborates on this delimitation (175 B.C. - A.D. 135). Because his main
concerns were Israel's crisis and Israel finding a solution to its crisis, history shows that the Maccabeans'
revolt was Israel's first serious insurrection against a foreign Power and the Bar Kochba's insurrection was
but the last serious one. From a religious perspective, one should note that with the Maccabeans' revolt,
evidence of a split within "Judaism" appears (one may speak of the many Judaisms); but, after Bar Kochba,
a "mainline" Judaism appears (the rabbinic Judaism) and Christianity is no longer perceived as part of
Judaism. On Christianity and Judaism as two separate entities after A.D. 135, see: Jack T. Sanders,

\textsuperscript{14} The first part of this dissertation has tried to present Eboussi's elaboration as grounded in the
 crisis resulting from the encounter with the West. One can now sense why Eboussi pays attention to Israel
during the second Temple.
undergoing its greatest and most lasting mutations.\textsuperscript{15}

Indeed, the post-exilic period has been marked by direct interferences of foreign powers in the life of Israel.\textsuperscript{16} The Persian policy, in spite of its apparent benevolence toward the Israelites, had led to a series of general revolts\textsuperscript{17}. Some prophetic writings of the time like Ezechiel (38-39), Isaiah (24-27), Deutero-Isaiah (63: 1-6), Zecharia (9-12), and Joel have been seen as early apocalyptic tendencies sanctioning the revolts.\textsuperscript{18} But the worst for the Israelites came with the Greek conquest\textsuperscript{19} and the subsequent deliberate policy of hellenization\textsuperscript{20} which led to the Maccabean\textsuperscript{21} revolt. Paradoxically, the Maccabean response to this crisis further divided Israelites: with rival political

\textsuperscript{15}Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 91. [CWF, 90].

\textsuperscript{16} Persian domination (539 - 332 B.C.), Greek domination (332 - 63 B.C.), and the Roman domination (63 B.C. to 70 A.D.). After 70 A.D. Palestine became a Roman Province.

\textsuperscript{17} See, Carroll Stuhlmueller, "Post-Exilic Period: Spirit, Apocalyptic" in Jerome Biblical Commentary (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968), pp. 340-342; he mentioned Darius I Hystaspis (521-486) who had to extinguish the revolts that had flared up through the empire, Artaxerxes II Mnemon (404-486) who placed a heavy fine on Jews, and Artaxerxes III Ochus (358-338) who put down insurrection "with great severity" (p. 341).

\textsuperscript{18} ibid., p. 341.


\textsuperscript{20} The hellenization of the Israelites started before Alexander the Great conquered Judea in 332; see: D. Auscher, "Les relations entre la Grèce et la Palestine avant la conquête d'Alexandre" in Vetus Testamentum 17 (1967) 8-30; H. Cazelles, Naissance de l'Eglise, p. 19; and, M. Hengel, Jews, Greeks and Barbarians, pp. 3-4. Hengel wrote: "Hardly any well-to-do home in Palestine will have been without Greek pottery, terra cotta and other luxury items, and Greek coinage, along with local imitation, had long been important means of payments." (p.4). According to Cazelles, the forcible hellenization came when Antiochus IV narrowly escaped death from the Roman general Popilius in Egypt: "Devenue définitivement province frontière, la Palestine devait être maintenant complètement hellénisée pour constituer un sûr rempart." (ibid., p. 31).

\textsuperscript{21} An account is found in 1-2 Maccabees. Complaints have been raised on the historical value of the texts. Speaking of the author of 1 & 2 Mac., Neil J. McElaney notes: "within the context of his culture and the canons of historiography then in force, he [author of 1 Mac.] is a trustworthy witness of men and events... Greater allowance must be made for the rhetorical nature of the "pathetic" historiography of 2 Mac." ("1-2 Maccabees" in The Jerome Biblical Commentary (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 461).
and cultic loyalties tearing the Nation already under foreign domination, alternative groups emerged as new and distinctive solutions to the crisis. Christianity itself emerged during the Roman domination. For Eboussi, Christianity, seen from this perspective, appears as an original contribution toward the solution of this persistent crisis.

The methodological decision to attempt an African re-appropriation of Christianity from within the Second Temple, in other words: prior to dogmatic definitions, is not without links with Eboussi's sense of a parallel situation between today's Africa and Israel of that time. But here, neither cults nor cultures or the deep religious sense of Israelites and Africans are objects of comparison. For Eboussi, the parallelism is in the "crisis": confrontation with limit-situations, need of preserving or redefining one's identity in the midst of an irresistible civilization claiming universality. To re-appropriate Christianity means to recapture the spirit of its origins, as it buoyed Israel in a life and death crisis. So, what counts is the spirit that gives life to the dogmas.


23 He writes: "Ainsi replacé dans son époque, la «secte» chrétienne naissante apparaît comme une réponse originale aux questions et aux aspirations communes, comme l'offre d'une nouvelle cohérence" (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 91. [CWF, 90]).

24 cf. the idea and practice of sacrificial rituals.

25 M. Hengel, Jews, Greeks and Barbarians, makes clear the same point when he writes: "In this context, 'Hellenism' does not mean just a historical period, say between Alexander's expedition (334 BC) and the battle of Actium (31 BC); it is to be understood as the designation of an apparently clearly defined culture which because of its aggressive character also sought to take over ancient Judaism." (p. 52). Italics are mine. "Aggressivity" and will to "take over" had characterized the Western colonial expansion in Africa.

26 "Notre thèse ou mieux notre hypothèse est la suivante: «Les questions d'une communauté singulière du temps passé sont encore les nôtres pour autant qu'elles étaient conditionnées, voire déterminées par l'avènement d'une problématique de l'universel qui somme les particularités de se comprendre et d'exister à partir d'un 'monde' perçu comme devenu un, de se dépasser en une nouveauté sans précédent, en une communauté sans dehors ni dedans»... Si le christianisme nait en réponse à une telle situation, sa problématique originaire est susceptible encore de répétition, qui n'est pas réitération de
not the spirit of the lifeless formulas of the dogmas.  

It follows that, in the Christic model, the Christic phenomenon is not primarily interpreted from the early Christian testimony, but from the Jewish situation up to the early formation of Christianity. The background of early Christianity becomes a serious hermeneutical principle in an African approach to Christianity, at least in Eboussi's perspective. As a consequence, we now have to take very seriously this other fact: up to 135 A.D. (at least), there seems to be no "one Judaism" nor "one Christianity" which "rabbinic Judaism" and "dogmatic Christianity" respectively tend to suggest. By setting the task of re-appropriation prior to dogmas, Eboussi has

l'identique, mais invention du même." (Christianisme sans fétique, pp. 88-89).

27 See the review of contemporary attempts to reinterpret the council of Chalcedon: Bernard Sesboüé, "Le procès contemporain de Chalcédoine" in Recherches de Science Religieuse 65/1 (1977) 45-80.

28 Joseph Bonsirven, Palestinian Judaism in the time of Jesus, trans., W. Wolf (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964) puts it this way: "As historians of the origins of Christianity the commentators of the New Testament are today convinced that they cannot accomplish their task without being acquainted with the Jewish milieu in which Christianity arose and began to develop." (p. v).

29 On the complexity of this background, see Everett Ferguson, Backgrounds of Early Christianity, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1987).

30 Cf. Jacob Neusner, Jews and Christians. The Myth of a Common Tradition (London: SCM Press, 1991). To the question: "can we identify one Judaism in the first centuries B.C.E. and C.E.?") Neusner answers: "There was no one orthodoxy, no Orthodox Judaism. There were various Judaisms." (op.cit., pp. 25-26.).


undoubtedly made an unprecedented decision about the "authoritative rules", - norma normans -, in theological interpretation. For Eboussi, it is clear that there were "as many canons as there were communities, a situation not entirely different from the case today, where the canons of the various communities: the Jewish, the Roman Catholic, the various Orthodox communions, and the Protestants, differ in significant ways." From this perspective, the dogmatic formulations first appear as formal reiteration of a communal identity.

B - Dogmas as Formal Reiteration

Eboussi's concern with dogmas arises from his strategic need to recapture Christianity where it offers itself as "life giving", in a situation of crisis. The dogmatic Christianity from which Eboussi is departing is not an abstract reality. It is the type of Christianity characterized by the

\[\text{EBOUSSI'S VIEWS ON DOGMAS}^{[33]}\]

Is Eboussi's decision unprecedented? What about the reformers' "sola scriptura"? The liberation theologians' hermeneutical principle: the poor? The feminist theologians' hermeneutics based on the revision of the "androcentric patriarchal culture and history" (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, New York: Crossroad, 1983, p. xv)? And, the African theologians insistence on the inescapable cultural dimension of theological elaboration? For all of them, Scripture still functions as a canon; it is not so with Eboussi. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza comes close to Eboussi's view when she asserts: "Methodologically, it will be necessary to go beyond the limits of the New Testament canon since it is a product of the patristic church, that is, a theological document of the «historical winners»" (In Memory of Her, p. xv.).

\[\text{SANDERS' VIEWS ON DOGMAS}^{[34]}\]

J.A. Sanders, "Scripture as Canon for Post-Modern Times" Biblical Theology Bulletin 25/2 (1995) 58, renders well Eboussi's views. This is how Eboussi himself puts it: "Où git le problème? Dans ce qu'on a appelé le conflit des interprétations... L'histoire, par ses mises en perspective, propose des époques de l'interprétation... Ainsi, il n'est pas possible de prendre pour normatif le genre d'exégèse que les Evangiles attribuent à Jésus ni celui auquel s'adonne Paul dans ses lettres. Nul, en Occident, n'oserait aujourd'hui se livrer à des commentaires scripturaires à la manière des Pères de l'Eglise... Les divisions confessionnelles, malgré le vent ecuménique, véhiculent encore des principes d'oppositions ou de divergences, et leur seule existence irréconciliable témoigne de l'irréductibilité actuelle des interprétations qui les soutiennent... L'exégèse moderne a contribué à abattre l'arrogance péremptoire des interprétations partisanes ou sectaires..." ("Christianisme comme Maladie et comme Guérison" in Croyance et Guérison, ed. M. Hebga (Yaoundé: Clé, 1973), p. 127.)
"language of orthodoxy"³⁵, the "missionary Christianity"³⁶. Being Christian is to possess the "exact formulation" of the articles of faith. In the African missions, memory often supplements the difficulties new converts had to grasp the conflicts and controversies behind each "article of faith". Having the right words to oppose, to counteract or to dismiss the others' views, - most of the time pagans or Christians of other confessions -, is in fact a way to assert one's commitment to a particular community. In a very subtle remark, Eboussi suggests that this happens because the "common reference to Jesus Christ is by no means a guarantee"³⁷ of faith. During the missionary activity of the West, dogmas defined the boundaries of the various Christian communities or confessions. They function as an assertion of identity, a formal reiteration of the self understanding of the community.

So, in Eboussi's perspective, the question is not the possibility or the "transcendental necessity for man as mind and spirit to affirm certain truths absolutely,"³⁸ a possibility or necessity which justify the Christian church's right to explicitly propound a "proposition" as "fides divina et catholica", i.e. "as revealed by God (D 1792; CIC, can. 1323, ## 1,2), in such a way that its denial is condemned by the Church as heresy and anathematized (CIC, can. 1325, # 2; 2314, # 1)."³⁹

³⁵ "D'autres peuvent surpasser le chrétien en vertus, mais à lui seul a été confié le dépôt de la foi, de la connaissance du vrai Dieu. La foi est orthodoxie ou elle n'est pas." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 45). Italics are mine.

³⁶ For Eboussi, Christianity is not a general idea; indeed, as he notes "le Christianisme en soi n'existe que comme concept-limite, tout comme l'état de nature: il ne se rencontre que dans la condition toujours historique..." ("L'Africain Chrétien" in A Contretemps, p. 52).

³⁷ "Et puisque la commune référence à Jésus-Christ n'est pas une garantie, que des églises et des sectes antagonistes surgissent, la confession de la foi inclura le rejet implicite ou explicite des croyances hérétiques. En chrétienté cette visée polémique devient directe, le fait d'être chrétien, allant de soi, est une visée indirecte et oblique. Ce qui sera transmis en pays de missions sera ce langage de l'orthodoxie angoissée des différentes confessions..." (Christianisme sans fétiche, pp. 45-46).


³⁹ Ibid., p. 354.
question, or more precisely, what is at stake in such a formal dogmatic formulation is the whole business of "conversion". In the context of dogmatic Christianity, the act of faith, according to Eboussi is "less a conversion than an integration into a Christendom fragmented and captive of its own dissemination." Here, the acceptance of faith has more to do with the identity of a community (defined by a set of beliefs) than with "Christ and the power of his resurrection" (Philippians 3:10).

To overcome the bitter dissatisfaction which trails every dogmatic formulation, attempts have been made to foster the idea of a "development of dogma", following the "history" of dogmatic formulation(s). In his contribution to this trend, Jaroslav Pelikan has defined the Christian doctrine as: "What the church of Jesus Christ believes, teaches, and confesses on the basis of the word of God". One of his main contributions is his shift from the exclusive focus on "what is confessed" (dogmas as normative statements) to its correlation with "what is believed" (devotion, spirituality, and worship) and "what is taught" (proclamation, instruction, church theology). By so integrating what is believed and taught to what is confessed, Pelikan was renewing the insight of the old saying: *Lex orandi, lex credendi*. No doubt, this perspective offers more chance to escape from the vicious circle of reasoning upon a previous rationalization which, 

40 "Il s'ensuit que la réception de la foi sera moins une conversion que l'intégration dans la chrétienté éclatée et captive de sa dissémination." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 46. [CWF, 42]).


43 Cf. Ibid., p. 4.

44 See, E. Lindbeck, The Nature of Doctrine. Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984). To resolve the "quarter century of growing dissatisfaction with the usual ways of thinking about those norms of communal belief and action", Lindbeck offers a "postliberal way of conceiving religion and religious doctrine", that is: "a theory of religion and religious
in Catholic circles, has already driven theologians on the unending road of scholastic distinction.\textsuperscript{45}

Nevertheless, even with Pelikan's perspective where "creed"\textsuperscript{46} is correlated to "cult" as its original \textit{Sitz im Leben}, and to conduct as their common translation in daily life situations, doctrines/dogmas still function primarily as self definition of the Christian confessions\textsuperscript{47}. Indeed, if "it is to the conflicts of the sixteenth century that most Christian denominations in the West, not least Roman Catholicism itself, must trace the origins of their present doctrinal positions\textsuperscript{48}, then "faith", i.e. "saving knowledge" of "salvation" becomes the acceptance of one Christian doctrine that ... is not specifically ecumenical, nor Christian, nor theological" (p.7). In a catchword: "A theory of religion and doctrine cannot be ecumenically useful unless it is nonecumenically plausible." (p.8). In this perspective, priority is given to "philosophical and social-scientific approaches" (p.7). See Eboussi's critique of these approaches in "L'Enjeu de Dieu en Afrique" in \textit{A Contretemps}, pp. 173-175.


\textsuperscript{46} It is important to note that the council of Nicaea's "greatest achievement was the definition of the faith composed in the form of a creed." (cf. Introductory Note to the Council of Nicaea in \textit{Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils}, vol. 1., ed. Norman Tanner (London/Washington: Sheed \& Ward/Georgetown Univ. Press, 1990), p. 2. While the "canons" of the council define the "external" limits of the community, the creed sets forth the principle of "internal" cohesion.


\textsuperscript{48} J. Pelikan, \textit{The Christian Tradition}, vol. 4., p. 1. See also, M. de Certeau, "\textit{Faire de l'Histoire}": "La détermination de ce l'on connaît, quand on est Catholique ou Réformé, fournit à la communauté son mode d'identité et de distinction. Les catéchismes changent remodelés par l'urgence de ces définitions qui circonscrivent à la fois des contenus intellectuels et des limites socio-institutionnelles." (p. 490).
denomination's particular confession and interpretation of Revelation. In spite of the claim of "confessing" one Christ and of having one "Scripture", and despite the many efforts to ecumenism, the present historical fact is that there is no "real communion" among the various denominations. In fact, as Eboussi points out, none of these denominations are ready to envision themselves as "not necessary".

According to Eboussi, Africans should be free vis-à-vis these confessional fights. As they resolutely move toward a new historical initiative and responsibility in re-appropriating Christianity, doctrines or dogmas can only be meaningful and useful if they constantly reflect the spirit of their origin.

C - Dogmas as Relational

If being Christian is more than the confession of a particular creed and, thus, more than belonging to a specific denomination, then dogmas need not to be taken in themselves as essential. In spite of their internal consistency and coherence, dogmas, for Eboussi, are relational. Their full

49 Cf. The controversies around the meaning of "salvation" and the "means of salvation" which grew in the Middle Ages as a theological discussion has been transformed in line of demarcation during the "Reformation" and the "Counter-Reformation"; the antithetic positions are famous: *sola fide*/faith and work, *sola gratia*/human nature as cooperative, *sola scriptura*/scripture and tradition, *sola Christi*/Church and sacraments as efficacious.

50 "Le catholicisme missionnaire est ouvertement et agressivement antiprotestant, mais les protestants ne sont pas en reste de fanatisme. Chaque confession croit détenir la totalité de la vérité chrétienne. Toutes, elles canonisent leur unilatérales antithétiques, qu'elles brandissent les unes contre les autres." ("Pour une catholicité" in *A Contretemps*, p. 100).

51 "Il serait déraisonable, dans ces conditions, de donner une valeur absolue à notre appartenance confessionnelle, due aux hasard de la colonisation ou aux aléas de la compétition religieuse et d'épouser sans esprit critique une polémique plusieurs fois centenaire, qui n'a rien d'une interpellation positive que la vie et Dieu nous adressent en ce tournant de notre histoire." ("Pour une catholicité" in *A Contretemps*, p.101). Paraphrasing the gospel, Eboussi can say: "L'Africain est appelé à laisser les morts enterrer leurs morts." (*L'Africain chrétien* in *A Contretemps*, p. 53).
meanings are made manifest only in relation to what they signify: God in his mystery and, in relation to what they command: the recognition of God and the ethical responsibility toward fellow human beings. It means that the self-definition of a believing community will remain empty as long as it fails to set free its members 1) when they have to undergo their own experience of that which has been taught of God; and, 2) when they come to encounter the rest of humanity.

Whatever the definition of dogma may be, as far as Eboussi is concerned, what is at stake is the "community" with its understanding of "self" and "others". The recovery of the relational dimension of dogmas intends to break from the tendency to exclusivism inherent to any self-definition of a group claiming "special privileges". The pretension of a community to have a unique abiding truth about God simply ignores the fundamental basic fact that, as a community, it has both a "language" and a "history" which are not just coextensive with itself. If such a

52 "Les articles de foi ont un être relationel: ils se terminent tout à la fois à Dieu, à son mystère et à l'ensemble des opérations, des conduites que sa reconnaissance déclenche et qui la signifient. Coupés de cette double référence, ils restent apparemment intacts, mais sont compatibles avec n'importe quoi." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 87. [CWF, 85]).

53 Cf. "L'enjeu de Dieu" in A Contretemps, pp. 195-215. Our presentation of dogmas as relational will essentially focus on these pages.

54 Either one belongs to the community or one does not. So, in spite of all its openness, one can still read in Vatican II, Lumen Gentium ("Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), #14: "... those cannot be saved who refuse to enter the church or to remain in it, if they are aware that the Catholic church was founded by God through Jesus Christ as a necessity for salvation" (Decrees of Ecumenical Councils, vol.2., ed. Norman Tanner (London/Washington DC: Sheed & Ward/Georgetown University Press, 1990), p. 860.). Italics are mine. One can point at the crucial note of the conditional clause "If they are aware..." The moral obligation in this case is in strict correlation with the necessity of the Church as a means founded by God for salvation.

55 The idea of election which has characterized Israel and, has been taken up by Christianity is fully in question here. Eboussi openly challenges its Christian expression when he questions the notion of "Revelation"; see, Infra, chapter 4. "God-talk Revisited." On the "election" and Israel's understanding of itself as "people of God", see: Joseph Bonsirven, Palestinian Judaism in the Time of Jesus, trans. W. Wolf (New-York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), especially Ch.3. "The People of God. Israel and the Nations".

56 "En d'autres termes, il n'existe pas et il ne peut pas exister une religion, dont la structure rituelle et dogmatique soit le reflet bi-univoque d'une structure de significations indépendantes..." ("L'Enjeu de Dieu", p. 180).
community or group ever existed, the present context in which Africans are attempting their reappropriation of Christianity offers no room for its survival.⁵⁷

That a group or religious community has a language which is not coextensive with itself means: 1) that such a group or community does not create *ex nihilo* its own symbols and meanings; 2) that even its dogmatic expressions cannot be an absolutely original and unique creation⁵⁸, unless these expressions are intrinsically bound to the contents as given or revealed by the deity. In the case of our present concern, Christianity has taken and used the existing realm of meaning offered by Greek and Latin to explicate its own "experience" with, as we know, the possibility of overlapping meaning as the same concepts and symbols serve different language games.⁵⁹

Precisely because the dogmatic expressions embodied in the Christian confessions are part of a "language game" which extends beyond any Christian denomination, none of the Christian denominations can pretend to offer an absolutely original truth about God exclusive to itself. In a way, "language" limits any dogmatic claim by excluding the possibility of an experience which could be beyond any language.⁶⁰ By pointing to the fact that Christianity does not create an exclusive original language which matches its "unique" or "absolute" experience of God, Eboussi

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⁵⁷ “Il faut y insister: on n'a plus que des sous-systèmes insérés dans un champ abstrait qui les relativise, celui que constituent et délimitent le réseau des interdépendances et le mouvement d'expansion de la technologie scientifique." ("L'Enjeu de Dieu", p. 197).

⁵⁸ “Ne pouvant constituer un jeu de langage complètement original, le langage de l'affirmation de l'existence des objets divins importe, avec ses mots, leurs valeurs d'usage dans d'autres jeux de langage." ("L'Enjeu de Dieu", p. 200.).

⁵⁹ "On joue de l'équivoque lorsque, par exemple, l'on déclare que la Révélation (ou la Résurrection) est historique. Il s'agit de l'histoire telle que la foi la détermine, la comprend et l'interprète, mais on ne doit pas comprendre que la Révélation « repose sur une base historique » au sens où ce serait la connaissance normale des faits survenus qui pourrait lui servir de fondement... A vrai dire, ce qu'on appelle « fait » est constitué différemment dans l'histoire crue et dans l'histoire sue: il n'y a aucun passage direct de l'un à l'autre." ("L'Enjeu de Dieu", pp. 200-201.)

⁶⁰ "Le langage est la forme de cette finitude temporelle et discursive. Il est intérieur à l'expérience de celle-ci et « rien n'est sans langage », rien de ce que concerne l'homme ou en tant qu'il le concerne" ("L'Enjeu de Dieu", p. 202).
intends to nuance the idea of a foundational experience; or, to put it more positively, he wants to reassert that dogmas (doctrines) belong to a particular history just as Christianity, as a whole, has its own history. Because of its root into a particular history, an effective critique as well as an effective re-appropriation has, in turn, to be rooted in a context. That is why Eboussi can legitimize his enterprise of re-appropriation prior to the dogmatic formulation:

In order to understand the "words of faith" and to bestow a meaning on them, both [the African critique and re-appropriation] pay attention to the circumstances and the context of their use, the attitudes and ways of living which they imply or that sustain them.

So, Eboussi proposes to take us back to the larger context within which Christianity emerged as a response to the question of "existence". Perhaps, one of the distinctive features characteristic of Christianity, will be its "razing the bastion" dividing humanity (the sons and daughters of God) in deadly or irreconcilable opposition: Jews and Gentiles, the Chosen and the Ungodly, the Free and the Slaves, Men and Women etc. According to Eboussi, the Christic model is a distinctive answer to the problematic of universality faced by Israel's particular uniqueness.

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61 "La notion d'expérience soulève des difficultés au fait de placer l'origine d'une expérience fondatrice dans l'individu ou dans la société. L'expérience n'est que par les individus et les individus ne sont que par le langage; le langage ne réside que dans la parole des individus, mais celle-ci n'est pas sans la société et il n'y a pas de société sans langage, il n'y a de société que par le langage et les individus qui parlent. Nous sommes dans une circularité sans antériorité possible d'un des «éléments» sur les autres, dans la tentative de genèse «absolue»" ("L'Enjeu de Dieu", p. 202). Italics are mine.

62 Christianisme sans fétique, p. 7. [CWF, 1]; "Le présent ouvrage a pour but d'expliquer de fonder une critique et une reprise africaines du christianisme. L'une et l'autre se veulent non doctrinales, parce que pour comprendre «les mots de la foi» et leur conférer un sens, elles ont le souci des circonstances et du contexte de leur utilisation, des attitudes et des façons de vivre qu'ils induisent ou qui les soutiennent."
Ch. 2. Horizon: Problematic of the Universal

Pour bien comprendre le Nouveau Testament et l'oeuvre de Jésus de Nazareth, il importe d'avoir une vue claire des problèmes et des tensions qui commandaient alors la vie d'Israël.

Henri Cazelles.¹

Introduction

"Joshua summoned all Israel, their elders and heads, their judges and officers, and said to them, «I am now old and well advanced in years; and you have seen all that the Lord your God has done to all these nations for your sake, for it is the Lord your God who has fought for you. Behold, I have allotted to you as an inheritance for your tribes those nations that remain... Therefore be very steadfast to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left, that you may not be mixed with these nations left here among you, or make mention of the names of their gods, or swear by them, or serve them, or bow down yourselves to them... For if you turn back, and join the remnant of these nations... they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a scourge on your sides, and thorns in your eyes, till you perish from off this good land which the Lord your God has given you.»"²

¹ Naissance de l'Église. Secte juive rejetée?, p. 7: "To understand the N.T. and the work of Jesus of Nazareth, it is important to have a clear picture of the problems and tensions which affected Israel's life..."

² Joshua 23: 2-13. The translation is from the Revised Standard Version (London: Collins, 1973). These were also the conditions put forth by Moses to the Israelites if they were to take possession of the promised land; see, Deuteronomy 4.
This long quotation from Joshua's farewell address (23:1-16) to the Israelites offers the condensed form of "a narrative of sacred history" which will evolve into Christianity as "history of salvation". But, most importantly, it bears the germs of the fall and the rising of Israel. The First Temple had been destroyed in the midst of the outcry of the Prophets denouncing Israel's unfaithfulness to his God and his ordinances (Law). Amazingly, almost in the same terms as Joshua, the Second Temple started with the pledge to faithfulness now associated with a curse if Israel failed to live up to the Law. The "uniqueness" of God's "election" which seals Israel in its "particularity" is paradoxically the inescapable trap of the question of "universality". How is Israel to deal with an aggressive encounter from the nations while steadfastly keeping and doing "all that is written in the book of the law of Moses"? That is the question which the many "movements".


4 Jeremiah will remain the prophet who delivered the most impassioned plea for the return of all Israel, - from the kings to the priests, the prophets and the people -, to God. See, Jeremiah 1:16-18; 2:6-8; 4:4-9; 9:11; 31:31-33.


6 "Comment prétendre qu'on est le peuple élu, lorsqu'on est une minorité parfois «odieuse», mal intégrée à la «civilisation», quand on est une nation colonisée et assujettie? Comment se redéfinir, préserver son identité, sa «mission ou sa vocation», sans mettre en péril sa survie biologique? A ces questions, les mouvements et les courants religieux s'efforcent de répondre." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 91. [CWF,90]).

7 Eboussi uses the word "mouvement" in contrast with "courant" which I translate as "trend". Emphasis should not be put on the meaning of these words but to what they intend to signify, i.e. organised groups or shared ideas and practices: "Le mouvement se forme autour d'un personnage-totem, il est organisé. Le courant est diffus et traverse les groupes" (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 92. [CWF, 91]). Following Josephus, Eboussi considers as "movements": the Sadduccées, the Pharisees, the Essenes, and the Zealots. Christianity for him is also a movement. On Josephus and these various groups, see: Jean Le
and "trends" from the Maccabees to Bar Kochba had been answering. For Eboussi, Christianity emerged, in the same dynamic, as being one more answer.

The present chapter, which consists of two parts, intends to articulate Eboussi's understanding of the major Jewish groups of the Second Temple as answers to the challenge of "universality". The first presents Jesus' era as an era in which culture and civilization clash. The second part focuses on the various solutions to the situation. These attempts to solve the cultural and religious crisis of Israel will be the essential and inalienable background of Christianity.

A - Era of Jesus: Clash of Cultures and Civilization

The era of Jesus, for Eboussi, is not limited to the time spanning his birth to his death. To be very precise, it is not even the whole "Second Temple" as I may have suggested by using this designation. It is the period spanning the Maccabean revolts up to the insurrection of Bar Kochba,


As "trends", Eboussi mentions "Baptism", "Apocalyptic", and "Hellenistic Judaism".

"Ainsi remplacée dans son époque, la «secte» chrétienne naissante apparaît comme une réponse originale aux questions et aux aspirations communes, comme l'offre d'une nouvelle cohérence." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 91. [CWF, 90]).

It is important to note that Eboussi has given few historical facts to sustain his argument. Our contribution here consists in probing and substantiating his views.

The expression "Second Temple" chronologically refers to the temple rebuilt by the returned exiles (cf. Ezra 1:1-6:22), but it also encompasses the wonderful and magnificent reconstruction of Herod which was destroyed in A.D. 70. As Robert North puts it in his commentary on the Book of Ezra: "Today's Jewish people rather tenderly favor the expression 'Second Temple'... But it focuses chiefly on the single century that fostered the three most controversial phenomena of all Jewish history: the baptizing sectaries of Qumran and elsewhere; Hillel and Shamrai; Jesus and Paul... Jewish tradition never speaks of Herod's as a 'Third Temple', doggedly regarding it as a mere repair job on the Temple of Zerubbabel." ("The Chronicler: 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah" in The Jerome Biblical Commentary (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 428).
i.e. from around 175 B.C. to A.D. 135. According to Eboussi, what characterizes this period as an "era" is that it provides "cohesion and certitude: the "framework within which one thinks, acts, and protests", as well as it expresses the "tensions and violence, the obscure needs and aspirations in search of formulation and satisfaction." In other words, what makes this period the "era" to which Jesus belongs is that it corresponds to the context, - both historical and geographical -, within which the "deeds" and "words" of Jesus are meaningful.

Eboussi's delimitation of the era of Jesus is neither "neutral" nor "arbitrary". In effect, if the second Temple Judaism does not start with the Maccabbeans' revolt, the latter nevertheless constitutes a turning point in Jewish life. Indeed, with the victory of the Maccabees came the Hasmonean dynasty which transformed the small community of Judaea into a conquering

12 175 B.C. corresponds to the beginning of Jason's term as High Priest and his move toward radical hellenization (cf. 2 Maccabees 4:9). But, in fact, Jason was not free vis-à-vis Antiochus IV who named him High Priest; see, H. Cazelles, Naissance de l'église, pp. 27-28.

13 A.D. 135 corresponds to the suppression by Emperor Hadrian of the Jewish insurrection led by Bar Kochba.

14 This is by the way Eboussi's definition of an "era": "Mais qu'est-ce qu'une époque? Elle est doublement caractérisée. D'abord, par ce qui d'elle va de soi, sans dire. C'est ce qui procure cohésion et certitude, le cadre à l'intérieur duquel on pense, on agit et on conteste... Ensuite, une époque se distingue par ce qui d'elle est non-maîtrisé, refoulé ou réprimé et qui s'exprime par des tensions et la violence, par ce qu'elle comporte de besoins et d'aspirations obscures en quête de formulation et de satisfaction." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 90. [CWF, 89]).

15 What Eboussi has tentatively suggested is well formulated by Jacob Neusner in his Preface to Origins of Judaism, vol.1., History of the Jews in the Second and First Centuries B.C., ed. J. Neusner (New York/London: Garland Publishing, 1990): "That event (the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E.) marked the end of the Jews' mode of worship through sacrifice in the Jerusalem Temple and it further concluded the history of autonomy and self-government under a recognized, territorial authority that had begun so many centuries earlier." (p. v.). Eboussi is concerned with this period when efforts were being made to salvage Jewish "worship", "autonomy" and "self-government".

16 A contemporary Jewish scholar, J. Klausner, Jésus de Nazareth wrote: "Sans ces victoires-là, il n'y aurait jamais eu de Palestine juive. L'état juif serait resté la 'Judée', un tout petit district de Syrie, une province oubliée de la 'Palestine' et nous n'aurions ni le Talmud, ni le christianisme." (p. 197; quoted by Le Moyne, Les Sadducéens, p. 384).

17 On the history of the Hasmonean rise to power, see: 1-2 Maccabees. The historical value of these has been questioned. But, in spite of the nationalist zeal and the anti-Seleucid bias of 1 Maccabees, and the "rhetorical nature of the 'pathetic' historiography of 2 Maccabees", both accounts give significant
Paradoxically, the victorious Hasmonean dynasty was also the cause of major and bitter splits within Jewish society. In fact, in spite of historical uncertainties surrounding the origin of the Sadducees and the Pharisees, it is during the Hasmonean period that they appeared as antagonistic groups. Long before the Sadducees and the Pharisees were mentioned, right in the midst of the wars, the Hasideans had already distanced themselves from the Maccabees after participating, for a while, in their military expeditions. It was also during this period that the Jews of the Diaspora in Egypt had their temple built at Leontopolis by Onias IV, the fugitive son of information about Mattathias and Judas Maccabee as they fought to regain control of the promised land and to foster faithfulness to the Law of Moses. Jonathan, son of Mattathias was the first Hasmonean High Priest (152-143/2); Simon took over from 142/1-136. Then, up to Hyrkanus II (76-67) the Hasmonean dynasty ruled over the Jews.

18 The Book of Ezra and the Book of Nehemiah give an account of this community rebuilding itself after Cyrus, the Persian king, took over Babylon (539/8) and allowed the repatriation of the Jews.

19 See, 1-2 Maccabees: John Hirkanus (134-104) was at the origin of the war against the Samaritans and the destruction of their sanctuary; he also captured Idumaea. His successor, Aristobulus I (104-103) annexed Ituraea and forced its inhabitants to have themselves circumcised. For more information see, J. Le Moyne, Les Sadducéens, pp. 381-385, with references to Josephus' War and Antiquities.

20 See, J. Le Moyne, Les Sadducéens. He offers an excellent presentation and review of the available data and the scholarly discussion on the Sadducees as a group by themselves. See, especially pp. 321-363 for a summary.


22 Even Jacob Z. Lauterbach, "The Sadducees and Pharisees: a Study of their Respective Attitudes towards the Law" in Origins of Judaism, vol. 2., part 2., The Pharisees and Other Sects, pp. 34-56, with his attempt to trace back the origin of the two groups as early as the return of Ezra (cf. p. 38) recognizes that the real split occured during the Hasmonean period (cf. p. 40; especially, footnote #2).

23 The Hasideans first appeared on the side of the Maccabeans as a distinct group in 1 Maccabees 2:42-48. But in 1 Maccabees 7:13-14, they were seeking peace; that indicates that the rift had already occured. Some commentators see in them the forerunners of the Pharisees and the Essenes; see: Neil J. McElaney, "1-2 Maccabees" in The Jerome Biblical Commentary; H. Cazelles, Naissance de l'église, pp. 63-64. J. Le Moyne, Les Sadducéen, p. 35, is more cautious; so is A. J. Saldarini, Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees, p. 252 who wrote: "The Hasideans have most often been treated as a well defined sect or cohesive group who later spawned the Pharisees, Scribes and perhaps other second century Jewish groups, but nothing in the wording of 1 Maccabees suggests this..." On the weakness of the hypothesis that Hasideans are forerunners of Pharisees or Essenes see, Philip Davies, "Hasidim in the Maccabean Period" Journal of Jewish Studies 28 (1977) 127-140.
Onias III. For Eboussi, what matters most is not the history of the formation of these different "groups" or "sects". What counts, and thus legitimates his delimitation, is the clear perception of these groups as various and distinctive contributions to Israel's crisis.

The crisis is a direct confrontation of the Jewish culture with, successively, Greek and Roman civilization in their imperial expansion. Indeed, the Maccabean revolt was not primarily directed against the ongoing Hellenization of Jewish life, but to the radical and almost systematic

24 See, H. Cazelles, Naissance de l'église, pp. 27-28. The misfortune of the priesthood which led to the Maccabean's revolt in 167 B.C. started with the defeat of Antiochus III at Magnesius in 189 B.C. In order to pay tribute to Rome, the defeated Seleucid king turned to the resources of the temple of Jerusalem. After his assassination, Onias III, then high priest, was summoned to Antioch for explanation. He will never return. His brother Joshua, now called Jason, was named high priest by Antiochus IV. In return, he pledged to pay three hundred and sixty talents of silver to Antiochus and a hundred and fifty more if he could build a gymnasium and a youth centre (cf. 2 Maccabees 4:7-10). Onias IV who fled to Egypt set up the temple of Leontopolis (c. 160 B.C.) which many Jews of the Diaspora in Egypt attended. This temple survived only three years the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) by the same Roman. See, Th. Reinach, Textes d'auteurs grecs et romains relatifs au judaïsme (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagshandlung, 1963), pp. 89-90, esp. footnotes #1 & 2, p. 90.

25 Eboussi uses the term "sect" to designate Christianity in this period; see, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 98. He basically assumes the usage of the term in Josephus as denoting the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Essenes and the Zealots: "Josèphe appelle les mouvements «hérésie», c'est-à-dire «sectes», marquant ainsi leur caractère optatif." (Ibid., p. 92). On Josephus' use of "hairesis" and the adequate translation of this Greek word, see: A.J. Saldarini, Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees, pp. 123-127; J. Le Moyne, Les Sadduceens, pp. 32-33. Le Moyne gives a table of the various uses and synonymous expressions which appear in Josephus' War and Antiquities; see, p. 33. He rejects the translation "sect" because "ce mot, en français, évoque tout de suite des gens qui se sont séparés d'un groupe plus large pour constituer une association autonome. Or il ne s'agit nullement de cela pour les Pharisiers, Sadducéens et Esseniens... ce sont des groupes faisant partie intégrante du peuple juif" (Ibid., p. 34). Saldarini, for his part, prefers the translation of "hairesis" by "school": "A Hairesis was a coherent and principled choice of a way of life, that is, of a particular school of thought." (Ibid., pp. 123 & 127).


27 According to H Cazelles, Naissance de l'église, p. 19, hellenization has started before Alexander's conquest in 332 B.C. F.-M. Abel, "Hellenisme et orientalisme en Palestine au déclin de la période Séleucide." Revue Biblique 53 (1946) 385-402 shows that forced Hellenization was resented by the orientals. But, there were areas of progressive Hellenization such as the army, the administration, the mystery cults, art, personal names and, inter-racial marriage. As Daniel Harrington puts it: "The inroads of Hellenism were felt in Palestine from the late fourth century BC in economic matters, military strategy, language and cultus. Even the celebrated resistance to Hellenism by Judas Maccabeus and his brothers in
endeavour of Antiochus IV\textsuperscript{28} to unify the Seleucid empire with the complicity of the religious and political leader of Israel: the high priest\textsuperscript{29}. The most representative symbols of the Jewish identity were openly challenged and threatened to disappear: the erection of an altar for the worship of Zeus in the temple of Jerusalem where Yahweh is supposed to be, by covenant, the only God, was both an infringement of the covenant and a scandalous denial of Israel's identity, i.e. its \textit{election} among the nations, as a people endowed with God's own \textit{Law}, under God's exclusive protection and benediction. What was at stake was Israel's "uniqueness". For the Greeks the claim of the Jews was "contrary to humanity and hospitality"\textsuperscript{30}. So, Posidonius of Apameus' account of Antiochus' siege of Jerusalem and the profanation of the temple can emphasize the refusal of the Jews to associate themselves with the "nations" as contrary to humanity.\textsuperscript{31} Perhaps what was unbearable for the Greeks was the stubborn affection of the Jews for their "barbaric" culture, their lack of openness to

\footnotesize{the second century BC led ultimately to greater Hellenization..." ("A New Paradigm for Paul." \textit{America} 157/12 (1987), p. 291).

\textsuperscript{28} Cf. 1 Maccabees 1:41-64. Antiochus did not only proscribe Judaism by an Edict, he also imposed the pagan cult upon the Jews and, on December 7, 167, erected an altar to Zeus in the Temple of Jerusalem: that was the "desolating abomination" (1 Mac. 1:54).

\textsuperscript{29} See, Jason requesting a gymnasium and a youth center in Jerusalem and his readiness to pay tribute to Antiochus IV; see, 2 Maccabees 4:7-10.

\textsuperscript{30} Hécatée d'Abdère reported by Diodore, \textit{LX}, 3. in Théodore Reinach, \textit{Textes d'auteurs grecs et romains relatifs au judaïsme}, p. 17. Hécatée was referring to Moses saying: "Les sacrifices et les coutumes qu'il établait étaient entièrement différents de ceux des autres nations; par souvenir de l'exil de son peuple, \textit{il institua un genre de vie contraire à l'humanité et à l'hospitalité.}" (p. 17). Italics are mine.

\textsuperscript{31} The following quotations are from Posidonius of Apameus (c. 135 B.C.) taken from Diodorus of Sicile, \textit{XXXIV}, fr. 1, in Théodore Reinach, \textit{Textes d'auteurs grecs et romains relatifs au judaïsme}, pp. 56-59: "Le roi Antiochus assiégait Jérusalem... La plupart des amis d'Antiochus étaient d'avis qu'il fallait s'emparer de la ville de vive force, et \textit{anéantir complètement la race juive: car seule de toutes les nations, elle refusait d'avoir aucun rapport de sociétés avec les autres peuples, et les considérait tous comme des ennemis}" (p.56). "...Ils avaient institués des \textit{lois toutes spéciales}, comme de ne jamais s'asseoir à table avec un étranger et de ne montrer aucune bienveillance pour eux." (p.57). "Antiochus, surnommé Epiphané... avait pénétré dans le sanctuaire de leur dieu... Il y trouva la statue en pierre d'un homme à longue barbe, monté sur un âne, tenant un livre dans les mains: il pensa que cette statue représentait Moïse, le fondateur de Jérusalem et l'organisateur du peuple juif; celui qui avait imposé des \textit{lois contraires à l'humanité et à la justice}... sur l'autel découvert de leur dieu, \textit{il sacrifia une énorme truie et y répandit le sang de la bête... enfin, il força le grand prêtre et les autres Juifs à manger les chairs de la victime.}" (p.58). Italics are mine; they indicate the points of contention in the relation between the Jewish culture and the Greek civilization.
the "civilization" of the conquerors of the world, the teachers of laws, philosophy and peace.32

Paradoxically, according to Joshua (23:1-16) and Nehemia (10:29-31), any association of Israel with the nations can but lead to the loss of its humanity. "To be or not to be" with the nations? That is the knot of Israel's crisis. The Maccabean solution was a total war against the invaders. To consolidate their victory, on the one hand they extended the war to the neighbouring nations, circumcising everyone; and, on the other, they combined and centralized the political and the religious powers in one person, the High Priest.33 The Hasideans disagreed with them; and so will, with different emphasis, the Pharisees, the Sadducees and other sects/groups.34

B - Other Responses to the Crisis

Even if the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, and the Zealots were but "small groups", perhaps of little interest for their contemporaries, they did bring to "an extreme expression common beliefs of the nation at large"35. Precisely for Eboussi, each of these extreme expressions

32 See, Martin Hengel, Jews, Greeks and Barbarians, especially ch.7.

33 Cf. Daniel J. Harrington, The Maccabean Revolt, Anatomy of a Biblical Revolution (Wilmington: M. Glazier, 1988), p. 127: "From being in danger of cultural and religious extinction the Jews of Palestine moved to a form of religious life that was both traditional and adaptable to the realities of the time. In the crisis period under Jason and Menelaus the fate of Judaism (and with it Christianity and Islam) was uncertain. The result of the Maccabean revolt was a Judaism with both clear definition and flexibility." Italics are mine.

34 Cf. Ibid., p. 128: "Despite 1 Maccabees there was no unanimity among Jews and a good deal of opposition to the Maccabees from both the pious and the 'lawless'."

35 Jacob Neusner, "Preface" to Origins of Judaism, vol. 2., part 2., The Pharisees and Other Sects, p. v. Neusner believes that "our interest in these small, if suggestive and later influential, groups, exceeds that of their contemporaries." (Ibid., p. vi).
is rooted in the "common beliefs"; moreover, each of them intends\(^36\) to be an adequate response to the crisis faced by Israel as it encountered the aggressive and imperial Greek and Roman civilizations.\(^37\)

Besides the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes and the Zealots mentioned by Josephus\(^38\), Eboussi presents some "currents" of thought: baptism, apocalypticism and Hellenistic Judaism, as integral parts of the many solutions to the crisis. In our present exposition, it seems more adequate to integrate these currents into the various groups within which they were effectively determining elements. In addition, notwithstanding the fact that these groups interacted with each other, we deliberately focus on Eboussi's insight that they were fundamentally addressing the same problem\(^39\): under the compulsion of mighty civilization, how to keep and do all that is written in

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\(^36\) Henry Cadbury, *The Peril of Modernizing Jesus* (1937; reissued, London: 1962) has been against attributing a consciously intended programme to Jesus. But, E.P. Sanders, *Jews and Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1985) thinks that "consciously intended programmes were not as alien to the ancient world as he [Cadbury] suggests, nor need we look far to find instances. Two of the sectarian or semi-secarian groups in Judaism of Jesus' day had such programmes: the habarim and the Essenes." (p. 20).

\(^37\) "Israël élabore des stratégies de survie face à la sujétion et au danger de destruction. L'instauration des monarchies hellénistiques est décisive à cet égard. C'est, en effet, durant la lutte contre elles que Sadducéens et Pharisiens font leur apparition." (*Christianisme sans fétiche*, p. 92. [CWF, 91]).

\(^38\) Eboussi barely mentioned Josephus on p. 92. of *Christianisme sans fétiche* [CWF, 91]. He hardly gives references for other sources which he consulted. But, this is true for almost all of his writings. The reason can be found in his review of Achille Mbembe, *Afriques Indociles* (Paris: Karthala, 1988): "... Quatre cent quarante-huit (448) auteurs de livres et d'articles sont convoqués pour «étayer des affirmations» ou «pour nuancer des affirmations trop abruptes». Assurément, cet énorme amoncellement de lectures n'est ni pédantrie ni alibi pour éviter l'effort pénible de penser à ses propres risques... Mais il n'en est pas moins vrai que la dépendance vis-à-vis des auteurs qui s'étale dans cette multitude de références nous plonge dans la perplexité." (*A Contretemps*, pp. 244-245).

\(^39\) Hendrikus Boers has suggested such a move in New Testament studies; see, "Contemporary Significance of the New Testament" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 45/1 (1977), B: 1-33. I only have access to the Abstract which appeared in *Journal of American Academy of Religion* 45 (1977) 69. To uncover the fundamental meaning which the NT had in its own time, Boers suggests that we "move the focus from their particular responses to the problem itself as that to which they responded. In order to do so, it is not necessary to presuppose that NT writers took issue with each other, or even knew of each other. It is sufficient, if it is clear that they were at a fundamental level addressing the same problems." (p. 69), -italics are mine. So, we will not concentrate on the "social activities" or the "roles" of these groups like A.J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society* (Wilmington: M. Glazier, 1988); nor will we focus on the history of the formation of individual groups like J. Le Moyne, *Les Sadduceéens* (Paris:Gabala, 1972); J. Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: the emergence of Pharisaic Judaism*
the book of the law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left... (and) not be mixed with these nations left here... ? (cf. Joshua 23:1-16; Nehemia 10:29-31).

The Sadducees' strategy\(^{40}\) of surviving the crisis, according to Eboussi, was devised around the "promised land" and its most significant symbol: the temple.\(^{41}\) As a minority in the midst of imperial and aggressive civilizations bent on assimilation, the Sadducees stuck to the land and the temple as a hermeneutical principle for interpreting Joshua and Nehemias recommendations.\(^{42}\) Here, faithfulness to the Law becomes a faithfulness to the preservation of the temple and its cultic celebrations. As such, it is keeping the people on the promised land and maintaining alive their unique relation to their God. The perennity of the temple would be the perennity of the presence of Yahweh and, thus, the perennity of his people. If the smell of their holocaust continues to rise from the promised land, then the Law is being kept.\(^{43}\) As a matter of fact, because the priests have been,


\(^{40}\) It is important to note that our present sources on the Sadducees are writings and testimonies either from people less favorable to them or definitively hostile to them. Jean Le Moyne who gathered and critically examined the available sources has this well nuanced conclusion: "L'essentiel de nos renseignements sur les Sadducéens vient de Josèphe et de la littérature rabbinique. Josèphe, selon toute probabilité était de famille sadducéenne. Il est devenu pharisien et, après ce changement d'orientation, il n'aima guère, semble-t-il, les Sadducéens. Quant à la littérature rabbinique, elle est l'oeuvre de rabbins pharisiens. La mise par écrit des textes rabbiniques commença vers la fin du IIe siècle de notre ère, à une époque où les Pharisiens considéraient les Sadducéens comme des gens totalement coupés de la vie du peuple juif." (Les Sadducéens, p. 326).

\(^{41}\) "Le grand souci sadducéen, c'est d'assurer la pérénité de cette possession et des ces institutions... L'unique nécessaire est de sauvegarder l'entité nationale et la religion juive, le lien généalogique et le rapport à la Terre de la promesse, bref ce par quoi Israël est «le peuple de Dieu»." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 92. [CWF, 91-92]).

\(^{42}\) The reference to Joshua's and Nehemia's texts is the best biblical reference I found in my attempt to give a content to Eboussi's somehow abstract formulation of the challenges faced by Israel: "Comment prétendre qu'on est le peuple élu, lorsqu'on est une minorité parfois «odieuse», mal intégrée à la «civilisation», quand on est une nation colonisée et assujettie? Comment se redéfinir, préserver son identité, sa «mission ou sa vocation», sans mettre en danger sa survie biologique? (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 91. [CWF, 90]). Italics are mine.

\(^{43}\) The relation between the service of the temple and faithfulness was suggested in Ezekiel 44:15ff; v. 28 read: "They [the Levitical priests] shall have no inheritance; I am their inheritance: and you shall give them no possession in Israel; I am their possession." (RSV - Ecumenical edition, 1973). The exclusive bond
since Ezra and Nehemia, both the interpreters of the Law and the performers of sacrifices in the temple, the Sadducees from whom the High Priest usually came were in a better position to carry out their strategy of Israel's survival. Sadducees are known to have been strict interpreters of the Law: they would not accept anything that had no clear evidence in the Books of the law of Moses, like the idea of a "resurrection", of a "retribution" after death. Jerusalem was their primal concern, its landowners their privileged partners and, the activities in and around the temple (cults and treasury) their essential interests. The rest, including the presence of foreigners, were of less importance. The total annexation of the promised land and the destruction of the temple had been fatal to this strategy.

The Pharisees offered a different approach to Israel's survival. According to Eboussi, the between the priest and Yahweh suggests his continuous presence as far as the cult is rendered by the faithful priests.


45 Cf. Jacob Neusner's "Preface" to Origins of Judaism, vol. 2., part 2., p.ix. : "They stood for strict adherence to the written word in religious matters, conservatism in both ritual and belief." See, Jean Le Moyne, Les Sadducéens, pp. 360-363, for the discussion on the faithfulness of the Sadducees toward the Law and its "literal" interpretation: "Selon les Sadducéens, la Tora était claire, sans ambigüité, facilement compréhensible, il fallait s'y tenir de façon littérale." (p. 363). It is this desire to be faithful to the word of the Law which led the sadducees to reject any new ritual (ritual bath and purification practices) or belief (resurrection).

46 Cf. Jacob Neusner, "Preface" of Origins of Judaism, vol. 2., part 2., p. x. : "The Sadducees were most influential among landholders and merchants..."

47 See, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 93. [CWF, 92]). The Sadducees had been excommunicated by their rival; see, Victor Eppstein, "When and How the Sadducees were Excommunicated" Journal of Biblical Literature 85/2 (1966) 213-223.

48 Tal Ilan, "The attraction of Aristocratic Women to Pharisaism during the Second Temple Period" Harvard Theological Review 88/1 (1995) recalls an important remark which needs to be mentioned: "Current scholars commonly assert that Second Temple Judaism can hardly be described as predominantly Pharisaic; scholars now talk of «many Judaisms». The Pharisees, therefore, who previously had been viewed as normative in Second Temple times, and their heirs - the rabbis - who were viewed likewise in the following period, are relegated to equal footing with their one time inferiors, the other groups previously viewed as dissident or schismatic" (p. 4). The Pharisees first appeared in Josephus' writings during the reign of John Hyrcanus as group interested in power; see, A.J. Saldarini, Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees,
emphasis shifted from the temple to ethical demand. Perhaps, one can put it this way: faithfulness to the Law is a living knowledge of the Law and its actualization in the midst of the nations. The temple and the cultic celebration remain important but the most significant temple is now the heart of each Jew, and the new effective sacrifice is the "meditation" of the Law. The hermeneutical principle in this perspective is fundamentally ethical: a rigorous practice of the Law derived from a personal meditation. As the Law finds its new dwelling in the heart of the pious, the daily intercourse with the "nations" could no longer affect the exclusive dedication of any Jew to Yahweh. Regular lustration would be enough to purify oneself. With more than six hundred

pp. 93-95. Jacob Neusner describes them as a political movement which left politics during the Herodian rule and the Roman period; see, J. Neusner, From Politics to Piety. The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973).

49 Most of the scholars dealing with the Pharisees point out their distinctive way of "conceiving" and living Judaism; see: Jacob Neusner, "Preface" to Origins of Judaism, vol. 2., part 2.; he writes on p. viii.: "The Pharisaic community sought to rebuild society on its own ruins with its own mortar and brick." For Anthony Saldarini, Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees, "in the Hasmonean and Herodian periods the Pharisees were one... well known group, characterized by a distinctive way of living Judaism and constant social involvement." (p. 278). Speaking of the Pharisees, J. Pawlikowski, Jesus and the Theology of Israel (Wilmington: M. Glazier, 1980) writes: "Confronted with the threat of Judaism's absorption by Hellenism they devised a plan of Torah observance that included erecting a «fence», as it were, around the «Sabbath»." (p. 60). The sabbath was not the main concern of the Pharisees, the Torah itself had become a means of salvation; see, H. Cazelles, Naissance de l'église, p. 61.

50 "Avec le pharisaïsme, le centre de la religion est déplacé du Temple et du culte vers les observances éthiques, la science des Ecritures, la synagogue." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 93., [CWF, 92]).

51 "La méditation, ce «sacrifice des lèvres» et la pratique des commandements remplacent les holocaustes. Ce n'est plus dans le sang des génisses et la fumée des victimes, mais dans les versets de la Bible qu'on scrute désormais les intentions divines." (Ibid., p. 93., [CWF, 92]).

52 As scholars of the Second Temple often do, Jacob Lauterbach presents the Pharisees in contrast with the Sadducees; he compares their opposition to "the old opposition of the prophets to the priesthood." ("The Pharisees and their Teaching" in Origins of Judaism, vol. 2., part 2., p. 66.). The suggestion is interesting but we have to keep in mind that the claim of the prophets vis-à-vis an instituted priestly organization is rooted in the certitude of Yahweh himself speaking through the medium of the prophet. The Pharisees do not have such a claim in their confrontation with the Sadducees.

53 See, Jacob Neusner, "Preface" to Origins of Judaism, vol. 2., part 2., p. ix: "Their way of life required them to identify with the Temple and its holy meals and to pretend that they were priests, their homes the Temple, their hearts the table of God. They lived out life as a metaphor for sanctification." See also, E.P. Sanders, Jesus and Judaism; according to him, the Pharisees "wanted to sanctify the entirety of life, to make common life as holy as the temple, filled with the presence of God. To this end they agree to
regulations the Pharisees await God's intervention to restore Israel in its integrity. They believe in God's judgment even after death because there will be a resurrection. As essentially a lay movement, the Pharisees' strategy offered another modality of surviving which seems to have been attractive to many Jews. Indeed, Pharisaic Judaism will survive the destruction of the "outer" temple and the annexation of the promised land.

The third attempt to rescue Israel from total assimilation by the Greek and Roman civilizations was the strategy of the Essenes. The temple was too much in the midst of the nations to escape contamination. To remain in the land among the nations appeared to the Essenes to be dwelling in impurity. The promised land is already sullied just as the temple since its profanation by Antiochus and the usurpation both of the priesthood and the kingship by the Hasmonean. The hermeneutical principle of the Essenes was straightforward: separation. Faithfulness to the Law is handle, sell and eat food in virtually the same state of purity as that which the Bible prescribes for the priests who serve in the temple." (p. 20).

54 With the rule of ritual purity outside the Temple, the Pharisees could live "among, but not with, the people of the land." (Ibid., p. ix).

55 "La Torah est plus que la vie. C'est en la méditant, en la commentant, qu'on en tire ce qui est utile à tout, plus de six cents prescriptions qui recouvrent de leur réseau serré jusqu'aux détails et aux trivialités de la vie quotidienne." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 93. [CWF, 92]).

56 Cf. Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 93. [CWF, 92].

57 For the Pharisees, "all Israel, not only the priesthood, was supposed to live the holy way of life of the Temple." (Jacob Neusner, "Preface" to Origins of Judaism, vol. 2., part 2., p. ix).

58 Since the discoveries of Qumran, new light has been shed on this group; see, G. Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls in English, 3rd ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1987). One of the distinctive characteristics of this group is the perception of itself as "the entirety of Israel, the saving remnant that would be saved, ruling out that other, the massive Israel round about." (Jacob Neusner, "Preface", p. viii).

59 The radical position of the Essenes is translated in the Rule of the Community. As H. Cazelles, Naissance de l'église. Secte Juive Rejetée? noted, "l'un des buts de la règle de la communauté c'est «de haïr tous les fils des Ténèbres, chacun selon sa culpabilité dans la vengeance de Dieu» (I,10-11). Si dans l'hymne qui conclut la Règle le fidèle s'écrie: «Je ne rendrai à personne le mal en rétribution mais c'est par le bien que je poursuivrai chacun», il ajoute: «je ne détournerai pas ma colère des hommes pervers» (X,17-20)." (p. 69). Still, we have to keep in mind that the Essenes were not a monolithic group.
certain only in a community strictly dedicated to Yahweh. Lustration and genealogy will play an important role in the community as it sets itself aside as the faithful "remnant".\(^{60}\) Interiorization of the Law replaced the sacrifice in the temple of Jerusalem.\(^{61}\) Because the crisis is but a siege, the Essenes await in intense fervour and rigorous ascetical practices the imminent intervention of God.\(^{62}\) Living at the fringe of society, the Essenes remained up to the end in a front line where their enemies never engaged in battle. They offered a radical personal and community centred way of solving Israel's crisis.

According to Eboussi, for the Zealots\(^ {63}\), Israel's salvation resided in its "purity", i.e. an

\(^{60}\) "Les Esséniens sont le «petit reste», la réserve saine pour une future restauration. Le régime des Hasmoneens, qui a bloqué entre ses mains royauté et souverain pontificat, a, dans sa corruption, fait perdre leur légitimité à l'une et à l'autre... Quant à la masse, elle est impure et sans piété... La séparation a pour but de préserver un petit reste de ce mal généralisé et de l'entraîner au combat contre les ténèbres." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 94. [CWF, 93]).

\(^{61}\) According to H. Cazelles, the notion of "Covenant" was at the centre of the Community's life: "très discrète sur la résurrection, la secte centre sa vie et son espérance sur la notion d'Alliance et le renouvellement de cette alliance." (Naissance de l'église, p. 67).

\(^{62}\) The Essenes did not settle far from the cities and towns in order to simply await the deliverance of Israel. Their daily life seems to suggest a "here and now" preparation through strict discipline. Jacob Neusner rightly catches the spirit of the community when he writes: "What makes the Essenes of Qumran especially interesting is that they joined together in exquisite balance the two points of stress, sanctification and salvation, interest in the holy way of life in the here and now, concern for the meaning of history and the end of time..." ("Preface", p. viii). Italics are mine.

\(^{63}\) "Il faut les distinguer des sicaires, ceux qui se livrent à la guérilla dans la montagne ou le desert, ceux qui assassinent sur les routes et dans les villes les occupants et leurs collaborateurs indigènes. Les Zélotes ne sont pas non plus des bandits de grand chemin, des bandits, fils de la misère et de la détresse économique. Ils se rattachent au clergé, peut-être inférieur, et se caractérisent par leur « zèle pour la maison de Dieu »." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 95. [CWF, 94]). M. Hengel's dissertation on the Zealots intends to portray them in a better light than Josephus who has little sympathy for them; see, M. Hengel, The Zealots. Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I until 70 A.D., trans. David Smith (Edinburg: T. & T. Clark, 1989). Cecil Roth's two articles: "The Religious Nature of the Zealots" and, "The Zealots - A Jewish Religious Sect" which were reproduced in Origins of Judaism, vol. 2., part 2., (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990) emphasize the religious dimension of this group. For Cecil Roth, "it is impossible to have a clear picture of the Palestinian scene at this period so long as this equation of Zealot and Activist persists... For the term Zealots is to be used precisely, as denoting the members of a well-defined religious faction among the Jews, not a political party, and still less political activists generally." ("The Religious Nature of the Zealots", p. 203.).
absolute faithfulness to Yahweh who sets Israel apart as his own heritage. It is from this hermeneutical principle that the Law and the relation to the nation have to be understood in the present situation of occupation and domination. Israel's faithfulness has to measure up to the purity of the race, the purity of the temple and its exclusive cults, conducted by a legitimate priesthood. The zeal for the temple and the total dedication of the people to God is in proportion to the trust in Yahweh as "almighty". It is from this religious insight that they called for a total war against the enemies of Israel. In a certain way, the war itself is but the beginning of the messianic age because it is a war on behalf of God, it is a holy war. The Zealots are instruments in the hand of God in whom they have unconditional trust. Their defeat by the nations raised an ever disturbing question: what is the meaning of the present silence of God who, in the past, fought on behalf of Israel? The strategy of the Zealots based on the absolute conviction that God will assist his faithful servants led to the destruction of the nation and its temple. Even in its failure, this strategy is not without serious theological challenges.

64 "Les Zélotes poursuivent cette tradition de sauvegarde de l'identité ou de la vocation juive, en exigeant la pureté de la race, le culte exclusif d'un Dieu jaloux, la sainteté du Temple et la légitimité de la succession sacerdotale." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 95. [CWF,94]).

65 Intermarriage has always been seen as danger for Israel's identity. Joshua had warned the people as they settled in the promised land. Nehemiah and Ezra prescribed strict rule to prevent it from happening.

66 For the Zealot, God is the only ruler of Israel; see, Cecil Roth, "The Zealot - A Jewish Religious Sect" in Origins of Judaism, vol. 2., part 2., pp. 282ff.

67 "Selon les Zélotes, la résignation au règne païen pour cause d'infériorité militaire est un manque de foi caractérisé. Le soutien de Dieu est d'avance acquis aux siens, car leur victoire et leur hégémonie sont les siennes et témoignent qu'il est l'Unique, le Fort et le Vrai." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 95. [CWF, 95]).

68 As M. Hengel puts it: "Anyone who fails to recognize this special religious character of the Jewish revolts against Rome - all of which had an eschatological and messianic aspect - and at the same time their uniqueness, will not be able to judge the events in Judaea between 6 and 70 A.D." (The Zealots, p. xv.).
C - The "Where" and the "How" of Israel's Salvation

In the midst of the crisis which fell upon Judah with the menace of an imminent destruction, the "word of the Lord" was addressed to the prophet Jeremiah "to pull down and to uproot, to destroy and to demolish, to build and to plant..." (Jeremiah 1:10). The stress is on destruction. But, the initiative is not of the prophet. Indeed, the message is from Yahweh himself; it is he who designed the ways for Israel's salvation. The prophet can boldly denounce the "people" who forsook their God and offered sacrifices to Baal and Astarte (Jer 1:16; 2:11-13); the "priests and the prophets" who prophesied in the name of Baal (Jer 2:18; 5:31); and, the "kings and the princes" who put their trust in political alliances with Assyria and Egypt (Jer 2:18.36-37). So, the prophet can proclaim: "there is no help in worship on the hill-tops, no help from the clamour on the heights; truly in the Lord our God is Israel's only salvation" (Jer 3:23). Israel has to "return" to Yahweh and follow his Law or face destruction from the hand of his God (Jer 4:1-6). This was in the twilight of the First Temple.

In the dawn of the Second Temple, the prophetic "word" disappeared like a fog. Now, various groups like the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Essenes, the Zealots echoed the prophets; but, unlike the prophets, they form associations with specific ways of living the ultimate faithfulness to Yahweh alone, with a particular vision of what Israel should be. None of them dares the prophetic claim of a "revelation". Typical to the Second Temple is the lack of a manifest involvement of Yahweh in Israel's quest for deliverance from the crisis. No more does one hear: "thus says the Lord...", or "the word of the Lord came to me...", except with Jesus of Nazareth the

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70 Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes and Zealots were the well known groups reported by historical records. They were many others whose names never come to us; see, Louis Ginzberg, An Unknown Jewish Sect (New York: Press of Maurice Jacobs, 1976).
founder of Christianity, the new "hairesis" (group/sect).

In Christianity, Jesus Christ bears the seal of the "word of the Lord". Indeed his followers claim that he is the incarnation of the eternal word. His words and deeds are the main concern of the next chapter. We will see how Eboussi understands them as constitutive of the model Africans have to re-appropriate for themselves.
Ch. 3. The Model\textsuperscript{1}: The Christic-Phenomenon Reinterpreted

In an Essay entitled \textit{The Birth of Christianity as a Hellenistic Religion: Three Theories of Origin}\textsuperscript{2}, Hans Dieter Betz presents three distinctive interpretations of Christianity: the theories of fulfilment\textsuperscript{3}, the theories of fraud\textsuperscript{4}, and the theory of betrayal\textsuperscript{5}. Whether correlated or antithetical to each other, these theories, in a way, reflect the sign of contradiction that "the founder of Christianity"\textsuperscript{6} has himself been, since he was conceived in Palestine three millennia ago. The metaphor of "birth" as well as the concept of "religion", let alone "Hellenistic religion", are all

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item[1] The model for Eboussi has to do with the "primal intention" and the original process or constitutive operations in the emergence of a reality. We find a short presentation of what a model is in "Le modèle Américain et la Démocratie en Afrique" Terroirs 002 (1995) 18-33. He writes, "la nomenclature des institutions, la description de leur fonctionnement, de leurs équilibres, de leur mode d'emploi conventionnel ne nous garantissent la compréhension de ce dont il y retourne réellement. Seul le concept du fondamental détermine ce qui est surface, conséquence et ce qui est structures profondes, principes opératifs... Nous saisissons le fondamental en revenant à la «brèche» et à l'«irruption» du commencement. Il ne s'agit pas de nostalgie, mais de percevoir un processus instituant des opérations constitutantes..." (p. 19). In short, a "model" is the original process by which an "event" is constituted as a historical reality.
  \item[3] Betz distinguishes two types of theories of fulfilment: 1) the mythical concepts based on the idea of God's promise to Abraham, the coming of the Messiah, the kingdom of God (Gal 4:4; Mark 1:15; Luke 21:24); and, 2) the historical constructs of authors like Semler (1725-1791), Lessing (1729-1781) and Herder (1744-1803). For more details, see Betz, "The Birth of Christianity", pp. 3-10.
  \item[4] The theories of fraud are concerned with dupery: dumb disciples and simple folks are suspected to have been deluded. According to Betz, "the polemics by Lucian of Samosata, Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian the Apostate show that these theories... must have been widespread in the second to fourth century C.E." (\textit{Ibid.}, p. 12).
  \item[6] This echoes the title of an insightful book of C.H. Dodd, \textit{The Founder of Christianity} (London: Collins, 1971). This book finely deals with the origin of Christianity by focussing on the intention of its founder. On the various attempts to decipher the intention of Jesus, see E.P. Sanders, \textit{Jesus and Judaism}, pp. 23-58. At the origin of Christianity, according to Sanders, is Jesus' hope for a "new age" where he and his disciples would have a "leading role", and the disciples believed in him (cf. pp. 319-320).
\end{itemize}


loaded with complex questions. Without overlooking these questions, our primary task here will consist of comprehending Eboussi's own understanding of emerging "Christianity" as an answer to the problematic of universality faced by Israel.

In the previous chapter, we briefly reviewed the Maccabean's answer to this challenge and, we have also highlighted the answers suggested by the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Essenes and the Zealots as understood by Eboussi. However, emphasis has not been put on currents like "baptism" and "apocalypticism" because they permeated many groups or movements. This chapter focusses on the "Christic model" which is, according to Eboussi, nothing but the answer suggested by Jesus and carried on by his disciples. The reference to a particular person: Jesus Christ, stamps

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7 Betz's conclusion summarizes these questions by putting them in a critical perspective; he writes: "Theories of historical origin must be distinguished from historical realities. What scholarship hands down to us as historiography is not simply accounts of facts, but accounts that are simultaneously influenced by theories... but such theories may also shape and even create history. Yet, whatever their origin, historical realities are first experienced, then, perhaps, understood. The main difficulty, then, for understanding historical origins lies with the critical distinctions to be made between what is reality and what is theory." (Ibid., p. 25). Italics are mine. For further discussion on historiography, see: M. Certeau, "Faire de l'histoire" Recherche Sciences Religieuses 58 (1970) 481-500.

8 It is important to recall that Eboussi's aim does not consist in analysing the "growth" or the "transformation" of Christianity from its Jewish origin to a worldwide (Roman empire) dominant religion. Neither is his goal a study of the "relationship" between Jews and Christians during the formative period of Christianity. For a well documented study on Jews and Christians relationship, see: Jack T. Sanders, Schismatics, Sectarians, Dissidents, Deviants. The First One Hundred Years of Jewish-Christian Relations (London: SCM Press, 1993). Eboussi's concern and focus are on Christianity perceived as one of the many Jewish sects or groups (haireses) which were attempting to respond to Israel's crisis as it encounters aggressive civilisations in imperial expansion. There is a whole and unsettled discussion on the "when" and "how" of the break between Christianity and Judaism; see: J.T. Sanders, op.cit., pp. 85-89, especially, note #16. Sanders is very critical about what he calls "enslavement to Acts" (p.85) as the major source in dealing with the break. S.G. Wilson, The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Luke-Acts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), thinks otherwise: "Luke is neither totally reliable nor is he a wholly tendentious writer... While it would be naive to accept uncritically everything Luke says, it remains true that for the careful and critical reader Acts contains an immense amount that is of great historical value." (p. 267).
the "Christic Model" with the seal of historicity.10

Following this dynamic, we will first of all unfold the model from the words and deeds of Jesus as subsumed in the early Christian community according to Eboussi's understanding.11 Then, we will "redeem" its significance for the person of Jesus as presented by Eboussi. What will not be openly said but presupposed at this stage is that the task of an African re-appropriation of Christianity (according to Eboussi's perspective) is nothing else than the "repetition" of this model.12

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9 *Christianisme sans fétiche*, p. 89. [CWF, 87]. The term suggests something larger than Jesus as a historical reference. The Christic Model is the "Good News" understood and subsumed by the early Christian communities. In a way, the interpretations of the "Good News" by the early communities are part of the "Good News". The quest here is not of *ipsissima verba*, that is, the very words of Jesus.

10 "Un tel modèle, produit de l'histoire en vue de la transformation de l'histoire ou dans l'histoire, est un modèle «devenu». Sa mise à jour est liée à la singularité d'une localité et d'une temporalité, voire à celle d'un nom. Dans la transversalité de l'histoire qui garde mémoire de sa genèse, de son être-devenu, il est impensable sans la référence christique." ([*Christianisme sans fétiche*], p. 89. [CWF, 87]). This is a very important remark. Indeed, when I gave my thesis proposal to Eboussi in order to have his views, he wrote the following comment: "Tenir compte cependant de la perspective d'ensemble qui est «historique», «politique» et «éthique», «contractuelle» (?)". There is a serious risk that the whole perspective be reduced to a "business affair". This will be further discussed in the third part of this dissertation; see, Part III Chapter 2. *A Contretemps*. Up to then, we have to understand Eboussi from his own internal logic.

11 Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, ed. R. Kraft & G. Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971) has the following remark in his introduction: "we live in a time that demands concise discussion, and repetition of what has been presented in a suitable manner should not be tolerated. Therefore, he who opens this book in hopes of finding therein a convenient synopsis of what fellow-scholars already have contributed to this or that aspect of the theme will be disappointed." (p. xxv). In the same spirit, it seems important to note that our concern in this dissertation is not New Testament exegesis. I will rely on the scholarly works on this field solely to probe Eboussi's argumentation. I have no intention to engage in the discussions about the historical validity of any particular text or event referred to in Eboussi's reinterpretation of Christianity from within the Second Temple.

12 Eboussi's very first attempt to construe the Christic model goes back to September 10-13, 1972 in a symposium held in Yaoundé-Cameroon. In a paper entitled, "Christianisme comme maladie et comme guérison" ([*Croyance et Guérison*, ed. M. Hebga (Yaoundé: Clé, 1973, pp. 127-147)], Eboussi sketched his view of how Christianity can be re-appropriated from its original significance.
A - Words of Deeds

The model suggested by the "new sect" can be formally defined by the well-crafted programmatic words of Mark: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15). Indeed, the nearness of the kingdom of God is now the hermeneutical principle for the resolution of Israel's crisis as well as the foundation of the emerging group. In effect, according to Eboussi, the breaking-in of the kingdom means that all the elements which have been mediating the presence of God to Israel, i.e. the Law and its interpreters, the Temple and its priests, the Land and its officials, lose their validity. Paradoxically, they have not

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13 This expression which may not be easily understood in English, is an attempt to capture Eboussi's view of Jesus's words as description of his deeds. The words are not simply related to deeds, or leading to deeds, or telling about deeds. Words and deeds are bound together as two expressions of the same reality. See, Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, # 2: "the pattern of this Revelation unfolds through deeds and words bound together..."

14 Eboussi used the term "secte nouvelle" (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 98 - *CWF*, 98) in the perspective of Josephus's "hairesis". We have seen that the modern negative connotation of the word "sect" has led some scholars to reject it as an appropriate translation; see: J. Le Moyne, *Les Sadduceens*, p. 33: A. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, pp. 123-127. H. Cazelles, *Naissance de l'Église*, pp. 97-110, seems to have no problem with this designation: "C'est aux filiales de l'Église de Jérusalem que nous devons la connaissance de la foi dont elle a vécu... Nous en savons assez cependant pour mieux participer à la foi des Apôtres, disciples de Jésus de Nazareth, fondateur d'une secte, contestée par les Pharisiens, rejetée par les Sadduceens, et devenue l'Église universelle..." (p. 110).


16 *Christianisme sans fétiche*, p. 99 [*CWF*,98]: "Son message qui a pour horizon l'imminence du Règne de Dieu, proclame que celui-ci s'est fait proche de tous sans intermédiaire obligé d'un lieu, d'un corps de prescriptions, ni de spécialistes du sacré. Sa proximité signifie qu'il ne délègue pas sa souveraineté sans reste ni retenue à ses représentants et à ses figurations; que sa liberté et sa générosité ne reçoivent ni détermination ni restriction du fait des choix et des dons du passé." Today, with the new consciousness fostered by the Jewish-Christian dialogue, Eboussi's statement could raise controversy. But, it is very important to recall and keep in mind that Eboussi fundamentally understands Jesus and the early Church solely from the Second Temple (prior to dogma) as an integral part of Judaism.
become useless simply because of their inefficiency. But, in the very dynamic of Israel's tradition and hope, the Law, the Temple, the priests, the kings, the prophets and, even the Promised Land lose their raison d'être, precisely because "the time is fulfilled", i.e. the time set by God for the fulfilment of the promises has come to pass. When God breaks the silence and comes in to take control of the situation, the structures of mediation become de facto obsolete.

The nearness of the kingdom introduces a "principle of illimitation" within the paradigm set forth by Joshua (23:1-16) after the Exodus and re-spelled by Nehemia (10:29-31) after the Exile, that is, the integral faithfulness to the Law and the ban on intercourse with the nations. The knot of Israel's crisis (the Law and the Nations) can now be unravelled from within. The proximity of the kingdom of God calls for a radical change of mind: "it is not the changing of the

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17 Cf. Daniel 12:4-9. "The certainty that the end-time rule of God was already operative in and through his ministry brought with it the conviction that its full manifestation could not long be delayed." (J.D. Dunn, Unity and Diversity, p. 15). The early community has assumed the permanence of this state in its midst. Up to today, the Church of Christ claims the "already" even if it has to reckon with the still "not totally yet".

18 Deep in the heart of the messianic expectation is the belief in a supernatural intervention, perhaps God's own direct and miraculous intervention because the crisis has reached a point where hope in a human transformation has definitively died. See, Ezekiel 38:16; Daniel 2:28; 10:14; Micah 4:1. As J.D. Dunn, Unity and Diversity, points out: "The kingdom of God' denotes the manifest rule of God whose intervention will bring to an end the history of this world as we know it and its judgment" (p. 13). See also: H. Cazelles, Naisance de l'Eglise, p. 39; P. Grelot, L'Espérance Juive à l'heure de Jésus (Paris: Desclée, 1978). The early followers of Jesus think that he has inaugurated the last days; see. Hebrews 1:1; 1 Corinthians 10:11; Acts 2:17; 1 Peter 1:20. So, Eboussi can write: "Le principe eschatologique, au vrai, signifie qu'il n'y a plus d'intermédiaires: Dieu est présent et renvoie à son propre mystère, il renvoie l'homme à sa propre réalité." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 107. [CWF, 107]).

19 Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 105. [CWF, 105]. The principle of illimitation means both that God's freedom and generosity "receive neither determination nor restriction from the fact of choices or gifts in the past" (CWF, 98) and, that no one can stake a claim on the "future" which is "God's alone" (Ibid.). Precisely with the proclamation of the nearness of the kingdom, the proximity of God opens the space for the advent of God's unrestricted freedom and generosity; and so, the principle of illimitation takes the form of an "eschatological principle". Eboussi also identifies the "power of illimitation" with "love" and, with "God" (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 107. [CWF, 107]).

20 There is an important aspect of Eboussi's thought here. For him, a society cannot be authentically transformed from without. It has to be done from within: "On ne refait pas sa société de l'extérieur, on ne la conteste efficacement que du dedans, car alors on ne renie pas son héritage, mais on veut le conduire à son plus haut accomplissement. L'universalité est alors réalisée dans l'histoire. C'est une particularité, disons même un particularisme qui se dépasse lui-même." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 114. [CWF, 115]).
characteristics and actions of man that is emphasized, but the transformation of the total direction of his life, that is, of his relationship to God. "Conversion" and unconditional "trust" are thus inseparable corollaries of the principle of illimitation introduced by the nearness of the kingdom. Concretely, what does this mean?

The answer is to be found in the life of Jesus, the founder of the new "way" or "movement" toward a solution to Israel's crisis. What counts is the message which, here, should not be dissociated from the messenger: his words are expressions of his deeds. Vis-à-vis the Law, Jesus proclaims the priority of the "person" who is in the "image of God", i.e. not a means of


22 Eboussi is not dealing with the "historical Jesus" as opposed or contrasted with the "kerygmatic Christ" (exalted Christ). For a brief synthesis on the still ongoing discussion, see, J.D. Dunn, Unity and Diversity, # 50. "The Continuity Between The Historical Jesus and The Kerygmatic Christ". For Eboussi, there is a historical tie between Jesus and the early community (his followers) which is the basis of the understanding of one and the other. In this perspective, "myths" are not to be rejected as inappropriate (cf. J. Jeremias, The Eucharistic Words of Jesus, [pp. 89-96] opposing R. Bultman's History of the Synoptic Tradition, [pp. 262-284] de-construction of the Passion narrative which has been seen as the core of Christian tradition). Contrary to Burton L. Mack, Mark and Christian Origins. A Myth of Innocence (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), especially pp. 319-324, Eboussi does not understand "myth" from the opposing poles of "truth" and "falsity" : "Le mythe est au-delà de l'alternative de la bonne ou de la mauvaise foi, de la vérité ou de l'erreur, de la vérité ou du mensonge. Et les raisons pour lesquelles on ne peut convaincre les évangéliques ou les premiers croyants de supercherie sont exactement les mêmes pour lesquelles on ne peut les citer comme adeptes de l'historicité, telle que l'entend l'historian d'aujourd'hui" (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 128. [CWF, 130]). On further development of Eboussi's view on myth, see his unpublished doctoral dissertation in philosophy: Le Mythe du Dialogue chez Platon: Essai sur le Mythe et le Dialogue comme Formes du Discours, Thèse de Doctorat en Philosophie (Lyon: Université de Lyon II, 1968).

23 The concept of "way" which was used by early Christians to characterize their "group" befits the idea of "crisis". The way is both a way out of the crisis and, a way toward a redeemed existence.

24 "Le «message» nous a été livré sous la forme d'une action créatrice: la naissance d'un groupe s'affrontant à d'autres qui existent. Le «message» est la description d'un agir, de la réalisation d'une destinée." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 104. [CWF, 104]).

25 On Jesus and the Law, see the careful scholarly exposition of E.P. Sanders, Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishna (London: SCM Press, 1990), especially pp. 1-96. Aspects of the Law concern the sabbath, purity, food, tithes, Temple tax, oaths and vows, blasphemy, fasting etc. On these subjects, as on all other words and deeds attributed to Jesus, the pending question of authenticity looms around like the sword of Damocles. On the general problem of authenticity, see A. Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus. A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1954).
anything at all. So, the Law was made for human beings, not human beings for the Law. Now, faithfulness to the Law has to be measured not by the scrupulous performance of what is commanded but by the actual transformation of the person and the new patterns of relation to God and to the neighbour which it induces. Thus, with the nearness of the kingdom, even the Law cannot set limits to the "love of God and of the neighbour" which are now both its paradigmatical and normative expression. Jesus eats with sinners, befriends prostitutes, dines with the tax collector, engages in a very personal conversation with the Samaritan woman and her people, performs cures during the Sabbath and, sides with his disciples who pluck heads of wheat during

26 The person for Eboussi is always a "subject", an image of God, i.e. who cannot be treated or used as the "means" for anything at all. (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 109. [CWF, 110]). This little precision is crucial in Eboussi's argumentation. Here, Eboussi is indebted to Edmond Ortigues, Le Temps de la Parole (Neuchatel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1954); significant is this concise but forceful remark of Ortigues: "Rien dans le monde n'est une fin en soi (rien, non seulement aucun plaisir mais aucune tâche), sinon le prochain que nous avons à recevoir comme Jésus-Christ, c'est-à-dire dans la fidélité de la parole et sans l'exploiter comme un moyen." (p. 45).

27 See, Mark 2:27. Concerning the Sabbath, I Maccabees 2:29-41 had already opened the way for a provision.

28 Eboussi sees in Jesus' call to go beyond the scrupulous observance of the commandments and rules drawn from the Law, a rejection of a ritualization of the ethical demand: "La ritualisation de l'éthique est un principe d'asservissement. Elle multiplie les prescriptions et par là les occasions et les possibilités de transgression... Mais le succès dans l'observation minutieuse de règles nombreuses... enferme dans la bonne conscience, l'autocomplaisance, l'autojustification, par ses œuvres." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 102. [CWF, 101]).

29 "La ritualisation de l'éthique aboutit à la sacralisation des usages, des préceptes qui donnent à leur forme une intangible dommageable à l'homme. La loi, au lieu d'être pour l'homme, met celui-ci à son service et le sacrifie. La ritualisation de l'éthique est un principe d'asservissement." (Christianisme sans fétiche, pp. 101-102. [CWF, 101]).

30 "On n'échappe à la manipulation de l'Ecriture qu'en prenant pour règle d'interprétation le Premier commandement et le Second qui lui est semblable, car à eux deux, ils sont "la Loi et les Prophètes." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 102. [CWF, 102]).

31 See E.P. Sanders treatment of Jesus' relation to the sinners in Jesus and Judaism, pp. 174-211. In spite of his constant attempt to play-down any distinctive character which would make Jesus "unique", Sanders acknowledges that "the one distinctive note which we may be certain marked Jesus' teaching about the kingdom is that it would include the 'sinners'." (p. 174).

32 John 4:1-42.

the Sabbath\textsuperscript{34}. The full meaning of these "transgressions", according to Eboussi, only appears in the light of the unprecedented path which was being opened for the "physical" survival of Israel and its specific "identity", as an alternative solution to the crisis.\textsuperscript{35} Indeed, with the nearness of the kingdom, the provisional character of the Law\textsuperscript{36} as well as the hierarchies\textsuperscript{37}, the scale of value\textsuperscript{38} and the institutions which human beings have transformed into ultimate realities\textsuperscript{39} are unveiled.

The same is true with the repeated warning against Israel's intercourse with the nations. The nearness of the kingdom calls for a radical change in the perception of all those who do not belong, by descent, to one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus openly and publicly challenges one of the core instances of Jewish identity, that is, the bonds of blood: "Who are my mother and my brothers?... Here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother."\textsuperscript{40} Since the return from Exile, renewed efforts were being made to keep and update records of genealogies as an important measure of preserving Israel's integrity. Flaws in anyone's records can be damaging.\textsuperscript{41} Thus, the case of the Samaritans who, in spite of their claim of

\begin{align*}
\text{\textsuperscript{34} Mark 2:23-28; Matthew 12:1-8; Luke 6:1-5.}
\text{\textsuperscript{35} "Ces transgressions et ces inversions acquièrent leur pleine signification comme «solutions alternatives» au système de réponses de l'époque. Elles prennent en charge ce qui est omis, négligé et dévalorisé par lui... Mais elles le font en des opérations concrètes, immédiates, qui donnent un contenu à la force d'illimitation, à l'amour ou à Dieu." (Christianisme sans fétiche, pp. 106-107. [CWF, 107]).}
\text{\textsuperscript{36} Paul will develop the provisional aspect of the Law more forcefully; see, his letters to the Romans and, Galatians.}
\text{\textsuperscript{37} men/women, masters/slaves, rich/poor, wise/ignorant, righteous/sinners.}
\text{\textsuperscript{38} See, righteous-pure-sinners etc.}
\text{\textsuperscript{39} See, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 105. [CWF, 105]}
\text{\textsuperscript{40} Mark 3:31-35; Matthew 12:46-50; Luke 8:19-21.}
\text{\textsuperscript{41} Cf. the excellent study of J. Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus. An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament, trans. F.H. & C.H. Cave (London: SCM Press, 1969), pp. 270-358, especially pp. 317-344. Israel was divided according to ancestry: "together with the clergy (priests and Levites), the Israelites of pure ancestry made up the pure Israel" (Ibid., p. 275); then come the Israelites with "slight blemish" (illegitimate descendants of priests [examples: John Hyrcanus,
being descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, were cast out of the "chosen people" precisely because, for decades, they were mixed up with the nations. According to Eboussi, for Jesus, Israel can no longer survive with this interpretation of God's choice. God's choice of Israel as a people for his own does not entail that God is less free to act likewise toward other people. Even from the stones, as John the Baptist already suggested, God can raise sons and daughters to Abraham. The new community or the new Israel which Jesus envisioned has to carry out vigorously the timid prophetic perception of the incorporation of the nations into Israel, not by a process of assimilation but by the recognition of the new modality of becoming sons and daughters of God. More importantly, what is at stake in Israel's relation to the nations is not the risk of contamination or the development of ungodliness in Israel, but the impossibility of Israel, as a community erecting

Alexander Jannaeus], proselytes [not God-fearers but Gentile converts], freed Gentile slaves [Gentile circumcised and submitted to the Law when they were slaves]); finally, there were Israelites with "grave racial blemish" (bastard [from union prohibited by the Law], temple slaves, fatherless, eunuchs): "Rabbinic legislation, appealing to Deut. 23.2-3, was ever watchful to keep the community, and the clergy in particular, apart from these elements by marking them as a caste outside the law." (Ibid., p. 344).


43 See, Matthew 3:9.

44 "Disposer Israël à la venue du règne de Dieu, c'est en poser la conséquence entrevue par certains prophètes l'incorporation des païens dans le peuple de Dieu, comme acte décisif de sa puissance. C'est Dieu lui-même qui rassemble des lointains de la Terre, mettant fin au temps des médiateurs et des intermédiaires spéciaux." (Christianisme sans féétique, p. 115. [CWF, 116]). Italics are mine.

45 "Jésus affirme, au contraire, que les «enfants de Dieu» ne naissent ni du sang, ni du vouloir de la chair, ni de l'homme, mais d'un Dieu reconnu et par là authentiquement découvert par l'homme, dans la réponse à l'exigence. On devient enfant de Dieu par de libres accomplissements personnels... L'homme n'est plus déterminé par sa «nature originale», sa généalogie, l'appartenance chanceuse à un peuple élu." (Christianisme sans féétique, p. 109. [CWF, 109-110]). Eboussi is taking a firm position on this because in his African context, there is the question of the bonds of blood within the tribes which needs to be addressed. The freedom of the persons for Eboussi is to be modelled on the freedom of God.
itself into an end in itself,\textsuperscript{46} to encounter the "variety and diversity of the world"\textsuperscript{47}. For Jesus, "the erstwhile stranger is within"\textsuperscript{48}. So, Israel "has to overcome from within the divisions and discriminations which are tearing [it] apart."\textsuperscript{49}

Paradoxically, by summoning Israel to pull down the fence of the bonds of blood, Jesus does not intend its dissolution among the nations. Indeed, his focus is still primarily on Israel.\textsuperscript{50}

Jesus' stern criticism of proselytism\textsuperscript{51} in his time even contrasts the stand of the later generation of his followers\textsuperscript{52}. Coupled with his unpleasant response to the Canaanite woman: "it is not fair to

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item See, \textit{Christianisme sans f\'etich\'e}, p. 114. [\textit{CWF,} 116].
\item \textit{Christianisme sans f\'etich\'e}, p. 115. [\textit{CWF,} 116].
\item \textit{CWF,} 116: "L'\'etrange est au-dedans de soi." \textit{Christianisme sans f\'etich\'e}, p. 114.
\item "La communaut\'e doit surmonter à l'intérieur d'elle-même les divisions et les discriminations qui déchirent Israel..." \textit{Christianisme sans f\'etich\'e}, p. 114. [\textit{CWF,} 115-116.].
\item "C'est à cette societé et uniquement à elle que Jésus destine son message de restructuration. Il se refuse de sortir des limites du judaïsme palestinien. En un temps où le prosélytisme juif est intense, il l'interdit aux siens." (\textit{Christianisme sans f\'etich\'e}, p. 114. [\textit{CWF,} 115]).
\item Matthew 23:15. missionary activity during the time of Jesus seems to be unprecedented. J. Jeremias, \textit{Jesus' Promise to other Nations} (London: SCM Press, 1967), characterized the period as "an unparalleled period of missionary activity" (p. 11); it reached its "climax in the lifetime of Jesus" (p. 11.); in short, it was \textit{par excellence} the missionary age of Jewish history" (p.12). This general picture should not lead us to overlook this remark of S.G. Wilson, \textit{The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission}: "The Jewish approach to the heathen was basically a matter of private enterprise undertaken by individuals; it did not spring from a belief that the community as a whole has a responsibility for all mankind. Nor was there any consciousness of a special divine commission for this task." (pp.2-3). J. Jeremias himself has brought forth this point: "We know absolutely nothing about any official sending forth of missionaries by the Jewish authorities" (\textit{op.cit.}, p. 16).
\item See, Paul's missionary activities. Almost all the universal mission commissions in the Gospels are set in post-Easter context: Mark 16:14-20; Luke 24:47; John 20:21 and Matthew 28:18-20. There has been conflicting assessment of Matthew 28:18-20. In these two verses, we find not only the liturgical formula for baptism but also the most straightforward Trinitarian affirmation in the New Testament. For centuries it has been used as the biblical foundation for mission. Recently, the translation of the Greek \textit{panta ta ethnē} (v.19) as "non-Jewish" mankind has raised historical and exegetical discussion. For D. Harrington, \textit{Light of all Nations} (Wilmington: Glazier, 1982), "Matthew does envision the conversion of Israel as a nation; the time for that has passed. His gospel reflects the conditions of a period in which the split between Israel and the church is definitive." (p. 116). John P. Meier reacts against this view in his article, "Nations or Gentiles in Matthew 28:19" \textit{The Catholic Biblical Quarterly} 39/1 (1977) 94-102; "Two Disputed Questions in Matthew 28:16-20" \textit{Journal of Biblical Literature} 96/3 (1977) 407-424.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs"\(^{53}\), Jesus' clear statement that he was "sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"\(^{54}\) strongly indicates why he himself could not be seen as the "first missionary to the Gentiles"\(^{55}\). The more it becomes evident that "the restriction of the mission of Jesus to the Jews is clear in the entire New Testament"\(^{56}\), the more his stand on Israel's ban on intercourse with the nations is startling. According to Eboussi, for Jesus, Israel's faithfulness to God is not in proportion to its preservation from contamination: the salvation of Israel is neither in the flight from the cities (cf. the Essenes), nor the multiplication of the ritual of purification (cf. the Pharisees and the Essenes) or the safeguard of an ultimate sacred space (cf. the Temple for the Sadducees and, the "promised land" for the Zealots).\(^{57}\) Israel's faithfulness is in the "rediscovery" of its own tradition. Indeed, the Good News is "tradition understood and conquered anew from forgetfulness, routine, conformism, and betrayal."\(^{58}\) In Eboussi's view, Jesus' call to a radical openness of Israel is not a denial of his heritage, but a call to its fullest realization.\(^{59}\)

\(^{53}\) Matthew 15:26. Commenting on this passage, John P. Meier writes: "He repeats the excuse of his limited mission, but now in the form of a harsh parable. He tells the pagan that the bread of his healing and teaching ministry is meant only for God's children, the Israelites; he may not waste it by tossing it thoughtlessly to the 'dogs' (a Jewish epithet for pagans)..." ("Matthew 15:21-28" Interpretation 40/4 (1986) 399).

\(^{54}\) Matthew 15:25. Jesus not only restricts his mission to Israel, but during his life he restricted the mission of the disciples in a specific recommendation: "go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And preach as you go, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 10:5-7). This statement has embarrassed more than one scholar; see: W.F. Albright & C.S. Mann, Matthew (New York: Doubleday, 1971), pp. 117-119; J. Held, "Matthew as Interpreter of the Miracle Stories" in G. Bornkamm, G. Barth & J. Held, Tradition and Interpretation (London: SCM Press, 1963), p. 200.


\(^{57}\) See, Christianisme sans fetiche, pp. 99-103. [CWF, 98-103]).

\(^{58}\) "La Bonne Nouvelle, c'est la tradition comprise et reconquise sur l'oubli, la routine, le conformisme et les trahisons." (Christianisme sans fetiche, p. 114. [CWF, 115]).

\(^{59}\) See, Christianisme sans fetiche, p. 114. [CWF, 115].
According to Eboussi, with the eschatological principle as the essential rule for resolving Israel's crisis, Jesus, in words and deeds, engaged Israel in a totally new relation with God through a profound internal transformation. Indeed, when God makes himself close nothing can stand between God and human beings, neither the Law nor the bonds of blood, not even the choices and gifts of the past or the present sins. When the time is fulfilled, God is there unconditionally and human beings are invited to an unconditional encounter, for a new beginning, for a new future.

For Jesus the mercy of God is abounding and gratuitous. It is God himself who comes to the encounter of human beings and his grace surprises them wherever they are. Even before they become conscious of it, their sins are forgiven. Finally, the believer is set free from what he has become a slave of: the Law, the rules of purity, the prohibitions. Obligations have to be reconstructed from the twin commandments of love of God and the neighbour. There is no longer any "unclean person", be it a tax collector, a leper or a Samaritan.

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60 One can suspect here the influence on Eboussi of Ignatius' spirituality. In effect, one of the recommendations of the Spiritual Exercises is that the director of the retreat should not stand between the one doing the "Exercises" and God. See, Spiritual Exercises, Annotation # 15.

61 "Le message de Jésus n'est donc pas centré sur le Temple, la vie cultuelle, la conservation des lieux saints, de la pureté de l'ethnic, le maintien d'un ordre sacral ordonné autour des Dons passés de Dieu, la Terre et la Descendance abrahamique (la Race). Il est tourné vers l'avenir sur lequel il n'y a aucune mainmise humaine, qui n'appartient qu'à Dieu." (Christianisme sans fétiche p. 99. [CWF, 98-99]).

62 "Pour Jésus la miséricorde de Dieu est surabondante et gratuite. C'est Dieu lui-même qui vient au-devant des hommes et la grâce les surprend là où ils se trouvent. Avant même qu'ils n'en aient pris conscience, leurs péchés leur sont remis. Enfin, le croyant est libéré de ce dont il est devenu l'esclave: la Loi, les règles de pureté, les interdits. Il faut reconstruire les obligations à partir du double commandement de l'amour de Dieu et du prochain. Il n'y a plus d'homme impur, qu'il soit publicain, lépreux ou Samaritain." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 100. [CWF, 100]).
B - A Fulfilled Existence

The Christic model, as it appears, is but Israel's own "tradition, placed in the perspective of the end of history and the nearness of God who comes, the ancient relationships re-baptized in the fire of the Spirit and, re-translated into the language of emancipation of all destiny."63 This first happened, as it has been shown, in and through Jesus' words and deeds, later subsumed in the early Christian communities. It is to the personal dimension of the model that we now turn. Indeed, for Eboussi, the Christic model has both a "social" and a "personal" dimension. Eboussi is not only keen to insist on the intrinsic link between the two64; in this case, he thinks that the actualization of the model in Jesus' own life is its most important validation as a concrete, not abstract, possibility.65 In effect, the one who summons Israel to find resources for restructuring itself in a new self-consciousness of its history and tradition has been in his life and death, the paradigm of his message.

If, in order to survive within culturally, politically and militarily mighty empires, Israel has to be firmly rooted in its tradition, Jesus himself has been deeply rooted within this tradition. He received his first human determinations from a specific culture: the Jewish culture, in a particular time: the Roman Period. For Eboussi, because any serious and legitimate change can only occur from within, it is not by chance that the Good News starts with Jesus' genealogy and relates him

63 "Le salut, c'est la tradition mise en perspective de la fin d'histoire et de la proximité du Dieu qui vient, ce sont les anciennes relations rebaptisées dans le feu de l'Esprit créateur, retraduites dans le langage de l'émancipation de tout destin." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 115. [CWF, 116-117]).

64 "La personne implique la société et celle-ci n'existe que par l'action instituante de celle-là." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 115. [CWF, 117]).

65 "L'émergence de ce modèle est liée à l'événement singulier qu'est Jésus de Nazareth, à des événements singuliers de sa vie, à sa mort et à sa destinée posthume. Ce modèle sera exact s'il est aussi donné par l'existence même de Jésus." (Christianisme sans fétiche, pp. 115-116. [CWF, 117]).
not just to Mary but, more importantly, to David and to Abraham (cf. Matthew 1:1). Indeed, as "son of David", Jesus "crystallizes" both a political and a religious ideal which reflects Israel's hope of happiness. In Eboussi's own words, "Jesus, son of David, is the promise of liberation and restoration or, better, of re-instauration". The son of David is heir of the most glorious expression of Israel's tradition and history. But, he can legitimately be regarded as such only if he carries forward this tradition, if he fulfills its hope. Only the son of David can meet the challenge of the restoration or the re-instauration of Israel as a covenant people.

As son of Abraham, a new dimension is added to Jesus' root in Israel's authentic tradition and history. No doubt, David represents a significant realization of Israel's hope. But David still symbolizes the triumph of one tribe, the tribe of Judah. More than a head of a dynasty, Abraham is at the origin of a new "order". In him, not only the twelve tribes of Israel have their source, but also the "nations" have the source of their blessing. According to Eboussi, this explicit link of Jesus to Abraham signifies that he bears and shares a larger vision than the dynastic determination

66 Contemporary scholarship has suspected the "Infancy narrative" as a mythical construction. In The Birth of the Messiah (Garden City: Doubleday, 1977), R. Brown has shown the editorial work and the theological insight behind the narrative. Eboussi seems not to buy into this trend if the ultimate goal is either to salvage a historical core, or to reject the whole story. For Eboussi, myth is beyond good or bad will, truth or falsity; see, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 129.

67 "Jésus, fils de David, est la promesse d'une libération et d'une restauration ou mieux de ré-instauration" (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 130).

68 "Le fils de David doit être un nouveau David sur la terre régénérée, un être dansant la nouvelle alliance du Dieu avec son peuple. La figure davidique marque du sceau de la légitimité et de la continuité toute novation politique..." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 130).

69 The centralization introduced by David and Solomon with Jerusalem as the new theological and cultic center has affected the old system of tribes and, was certainly not the least cause of the schism between the North (Israel) and the South (Judah). On the divided monarchy, see: 1 and 2 Kings; E.W. Heaton, The Hebrew Kingdoms (London: Oxford University Press, 1968). On the religious dimension of the division, see 1 Kings 12:26-33; E.T. Mullen, "The Sins of Jeroboam: A Redactional Assessment." The Catholic Biblical Quaterly 49/2 (1987) 212-232.

70 "Le patriarche ouvre une lignée, une direction, un ordre et un sens. Il y aura ses descendants, fils de la bénéédiction de Dieu, et par lui se béniront tous les peuples." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 130).
of the "son of David". Like Abraham, the son of Abraham opens a new direction to "all Israel", he offers a new meaning to its relationship to God. And, just as "Israel" is the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham, the new Israel which is to emerge from the crisis occasioned by the encounter with emperial "nations" is the fulfilment of the promise of God. Again, just as in the past the nations received their blessing from Abraham, now too, they will have their blessing in the "son of Abraham". So, Jesus' relation to Abraham broadens the scope of his words and deeds by inserting them into the dynamic of the radical shift which Abraham's call symbolized: Abraham was called from among the nations to be, among the nations and for their welfare, at the origin of a new relation to God. So, the new order for which Abraham was called is not without links with the old order he left: the heritage of Adam. Abraham has to trust that, in God's hands, what is impossible for human beings is possible, life can triumph where death seems to already have a hold.

In Jesus, that is what happened to the heritage of Adam. If Eboussi did not elaborate on Jesus' link to Adam, he did play with the meaning of "Adam", i.e. man, equating the "son of man" with the "son of Adam". No doubt, the later designation never appears in the New Testament. However, with St Paul, Eboussi insists on Jesus as the "new Adam". In this perspective, the heritage of Adam is no longer split from within (cf. Abraham's call), but it is now re-created. The "son of man" is a "new Adam", the "new creation".

71 "Sa relation avec Abraham est un impératif d'une plus vaste ouverture en même temps que le gage d'une promesse plus ancienne et de plus grande portée." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 130).

72 See, Joshua 24:2-3.

73 See the promise of descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky (Genesis 15:5).

74 Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 130.

75 Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 130.
To sum up, two fundamental elements emerge from Eboussi's interpretation of Jesus' genealogy as constitutive dimensions of his person: first, the destiny of a people and, second, its incarnation in an archetypal figure. According to Eboussi, a person can be said to have been fully realized when these two elements find in his/her life their completion. A life fulfilled carries the destiny of its people in such a way that its archetypal figures are reincarnated, the traditions they represent assumed and transformed for the regeneration of the people. In a way, a life fulfilled becomes itself an archetype, the model of a new beginning. In the case of Jesus, son of David and son of Abraham, the process of carrying forward the tradition of the ancestors has come to its climax with the foundation of a "new community" in which a "new order" is operative. The new community is not simply the re-unification of the twelve tribes of Israel now fragmented and in deadly opposition but, it is much more the re-unification of the children of God, i.e. they who "were begotten not by blood, nor by carnal desire, nor by man's willing it, but by God" (John 1:13). The new order is that of a "brotherhood which is beyond the tribes and the genealogical links." When the son of David and Abraham carries its traditions to their fulfilment, he initiates a "new beginning": he becomes a "new Adam".

76 "La généalogie nous montre comment la personne porte le destin de son peuple, s'identifie à lui, en sorte que son histoire est la reprise de l'histoire de tous. Il s'accomplit d'autant plus qu'il réincarne les figures constitutives de son peuple." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 130).

77 "L'homme réussi est celui qui s'accomplit conformément aux écritures de sa tradition et revivifie en lui ses images primordiales, en même temps qu'il les transcende par une rupture instauratrice d'un autre lieu." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 131).

78 Cf. the enmity between Jews and Samaritans.

79 Jesus carries further the task of re-unification of David. In the Letter to the Colossians (1:13-22), the kingdom of the beloved son is the kingdom where everything in heaven and on earth is reconciled.

80 "Une fraternité située au-delà de l'ethnie et des liens généalogiques..." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 133). In this Jesus carries further Abraham's task of starting a new order.

81 The new Adam is a new creation characterized by a primal relation to God, that is, without mediation. As a consequence, his relation to others is based on reciprocity: "L'homme nouveau et définitif, c'est celui qui se sera fait lui-même par ses choix au sein d'une communauté volontaire avec laquelle il sera en réciprocité d'être. Une telle vie est plus forte que les conditionnements biologiques. C'est à partir de son reflux par-delà la mort qu'on l'entrevoit et l'on ne peut désigner sa transcendance à l'existence biologique
So, the principle of illimitation has been at work in Jesus' words and deeds as well as in his own person. The nearness of the kingdom calls for a "radical newness"\(^\text{82}\). Israel has now to reckon with God's absolute freedom. The choice of Israel has not been done over against the nations but out of God's gratuity, his overflowing love. In this line, there could be no "spiritual segregation"\(^\text{83}\) where some, by chance of birth, are \textit{de facto} "of God's own" and others are fundamentally "ungodly" or "impure". In the perspective of the Christic model, one is not born but one becomes "son" or "daughter" of God: there is a personal responsibility which cannot be waived.\(^\text{84}\) That is precisely why "the principle of heredity will not take root in the community of those who are born not of blood or the will of the flesh or of «man», but of «God»."\(^\text{85}\)

At bottom, the eschatological principle signifies that there are no more intermediaries: God is present right here, referring men and women to the divine mystery by referring them to their own proper reality.\(^\text{86}\)

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\(^{82}\) "une radicale nouveauté" (\textit{Christianisme sans fétiche}, p. 100. [\textit{CWF}, 99]).

\(^{83}\) \textit{Christianisme sans fétiche}, p. 100. [\textit{CWF}, 99].

\(^{84}\) "On ne naît pas enfant de Dieu, on ne l'est pas non plus par le simple fait d'appartenir à un groupe, à un peuple élu. C'est un événement, l'avènement dans l'histoire d'une relation de liberté. Il convient d'insister sur une telle filiation et une telle paternité" (\textit{Christianisme sans fétiche}, p. 108. [\textit{CWF}, 108]). Eboussi further elaborates on this type of filiation: "On devient enfant de Dieu par de libres accomplissements personnels, grâce auxquels on assume en vérité la gratuité d'un nouveau commencement, par-delà la ruine des divinités de la terre, de la fécondité, de celle du sang et de la puissance." (\textit{Christianisme sans fétiche}, p. 109. [\textit{CWF}, 108]).

\(^{85}\) \textit{CWF}, 106. "Le principe héréditaire ne prendra pas racine dans la communauté de ceux qui sont nés, non du sang ni du vouloir de la chair ni de l'homme, mais de «Dieu»" (\textit{Christianisme sans fétiche}, p. 106).

\(^{86}\) \textit{CWF}, 107. "Le principe eschatologique, au vrai, signifie qu'il n'y a plus d'intermédiaires: Dieu est présent et renvoie à son propre mystère, il renvoie l'homme à sa propre réalité." (\textit{Christianisme sans fétiche}, p. 107).
In its apparent simplicity, the Christic model sketched by Eboussi bears startling implications. Indeed, with the end of "intermediaries", comes the question of "Revelation" and the status of the "Church" in Eboussi's elaboration. More crucially, what understanding of God is now put to the front when God's presence fundamentally confirms the divine mystery and refers human beings to their own reality? And if, in the final analysis, each one has to do for its own tradition what Jesus did with his, what does "African Christianity" entail for Eboussi? These questions will be dealt with in the next chapter by way of recapitulation of the expository phase of this dissertation.

87 Cf. Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 155: "ce que Jésus fait, chacun doit l'accomplir du lieu où il se trouve, et pour sa propre tradition."
Ch. 4. Implications: "God-talk" Revisited.

Révolutionner les institutions ecclésiastiques et rechercher des adaptations indigénisantes en étudant la question de fondements, en refoulant celle de la pertinence pure et simple du christianisme, de son langage, c'est se vouer à une agitation stérile, se mettre en danger de mauvaise foi, de divertissement, de diversion.

Eboussi Boulaga

Introduction

As they are presented, the daring implications of the Christic model have been subtly hidden in order to make manifest its main threads. Now, the full meaning as well as the originality and the challenging power of the Christic model only appear when one comes to grips with its implications. It is, indeed, in a perspective of final elucidation that the present chapter intends to highlight the range of the theological questions involved in the model, by giving serious consideration to some of its implications. Perhaps, far from being a "sharp rejection of much of the

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1 The title has been inspired by J. Macquarrie, God-Talk, An Examination of the language and logic of Theology (New York - Evanston: Harper & Row, 1967). It seems to recapitulate the many questions clearly expressed or implicitly suggested by Eboussi's elaboration.

2 Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 186: "To change ecclesiastical institutions and to attempt indigenous adaptations while avoiding the question of foundation and dismissing the question of relevancy of Christianity, of its language, is to devote oneself to sterile agitation, to put oneself in danger of bad faith, amusement and diversion". [CWF, 191].
received message\textsuperscript{3}, Eboussi's insight suggests another way of talking about God as he makes manifest the shortcomings of some major "ideas" or "themes" dear to systematic theologians\textsuperscript{4} such as: "Revelation", God as Trinity, the Church of Christ as prefiguration of the kingdom of God, ideas often invoked in the missionary activity\textsuperscript{5} to characterize Christian specificity, its "absoluteness". Because this chapter will function as a conclusion to the "Christic Model" (part 2), it will integrate the essential components of its "Foundation" (part 1).

A - Revelation and Mediation

It is not without significance that the subtitle of the French original of Christianity Without Fetishes read: "Révélation et Domination" (Revelation and Domination).\textsuperscript{6} The idea of Revelation\textsuperscript{7}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{3} J.P. Hogan, "Christianity Without Fetishes" Theological Studies 46 (1985) 564.
  \item \textsuperscript{5} See, Christianisme sans fétiche, pp. 35-46, especially, pp. 45-46.
  \item \textsuperscript{6} The English translation, for whatever reason, abandoned the evocative power of the French subtitle for "An African Critique and Recapture of Christianity". This English subtitle is by no means arbitrary; indeed, it refers to the first sentence of the book as specification of Eboussi's goal.
  \item \textsuperscript{7} "Revelation" is perhaps the single most important concept, which can hardly be removed from present Christian (Catholic and Protestant) "systematic theology" without peril to the theological foundations of the Christian faith. Indeed, the concept of "revelation" has gained a very important consideration in Christian thought nowadays. One can simply refer to Vatican II with its "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation": Dei Verbum (see Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, ed. N. Tanner, vol.2, London: Sheed & Ward, 1990, pp. 971-981). A careful look at the history of Dei Verbum (see G. Baum, "Vatican II's Constitution On Revelation: History and Interpretation" in Theological Studies 28 (1967) 51-75.) brings us back to the unfinished business of Vatican I, where the appeal to "revelation" appeared in a complex struggle for authority: abstractly between "faith" and "reason" and, concretely between the "Papacy" and "Modernists"/"Reformers" (see Vatican I, "Dogmatic Constitution On the Catholic Faith": Dei Filius, ch. 2: "On Revelation", ch. 4: "On Faith and Reason"; and, the "First Dogmatic Constitution On the Church of Christ": Pastor Aeternus, chs.1-4: in fact the whole four chapters which make up this decree are devoted to the primacy of the Roman pontiff and his infallible teaching authority).
pervades the whole book like a latent question with which Eboussi struggles, sometimes openly, but, in general, indirectly. Indeed, the question of revelation is never treated exclusively as a theme even if Eboussi considers this concept as the "paradigm or the mother of all the subsequent ideologies of ultimate authority". In the dramatic encounter between Africa and the West, authoritative claims were in the forms of "Reason" (Civilization) and "Revelation" (Religion).

There are two possible ways to grasp Eboussi's view on revelation: either one gathers his critique of the notion of revelation and finds out what, obliquely, he is suggesting, or one focusses on his positive understanding of revelation and sees how such an understanding has led him to his critical stance. The latter orientation seems more convenient to our perspective with the Christic model as our primal source.

The Christic model, as it appears from our presentation, is but the principle of illimitation applied to the "Law" and the "Nations", i.e. to the knot of Israel's crisis. From the Persian period up to the Roman period and throughout the Greek period, what ultimately was at stake in Israel's confrontation with imperial powers was its own self-definition as a people chosen by God and

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8 *Christianisme sans fétiche*, p. 20. :"le paradigme ou la «mère» de toutes les idéologies subséquentes de dernière instance..."

9 Here are some examples of Eboussi's critique taken from *Christianisme sans fétiche*:
- "Que l'Eglise et le croyant soient soumis à la Révélation signifie concrètement qu'ils ne sont pas libres à l'égard du vocabulaire, des images, des récits, des mythes, des formules et des schèmes de l'Écriture et de la Tradition qui l'actualise et la commente, par le Symbole, le dogme et le rituel." (p. 13).
- "L'idée de «révélation» repose sur la prémisse selon laquelle il y a des réalités empiriquement observables qui sont substantiellement sacrées... Je ne vois pas en quoi une telle prémisse diffère de celle du fétichisme." (p. 16).
- "Pourquoi en effet pense-t-on échapper au positivisme ou au fétichisme de la Révélation en fixant la manifestation de Dieu, non dans un morceau de bois, mais dans une tranche de temps — deux mille ans, trente ans?" (p. 17).
- "Nous ne pouvons nous mettre «au point de vue» de Dieu et voir comment les choses et nous-mêmes sortons de lui et le dire dans un langage des relations descendantes, sinon fictivement ou métaphoriquement." (p. 17).
established in a unique relation of Covenant with the Creator of the universe. In this respect, Israel has always been claiming and proclaiming an exclusive knowledge of God and his will now enshrined in the "Law" and explicated by the "Word" addressed to the prophets. But, with the nearness of God proclaimed by Jesus and the principle of illimitation which comes forth with it, Eboussi sees a radical interpretation of Israel's self-definition and claim. Indeed, applied to the Law, the principle of illimitation implies that no custom of whatever particular group should be made exclusively and irrevocably "sacred" access to God. With the accessibility of God to all, even to those excluded by the Law like the sinners, the prostitutes, the uncleaned, the Samaritans etc., priority is given to personal intercourse with God. By no means, however, is the communitarian dimension played down; instead, it is opened, or better, called to be opened up to the entire universe where God's "reign" has to become fully manifest.

As a matter of fact, by upholding Jesus' challenge to Israel's claim of a unique knowledge of

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10 see, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 91: "Comment prétendre qu'on est le peuple élu, lorsqu'on est une minorité parfois odieuse, mal intégrée dans la « civilisation », quand on est une nation colonisée et assujettie? Comment se rédefinir, préserver son identité, sa « mission ou sa vocation », sans mettre en péril sa survie biologique?".

11 The Book of Deuteronomy constantly refers to Israel's knowledge of God and his will as its necessary and sufficient element of survival. See a typical summary in Deuteronomy 5:32-40. Among all the nations on the earth, only Israel has heard the voice of God and lived. Moreover, for now, only if Israel continues to hear the voice of God will it live: Shema Israel! (Deuteronomy 5:1; 6:4).

12 Christian theology has been more inclined to associate "revelation" with the prophetic "word" (dabar) than with the "law" (torah). This is the sequel of the bitter conflict within Christianity of the role of the Law as one can sense from Paul's Letter to the Galatians. More importantly, the Hebrew dabar later translated in Greek by logos has quickly been identified with the logos tou theou, the word of God, whose incarnation Jesus was. So the word made flesh is the full manifestation of the eternal word spoken by the Spirit through the prophets.

13 Only the prophet Jeremiah (31:31-34) had dared to talk about a "new covenant" which will not be like the covenant made after the Exodus, that is, with Moses as mediator. Still, Jeremiah did not envision a "new law"; the newness is that the law will no more be an external but an internal reality. Indeed, it will be written upon the hearts. So, what ultimately counts for the prophets, even to Jeremiah, is that the people live by the law given by God himself.
God and his will, Eboussi indirectly objects to the underlying idea of an exclusive "direct access" to God which characterizes the present theological concept of revelation. In effect, if the life and death crisis which befell Israel was due to its self-understanding as a people "chosen" from among the "nations" to live under the very "will" and "commandments" of God, - according to the Promises (descendants, land and prosperity) sealed in a Covenant guaranteed by God -, and if Israel's survival lies in the recognition of God's unrestricted freedom and generosity toward everyone, then Christianity has to be vigilant in avoiding such a self-understanding. But, beyond the claim itself, Eboussi primarily sees and stigmatizes the potential danger inherent in the idea of revelation: the danger of turning an individual or a group with its custom into a "sacred" mediation.

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14 Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 16. According to Eboussi, even though they are empirical realities, the sacred mediations (books, persons, etc.) tend to function as divine realities. The rejection of any "direct" relation to God has been held by S. Kierkegaard whose thought is familiar to Eboussi (the last sentence of Christianisme sans fétiche is a quotation of Kierkegaard). About God, Kierkegaard wrote: "Il est dans la création, il est partout dans la création, mais il n'y est pas directement... Le rapport direct à Dieu est justement le paganisme, et ce n'est que quand ce rapport est rompu qu'il peut être question d'un vrai rapport avec Dieu." (Post-Scriptum Aux Miettes Philosophiques, Paris: Gallimard, p. 161; quoted by Edmond Ortigues, Le Temps de la Parole (Neuchatel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1954), p. 6).

15 Since Vatican II understands by revelation God's choice "to reveal himself and to make known the secret purpose of his will" (Dei Verbum, #2) or, "to manifest and communicate both himself and the eternal decrees of his will for the salvation of humankind" (Dei Verbum, #6), it has become familiar to hear and read about revelation as "self-disclosure", "self-communication" or "self-manifestation" of God. But this emphasis on God's "self" being at the heart of revelation is not unheard of in the past; indeed, St. Ignatius of Antioch (c. 110 AD), in his Letter to the Magnesians, 6, spoke of "the existence of one sole God, who has revealed himself in his Son Jesus Christ, Word of his own from silence proceeding, who in all that he was and did gladdened the heart of the one who sent him."

16 "Ces refus primitifs pourraient donc révéler le type d'obstacles permanents qu'il [le christianisme] doit surmonter pour rester lui-même. Il doit surmonter à la volonté de puissance théocratique, au culturalisme ou au ritualisme, à la sacralisation des méditations. Il se doit de briser le principe territorial, le principe ethnique, briser la logique exclusive de l'appartenance à un groupe, même et surtout religieux. Aucun mode de vie ne saurait devenir le chemin obligé pour aller à Dieu." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 103.). Italics are mine.

17 In Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 16, he speaks of "potentialités impérialistes, totalitaires et sectaires..."

18 "Dès lors que Dieu est «intervenu» dans le monde, l'institution qui revendique d'être son «lieutenant», sa présence en différencé, s'octroiera des droits divins." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 16). Eboussi has in mind "Israel" and the "Church". If in Judaism Moses held a unique position because he was
With the principle of illimitation, God is near to everyone. This, first of all, means for Eboussi that God cannot be a "private possession". He cannot be confined to a defined experience of some privileged people who have set the canon\(^\text{19}\) to have access to him. Eboussi is adamant that God cannot be claimed or used to justify a privileged position of any group; he cannot be called upon as the validation of the "symbolic domination"\(^\text{20}\) of one group over another.\(^\text{21}\) Indeed, with the principle of illimitation, Eboussi wants to exclude any use of God as siding in human conflict, or as founding the "hegemony" of one group.\(^\text{22}\) The nearness of God also means that God is "here", in the social matrix. Indeed, the end of "sacred" mediation or mediator, according to Eboussi, "mediator" between God and the Israelites (cf. Deuteronomy 5-6.), in Christianity, the idea of "incarnation" (cf. John 1) asserts in Jesus (mediator), the self-manifestation of God. In Christianity the sacred status has been given to Jesus, while in Judaism, it is the Law which has been revered as sacred. Both offering a "direct access" to God and his will.

\(^{19}\) The canon is a set of rules defining what is to be said and what is not to be said about God (dogma), - and how this should be done -; what are the ways and means to encounter him truly (sacraments or other rites and rituals for piety), - and how this should be done.

\(^{20}\) Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 8.

\(^{21}\) See early Christianity's objection to Rabbinic Judaism according to Eboussi: "Le pharisaïsme investit tout le contenu de la «Révélation» dans un corps d'usages, de préceptes, de recettes, de dispositions et d'habitus qu'il identifie de manière immédiate à la Volonté de Dieu... La Bible transposée en Talmud entre dans le dispositif d'une «culture de la différence»... Par là, s'éternise l'opposition entre les Juifs et les autres, en la transférant en Dieu, en la fondant en son immuable Arbitraire." (Christianisme sans fétiche, pp. 102-103.).

\(^{22}\) On the problem of competing religious claims and the tendency to demonize the others in Israel, see: Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Yahweh and Other Deities. Conflict and Accomodation in the Religion of Israel" in Interpretation 40/4 (1986) 354-366. In a sense, Eboussi is not wrong when he points out that the God of Abraham is not exempt from the ambiguities and partisanship common to local or particular deities: "Les divinités particulières meurent comme autant d'absolus contradictoires, ennemis les uns des autres par adorateurs interposés, jetant ceux-ci les uns les autres en des luttes inexpiables. Ils sont équivoques... Le Dieu d'Abraham n'échappe pas à cette ambiguïté... Ces divinités sont parmi les éléments qui différencient un groupe d'un autre, où Dieu est, en somme, un principe d'exclusion qui se transforme dans le conflit ou la compétition en principe d'intolérance et d'élimination." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 108). That is why the principle of illimitation becomes very important: "Le principe eschatologique, au vrai, signifie qu'il n'y a plus d'intermédiaires... Dieu n'est plus dans les rites d'identification d'un groupe à lui-même, il n'est plus la possession d'une société qui prend son saint nom comme emblème de ralliement ou totem." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 107).
signifies that human beings are referred to their own reality as "image of God". God is now given in the relation of human beings with one another and the way they attend to the world. So, the end of sacred mediation or mediatorship is not the beginning of a new immediacy characterized by psychological introspection or intentionality.

Furthermore, to be consistent with the Christic model, the whole idea of a "history of salvation" has to be re-examined. In effect, for Eboussi, the encapsulation of world history in the linear understanding of the history of salvation as accounted for in Jewish-Christian "scriptures": creation, fall, call of Abraham, covenant with Israel, incarnation-death-and-resurrection of Jesus, and the expectation of a final day, simply broke the "temporal unity" of the existence of other peoples by forcing them into the salvation-history dynamic.

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23 See, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 107: "Quand Dieu est réel, l'homme ne se retrouve pas devant le face à face de la vision, mais devant la seule «image» qui puisse le représenter, devant soi-même comme responsabilité, parole. Parole et responsabilité sont la représentation active et réelle de Dieu comme reconnaissance et engagement, comme «confession de foi». Le Dieu eschatologique se médiaitise par l'humanité de l'homme en acte et en exercice, en sa source qui, en tous les rôles, dans les arrangements de la vie en société, dans le travail et les rapports de production, se présuppose elle-même comme spontanéité et gratuité." (Christianisme sans fétiche, pp. 107-108.).

24 See, Christianisme sans fétiche, pp. 110-116. Here, Eboussi describes what he calls a "community of love". The community of love is a community where God is really "Father", that is, where everyone is "sons and daughters of God", brothers and sisters: "La nomination de Dieu Père... n'est pas une simple référence à un sujet éternel, mais elle est un acte qui engage l'homme et lui impose des règles de conduite, une manière originale d'être-au-monde, d'être en société, de créer une communauté, qui soit celle des «enfants de Dieu». Il s'agit que le principe d'illimitation, nommé Dieu-Père ou Dieu-Amour, devienne le principe structurant d'une communauté d'hommes." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 110). Italics are mine.

25 "Ainsi, par exemple, pour dire qu'on aime Dieu qu'on ne voit pas, il faut que celui-ci ne soit pas le meilleur moyen de nous affecter nous-mêmes, de rechercher la paix, de nous fuir ou de nous affirmer. Il doit être voulu pour lui-même comme celui vers qui nous nous tournons du même mouvement que nous nous faisons..." (Christianisme sans fétiche, pp. 110-111.).

26 "Le temps chrétien ne souffre pas d'interruption: il s'avance d'une marche linéaire depuis le judaïsme jusqu'à nos jours en passant par l'Eglise primitive, le Moyen Age, la Renaissance et les temps modernes. On s'intègre à ce courant. Le christianisme n'a plus d'histoire que celle d'une diffusion géographique à partir d'un foyer rayonnant, celle d'une dissémination de formes accomplies et de vérités constituées, d'une identité répétitive et croissante. Le nouveau converti n'est qu'un assimilé et un métèque. Son unité temporelle est brisée." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 31.).
What is at stake here has been dealt with by Karl Rahner in a vigorous but subtle article. Rahner tackled the problem of salvation-history by first positing "salvation-history" and the "history of the world" as two distinct realities. He then correlated them in the following assertion: "Salvation-history takes place within the history of the world." The formulation can be misleading; indeed, if salvation-history occurs right in the midst of ordinary history, i.e. everyday life of individual and communities, definitively, according to Rahner, "the history of this world is a history interpreted in the Christo-centric sense." In effect, with the "Incarnation of the divine Word" (Jesus), God had "authoritatively" interpreted the "history of Israel alone" as "the official and special salvation-history in distinction to profane history." So, Rahner is still arguing in the dynamic of a special Revelation. The distinction between "salvation-history" and "profane history" with an ultimate subordination of the latter to the former falls under the category of what Eboussi terms the "monopoly of the meaning of existence." For Eboussi, the truth claims inherent


28 Op. Cit., p.97. Frequently in his text, Rahner qualified the history of the world as "profane history" (pp. 99, 100, 105, 106, 107, 109, 110).

29 Ibid., p. 114.


31 Ibid., p. 109.

32 Ibid., p. 109.

33 There is an uneasiness with the idea of special revelation even when one remains within the account of the Old Testament. Rahner had the courage to mention it but without further consideration. He wrote: "...in a theology of salvation history which takes God's universal salvific will seriously, and also takes account of the enormous temporal interval separating 'Adam' from the Old Testament revelation of Moses, the whole interval between these two points cannot be understood to have been deprived of divine revelation. It should be noted in passing that Vatican II's constitution Dei Verbum (art. 3) passes over this interval a little too quickly." (Foundations of Christian Faith, pp. 314-315.). Italics are mine. Not only Vatican II passes over the question too quickly, Rahner himself simply noted the problem "in passing".

34 "monopole du sens de l'existence." (Christiansisme sans fétiche, p. 18.). On p. 48, of the same book, Eboussi speaks of: "une certaine incapacité des religions révélées et des idéologies laïcises qui héritent de leur prétention, à accepter la diversité des modes d'être homme et de reconnaître l'absolu, à renoncer au monopole de la «vérité», du sens de l'existence ou de la direction de l'histoire."
in the idea of revelation only leads to a "prescription of meaning", a "supernatural terrorism". Thus, his orientation toward a "metaphorical" understanding of revelation, that is, a prior and formal acknowledgment that our language on God is but a transposition onto God of our human experiences. The reason advanced by Eboussi is that we cannot put ourselves in God's position to see things as from his own point of view.

Ultimately, it is only from the background of Eboussi's determination to "free" God from being hijacked for "political" and "imperial" purposes that the whole line of reasoning holds. It is definitively from the same background also that one can perceive a meaning to Eboussi's terrible

35 "Terrorisme surnaturel" (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 50).

36 "On n'évitera le fétichisme de la révélation que si l'on avoue, pour en tirer toutes les conséquences théoriques et pratiques, le caractère métaphorique de la notion ou de l'expression de «Révélation» ou de «Parole de Dieu». Qu'est-ce à dire? Quand on affirme que Dieu appelle, choisit, écoute, parle, se laisse apaiser ou flétrir, il faut bien admettre qu'on use de métaphores, c'est-à-dire qu'on transporte en Dieu ce qui se passe dans l'homme, qui, il est vrai, «dépend» de lui quant à l'être." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 17.). For Eboussi, out of such a metaphorical understanding, there is but a myth: "Prétendre résoudre la question du mythe en christianisme en se délestant de quelques réalités mythiques d'importance secondaire, telles Adam, les démons, les Anges, tout en continuant de discoursur la Parole de Dieu, de ses «habitues», de l'incarnation, de la révélation, qui vient à l'homme de l'au-delà, des actes de Dieu qui jugent, condamnent les hommes et transforment leur histoire... c'est la laisser inentamée." (Ibid., p. 58).

37 "Nous ne pouvons nous mettre «au point de vue» de Dieu et voir comment les choses et nous-mêmes sortons de lui et le dire dans le langage des relations descendantes, sinon fictivement ou métaphoriquement." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 17.).

38 The word is mine. It comes close to express Eboussi's constant criticism of any claim of a privileged relation to God. It is important to note that the idea of "freeing" God as a deliberate endeavour is alien to Eboussi; concluding a study on the "African writers and Christianity", he writes: "La défense de Dieu, de la Vérité est la dernière «trouvaille» de l'homme contre l'homme, pour se valoriser et exploiter autrui. Le saint Maître des Diallobé en prend douloureusement conscience au soir de sa vie... «Mais, je vous le demande, peut-on défendre Dieu des hommes? Qui le peut? Qui a ce droit? A qui Dieu appartient-il? Qui n'a pas le droit de l'aider ou de le bafouer? Songez-y, Chef des Diallobé, la liberté d'aider ou de haïr Dieu est l'ultime don de Dieu que nul ne peut enlever à l'homme.» (C. Hamidou Kane)" ("Les Auteurs Africains parlent du Christianisme" in A Contretemps, p. 152). Eboussi intends his critique in the perspective of Kierkegaard's "corrective" (see, A Contretemps, p. 259).

39 See, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 59: "On voit pourquoi celui qui a subi l'assaut critique du christianisme à l'endurance de ses propres traditions ne saurait se contenter de demi-mesures et de demi-vérités. Le christianisme ne trouvera pas de crédibilité, du moins au yeux de quelques uns... aussi longtemps que les questions les plus radicales seront traitées par prétextation ou éludées."
question addressed to Christian theological traditions: "Why should one think to escape a positivism or fetishism of Revelation by locating the manifestation of God, not in a piece of wood, but in a portion of time -- two thousand years, thirty years?"\(^{40}\)

**B - Trinitarian Faith**

By calling into question the idea of Revelation, Eboussi was objecting to certain ideas of God and the truth claims which they carry. From the standpoint of the Christic model, and as one of its major implications, both "monotheism" and "polytheism" are forcefully rejected respectively because of the risk of totalitarianism and antagonistic rivalries. The Trinitarian faith is upheld and reinterpreted in the perspective of an ethical demand of personal responsibility as antithetical to monotheism and polytheism.

In the Christic model's perspective, Trinitarian faith is not about the "three persons", their "nature" and their "processions".\(^{41}\) Just as he was with the question on revelation, Eboussi remains suspicious of any claim related to the knowledge of God in his being: in this case, of any "talk"

\(^{40}\) "Pourquoi en effet pense-t-on échapper au positivisme ou fétichisme de la Révélation en fixant la manifestation de Dieu, non dans un morceau de bois, mais dans une tranche de temps -- deux mille ans, trente ans?" (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 17.). The two thousand years refer to the history of Israel, from Abraham to Jesus. And, the thirty years refer to the life of Jesus. Of the latter, Eboussi writes: "Le christianisme se transforme en secte intolérante en croyant posséder la vérité enclose dans les bornes de la vie terrestre de Jésus, devenue la propriété exclusive de ses héritiers et de ses disciples." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 142.).

\(^{41}\) Every contemporary theological treatise on the Trinity has been unsuccessfully battling against these traditional categories. Even Karl Rahner had not succeeded in spite of his own writing: "Any attempt today to present the Christian doctrine of the Trinity must involve a 'liberation' of the usual traditional propositions from their 'splendid isolation', in which they have been encapsulated in scholastic theology. We must try to make the doctrine of the Trinity fruitful for practical Christian living, given that the doctrine has a 'sitz im leben' and that the Trinity is of crucial importance for actual Christian life and spirituality." (The Mystery of the Trinity in Theological Investigations, vol. 16., trans. D. Morland (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979), p. 254).
about the "immanent Trinity". And, precisely because the idea of "revelation" and particularly that of "incarnation" can only be understood metaphorically, there is little room in the Christic model for a direct translation from the "life of Jesus" to the "inner life of God". In other words, for Eboussi, there could be no symmetry or identity between the "economic Trinity" and the "immanent Trinity". God remains incomprehensible. For Eboussi there are two consequences related to the incomprehensibility of God: 1) because God is incomprehensible, he cannot be "objectified" or mediated by any historical realities and, 2) the acknowledgment of God as he is refers human beings to their own reality. These two elements are but the paradigms of Eboussi's understanding of Trinitarian faith.

Trinitarian faith in the context of the Christic model stands in contrast both with monotheism and polytheism which, in different ways, ultimately "objectify" God. In monotheism,

42 I have taken advantage of Karl Rahner's terminology to express concisely Eboussi's position on the doctrine of Trinity. An initial approach to the doctrine by Rahner can be found in Foundations of Christian Faith, pp. 133-137. Further elaboration comes with his presentation of "Incarnation" (Ibid., pp. 212-228). Rahner pointed out the fruitless result of the attempts to explain the "Trinity" from and in its "immanence": "A psychological theory of the Trinity", however ingenious the speculations from the time of Augustine down to our own time, in the end does not explain precisely what it is supposed to explain, namely, why the Father express himself in Word, and with the Logos breathes a Spirit which is different from him." (Ibid., p. 135). To find a way out of this impasse, Rahner suggested an understanding of the Trinity from and in "the economy and history of salvation and revelation" (Ibid., p. 137). In his own catchword, we have this identification: "The Trinity in the history and economy of salvation is the immanent Trinity." (Ibid., p. 136). The problem with Rahner, - from Eboussi's perspective --, is that he cannot conclusively attest from within history "why" it is God, in his innermost self, who is giving himself in this historical man Jesus. Rahner knows that there is an impasse here too because we are dealing with the mystery of God. His less often discussed article on the incomprehensibility of God, even in the beatific vision, is well reflected upon; see, K. Rahner, "An Investigation of the Incomprehensibility of God in St. Thomas Aquinas" in Theological Investigations, vol.16., trans. D. Morland (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), pp. 244-254. To recapitulate a complex argument in a sentence (risky business!), I will say: Rahner agrees with St. Thomas that the "beatific vision" does not imply that we cease to be different from God; and, because the difference is maintained, a total grasp of who God is will remain impossible. Therefore, Rahner can invite the "intellect" to surrender "itself to incomprehensibility as its own beatitude" (An Investigation, p. 254.).

43 "La doctrine de la Trinité réfère à Dieu en son ipséité même, de telle manière que l'homme qui reconnaît Dieu comme tel, c'est-à-dire en son incommunicable mystère ou Soi, est renvoyé à sa propre ipséité d'homme, à son être-au-monde comme la forme constitutive de son humanité et de sa personnalité." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 187).
here symbolized by the God of Israel, God is transformed into a "principle of exclusion." Indeed, because the only true God has truly made himself known to a particular people, any true knowledge and access to him now comes through this people. In the case of Israel, one can even establish a date of his manifestation in this world. To such a view, Eboussi replies, not without irony:

God is not a historic figure whose career begins with the most ancient "memories" of the Jewish people, and whose behaviours, "habits" and major achievements can be learnt in the holy Scriptures. No, revelation is not a disclosure of the mystery of God. He is just as "hidden" as the unknown God which pagans worshipped and whose enigma they acknowledged.45

So, Eboussi's criticism of the idea of monotheism does not start with a philosophical discussion of the necessity or the validity of the "intuition", "perception" or "claim" or "logical consistency" that the "first principle" or "God" should be "one".46 Eboussi's first concern, in the dynamic of the Christic model, is the risk of "consecrating" a particular view, setting it over against others and, finally refusing the "otherness" of others through assimilation or reduction.47 There is

44 "La Trinité, par son allure abstraite et sa connotation de multiplicité est le dépassement du dieu des Juifs, anthropomorphe, solitaire, « jaloux » et principe d'exclusion." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 188).

45 "Dieu n'est pas un personnage historique dont la carrière commence avec les plus antiques « souvenirs » du peuple juif, dont on peut apprendre le caractère, les « habitudes » et les hauts faits dans les saintes Écritures. Non, la révélation n'est pas la divulgation du mystère de Dieu. Il est aussi « caché » que le Dieu inconnu que les païens ont adoré et reconnu en énigme." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 188).

46 The idea of "oneness" is not left out of Eboussi's criticism. He writes: "La foi admet comme allant sans dire l'unicité de la révélation, parce que le Dieu qui se révèle est un. En quoi l'unité numériquement cardinale de la révélation judéo-chrétienne correspond-elle à l'« unité » de Dieu? Si Dieu est aus-dessus du nombre, au-delà de l'opposition mondaïne de l'un et du multiple, comment peut-il suivre que la manifestation de son ipséïté ne puisse s'exprimer adéquatement que par l'unité cardinale? Comment ne pas reconnaître que l'unité ou l'unicité ne sont que des représentations humaines...?" (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 58).

47 What is said about the revelation of the one and true God is also valid for the "rationale" behind the "Western civilization" advocacy of "rationality". See, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 188. Eboussi
an inherent, often latent, intolerance of others in their differences where monotheism is strongly defended and promoted. Eboussi's understanding of Trinitarian faith rejects such behaviours by asserting that God is beyond the human concept of "unicity" and "multiplicity".

So, God is neither "one" nor "many". According to Eboussi, polytheism is but "the idolatry of the phantasms of desire and, the renouncement of oneself in favour of obscure and fascinating powers of sex, blood, power, possession, circular regularities and fate." Here, Eboussi has in mind African deities as well as the Greek pantheon. The major critique of the Olympian gods had been carried out by the Greek philosophers who castigated their deceptive character and suggested instead some "first" cause as principle sustaining the universe. Against the anarchy of polytheism, the reduction to a unique principle had unfortunately led to a totalitarian monotheism. The idea of trinity is not a mere dialectical reconciliation of monotheism and polytheism as specifically deals with the philosophical dimension of Western rationality in *La Crise du Muntu* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1977).

48 "Mais la Tinité est aussi un rejet du polythéisme, qui est idolâtrie des phantasme du désir et désistement de soi en faveur des puissances obscures et fascinantes du sexe, de sang, du pouvoir, de la possession, des régularités circulaires et de la fatalité" (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 188.).


51 As first cause, Thales suggested "water", Anaximenes suggested "air" and, Heraclitus proposed "fire".
manifested in Judaism and Hellenism; it asserts that God is beyond human representation. Thus, Trinitarian faith, according to Eboussi, frees humanity from the idolatry of the "sacred", be it "one" or "many":

It sets human being free from the holy, that is, from events, names, places, persons and objects which are immediately identifiable with the presence of God, with his sign or his traces, giving direct access to him without the 'reflective discourse' by which human being becomes God's effective re-presentation.

So, for Eboussi, the understanding of God as Trinity is not meant to be a puzzle to the mind of human beings. On the contrary, it fundamentally promotes human dignity by liberating individuals and groups from "all a priori, even religious ones". For Eboussi, this means a return to human being and society respectively as centre and matrix of the realization of Trinitarian

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52 Eboussi uses the word "dépassement" which denotes the idea of going "beyond", "further". So, the Trinity will be said to be: "... dépassement de l'idolâtrie monothéiste et polythéiste" (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 187), "... confrontation du judaïsme et de l'hellénisme et de leur dépassement" (ibid., p. 188), "le dépassement du dieu des Juifs" (ibid., p. 188).

53 "Elle [la notion de trinité] disait ce que Dieu n'est pas, ni un ni multiple, mais au-delà de l'un et du multiple, du même et de l'autre, au-delà de toute représentation." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 188).

54 "Elle libère l'homme du sacré, c'est-à-dire des faits, des noms, des lieux, des personnages, des objets identifiables immédiatement à la présence de Dieu, à sa marque ou à ses traces et donnant un accès direct à lui, autrement que par la «discursivité» par laquelle l'homme se pose en re-présentation effective de lui." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 188).

55 "Sa fonction n'est donc pas de briser l'orgueil humain, de scandaliser la raison et d'obtenir le sacrifice de l'intelligence en faisant adhérer à une formule contradictoire, en proposant à contempler un pur Déhors de l'homme, qui n'a aucune fonction dans la genèse de l'humanité concrète de l'homme, dans son devenir-personne." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 189).

56 "Elle [la notion de trinité] va jusqu'à affranchir l'homme de tout a priori, même religieux, théiste ou antithéiste..." (Christianisme sans fétiche, pp. 188-189).

57 "La seule «assurance» qu'on puisse avoir de ne pas adorer une idole et une projection de son désir, c'est de revenir à soi, d'être donné à soi-même pour être et faire ce qu'on est seul à pouvoir être et faire, sans substitution vicaire. C'est d'être donné à soi-même comme le moyen de rien, à l'instar de Dieu
"predicament", i.e. God as means for anything at all; and, human beings as "re-presentation" of God, "image of God".59

Where does Eboussi lead us with this Trinitarian faith? It may be important to recall the starting point of this elaboration in Eboussi's own words: "Our starting point does not primarily confront us with an internal crisis of the churches but demands another type of question: what is the present meaning of Christianity perceived from other horizons of history than the Christian or post-Christ West? How to integrate into our historical destiny a Christianity imposed from without?"60 Here is rooted Eboussi's double task of understanding and re-appropriating Christianity from the vantage point of "domination". Eboussi with the principle of "illimitation" as the hermeneutical principle of the "nearness of the kingdom" has devised the Christic model in such a way that priority is given to the "person" now understood as re-presentation or image of God, that is "moyen de rien" ("means to nothing"). Truth is not just given or mediated from without, but it is the advent of a person, a new and living freedom.61 It is in this dynamic that Eboussi's appraisal or reformulation of "revelation" and "God" as Trinity places us. At this point, a bell most probably

58 "La gloire de Dieu, c'est-à-dire la splendeur de son éclat, c'est l'homme vivant, se faisant avec les autres, ces spontanéités libres, qui ne sont le moyen de rien, reconnus tels par la parole, le respect, la réciprocité de gratuité." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 187). What matters for Eboussi is less the institutions which constitute and structure a group or people than the relationship which determines and conditions the institutions.

59 "La doctrine de la Trinité réfère à Dieu en son ipséité même, de telle manière que l'homme qui reconnaît Dieu comme tel, c'est-à-dire en son incommunicable mystère ou Soi, est renvoyé à sa propreipséité, à son être-au-monde comme à la forme constitutive de son humanité et de sa personnalité." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 187).

60 "Notre point de départ ne nous affronte pas d'abord à une crise interne des églises, mais il nous impose une interrogation d'un autre type: quel est le sens actuel du christianisme perçu d'autres horizons de l'histoire que ceux de l'Occident chrétien ou post-chrétien? Comment intégrer en notre destinée historique un christianisme d'extériorité et d'imposition?" (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 186).

61 "La vérité est toujours l'avènement d'une liberté neuve et vivante. L'être-personne est l'éclaircie de la vérité. «La vérité vous fera libres.»" (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 186).
rings in the mind of a sensitive scholar of Christian doctrine: what place is then assigned to the
Church of Christ in this re-interpretation of Christianity?

C - Community of Love

The Church for Eboussi is the community where the principle of illimitation is operative. Here, the principle of illimitation is named "God-Father" or "God-Love". What is at stake in these names is not first and foremost an "eternal subject" which is now called "Father" or "Love", but an ideal implied in the idea of fatherhood and love. The designation of God as Father is an engagement to act according to fraternity, without discrimination based on religious status (priests/lay; righteous/sinners) or social status (rich/poor; wise/ignorant; old/young; men/women). Indeed, if God is "father" we are all "sons and daughters of God". The Church in this perspective is primarily the community in which the principle of illimitation "structures" the relation among its members in the form of brother-and-sister-hood. Such a community is not closed upon itself but all-embracing; otherwise, it lives against the principle of illimitation.

The designation of God as Love adds nothing new to the designation of God as Father. In effect, "Love is the name of this inventive power to create organizations and institutions which

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62 "La nomination de Dieu n'est pas une simple référence à un sujet éternel, mais elle est un acte qui engage l'homme et lui impose des règles de conduite, une manière originale d'être-au-monde, d'être en société, de créer une communauté, qui soit celle des «enfants de Dieu». " (Christianisme sans félicie, p. 110). A new sensitivity concerned with the bias implied in "sexist" or "patriarchal" designations of God has emerged in today's theological consciousness. From Eboussi's understanding of revelation and God, it should now be obvious that patriarchy and sex in theology are just one more anthropological projection and, thus, a fetishism. The focus is not at all on the fatherhood but on the "fraternity" which it implies.

63 "La relation compatible avec l'égalité de tous devant Dieu récuse, comme on l'a vu, les hiérarchisations discriminatoires, opposition entre prêtres et laïcs, riches et pauvres, savants et ignorants, saints et pécheurs. Elle s'appelle fraternité." (Christianisme sans félicie, p. 112).
make the new life possible." The new life is precisely the life of the fraternal community devised by the principle of illimitation. In this perspective, Eboussi has characterized "love" as "the constitutive principle of the eschatological community", i.e. a community where "violence", whatsoever its form, should not be at play. By naming God: Love, Eboussi basically intends to deepen by way of explication the foundation of the institutions and organizations of the fraternal community.

Indeed, if the naming of God as Father attests the equality of all before God, the naming of God as Love asserts our equality among ourselves: we are all without discrimination "images" of an invisible God whom one cannot love except through the love of one another. Love calls for a "labour of love" which is not without trials; indeed, it requires "conversion of hearts", i.e. a "dépassement" of one own limitations in order to discover and love God in his "image". The Church for Eboussi has to be understood as this "community of the future, where there is no more man and woman, Jew and Greek, slave and free-man" but "friends". It is the community in the form of the Christic model, i.e. a community which does for its own time and milieu what Jesus

64 "L'amour est ici le nom de cette force d'invention d'organisations et d'institutions qui rendent la vie nouvelle possible." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 113).

65 "Il [L'amour] est le principe constitutif de la communauté eschatologique, qui ne sera plus fondée sur la violence sous les formes les plus variées du privilège: savoir, fortune, force, sur la confiscation et la libre disposition par quelques-uns de ce qui appartient à tous et à chacun, de ce qui est nécessaire à l'humanité de chacun pour être plénière." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 113).

66 "Ainsi, pour dire qu'on aime Dieu qu'on ne voit pas, il faut que celui-ci ne soit pas le meilleur moyen de nous affecter nous-mêmes, de rechercher la paix, de nous fuir ou de nous affirmer. Il doit être voulu pour lui-même comme celui vers qui nous nous tournons du même mouvement que nous nous faisons... Cette reconnaissance n'est vraie que dans la mesure où nous traitons dans le quotidien le prochain comme présentation de ce Dieu, qui est fin." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 110-111). Italics are mine.

67 1 Thessalonians 1:3.

68 "... la communauté humaine de l'avenir, où il n'y aura plus ni homme, ni femme, ni Juif, ni Grec, ni esclave, ni homme libre. « Je ne vous appelle plus serviteurs, mais amis.»" (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 113).
had done for his own time and tradition. For whoever thinks that such a community is but utopian, Eboussi replied that such a thinking simply indicates "the level of «alienation» of the one who judges it that way". Indeed, for the one who loves others without restriction or calculation, there is no fear, not even the fear of death, when it comes to live up to the "radical change" (conversion) conveyed by the principle of illimitation called "Love" ("Dieu-Amour").

The "community of love" as "community of the future" is distinct from what Eboussi terms, "la Grande Eglise". La Grande Eglise is the Church of the Gentiles which has taken the place of the early Jewish-Christian communities and, has developed over the centuries an irreconcilable tension between "being Jew" and "being Christian". According to Eboussi, Paul never thought that way. Indeed, Paul, who admirably prevented the Christic model from being hijacked by the

69 "Ce que Jésus fait, chacun doit l'accomplir du lieu où il se trouve, et pour sa propre tradition." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 155).

70 "Qu'un tel programme apparaîsse utopique pourrait seulement indiquer le degré «d'aliénation» de celui qui le juge tel..." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 113).

71 "Qu'on s'en félicite ou qu'on le déplore, Jésus appelle à la conversion et annonce quelque chose de radicalement différent qui met en cause la religion et le pouvoir liés au temple et à la caste sacerdotale, le principe ethnique et la sacralisation de la loi. Il introduit des germes «d'anarchie» en niant les couples antithétiques selon lesquels l'ordre social s'organise, se hiérarchise: riche-pauvre, grand-petit, honnête-malhonnête, savant-ignorant, homme-femme..." (Christianisme sans fétiche, 148).

72 See, Christianisme sans fétiche, pp. 153-156.

73 See, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 153.

74 "La Grande Eglise hérite de tous ses biens, de l'interprétation de son histoire. Elle devient irrespirable au Juif qu'elle somme de se déjudaisser, de renoncer à ses solidarités, de ne sauver son identité et ses continuités historiques qu'en les allégorisant, de ne se sauver qu'en devenant un individu esseulé et déraciné, une âme." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 153).

Judaizers while vigorously recalling his gentile flock of its Jewish root, was himself wholly a "Pharisee", a "Roman Citizen" and a "Christian".\textsuperscript{76} For the early Jewish-Christian communities which Eboussi views as the paradigm of the community of love, it means that "faith is not a principle of belonging", but it is what makes possible the articulation of "Judaism and 'Romanism', ethnic and religious particularity and economic and political ecumenism, divisive and heterogenous temporality due to different past and common and manifold future."\textsuperscript{77} In other words, "faith" is more a principle of "reconciliation" which preserves the differences than a principle of "incorporation" into a particular society. The community of faith is a community of "destiny", that is, a community where the ultimate meaning of a life transformed by the power of "illimitation" is saved from oblivion (death) by the care of the living.\textsuperscript{78} And, this does not require breaking with one's "historical continuity", with one's "ethnic solidarities" even if one relativizes them.\textsuperscript{79}

What ultimately counts is becoming a "person" as suggested by Trinitarian faith. Faith is neither simply truth to be believed nor rites or rituals to accomplish communion with God. Indeed, truth, for Eboussi, is "the act by which we constitute ourselves as person"\textsuperscript{80}, and God is never directly attained through the "sacraments" or "prayers" (meditation, contemplation and lectio

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{76} "On reconnaît à Paul le mérite d'avoir soustrait le Modèle christique à la confiscation des judaïsants... Mais il n'a pas plaidé moins vigoureusement en faveur de l'irréductibilité juive. Pharisien, citoyen romain et chrétien, sa pensée maintiendra fermement sa triple appartenance." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 154.).
\item \textsuperscript{77} "Il convient de dire que la foi n'est pas un principe d'appartenance; elle est ce qui permet d'articuler judaïsme et romanité, particularisme ethnico-religieuse et oecuménicité politico-economique, temporalités hétérogènes et séparantes issues de passés différents et avenir commun et pluriel." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 154).
\item \textsuperscript{78} "L'homme mort reçoit sa plénitude des autres sous la forme du sens de la vie. La destinée, c'est la vie humaine perçue et vécue comme achevée." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 146).
\item \textsuperscript{79} See, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 152.
\item \textsuperscript{80} "Le vrai est l'acte même qui nous constitue en personne..." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 186).
\end{itemize}
No doubt, Eboussi's understanding of the Church stands in sharp contrast with the "teaching" of the Council of Trent, subtly assumed by Vatican II, that is, the Church as a "necessary means of salvation".

D - Recapitulation and Perspective: African Christianity

"When we ask ourselves if an African, i.e. an African who is aware of his identity, his links and solidarities can be Christian, we are questioning the original meaning of Christianity, prior to dogmas, nearest to the source." So, what is the original meaning of Christianity? Eboussi's answer is straightforward but not simple: a "repeatable" resolution of the confrontation between a particularity and the imperative of a universality.

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81 "La seule «assurance» qu'on puisse avoir de ne pas adorer une idole et une projection de son désir, c'est de revenir à soi... C'est d'être donné à soi-même comme moyen de rien, à l'instar de Dieu. Celui-ci ne se livre donc pas à la contemplation ni dans l'immobilité introspective de l'oraison ou de la lecture spirituelle, ni même dans la réception des sacrements comme tels: il n'y a aucun moyen privilégié d'aller à Dieu. Il y a seulement l'acte de devenir personne..." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 187). Italics are mine.

82 See, Council of Trent, Decree on Justification in Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, vol. 2., ed. Norman Tanner (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990). For the Council, "all lost their innocence in the sin of Adam"; and so, "not only could the gentiles not be freed from or rise above it by the force of nature, but neither could the Jews even by the letter of the law of Moses, though their free will... was in no way extinct" (chap.1/p. 671). More importantly, for Trent, "though [Christ] died for all, yet not all receive the benefit of his death... so, if not reborn in Christ, they would never be justified" (chap.3/p. 672). It follows that the transition from being "child of the first Adam" to being "child of God" "cannot take place without the waters of rebirth or the desire for them" (chap.4/p. 762). So, because baptism is done in and by the Church, the mediative role of the Church becomes patent. Vatican II is more explicit in Lumen Gentium #14. (see, Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, vol. 2., p. 860). "The holy synod... teaches that this pilgrim church is necessary for salvation... Therefore, those cannot be saved who refuse to enter the church or to remain in it, if they are aware that the catholic church was founded by God through Jesus Christ as a necessity for salvation." (#14/p. 860). Theologians often argue on: "or the desire for them" (Trent) and "if they are aware..." (Vatican II), to soften the exclusive necessity of the Church as "means of salvation".

83 "Quand nous nous demandons si l'Africain ou un Africain conscient de son identité, de ses continuités et de ses solidarités peut-être chrétien, nous interrogeons sur le sens originaire du christianisme, en amont des dogmes, au plus proche de la source." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 156).

84 See, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 88: "Notre thèse ou mieux notre hypothèse est la suivante: «Les questions d'une communauté singulière du temps passé sont encore les nôtres pour autant qu'elles
crystallizes the essential elements of the answer has appeared to be originally grounded in the African experience of a profound crisis. With Eboussi, becoming Christian is set and resolved in the one and same dynamic of becoming human or, more precisely, a person according to the Christic model. The God of Jesus Christ is God who lets human beings be "in his image". To put it simply but forcefully, it means that, just as God cannot and should not in any case be a "means" for nothing, so also human being cannot and should not be transformed or used as a "means", whatever the aim may be. For Eboussi, this does not imply that we are equated to God but it affirms a "real distinction" between God and human beings. God remains "unknown" or "incomprehensible" to know him in this world not as a projection of our desires is to discover and love in one another his "image".

What is Eboussi inferring for African Christianity or for African Christians? First of all, African Christians have to rediscover "religion as a metaphor of life" over against the "concentration of divinity in a holy land, a sacred book, a person and a subjectivity which are

éttaient conditionnées, voire déterminées par l'avènement d'une problématique de l'universel qui somme les particularités de se comprendre et d'exister à partir d'un «monde» perçu comme un, de se dépasser en une nouveauté sans précédent, en une communauté sans dehors ni dedans."

85 See, Infra, part. I.

86 See, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 142: "Le «Dieu de Jésus-Christ», celui dont l'accès et l'expérience sont pour nous inséparables du nom de Jésus, du modèle christique est celui qui nous laisse être à sa ressemblance, être sa «présentification». Reste l'espérance que rien, pas même la mort, ne nous séparera de l'Amour de Dieu."

87 See, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 143: "l'homme se réalise d'autant plus complètement qu'il accepte ses limites, qu'il «réalise» que l'homme est homme et que Dieu est Dieu... L'oubli de cet enseignement ne va pas sans la déshumanisation de l'homme, sans la transformation du christianisme en positivisme surnaturel ou en idéologie de la volonté de puissance."

88 See, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 142.

89 Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 32: "Avant, la religion était la métaphore de la vie, la reconnaissance dans les actes de celle-ci du mouvement et de la puissance par lesquels elle se dépasse sans cesse."
inaccessible, far away, absent." This indeed would open the way to a better appreciation of the message of Christ which should no more stand in opposition or in competition with the ancestors' traditions because Christ comes "to fulfil their wish of a fullness of life". According to Eboussi, what ultimately counts is the triumph of life even if this requires the shattering of a way of life inherited from countless generations.

With the times coming to their fulfilment, Africans have to recapture and exercise the power of initiative by creatively reinterpreting their various situations from within. The task is not the collection of "heteroclite elements from the Bible, Western Christianities, and supplemented with elements of «African genius», anecdotes, trivial curiosities."

According to Eboussi, the new initiative implies an unprecedented responsibility of letting go the old missionary Christianity and, even, parts of one's own tradition, when "death" becomes the appropriate way to a new life. In the present situation, African Christianity has to rediscover "fraternity" and "joy". Here, fraternity is rooted in the understanding of God as "Father". Indeed, among brothers and

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90 Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 33: "En concentrant le divin dans une terre sainte, un livre sacré, une personne et la subjectivité inaccessibles, lointaines, absentes... on ne peut plus se rattracher à celui-ci que de l'extérieur, par l'intention, l'invocation, la volonté, la consécration."

91 Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 66.

92 See, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 66.

93 See, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 67: "... un pouvoir d'initiative et de décision et non seulement de témoignage, de commentaire et de préservation d'un dépôt intangible."

94 See, Pour une Catholicité, in A Contretemps, p. 67: "Pourquoi une telle reprise, en quoi est-elle légitime et nécessaire? Il s'agit que les chrétiens missionnaires se fassent du dedans, qu'elles reprennent de leur propre initiative le processus qui les ont constituées comme du dehors, afin de les conduire à leur perfection, à leur intériorité reflexive." Italics are mine.

95 "Faute de radicalité, les réappropriations du christianisme en Afrique font la collecte de traits hétéroclites dans la Bible, les christianismes occidentaux, en y ajoutant des éléments du «génie africain», des anecdotes, des curiosités folkloriques." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 73.)

96 See, Pour une Catholicité, in A Contretemps, p. 68: "...le catholicisme africain est appelé à une conversion qui équivaudra à une mort, celle du vieil homme qu'il est devenu tout d'un coup." Also, Ibid., p.76.
sisters, there is only one debt: the debt of love. The community of faith is fundamentally a community of love where "compassion" and other "labours of love" are not done out of "condescension" but because they are an inseparable dimension of faith. Faith and love should not be separated, rendering possible exploitation and discrimination among Christians. 97 "Joy" refers to the paschal mystery which is the celebration of the victory of life over death. The call for a festive Christianity according to Eboussi does not entail an escape from real life. 98

The ideal-type of African Christianity is one which welcomes the "breaking-in" of the Kingdom with its principle of illimitation rather than the expansion of "Christendom", or the "reproduction of national Churches", or "opposing denominations". 99 Here, daily life with its sorrow and joy, its deception and hope, are "celebrated" in liturgy as the actualization of the "drama" of existence: the struggle between life and the powers of death. 100 It follows that salvation has to do primarily not with "sin" as "offence to God", but with the powers of death encountered day-to-day: diseases of every kind, "economic power" that exploits and enslaves fellow human

97 See, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 70: "Devant le manque caractérisé de charité, les plus grands dévouements tourneront à la condescendance, au moyen de salut individuel et de propagande... Sans charité, le zèle évangélisateur apparaîtra comme volonté de puissance, d'universaliser sa propre image de soi."

98 See, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 76: "elle [la communauté fraternel et festive] ne peut être la proie de l'imaginaire, quand la célébration est une simple parenthèse dans la vie courante, une évasion qui ne donne pas le courage et le goût d'être, au sortir de la liturgie. Celle-ci, avec sa musique, ses danses et ses incantations, jette dans l'euphorie, l'envoûtement et la transe... L'homme s'évade de la prison quotidienne avec ses censures, ses injustices et ses humiliations.... La célébration est en passe de devenir un opium..."

99 See, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 67: "... c'est le Royaume de Dieu, mais non la diffusion d'une chrétienté ou la reproduction d'églises nationales ou des dénominations opposés les unes aux autres." Speaking of Christianity "brought" by the missionary in Africa, he wrote in Pour une Catholicité (À Contretemps, p. 84): "Il est un christianisme de croisade civilisatrice, de résistance antimoderniste, de rivalités interconfessionnelles... Il souffre cruellement de l'absence du sens d'une catholicité positive et dilatante, qui n'a pas la main crispée sur le misérable trésor de traits qui définissent son identité."

100 See, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 67: "La liturgie et l'existence journalière actualisent en permanence ce «drame»: on entre dans le «mystère» avec tout son être, pour accepter le sens de la vie en sa gratuité et en son jaillissement sans bornes."
beings, "political power" that crushes and reduces to silence etc.¹⁰¹ For Eboussi, the content of faith is not doctrines made up of normative statements but "mutual recognition" and "solidarity" out of love, in the name of God recognized as "Trinity" and confessed as "Father".

As it now appears, the Christic model of Eboussi raises serious questions for Christian traditions. The next part, the third of this dissertation, will deal with some of these questions, not in an apologetical or polemical way, but as a step toward our own reflections and within the general horizon of the many attempts by Africans to re-appropriate Christianity for themselves.

¹⁰¹ See, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 68: "Ce qu'on recherche, c'est la rédemption qui donne aux conditionnements de la vie humaine leur plénitude de réalité. La quête est celle de la guérison, de la santé... des forces sorcières, celles qui font échec à la vie, en la niant, en lui assignant un but situé hors d'elle-même, en l'utilisant comme le moyen d'autre chose, par exemple comme moyen d'enrichissement, de puissance."
PART THREE

EVALUATION
Ch. 1. *A Contretemps*

La liberté de pensée, un luxe? Etourdi! Elle est la possibilité... de concevoir d'entrer en contact avec ses semblables, d'agir de concert avec eux... C'est cela qui permet d'agir en connaissance de cause.

Eboussi Boulaga

Introduction

With the Christic model, Eboussi has set up a drastic agenda for the task of re-appropriation of Christianity in Africa. Indeed, given the situation of "crisis" as the essential background of re-appropriation, and the necessity of a "new beginning" as its aim, Eboussi's quest for a historical responsibility in thinking Christianity for oneself has excluded every precondition to the endeavour, except the imperative of seeking truth at one's own risk. Moreover, it is now clear that

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1 Eboussi Boulaga, "L'Honneur de penser." *Terroirs* 001 (1992) 6-7: "The freedom of thought, a luxury? Stupid! It is the possibility... to conceive how to enter into relationship with fellow human beings, to act together with them... It is that which renders possible to act with full knowledge". Note that "thinking" here is in strict correlation with "action": "acting together", "entering into relationship with others." For further development, see Maurice Kamto, *L'Urgence de la pensée. Réflexion sur une précondition du développement en Afrique* (Yaoundé: Editions Mandara, sd).

2 The crisis is the result of an unequal encounter between Africa and the West. See, Eboussi Boulaga, "«L'Aventure ambiguë» de Cheik Hamidou Kane" in *Abbia* 6 (1964) 207-213; also, *La Crise du Muntu* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1977). It is Eboussi's concern with the African crisis which sparks his interest in the Second Temple Judaism (period of crisis *par excellence* in Jewish life) and his interpretation of Christ and the early Jewish-Christian community as a model of resolution.

3 See, *Christianisme sans fétiche*, p. 19. This pre-condition which is nothing but the radical emphasis on the responsibility of human beings as "subjects" is the legacy of "modern time". In spite of strong resistance, Vatican II has finally recognized its importance for today: see the "Declaration on Human Freedom", *Dignitatis Humanae*: "The dignity of the human person is a concern of which people of our time are becoming increasingly more aware. In growing numbers they demand that they should enjoy the use of their own responsible judgment and freedom, and decide on their actions on grounds of duty and conscience, without external pressure or coercion..." (# 1, also # 2). To counterbalance the dramatic
the horizon which he suggests for an African Christianity has far-reaching consequences, -- well beyond its original African prospect.⁴

The present and following chapters intend to take up Eboussi's contribution and to integrate it in the overall movement of making Christianity African,⁵ in order to carry further the reflexive task with which he confronts us. Our personal challenge consists of "theologizing", that is, going beyond a commentary on Eboussi's text - refined with insight from comparative elements -, towards the suggestion of the first steps of our own "way".⁶ So, reflecting on Eboussi's insights, we will deliberately move toward our own attempts to come to grips with what Paul called the "great hope" to which the "God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory" has called us⁷; confident that "this hope will not leave us disappointed"⁸, as we set out to reflexively inquire into its validity for those who were once "far" and "strangers"⁹

consequences of this freedom of the subject, the last paragraph of # 1 asserts: "Indeed, since people's demand for religious liberty in carrying out their duty to worship God concerns freedom from compulsion in civil society, it leaves intact the traditional catholic teaching on the moral obligation of individuals and societies towards the true religion and the one church of Christ." On the tumultuous history of this document, see Pietro Pavan, "Declaration on Religious Freedom" in Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, vol. 4, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler, trans. Hilder Graef & al. (Montreal: Palm Publishers,...), pp. 49-62.

⁴ See, Chapter 4 of part II: "God-talk revisited".

⁵ In this way, we hope that the distinctive contribution of Eboussi already suggested in the exposition will be affirmed more strongly.

⁶ I have been alerted to such a challenge by the following remark of Michel de Certeau: "Bien des thèses de théologie, il faut l'avouer, sont simplement des analyses littéraires d'un auteur et ne se distinguent de tout autre étude littéraire que par le fait d'avoir un objet religieux, -- comme si c'était «faire de la théologie» que de décrire les idées théologiques contenues dans une oeuvre." ("Faire de l'histoire. Problèmes de méthodes et problèmes de sens" in Recherches de Science Religieuse 58 (1970) 485, note # 4).


⁸ Rom 5:5.

⁹ Colossians 1:27; Ephesians 2:13.
Concretely, one element is under consideration in this chapter; namely, Eboussi's focus not on culture, but on the African human being as a "subject" of the task of re-appropriation. We will show that Eboussi's conception of the subject in fact has fused together two elements: one ancient, namely, "image of God" and one modern, "subjectivity". Both are brought together within a new matrix: the category of ends-and-means. This clarification will lead us to our further personal reflection.


The "event of the African" and its "startling novelty" correspond partly but decisively to a turn to modern subjectivity. Indeed, as a modern subject, "the African" in Eboussi's understanding is a radical centre of evaluation and decision of whatever affects his/her situation in-the-world as well as his/her relation with other human beings and with God. When Eboussi affirms that "an ethic of historical responsibility in thought, truth and belief commands us to submit to discussion and to the judgment of our experience what the dominators' activism of offer has been unceasingly and imperiously proposing to us"\(^{10}\), and that "we cannot exempt from examination either the «gospel» or the understanding of God"\(^{11}\), he has taken up the legacy of Descartes subsumed and further articulated by Kant in his Critique of Pure Reason (epistemological perspective) and his Critique of Practical Reason (ethical perspective).\(^{12}\) Long before Eboussi's decision to make it an

\(^{10}\) "Une éthique de la responsabilité historique de la pensée, de la vérité et de la croyance nous commande de soumettre à la discussion et au jugement de notre expérience ce que l'activisme de l'offre des dominants n'arrête de nous proposer impér历usement." (Christianisme sans fétique, p. 19).

\(^{11}\) "Nous ne pouvions exempter de l'examen ni l'«évangile», ni la conception de Dieu..." (Christianisme sans fétique, p. 19).

\(^{12}\) Our concern here is not a presentation of the Enlightenment. It was only important to note one of the roots of Eboussi's thought in order to understand the complexity of his elaboration. Kant has been specifically referred to solely because he is one the most articulate representatives of Enlightenment.
essential part of his reflection, this shift to the subject has already had serious impact on Christianity.13

Indeed, both Christian theology14 and exegesis15 have been forced to deal with this

13 See an excellent presentation of the situation by W. Kasper in his Theology and the Church (New York: Crossroad, 1989), especially chap. II. "Autonomy and Theonomy: the Place of Christianity in the Modern World", pp. 32-53. As Kasper rightly noted, with Kant, "all external authority collapsed, and all external order became a human blueprint and construction" (p. 40); indeed, "the human will is itself law, independent of any external causes that determine it. Human dignity is founded on this fact." (p. 41). Summarizing the theological problem with Kant, W. Kasper wrote: "the Christian tradition is concerned with the divinizing of human beings... the modern era is concerned with the humanizing of human beings or human society. For this, the idea of God has a no more than functional importance."(p. 42). This rather functional "use" of the idea of God is latent in Eboussi's thought; it puts his re-appropriation in permanent danger of contradicting his own principle that God should not be used as means for whatever aim.

14 One of the most serious attempts to tackle the problem is Joseph Maréchal's Le Point de départ de la métaphysique: leçons sur le développement historique et théorique du problème de la connaissance. 5 vols., (2 ed.; Louvain: Museum Lessianum, [1923]-1947). Maréchal tried to bring Kant into Christian thinking through a reinterpretation of Thomas Aquinas. After him, Karl Rahner will take up the same task in his Spirit in the World, trans. W. Dych (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1968). Bernard Lonergan's Method in Theology (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973), following his Insight. A Study in Human Understanding (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957) has also to be understood in this perspective of coping with the problematic of the subject. These attempts to build a bridge with modern subjectivity has generated some heated controversies. So, Hans Urs von Balthasar denounced the overemphasis of the subject which can turn theology into a mere anthropology; see his Cordula, French trans. B. Fraigneau-Julien (Paris: Beauschesne, 1967). Indeed, as human beings take the front stage, God is relegated into the background; see, Henri de Lubac, Le Drame de l'Humanisme Athée (Paris: Ed. Spes, 1965) who spoke about "le culte de la lucidité." (p.49).

15 This footnote does not intend to give a history of modern exegesis. It intends to show some fundamental impacts of the turn to the subject on the interpretation of Scriptures. Its importance for us will become evident when Eboussi refers to myths in order to understand Christ. One of the deliberate early attempt to use Descartes' method to interpret Scripture was Ludwig Meyer in his Philosophia S. Scripturae interpres (Eleutheropolis-Amsterdam: n.p., 1666). According to Samuel Preus, "A Hidden Opponent in Spinoza's Tractatus" Harvard Theological Review 88/3 (1995) 362-363, it is over against Meyer's philosophical interpretation that Spinoza in his Tractatus Theologico-Politicus (1670; A Theological-Political Treatise) formulated his historical rule of interpretation: "for interpretation of Scripture it is necessary to furnish its genuine history, and from that, as from certain data and principles, to infer the intention of its authors a legitimate conclusion." (Tractatus, 7.98; quoted by J. Samuel Preus, "A Hidden Opponent", p. 381). Let us note that Spinoza's innovative historical perspective in biblical study was set against Meyer's philosophical, i.e. his ideal perspective. Now, the relation between history and idea (concept) was the core problem of D. F. Strauss's The Life of Jesus Critically Examined (trans. G. Eliot, Philadelphia: 1972-3) which marks the turning point in modern biblical historical criticism. In between Kant's rational rejection of an objective anchor to the idea with its ultimate sub-ordination to the subject and, Hegel's affirmation of its identity with the subject, Strauss suggested a mythical interpretation of Jesus. See: W. Jaeschke, Reason in Religion, p. 375; H. de Lubac, Le drame de l'humanisme, pp. 48-50. The mythical perspective which was intended to salvage the "idea" of Christianity later turned into a programme of "demythologization". When Eboussi calls upon myths (see, infra the discussion with Metena
challenging quest for rational understanding and justification which does not simply bow its head to the authoritative claims vested in Scripture and Dogma by theologians and Church leaders. So, Eboussi's "African", as someone who emerges from domination, is but a modern subject which claims for himself or herself the ultimate "right" to deliberate on whatever determines his/her existence. In a way, there is nothing "typically African" in this dimension of the "event of the African". Even Vatican II has acknowledged the fact that "everything on earth is to be referred to humanity as to its centre and culmination."¹⁶ Perhaps, the point was not to say something unheard-of or exclusively proper to Africa, but to transform into a principle of deliberation a human experience of self-assertion, especially after a long and painful existence under domination.

Indeed, as it has emerged in the first part of this dissertation, Eboussi's starting point was the crisis experienced by Africans in their encounter with the West; or, to limit ourselves to the religious context, with "missionaries". Furthermore, this idea of crisis has come to signify not only the disruption of the social, cultural and religious fabric of African societies, but more importantly, it encompasses a life and death situation where only responsible decisions will save the future from further catastrophe. It is definitely in this perspective that the "event of the African" finds its meaning as the emergence of African human beings as "subjects", not in a prior definition of subjectivity. So, it will be a serious misunderstanding to suspect or accuse Eboussi of indulging in Western enlightenment thought. The new consciousness is a consciousness of the unbearable situation of alienation.

With the shift to the subject, a distinctive feature is given to the African prospect of a theology which takes this crisis seriously. Indeed, the primary focus is no more on the "culture"¹⁷, and Martelet), he is more in the same perspective as Strauss.

¹⁶ Vatican II, Gadium et Spes, #12; also, #25, 26.

¹⁷ One can contrast here Eboussi's approach to that of E.B. Idowu, Towards an Indigenous Church (London: Oxford University Press, 1965); C. Nyamiti, Christ as our Ancestor. Christology from an African
whatever its importance may be; or on the situation of exploitation, however cruel it may be. What Eboussi has done by turning to the subject was to summon Africans to stand up to their responsibility, at the threshold of a "new beginning". It means that both the cultural heritage and the past and present situation have to be assumed anew in accordance with the future they intend to build.19

To face the future does not necessarily mean to "eliminate the present" as it has been suggested.20 Perhaps, it posits on the contrary and for the first time that African history can be redone from a conscious and resolute decision. Further, it reveals that the question of God is mediated by the historical relation between human beings; and, as such, only dialogue can avoid the outburst of the potential violence inherent in the encounter of "subjects" with different and sometimes diverging perspectives on life and God. So, one should not underestimate the "revelatory" character of the situation of "crisis" and the "responsibility" which it entails according


19 The future plays a catalyst role in Eboussi's thought. If he unequivocally affirms that the past cannot "determine" us, he also clearly states that Africans cannot "have their future in the past of others". Since, for him, the future is not given but devised by the subject, it follows ultimately that we make our "historicity". Everything receives its meaningful determination from subjects or better persons, as they posit themselves as the ones who deal with what constitutes temporality. It is in this perspective that the whole idea of "project" finds its anchor in Eboussi's thought.

20 Eboussi's emphasis on the future was challenged by Jaouen during a symposium on "God in Africa" in the following words: "J'ai remarqué que ceux qui se réclament de l'avenir essayent d'éliminer le présent. Je ne sais pas si l'on peut avoir barre sur l'avenir de cette façon-là. J'ai lu chez un missiologue cette réflexion que je vous livre: «Nous n'avons pas à tuer ni à accélérer la mort de ce qui est en train de mourir. Il suffit seulement que nous assistions le pauvre mourant: nous aurons droit à la sympathie de la famille." (in Dieu en Afrique. Colloque de Bakara/Tchad, 5-8 Sept. 1977; ed. Eboussi Bouлага, Douala: V.P.A.O., 1979, p. 101). It seems that Jaouen missed the main point of Eboussi's statement which I now highlight: "... Quand on parle du passé, quand j'en parle personnellement, et ce dont nous parlons n'est pas complètement passé, ce n'est pas pour condamner ceux d'autrefois qui ont fait ceci ou n'ont pas fait cela. On ne veut pas que ce qui était jadis explicable, avait des circonstances atténuantes, domine sur le présent et hypothèque l'avenir... Nous allons aussi loin dans la discussion afin de libérer le présent du poids des morts." (Ibid). Italics are mine. The question is not the care to the dying, but the life of those living in jeopardy.
to Eboussi.²¹

In point of fact, this turn to the subject, with the firm determination to look forward, to redo anew and differently one's history is only meaningful in the light of the wounds of the past and their continuous pain in the present; wounds which our deliberate focus on the constructive contribution of Eboussi has somehow concealed.²² Here comes the answer to one of the lingering questions in reading Eboussi: why is he using this Enlightenment thought foreign to Africa? Eboussi seems to have caught the primal insight or intention of the turn to the subject: positing the subject as the centre of everything frees the subject from all external authority and dominion, forces the subject to enter into the dynamic of self-understanding and will. The "subject" is not an abstract "reference", it is the "Negro", -- with all the connotation of the term-- , becoming "African".²³ To sum up, the shift to the subject was an essential strategy in confronting the centuries-old doubt about the humanity of Africans.²⁴

²¹ For Eboussi, the root of African problems is the lack of "thinking", that is, the lack of responsibility involved in human ability to examine, to deliberate, to judge and to be accountable for its actions en connaissance de cause. See: Eboussi Boulaga, "L'Honneur de Penser" Terroirs 001 (1992) 4-5; Les Conférences nationales en Afrique Noire (Paris: Karthala, 1993), pp. 9-10. Thinking, definitively, is a risk. It implies a farewell to "intellectual prostitution" consisting of "Exercices sur commande a usage externe, sollicités par des préoccupations et des problématiques lointaines, discours mercenaires de la flatterie et de l'opportunisme, palabres byzantines et académiques au sujet de chimères" ("L'Africain Chrétien à la Recherche de son Identité" A Contretemps, pp. 43-44.). See also, Eboussi Boulaga, "L'Intellectuel exotique" Politique Africaine 51 (1993) 26-34. More recently, Meinrad Hebga, Afrique de la raison, Afrique de la foi (Paris: Karthala, 1995).


²³ See, Eboussi Boulaga, "L'Africain Chrétien à la Recherche de son Identité", pp. 42-43; he wrote: "Le christianisme et les missionnaires ont tout fait pour les Nègres, mais il n'ont pas fait l'Africain, qui commence par la décision de refuser ce paternalisme et le contexte d'ignorance et de violence où cette bienveillance à son égard s'est exercée." (p. 43). See also, "L'Identité Négo-Africaine", pp. 8-10.

²⁴ When Eboussi recalls the suffering of the past, it is often in correlation with the present situation: "Les cris des affamés d'aujourd'hui, des prisonniers politiques, les râles des chambres de tortures des Etats nègres se mêlent à ceux des victimes des geôles coloniales, des chantiers de travaux forcés d'hier
In a way, whatever feeling the recollection of past ill-treatments by missionaries spurs, neither the missionaries nor the AfEcans can ignore the simple fact that there would have been no talk today about "re-appropriating" Christianity if there have not been Western Christian missionaries in Africa, and if the missionary activities were not backed up by a sincere will to "civilize" or "humanize" Africans. Similarly, whether the "Christian West" likes it or not, the missionary activities which see the massive conversion of Africans occur during the colonial period.

So, with his turn to the subject, Eboussi shares with the African theologians who advocate inculturation the painful sense of depreciation of the African and their cultures. But, deeper than


25 If missionaries have been often criticized, in many instances, they have also been praised: see, Jacob Agossou, Christianisme Africain. Une Fraternité au-delà de l'Ethnie (Paris: Karthala, 1987), p. 8; W. Bühlmann, The Missions on Trial: Addis Ababa 1980 (Nairobi: St Pauli Publication, 1978).

26 Whether mission preceded or followed the colonial conquest, or whether they took place simultaneously, the relative coincidence in time has overshadowed the process of conversion. Our concern here is not the complicity or the diverging goal of the missionaries and the colonialists. Both missionaries and Africans have tried to shed light on this problem, see: Louis P. Ngongo, Les Forces religieuses au Cameroun de 1922 à 1955 (Paris: Karthala, 1977); Joseph-Roger de Benoist, Eglise et pouvoir colonial au Soudan Français (Paris: Karthala, 1987).

27 For example, O. Bimwenyi-Kweshi, Discours théologique, pp. 93ff, and B. Adoukonou, Jalons pour une théologie africaine, t.1., pp. 40-41. It is important to note that the concept of "inculturation" has overshadowed the early provocative idea of "African theology". The passionate debate between A. Vanneste (then dean of the faculty of theology) and T. Tshibangu (student in theology) in 1960 at the Université Lovanium (Kinshasa, ex-Leopoldville) over the possibility of "une théologie de couleur noire" (a black theology) seems to have finally come to an end with the dissertation of O. Bimwenyi-Kweshi, Discours théologique, especially pp. 272-281 for a critical presentation of the discussion. It is perhaps more interesting to compare the books and articles on African theology (see: K. N'Soki, "Genèse de l'expression «Théologie africaine»" in Telem 20 (1979) 43-57; Gwinyai Muzorewa, The Origins And Development Of African Theology (New York: Orbis Books, 1985); B. Bujo, African Theology In Its Social Context (New York: Orbis Books, 1992)) and those on Inculturation by Western theologians (see: P. Schineller, A
the protest against colonialism or, the accusation of disrespect or contempt vis-à-vis African cultures, Eboussi has got to the knot of the problem: the uncertainty regarding the "humanity of Africans" in the West. With this insight, Eboussi carries us, more than any other African theologians, beyond the grief and the condemnation of past ill-treatments of persons and cultures.


Here is the testimony of one well-informed missionary: "Africa has suffered more humiliation than other continents. In the time of the old Greek and Roman empires, Moors were known as slaves. In the 16th century, the western powers renewed their interest in Africa principally as a quarry for slaves. It has been calculated that about 30 million slaves were transported to the new world. It was usual to depict them as typical idolaters. Sources of the period repeatedly declare that they were absolutely ignorant of God, that they lived like beasts; they were lecherous, thieves and liars and they ate like animals... From the 18th century there was a «doctrine»... that they were the accursed sons of Ham. At Vatican I, a group of missionary bishops proposed to compose prayers for black Africa, beseeching God to free that continent at last from the curse of Ham. During my first stay in Africa, twenty years ago, I found African pupils with these ideas in their heads; the one thing they longed for was to become white." (W. Bühllmann, The Coming of the Third Church, pp. 150-151). Italics are mine. One of the sad intellectual catastrophes which awaits the ideas and projects around "inculturation" is the growing relegation of this background into the limbo of forgetfulness. Just as scholasticism is now abhorred because the "disciples" have been speculating on "themes" without any knowledge of the living background of St Thomas, so also could become the current discussion around "inculturation".

We now know that deep in the cultural quest is the will to rehabilitate a humanity which was denied. The focus on African cultures was indeed a means toward an end; the real end being the assertion of the humanity of Africans. The God of Jesus Christ was not the real problem. The Christian God becomes problematic with the identification of "being human" with "being Christian" in the Western fashion. G. Martelet is on target when he notes: "Sur ce point le Muntu de Fabien Eboussi est impressionnant. Il dénonce à juste titre l'identité établie entre culture occidentale et universalité de l'humain." ("Singularité des cultures et universalité du Christ" in Inculturation et Conversion, ed. J. Ndi Okalla (Paris: Karthala, 1994), p. 120). I underlined.

One of the recent theological studies which has taken seriously the question of "humanity" is Jacob Agossou's Christianisme africain. Une fraternité au-delà de l'ethnie (Paris: Karthala, 1987). There are typical expressions which indicate the author's knowledge of EbouSSI's problematic. For examples: "Le surgissement, dans les années 1950 à 1960, de notre «Nous-Sujet» en vue de son autodétermination dans le sens plénié du terme, implique l'acte qui nous a constitués objets curieux, ridicules..." (p. 8); "Dire par exemple qu'il y a une approche africaine de la réalité africaine, c'est poser le problème du Sujet... Il s'agit en effet d'une prise de conscience réfléctive de soi par soi du sujet..." (p.8); "Pour que ce christianisme prenne son départ officiel à la face du monde, nous reprenons ici le voeu unanime de tous nos frères: la convocation et sa préparation en bon ordre d'un concile africain."(p. 215). Italics are mine. The idea of an African Council has been Eboussi's lasting imprint on African theological quest; see, Eboussi Boulaga, "Pour une Catholite Africaine" in A Contretemps, pp. 57-105. By the way, the orderly preparation
In effect, the initial task is not so much a cultural heritage to be "recovered" or to be "salvaged", to be "purified" and to be "promoted" in the light of the revealed message, for the fulfilment of Africans in their Christian faith. The initial and perhaps the most fundamental task is contained in this straightforward remark of Engelbert Mveng: "The dialogue which takes place today is not that of two theoretical entities or two ideologies: on the one hand Christianity and on the other hand African traditions. No! The type of dialogue which takes place today is that of African people with themselves, with regard to their destiny.

From this standpoint, the question of an African re-appropriation of Christianity definitively acquires a radical newness. The theological task becomes a reflection on where suggested by Agossou is not without echo in the conclusion of Eboussi's controversial article, "La Démission": "Qu'on planifie le départ en bon ordre des missionnaires d'Afrique!" (A Contretemps, p. 42).

Without great risk of misrepresentation, most of, if not all, the recent talks, studies and proposals on "inculturation" can be summed up in this sentence. In his post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), John Paul II has echoed the general perspective of inculturation: "Inculturation includes two dimensions: on the one hand, «the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity» and, on the other, «the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures». The Synod considers inculturation an urgent priority in the life of the particular Churches, for a firm rooting of the Gospel in Africa." (# 59). There is nothing fundamentally wrong with this vision of the task of inculturation. What Eboussi has brought in and which set forth new considerations is the "subject" concerned by inculturation: there is a shift from "Christianity" versus "African traditions" to Africans (from within their traditions in situation) vis-à-vis Jesus Christ (from within the mosaic of Christian traditions).


The newness suggested by the turn to the subject is well signified by an experience described by V. Donovan in *Christianity Rediscovered* (New York: Orbis Books, 1978), pp. 106-108. After a year of missionary activity among the Legwanan of Eastern Africa, Donovan was told: "We have heard what you mean by the Christian message. For a year we have talked about it. We have looked forward to your coming each week. We have listened with great interest. We thank you for coming to us. We think we understand what you have said about Jesus Christ. But we cannot accept it. We cannot accept your Christ or believe in him. We do not want baptism. Forgive us — our answer is no!" (p. 106). He concluded his experience by the following reflexion: "Perhaps the most important lesson I was ever to learn in my missionary life, I learned that day... that no Christianity has any meaning or value, if there is not freedom to
Africans stand in God's eternal will of salvation, and how they fit in the dynamic of a history of salvation. So, the focus on the question of humanity inevitably compels us to tackle both the problem of the "origin" and the question of "ultimate meaning"; in theological categories, the problem of "creation" and "salvation".


Up to now, this aspect of Eboussi's contribution to theological inquiry in Africa has not been properly grasped and further explored for three main reasons. The first reason has to do with the overall concern, -- just before and after the proclamation of African Independent States --, with the revalorisation of Africans through the rehabilitation of their cultures which were the primal target of the colonialists and many early missionaries. The second reason is that Eboussi has been labelled by missionaries and some Africans as too critical and too theoretical, and thus alien to the African reality and "concrete" way of thinking. The third, and perhaps the most important reason accept it or reject it." (p. 108). We do not preach here that Christianity has to be rejected. Instead, with the turn to the subject, Jesus' question to the disciples after the discourse on the Bread of Life is significant: "What about you, do you want to go away too?" (John 6:67). Peter's answer reminds his profession of faith at Caesarea (see: Matthew 16:16-23; Mark 8:27-33 and Luke 9:18-22). John dramatizes the importance of freedom which does not appear in the synoptics. Perhaps, before confessing that Jesus Christ is the "Ancestor" or the "Initiator" or the "Healer" etc., it may be important to realize that there is no one else to whom we shall go ("Lord who shall we go to?"). Far from being a speculation, we could listen to Amba Oduyoye: "We have to face these questions: what does Christianity offer that the natural religion of our people does not offer? Why should an African who leaves the traditional religion become a Christian rather than a Muslim? We African Christians have only begun to probe and discuss these issues." (Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections On Christianity In Africa (New York: Orbis Books, 1986), p. 9).

In French speaking Africa, there was the creation of the Société Africaine de Culture which sponsored many symposia and backed up the Edition Présence Africaine in ligne with the movement of Négritude.

This label turned into suspicion, if not accusation, after his famous "infamous" article: "La Démission" Spiritus 56 (1974) 276-287. If the African and Malagasy Catholic Bishops attending the 1974 Synod on Evangelisation in Rome reacted swiftly in a strong letter: "Promouvoir l'Evangélisation dans la Coresponsabilité" Documentation Catholique 1664 (1974) 996, in other missionary corners, Eboussi was suspected of being a communist.
is that he cuts too quickly the knot of the intricate problem of creation and salvation in his presentation of all human beings as "image of God".36

According to Eboussi, "human beings themselves are said to be created in the image and likeness of God only in that they are constituted in speech and proceeded in love (inquantum invenitur in eis verbum conceptum et amor procedens, Saint Thomas, S.T. Ia p., q. 45, a. 7), that is to say, they are concrete «freedoms» making themselves, «in discourse», through the mediation of the world and in mutual recognition, but not immediately given in their empirical nature."37 The phrase is dense. It contains a basic statement on God or more accurately, it gives a content to the "image and likeness". Then it further explicates what the content entails. Concretely, the basic statement is that God is both in the form of "speech" (God talks, the Word is God) and the form of "being-in-love" (God is Love). This means that because speech entails "discourse", being in the image and likeness of God requires a relation of communication between at least two distinct entities (concrete free persons). And, because love entails mutual recognition, being in the image and likeness of God requires communion between at least two distinct entities. As a consequence, where there is no actual "communication" and "communion", and where there are no distinct and free entities in relation, there is in a sense no image and likeness because the latter are not simply given by our biological nature.

36 Eboussi's ability to go quickly to the essential point has often turned out to be his weakness. Many of his insights are either too subtle to be immediately perceived or, entangled in much presupposed knowledge which the reader may not necessarily have. So is the idea of "image of God", an important component of the "theological anthropology" of the early fathers. For a concise but well grounded presentation of the "image of God" in both the Latin and Greek Fathers, see: A.-G. Hamman, L'Homme image de Dieu, Essai d'une anthropologie chrétienne dans l'église des cinq premiers siècles (Paris: Desclée, 1987); Anthony Hoekema, Created in God's Image (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986.).

37 "Les hommes eux-mêmes ne sont dits être à l'image et à la ressemblance de Dieu que pour autant qu'ils sont en forme de parole et en procès d'amour (inquantum invenitur in eis verbum conceptum et amor procedens, Saint Thomas d'Aquin, S.T. Ia p., q.45, a.7), c'est-à-dire pour autant qu'ils sont des libertés concrètes se faisant, «discursivement», par la médiation du monde et la reconnaissance mutuelle, mais non en tant qu'ils sont immédiatement donnés en leur naturalité empirique" (Christianisme sans fétiche, pp. 16-17).
As we can see, Eboussi did not bother to present his understanding of "image of God" in contrast or in continuity with the Fathers or their modern interpreters.\textsuperscript{38} Eboussi has simply fused together the central notion of the early Fathers: image of God\textsuperscript{39}, with a modern and contemporary notion: "subjectivity", within a new matrix: the notion of "means and end". Eboussi has taken the notion of "means and end" from Edmond Ortigues\textsuperscript{40}, and turned it into a criterion of both our relation to God and to one another. Ortigues himself was reflecting on how one should understand the mediative role of Jesus Christ within the paradigm of God's sovereignty. He posits as the crucial element of his argument that the God of the gospel is neither a result nor a means.\textsuperscript{41} This implies for Ortigues that even when God gets involved in creation, he remains "hidden", that is, 

\textsuperscript{38} The Fathers discussed the idea of "image of God" in three different perspectives: a "metaphysical" perspective, an "ethical" perspective, and a spiritual perspective. This last perspective received its impetus from Origen in his \textit{Commentary on the Song of Songs} (Latin text and French translation in \textit{Commentaire sur le Cantique des Cantiques}, t. 1&2., ed. L. Brésard and als., Sources Chrétiennes # 375-376; Paris: Cerf, 1991-1992) where the Church is identified with the "soul". The ethical perspective is rooted in the fact of sin and the need of growth; it depends on the metaphysical orientation taken by each Father. Irenaeus for example, in his \textit{Adversus Haereses} (Latin text and French translation in \textit{Contre Les Hérésies I}, t. 1&2., ed. A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, Sources Chrétienennes # 263-264; Paris: Cerf, 1979) assumes that human being is constituted of body\textbackslash flesh and soul\textbackslash spirit. However, for him, the "image" is related to the flesh precisely because it is created in the image of the (eternal) Son. On the contrary, for Origen, the soul is what is in the image of God. Contemporary theology now treats these different perspectives under the title of "theological anthropology". On contemporary treatment, see: G. Berkouwer, \textit{Man: The Image of God} (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962).

\textsuperscript{39} The notion essentially refers to Genesis (1:26; 5:1; 9:6); but as H. Gunkel notes: "The primary difference between the O.T. and Christian dogmatics as regards this point is that in the latter it plays an important role -- it has sometimes served as the occasion for developing a complete anthropology -- while in the former it has no special importance; in the Prophets and the Psalms, for example, it is wholly absent." (\textit{Genesis} [1902], pp. 99f cited by G. Berkouwer, \textit{Man: The Image of God}, p. 67. note # 1.).

\textsuperscript{40} I am grateful to Eboussi who directed my attention to the influence of Edmond Ortigues, \textit{Le temps de la Parole} (Neuchatel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1954). In trying to show that Kant's ethical teaching is far from a "willful individualism and sovereign self-assertion", W. Kasper wrote: "Kant's categorical imperative is: 'Act only according to the maxims which you can at the same time will to be universal law'. This principle leads to absolute respect for the dignity of every human being; and it follows that we make neither ourselves nor anyone else a means to an end. This, then, is not a subjectivistic ethic. It is an intersubjective one." (\textit{Theology and the Church}, p. 41). Italics are mine. So, it seems that we have here a basic component of the Copernican revolution which has brought human being to the central stage.

\textsuperscript{41} "Le Dieu de l'Evangile n'a rien avant lui ni rien après lui, il n'est le résultat ni le moyen de rien" (Edmond Ortigues, \textit{Le temps de la Parole}, p. 13).
human beings now bear the full responsibility of the created world including themselves. In this perspective, the mediative role of Jesus Christ consists in revealing our autonomy and responsibility vis-à-vis the created world in the same movement that reveals our dependency on God.

With this perspective, priority is given to the historical relation among individuals, peoples, groups or nations. Eboussi reflects essentially on the level of relation. Indeed, to be in the image of God means nothing more than: no one should be transformed into a means, whatever the aim may be. Fundamentally, what is at stake is not an immediate relation to God but a formal principle for practical relation among human beings. Just as our relation to God is not and should not be based on the dynamic of means and ends, so should be our relation to fellow human beings whatever their race, sex, age, social and physical condition, spiritual or religious orientation.

Being in the image of God means that we are all equal before God and, precisely because of this, reciprocity is the only "rule" which is to determine our relation. Communion is only possible

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42 "Dire que le Créateur se cache dans sa création, c'est dire qu'il crée sujets devant prendre sur eux la totalité des conditions de l'expérience comme conditions de la vérité. Impossible sans trahir Dieu révélé en Jésus-Christ de nous servir de lui pour construire ou justifier telle ou telle image du monde, tel ou tel mode de totalisation de l'expérience." (Op. cit., p. 26).

43 The rejection of immediacy is not in view of a promotion of new mediation. The argument is subtle because the rejection of immediacy basically intends to assert the only relation which is meaningful: the relation among human beings. Ortigues was more clear than Eboussi when he wrote: "Rien de ce qui est dans ce monde n'est en soi un moyen pour aller à Dieu (rien, pas même la prière, la souffrance, etc) car en tous nos moyens Dieu se donne lui-même par lui-même et d'autre part, tout ce qui est dans le monde n'est qu'un moyen pour aller de soi à soi dans la disponibilité à Dieu..." (Le Temps de la Parole, p. 46). Early, he has already asserted that: "Rien dans le monde n'est une fin en soi (rien, non seulement aucun plaisir mais aucune tâche), sinon le prochain que nous avons à recevoir comme Jésus-Christ, c'est-à-dire dans la fidélité de la parole et sans l'exploiter comme moyen." (Ibid., p. 45).

44 "La relation compatible avec l'égalité de tous devant Dieu récuse, comme on l'a vu, les hiérarchisations discriminatoires..." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 112). Here also, one can discern Eboussi's transformation of Ortigues' view to fit his own concern. Ortigues wrote: "L'autonomie réciproque des consciences est insurmontable... Si une conscience n'est pas un donné naturel parmi d'autres, mais si, dans sa parole, elle se met elle-même en demeure d'assumer la vérité de l'existence dans son ensemble, alors le problème de la vérité ou du sens final de l'existence et le problème de la reconnaissance de l'homme par l'homme (du sujet par le sujet, et non pas de l'homme préalablement défini d'un certain
where effective communication occurs among distinct, different and equal beings. One can understand why Eboussi sets the task of re-appropriation out of the "dogmatic period" in the strict limit of the Jewish nation-state of the Second Temple. Indeed, in his perspective, there is no need for a prior blessing of any canonical authority: Scriptures, Fathers, counciliar or papal statements. Nothing is taken for granted, not even the African traditions.

Eboussi has been logically consistent in articulating his thought. The question is not whether he is "right" or "wrong". The problem is ours. It is the ultimate stumbling-block which confronts any who follow Eboussi having made up their minds beforehand on some fundamental non-negotiable "items": traditions, scriptures, fathers, councils, reformers etc. Indeed, what Eboussi point de vue) sont un seul et même problème." (Le Temps de la Parole, p. 14). The emergence of Africans for Eboussi coincides with a "subject" to "subject" relation. Christ or Christianity or the Missionaries have to encounter a subject, i.e. an autonomous conscious being which requires full responsibility in questions related to ultimate meaning. It is precisely in this dynamic that nothing is given except the subject, the African human being in Eboussi's case.

"Sortir de la croyance aliénée, c'est éprouver la puissance transfigurante du Christ comme en amont des dogmes." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 87). In a discussion (Yaoundé, July 3, 1996), Eboussi said that his intention was to reinterpret the dogmatic period from the Christic model. In fact, in the original manuscript of Christianisme sans fétiche a section was devoted to an understanding of the Fathers from the Christic model. This section was rejected by the editor.

"L'époque où s'enracine le phénomène chrétien va des Macchabées (175 av. J.-C.) à la révolte de Bar Kochba et la destruction de l'Etat-nation des Juifs en 135 après Jésus-Christ." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 91).

The complaint one often hears from African theologians is the tight control of the theological and pastoral initiatives arising from the "local churches" by the "mother Churches". See the story of Bishop J. N'Dayen, "Relation Of Local Churches With Rome And The Function Of The Episcopal Conference" in Concilium 106 (1977) 60-68. It is significant that J. Agossou in the last paragraphs of his book, Christianisme Africain. Une Fraternité au-delà de l'Ethnie (Paris: Karthala, 1987), addressed the question in the heading: "Tous les peuples sous le regard d'un même Dieu". He wrote: "Le Christ ne nous a donné qu'un seul commandement, celui de l'Amour: «Ce que je vous commande, c'est de vous aimer les uns les autres» (Jn 15,17). Voilà le signe et le critère indépassable de tout christianisme vrai... Tel est la base de l'unité, de notre égalité en dignité devant Dieu. Mais cette unité est communion entre frères qui vivent de la richesse de leur différences complémentaires parce que solidaires les uns les autres... Et c'est ici qu'à bien observer les choses tout semble nous prédosposer à promouvoir dans l'Eglise universelle l'ouverture et la souplesse qui s'opposent à la suffisance orgueilleuse et à l'intolérance barbare... Par là également, l'Afrique invite tous les «Hommes de bonne volonté» à renoncer vigoureusement aux traits individualisants d'une civilisation de l'anti-frère qui se traduit au plan religieux par des dogmes impersonnels, une morale de compétition et des traditions sans prise avec le réel vécu." (p. 216). Italics are mine. What is still an appeal in Agossou's writing is Eboussi's starting principle.
ultimately is calling us to is the experience of the "paschal mystery": dying to our old certitudes in order to enter into a new life. But in the paschal mystery, there is a "hiatus", characterized by the big silence that followed the puzzling words of abandonment on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?". In-between Jesus's death on the cross and his resurrection, there is a deep hollow that no historical intelligence can fathom. So, on what reasonable account shall we positively respond to Eboussi's appeal to die to our old certitudes, confident enough that there will be fullness of life after?

C - Further Considerations

The advent of Africans in Eboussi's new perspective is indeed startling. The challenge is now ours as the itinerary suggested by Eboussi involves responsible decision which itself requires careful thinking and judgment. Eboussi has not hidden the fact that many of his suggestions reflect his own itinerary. He has even faintly agreed that there could be some exaggeration in his views

48 In "Pour une Catholicité Africaine", he wrote: "... le catholicisme africain est appelé à une conversion qui équivaudra à une mort, celle du vieil homme qu'il est devenu tout d'un coup" (À Contretemps, p. 68); again: "On n'y parviendra qu'en acceptant de mourir à ses vieilles sécurités" (Ibid., p. 76).

49 Mark 15:34.


51 Concluding his major philosophical work La Crise du Muntu (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1977), Eboussi wrote: "La pensée de la crise désigne sa propre clôture en s'avouant l'allégorie d'une crise personnelle. Mais Socrate le mortel, dans sa prison, et cerné par l'avilissement collectif de la cité en dérive, taquine les Muses, s'apprête à être visité par le songe et se souvient du dieu dérisoire qui se manifeste dans un coq égorge palmiant dans son sang." (pp. 236-237). In his usual elusive way, by recalling Socrates' request and last words to Criton before his death ("We owe a cock to Asclepios; pay it without fail" - Phaedo (116D-118) quoted from Great Dialogues Of Plato, trans. W. Rouse (New York: Mentor Book,
while excusing himself from the duty of proposing a more balanced approach.\(^{52}\) In the following lines, we will take up the task of setting up a prospective way out of the deep hollow with which Eboussi left us.\(^{53}\)

Essential to both the ancient and modern elements of Eboussi's distinctive re-appropriation of Christianity is the assertion of equality in principle of distinct and different beings in relation. Indeed, with modern subjectivity, equality lies in the formal positing of the human being as the centre of ultimate deliberation and decision. Precisely because of the finitude which affects all indiscriminately, there could be no unilateral claim of "normativity" in the relation among human beings. From a different angle, the idea of "image and likeness" also posits an essential equality founded on the belief of creation. Indeed, if all are created by God, there could be no norm in the relation among human beings except from God or from a common deliberation. In a way, it is not surprising that Eboussi's insight finally integrates modern subjectivity and the ancient image of God. Starting his reflection from the experience of crisis, i.e. an experience of domination, Eboussi looks for a principle that excludes any justification and reiteration of domination.

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1984), p. 521), Eboussi was deliberately pointing out that even a very personal itinerary involves more than the individual; society and "gods" are part of it. See also, the "Epilogue" of Christianisme sans fétiche (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1981), p. 220; and, the conclusion of A Contretemps (Paris: Karthala, 1991) where Eboussi made of these words of Saint-John Perse: "La nuit de Dieu fut notre intempérie" an expression of his own commitment: "Il nous faut apprendre demeurer auprès de ces damnés de la terre pour éprouver la nuit du Dieu qui se voile dans la détresse et la misère." (p. 261).

52 "La partialité, le choix préférentiel, l'«hérésie» sont délibérés, à titre de correctif. «Le correctif, écrit Kierkegaard, se fait bien entendre, dans une certaine mesure, aux dépens de ce qui est corrigé. S'il en est ainsi, un esprit apparemment pénétrant peut à son tour faire le reproche que le correctif ne voit qu'un côté des choses, et il peut persuader facilement le public qu'il est ainsi. Grand Dieu! Rien n'est plus facile pour celui qui, le premier, a donné le correctif, d'y ajouter l'aspect complémentaire» (L'instant, tr. H. Tissieu; cité par Françoise Sur, Kierkegaard, le devenir chrétien, éd. Centurion, Paris, 1967, p. 132). J'irais volontiers plus loin en affirmant que le correcteur se garde de l'«équilibre» comme valeur individuellement obligatoire car il sait que la complémentarité est assurée par d'autres hommes, situés autrement et dans d'autres conditions, et ils sont en relation avec lui." (A Contretemps, p. 259).

53 What we are presenting here is just a sketch of our reflexion. It calls for further investigation and elaboration which are not part of this dissertation.
The Christic model is basically in this dynamic. It states the relation which has to be among human beings. It is "for us" (quoad nos)\(^5^4\) in that, what Jesus had done, each one has to do.\(^5^5\) What Jesus did has been given in the narratives of the early communities and made more vivid in contrast with the many groups of the time (Pharisees, Essenes, Sadducees etc.). In more synthetic terms, he resisted "the will to power of theocracy", "cultism and ritualism", turning historical "mediations into sacred realities". He also went beyond the "territorial principle", the "ethnic principle" as he broke up with the "exclusivist logic of belonging to a group", especially, a religious group. Indeed, Jesus would not "legitimize the systems of opposition by which human beings set up hierarchies among themselves to determine their status and their proximity to God".\(^5^6\) When Eboussi concluded by asserting that "no way of life should become a necessary way to God"\(^5^7\), he was trying to prevent any resurgence of domination. The experience of the African crisis still lurks behind. At the heart of this theoretical elaboration there is a pragmatic concern. Without the African crisis as a background, Eboussi can be charged with "pure speculation".

However, as Eboussi's pragmatic concern becomes evident, his theoretical orientation with the focus on Africans as subjects appears more shrewd than the focus on cultural differences. Indeed, the cultural argument can very well be quickly accepted and still lead to a subtle judgment

\(^{54}\) "Le sens «rédempteur» du Modèle christique est précisément qu'il est pour nous: il est l'être-pour-autrui, ce que chacun peut et doit être pour les autres." (Christianisme sans fétiché, p. 140).

\(^{55}\) "Ce que Jésus fait, chacun doit l'accomplir du lieu où il se trouve, et pour sa propre tradition." (Christianisme sans fétiché, p. 155).

\(^{56}\) See, Christianisme sans fétiché, p. 103.

\(^{57}\) "Aucun mode de vie ne saurait devenir le chemin obligé pour aller à Dieu." (Christianisme sans fétiché, p. 103).
on the humanity of the others\textsuperscript{58} as well as to a refined type of "apartheid".\textsuperscript{59} The cultural difference is in itself a symbol of the real problem, i.e. the possible difference in humanity. If Eboussi has touched the core of the problem, he has missed two dimensions which could have helped him to present a more balanced position.

The first dimension which is missing in Eboussi's elaboration is a historical perspective which reveals the amplitude and complexity of the millenia-long question on "Blacks". In a certain sense, on can rightly say that the root of the crisis is not to be found in the missionaries or the colonialists of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{60} Indeed, even before the slave trade "Blacks" were part of the imagination of the West.\textsuperscript{61} It is to Homer\textsuperscript{62}, in his \textit{Iliad}\textsuperscript{63} and \textit{Odyssey}\textsuperscript{64}, who introduced the

\textsuperscript{58} One should not quickly play down the impact and persistence of the evolutionary theory in anthropology; the shift to a functionalist approach has not solved the problem raised by the evident cultural differences when it comes to the "humanity" of the people. See Eboussi's critique of Tempels in Part I, chap. I.

\textsuperscript{59} Théoneste Nkémamihigo, "Inculturation And The Specificity Of Christian Faith" in \textit{Inculturation, Its Meaning And Urgency}, ed. J.M. Waliggo et al. (Nairobi: St. Paul Publications-Africa, 1986), pp. 67-74, esp. p. 69. The danger of what he calls "cultural apartheid" I would say is more than a refusal of openness characteristic of all cultures; it also consists in enclosing others in a particular way of being, behaving and understanding. It is not rare nowadays to hear and read that "many" Africans are more "Romans" or "Western-minded" than the missionaries, that where missionaries are more opened to local cultures and realities, Africans appeared more reserved, even hostile. See, Christiane Roussé-Grosseau, \textit{Mission Catholique et Choc des Modèles Culturels en Afrique} (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992), p. 369; also, Frank A. Salamone & Michael Mbabuike, "The Ancient Wind. Inculturation and Resistance: An Igbo Example" in \textit{Missionalia} 23/3 (1995) 261-282, esp. p. 264. There is most probably a problem which calls for discernment and careful judgment.

\textsuperscript{60} See: R. Mercier, \textit{L'Afrique Noire dans la Littérature Française} and L. Fanoudh-Siefer, \textit{Le Mythe du Nègre et de l'Afrique Noire}.

\textsuperscript{61} F. de Medeiros, \textit{L'Occident et l'Afrique}.

\textsuperscript{62} The "best and most divine of all poets" (Socrates qualification of Homer in Plato's \textit{Ión}, 530C-531E. \textit{Great Dialogues of Plato}, trans. W.H.D. Rouse, New York: A Mentor Book, 1984, p. 14) has made legendary the integrity, the joy and the grandiose festival of Africans, he has also situated them at the "end" of the humankind.

\textsuperscript{63} I, 423-425; XXIII, 206-207.

\textsuperscript{64} I, 22-26; I, 83; IV, 84-89; V, 282-283.
"Ethiopian" to the Ancient world more than a millenium before Christ by magnifying their integrity and piety. However, it is with Origen that the "image" of the Ethiopian as a theological and exegetical theme will be introduced in Christianity. His posterity unfortunately has transferred the symbolic function of the image from spiritual views (conversion) into ethical considerations and ontological questions. So, the cultural problem is an epiphenomenon.

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65 After scrutinizing Ancient literatures, tracing the characteristics of "Ethiopians" (black-skinned, woolly-haired, flat nose, "remote people" or "people living at the end of the earth"), F. Snowden, Jr., Blacks in Antiquity, is definite in his conclusion: "It is obvious that from the fifth century onwards Ethiopians were without question an African reality" (p. 108). E. Mveng, Les Sources Grecques, is more exhaustive in collecting documents from all the major literary genres of ancient Greek: poetry, drama, fiction, oracle, grammar, philosophy, medicine, geography, history, travel, epigraphy, iconography. As the title of his book indicates, his concern is the history of black African. By black African or, better, Nègre-African, Mveng is translating "Aethiops"; see his discussion of the word "Ethiopia" on pp. 90-95.

66 In Homer's poems the Olympians were very fond of visiting the Ethiopians because they were welcomed with sacred feasts of hecatomb of bulls and rams. "The Homeric precedent of these Olympian-Ethiopian consortia and an image of pious, just Ethiopians, wrote Snowden, became so imbeded in Greco-Roman tradition that echoes are heard throughout classical literature." (F. Snowden, Jr., Blacks in Antiquity, p. 144).

67 See his Commentary on the Song of Songs II, 1, 1-55 (Church); II, 1, 56-57 (Soul); II, 2, 1-22 (the analogy of the Sun is deeply rooted in the common image of the black as burned or blackened by the sun). The blackness of the Ethiopian as well as the fact that he lives at the ends of the world was for Origen an appropriate symbol to indicate both conversion and the journey it entails. The covenant which results from conversion also serves Origen to signify the indiscriminate acceptance of anyone who turns to God. In the second book of his commentary on the Song of Songs, Origen resorts to the Ethiopian as a symbol of the Church which was looked upon as Gentiles by the Jews. For further elaboration on Origen's contribution to the theme of Ethiopian, see: F. De Medeiros, L'Occident et l'Afrique, pp. 242-248 ("l'Aethiops dans la pensé d'Origène"); F. Snowden, Jr., Blacks in Antiquity, pp. 196-215 ("Early Christian Attitude toward Ethiopians"), especially, pp. 201-205. To appreciate Origen's contribution, it is interesting to note the remark of De Medeiros who scrutinized the theme of the Ethiopian in the Middle Ages (XIII-XV century): "La contribution du théologien d'Alexandrie sur l'allégorie de l'Aethiops au IIIè siècle a été si déterminante qu'elle est restée une référence essentielle pour la plupart des auteurs eclesiastiques qui abordent le problème jusqu'à la fin du Moyen Age." (Op.Cit., p. 242). Italics are mine.

68 See: F. Snowden, Jr., Blacks in Antiquity, endnotes, # 28, p. 333; F. De Medeiros, L'Occident et l'Afrique, footnotes, ## 73-74, p. 249. Black, colour attached to the Ethiopian, will play a significant role in the development and the transfer of meaning: black will be associated with "darkness", "night", "misfortune", "suffering", "sin", "death". It will be contrasted or opposed to white often associated with "light", "good fortune", "innocence", "purity", "joy". On the symbolic meaning of colours, see: Charles-Auguste Auber, Histoire et théorie du symbolisme religieux avant et depuis le Christianisme (Paris: Librairie de Fichoz et Letouzey, 1884). In demonology, black will be associated with evil and demons will either appears as black or be designated as black; see, Tondriau et Villeneuve, Dictionnaire du diable et de la démonologie (Verviers: Girard, 1968), pp. 64-65: "cavalier noir", "grand nègre", "homme noir", "prince des ténèbres" etc. Ethiopian will come to signify the one who is under the reign of evil or, the evil one. One should not be surprised that in the wake of the slave trade, little consideration is given to the humanity of
Elements of difference seems to cover physical traits as well as cognitive perception, ethical behaviour and spiritual tendencies.

The second dimension which Eboussi missed in focussing on the African subject is in fact an integral part of the understanding of both the modern "subjectivity" and the ancient "image and likeness". In effect, with the growing conscience of its autonomy and responsibility in the world, the modern subject has also come to discover the possibility of "illusion" in the very acts of self-assertion. Suspicion has overridden the early confidence in the ability of the subject to devise goals and act accordingly. At stake is the "integrity" of human beings which seems not to be given once for all. Precisely, human integrity is an essential aspect of the ancient idea of "image and likeness". Further integration of this dimension into African attempts to re-appropriate Christianity could help tackle the problem of tribal intolerance which hampers, within Africa itself, the advent of a "fraternity" which goes beyond one's ethnic group. Perhaps, for the first, one will rediscover that in much of our traumas with the West as well as in many of our today political, the Black/African; see: H. Deschamps, Histoire de la traite des Noirs de l'antiquité à nos Jours (Paris: Fayard, 1971). It is only within this complex and long history that the missionary enterprise of the 19th century can be properly understood. The 19th and even 20th century Europe has only carried the ancient image of the "Ethiopian" by further distorting it: the geographical extreme already present in Homer (Ethiopian as remote people) becomes the land of burning sun and sanctuary of wildlife, a cursed land with hostile environments: drought, famine, infectious deadly diseases, poverty; the racial extreme characterized by the colour of the skin and unusual behaviour (piety, hospitality, festive celebrations) now depicts their "strangeness": primitive, savage, lazy, people without morality, sensual, lacking sexual self-restraint, eager to enjoy without working, "black skin and black soul". See: L. Fanoudh-Siefer, Le Mythe du Nègre et de l'Afrique Noire dans la Littérature Française de 1800 à la 2e Guerre Mondiale (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1968).

69 K. Marx has shown that our quest for transcendence may simply be a projection of our deep desires. With Freud, these deep desires are said to rule our life from the "unconscious". Effective consciousness, Nietzsche will suggest, is to face the will of power that drives our existence. All in all, the true self lies behind a mask.

70 At the heart of Justin's stand against Stoicism is the destiny of human being after the "fall"; see, I Apol. 43.1-8 and II Apol. 7. Both Tertullian (against Marcion) and Irenaeus (against the Valentinians) developed their idea of "image and likeness" in response to the story of "creation" and "fall" upheld by the gnostics. See, Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. V. 1. 3 and especially V. 6. 1. For an overview of the question, see A.-G. Hamman, L'Homme, Image de Dieu (Paris: Cerf, 1987).
economic and social troubles, we Africans still have to address the big question of the story of Cain and Abel: "Where is your brother...?"\(^7\)

To sum up, by way of carrying further Eboussi's insight, the event of the African, by positing God's immediate relation with each human being,\(^7\) reclaims God's exclusive right to mediate the relationship among human beings.\(^7\) It is precisely because God makes possible our relation among ourselves (human beings) that none of that which constitutes such a relation can turn to mediate the relation of human beings with God. So, when Origen claimed for the Church the *nigra sum et formosa* (I am black and beautiful) of the fifth verse of the Song of Songs, it was to assert both and at once God's "image" in her (*in me est illud primum, quod ad imaginem Dei in me factum*) and God's indiscriminate acceptance of what she is (*nunc accedens ad Verbum Dei recepi speciem meam*).\(^7\) In other words, it is not the covenants, the law, the patriarchs and not even the "incarnation" of Christ in one's midst that is at the heart of God's "affaire" with the Church (the analogy is applicable to the soul), but it is love.\(^7\)

The central idea of the Christic model, i.e. God's nearness implies that his presence cannot be limited or conditioned by anything (not even the gift of the past), now appears as an early certitude and belief of the Church.\(^7\)

\(^7\) Genesis 4:9. This story reminds us that, even among brothers, love is not obvious. Even a massive destruction like in the story of the flood ended with this paradoxical lines: "Never again will I curse the earth because of man, because his heart contrives evil from his infancy." (Genesis 8:21).

\(^7\) See, the principle of illimitation introduced with the nearness of God as a fundamental hermeneutical principle of the Christic model.

\(^7\) See the understanding of God as Father. The metaphor in Eboussi's perspective is intended to foster fraternity.

\(^7\) See Origen, *In Canticum Canticorum*, II, 1, 4.

\(^7\) See the whole story of the Book of the Song of Songs.

\(^7\) As Jacques Chènevert noted in his study of the Church in Origen commentary of the Song of Songs: "Il est indéniable que la doctrine de l'égalité absolue de toutes les créatures raisonnables, au moment
Ch. 2. Transforming Traditions

La tradition n'est pas un corpus clos, un livre révélé. Elle est ouverte. A l'intérieur d'une certaine manière d'ordonner le réel, à l'intérieur de cadres symboliques déterminés, la créativité historique peut se déployer indéfiniment.

Eboussi Boulaga

Introduction

The startling newness envisioned by Eboussi with his deliberate focus on the emerging African subject directly challenges the most concrete expression of the cultural argument, that is, tradition. Indeed, the fundamental characteristic of these subjects is their position as responsible for their own historicity: a novelty which ultimately makes them worrisome. In effect, according to Eboussi, Africans are in no way determined by their African and Christian past. The present chapter intends to take up this challenge. We will clarify what is at stake in Eboussi's point of view and put forward our own argument. It should indeed appear that if the past is the condition of possibility of carefully thinking and defining a meaningful existence, only a "cosmopolitan" situation can really foster significant changes. Indeed, in a cosmopolitan context, the "myth of


1 La Crise du Muntu, p. 157: "Tradition is not a closed corpus, a book of revelation. It is open-ended. From within a way of ordering reality, a determined symbolic frame, historical creativity can be expressed indefinitely."

dialogue" can no longer be restricted to the confrontation of the primal narratives of African and Christian traditions.

A - African Tradition: From "Passion" to "Critical Utopia"

The seal of authenticity, i.e., that which testifies to the "Africanness" of any claim to African Christianity (or African philosophy or theology etc.) is often said to be the "reference to African tradition". Eboussi's turn to the subject with little emphasis on the African culture, could not go without suspicion. Fortunately, Eboussi himself anticipating the suspicion\(^4\), cleverly brought the question to the front and sketched his own personal view on the subject matter.\(^5\)

Eboussi's view can be articulated from this penetrating remark: "In the beginning, there is no African tradition, because there is no African."\(^6\) The sentence sounds provocative and

\(^3\) Because for the emerging African subject, the past is given in the experience of crisis, the narrative of the crisis becomes the myth of the dialogue where both Christian and African traditions receive meaning. On "myth" and "dialogue", see Eboussi Boulaga, Le Mythe du dialogue chez Platon, unpublished doctoral dissertation (Lyon: Université de Lyon II, 1968). Eboussi has summarized his thesis as followed: "Le titre de cet essai en indique la thèse qui se formule en trois propositions. 1) Le Mythe et le dialogue sont deux formes ou modalités d'une seule et même réalité: le langage ou le discours. Il est donc possible de passer de l'un à l'autre sans solution de continuité, de muer l'une en l'autre par une simple opération de conversion... 2) Sans le dialogue, le mythe, du moins chez Platon, est muet, inarticulable, informe. Il reçoit sa dicibilité, son articulation et sa forme du dialogue... 3) Conséquemment, sans le mythe le dialogue est creux et dépourvu d'intérêt ou de sens. Pour se comprendre lui-même, se situer dans la totalité du réel, penser son origine, le dialogue a recours au mythe, se subordonne à lui, comme à un ensemble auquel il appartient." (Eboussi Boulaga, Note de synthèse, polycopie, (Dakar: Université de Dakar, 1994), p. 6.).

\(^4\) "Le sceau de l'authenticité est, pense-t-on, la référence à la tradition africaine. Sa caution est nécessaire à tout projet culturel d'avenir. Tout penseur Muntu doit l'alléguer, lui payer le tribut d'un hommage à tout le moins verbal, occasionnel, sous peine d'être suspect de trahison et d'irrémédiable aliénation." (La Crise du Muntu, p. 143).

\(^5\) The essence of Eboussi's view is found in La Crise du Muntu, esp. pp. 143-172, i.e. part III, chapter II: "Le Recours de la tradition".

\(^6\) La Crise du Muntu, p. 143: "... au commencement, il n'y a pas de tradition africaine, parce qu'il n'y a pas d'Africain."
paradoxical. In fact, one needs no paleontological, ethnological or anthropological knowledge to sense that Eboussi is correlating "African tradition" to the event of the new consciousness of Africans. In effect, for Eboussi, the emergence of an African consciousness as "subject" (self) marks a turning point; it divides the whole history of the Continent in a "before" and an "after". So, the "in the beginning" of Eboussi's remark corresponds to this period where Africans have not yet come to the consciousness of themselves as subjects, as "selves" capable of carving a new destiny for themselves. What characterized this period, according to Eboussi, is not only the existence of many African traditions, but traditions which, if not because of matrimonial alliances, either were at war with one another or ignored each other. In other words, before "Africans" came to be, the many traditions of the Continent had little in common. "In the beginning", each tribe with its vision of the world and humanity was for its members the only "tradition".7

What prompted the change and, in a way, forced the new consciousness is the "passion" of these traditions, that is, their suffering and agony as they encountered the western "civilization" in imperial expansion. In most cases, this passion is not yet over because many tribes with their traditions are barely surviving, the sentence of death lurking over them like the sword of Damocles. Since crisis has befallen these traditions, the most important element which they share in common is their experience of suffering and agony. Eboussi took seriously this fact. Indeed, according to him, nothing brings the tribes together more than this "passion". He even went further pointing out that this suffering and agony is also what they have in common. So, only a common experience of domination has forced people who, in the past, understood themselves and others from their particular tribes, to redefine their identity and self-understanding.

7 "Au commencement — et ce commencement perdure jusqu'à ce jour —, la tradition est essentiellement bornée à la «tribu». Celle-ci est le monde, la totalité indiscutable, qui se relie directement à l'origine. Ce qui est transmis d'humanité concrète est éprouvé dans ce cadre, hors duquel il n'y a qu'étrangeté, barbarie ou animalité... L'idée de l'homme est indissociable de cet horizon." (La Crise du Muntu, p. 144).
It is at this juncture that Eboussi's "African" emerged. The common destiny they now envisioned is itself the fruit of their common experience.\(^8\) It is precisely in this sense that for Eboussi, "African tradition" starts with a shared-memory of pain and humiliation. The common heritage was not given in the beginning because each tribe was a totality and the other tribes were either enemies or of-no-concern. To sum up, "it is the community of passion which will suggest the community of destiny"\(^9\).

Once again, Eboussi brings us back to the experience of crisis as a very important *locus* of African reflection. By making the "memory of the passion"\(^10\) an integral part of the African tradition, Eboussi obliges every attempt at rehabilitating or at re-appropriating the traditions of the tribes, to take into account fully what these traditions were before the crisis,\(^11\) and what they became through the "passion."\(^12\) With regard to an African Christianity which takes African cultures as one of its foundational elements, three question have to be constantly kept in mind: First, to which stage, - "before" or "after" - , does the cultural item to be re-appropriated belong? Second, has it allowed in the past and can it prevent in the future the repetition of the "passion"?

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8 "L'élaboration d'un commun dénominateur est le résultat d'une récollection après la violence communément subie. Il est perçu avant tout comme une unité négative, l'unité d'une *Passion.*" (*La Crise du Muntu*, p. 143).

9 *La Crise du Muntu*, p. 143: "C'est la communauté de passion qui va suggérer la communauté de destin..."

10 "Il faut inclure comme dimension première de la mémoire du Muntu le souvenir de la passion de la tradition, de la tradition sous le régime de sa défaite et de son humiliation." (*La Crise du Muntu*, p. 152).

11 Tribes which ignore or exclude each other: "chaque tribu se croit le centre du monde, chacune ne connaît que ses us et coutumes, qu'elle tient pour sacrés, absolument valables, parce qu'ils viennent des Ancêtres indépassables. Ce qui est au commencement, et qui est vu comme tel après coup, ce sont des traditions multiples qui s'ignorent mutuellement, qui n'existent pas les uns pour les autres." (*La Crise du Muntu*, p. 145). The recent genocide in Rwanda is an extreme manifestation of tribalism. On the division of some major African cities according to tribal lines, see Meinrad Hebga, *Afrique de la raison*, pp. 49-57.

12 "La tradition, ensemble de coutumes, des représentations, de savoir-faire et d'organisations légués et transmis, n'est plus dans l'état d'innocence, non seulement parce qu'elle a été en fait violée, mais parce qu'elle a, en permanence, des possibilités qui l'y exposent..." (*La Crise du Muntu*, p. 152).
And third, what is its probable or effective relation to the future intended by today's Africans?

The memory of this passion indeed is a vigilant memory. It acknowledges that part of past traditions bears the responsibility of some of the humiliation and alienation suffered. In order to avoid the repetition of the latter, Africans have to keep their memory alive. Indeed, the memory of the passion has to become a critical parameter ready to prevent any absolutism, especially when references to traditions tend to substitute themselves for the deliberation and decision of Africans about their contemporary political, technological, economic and religious situations.

When the quest of a better future, that is, one free and exempt of the past suffering, humiliation, agony and other alienations, is anticipated or retrieved from the memory of the passion, the recourse to traditions functions as "critical utopia". It is only within this critical perspective, thinks Eboussi, that one can freely revisit the traditions of the tribes, not to dwell nostalgically in a lost paradise or to recreate it, but in order to establish a clear starting point, a point of reference for the journey into an unprecedented future. With this condition, it appears that Eboussi is not so much against the use of traditions than a certain way of using traditions,

13 "La mémoire vigilante se pose pour se libérer de la répétition de l'alévation de l'esclavage et de la colonisation. Ceux-ci comprennent la domestication de l'homme, sa réduction à la condition d'objet, en le dépouillant de son « monde» et de sa personnalité individuelle et collective..." (La Crise du Muntu, p. 153).

14 "La mémoire vigilante est le refus de tout attachement aveugle, de la confiance compacte, à l'immédiateté de ce qui va sans dire." (La Crise du Muntu, p. 152).

15 See, La Crise du Muntu, pp. 152-160: "La tradition comme utopie critique". Souk Allag Waayna has written a major substantial term paper on this question: La Fonction Utopique et Ideologique de la Tradition chez Eboussi Boulagha, Mémoire pour l'obtention du grade de Bachelier en Philosophie (Kimwenza-Zaïre: Institut de Philosophie S. P. Canisius, 1982), 71 p., polycop.

16 See, La Crise du Muntu, p. 158: "La mémoire va remonter à la période antérieure à la déchéance, à l'avant de l'avant, à la tradition dans son état d'innocence... Ce retour pourrait se perdre dans les sables dorés de la nostalgie s'il se contentait de viser à réintégrer le Paradis perdu. L'imaginaire est sauvé s'il est projeté en avant... La tradition devient prospective si, après avoir critiqué le présent, elle présente le projet d'un monde autre, où régissent des relations humaines autres, où la propriété, le travail, le pouvoir, la culture se vivraient autrement..." Italics are mine.
namely the approach of ethnology. The recourse to traditions in this science and through out its changing perspectives (from evolutionism to functionalism, and to structuralism) was intended to understand people whose ways of life stand in sharp contrast with the "civilized" life style. The focus was never on the "living subject" constantly dealing with his/her environment, adjusting needs to the existing socio-political relations. As it often appears, neither the people studied nor the ethnologists and their readers find themselves challenged enough to introduce significant changes in their previous life-style and worldview.

With the emergence of Africans as subjects, the tribal traditions enter into a new configuration. Their function is to pattern the future by keeping alive in their memories whatever rendered possible the "passion", so as to avoid its repetition. Positively, they can trigger the imagination to "project" what type of existence and human relation Africans want to foster. Christian traditions, for Eboussi, must enter into this dynamic too.

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17 See, part I, chapter 2 of this dissertation. See also, La Crise du Muntu, pp. 161-172: "La fin de l'ethnologie".

18 See, La Crise du Muntu, p. 163: "... L'ethnologie est ainsi histoire des hypothèses et des techniques nouvelles pour étudier «l'homme primitif». Celui-ci demeure insondable. A travers les pratiques et les théories ethnologiques, ce qui se donne à connaître est bien la société occidentale."

B - Christian Traditions: Avenues and Impasse

In spite of his deliberate attempt to re-appropriate Christianity from within the Second Temple, that is, apart from the dogmatic period, Eboussi has always been dealing with Western Christianity. Indeed, because Christianity for him has never been a vague idea, but his own experience with the Christian traditions inherited from the 19th century missionary activities in Africa, there is a very personal flavour to the avenues and impasse of this re-appropriation of Christian traditions.

Recent historical studies have brought forth more facts pinpointing not only the multifarious character of the denominations involved in the missionary activity in Africa, but also the many variations within a single denomination. Consequently, one can or should rightly speak of the many Christian missions in Africa and, subsequently, of the many Christian traditions in Africa. Eboussi hardly specifies any particular denomination or missionary association as a control-group in his writings. This could but leave his contribution an easy target for critics most impressed by monographs and descriptive studies than by systematic and comprehensive approaches. Not prejudging Eboussi's knowledge of the history of missions, his relation to

20 See, part 1, chapter 3.

21 Particular attention is given to the origin of the missionaries: their countries, the specific region where their were recruited, their formations. Influences from the group, congregation or association to which their belonged are also scrutinized. Some studies even take into account the African environment and the people among whom they landed. See, Christiane Roussé-Grosseau, Mission catholique et choc des modèles culturels en Afrique, L'exemple du Dahomey (1864-1928) (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992). Christiane Roussé-Grosseau was only dealing with the SMA (Société des Missions Africaines de Lyon founded by M. de Brésillac). Similar study can be extended to the White Fathers, the Jesuits, the Dominicans, the Verona Fathers etc.

22 Eboussi is not unaware of the monographies or, more accurately, of their methods and results; see, Eboussi Boulaga, "Enjeu de «Dieu»: le Savoir-Pouvoir" in Dieu en Afrique, ed. Eboussi Boulaga (Douala: V.P.A.O, 1979), pp. 6-8; also, "Enjeu de Dieu en Afrique" in A Contretemps, pp. 155-215.

Christian traditions rather reflects an insight of R. Bultmann: "history does not speak when a man stops his ears, that is, when he assumes neutrality, but speaks only when he comes seeking answers to the questions which agitate him"24, rather than the present reconstruction by historians.25

Eboussi's call for a responsible re-appropriation of Christian traditions is a result of his own26 attempts to come to grips with this tradition. Indeed, the Christic model which finally crystallizes the essential elements of his thought is itself a product of five different approaches to the missionary heritage. The very first attempt was a quest for the original meaning of good knowledge of the various stages and transformation undergone by the missionary activity of the Christian Churches in Africa. Eboussi is not unaware of the many evaluations of mission which he summarizes in four sentences (I take the freedom to associate with each sentence a book that treats in detail what Eboussi suggests): "Le bon sens triomphe, qui reconnaît la part d'erreurs inévitables dans un bilan somme toute positif, et prescrit une adaptation meilleure aux temps nouveaux [V. Donovan, Christianity: Rediscovered, New York, Orbis Books, 1978]. De fait, l'oeuvre missionnaire est de celles dont il convient de parler sans insulter le passé ni l'avenir [W. Bühman, The Missions On Trial: Addis Ababa 1980, Nairobi, St Paul Publication, 1978]. Beaucoup d'humanité s'y est investie, sous la forme du sacrifice de soi, de la foi sincère et de réalisations efficaces [A.G. Ingleby, Pioneer Days In Darkest Africa, London, Pickering & Inglis, 1935]. Tant de griefs ressassés ne prévaudront jamais contre ce fait, ni contre cet autre, bien plus décisif aux yeux du croyant: la transmission de l'Evangile [John Paul II, Ecclesia In Africa, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995]." (p.276).


26 The following sentence in his epilogue to Christianisme sans fétiche read: "J'écris pour ôter mes masques, avant que ne s'efface mon visage."(p. 220). Eboussi rarely writes on behalf of a group or community because the ethical dimension of responsibility implies a personal commitment. So, he can conclude La Crise du Muntu by confessing: "La pensée de la crise désigne sa propre clôture en s'avouant l'allégorie d'une crise personnelle." (p. 237). Indeed, without this commitment, African authenticity is hollow: "L'africanité ou l'authenticité sont des références inertes, oiseuses, ou mystificatrices, quand elles n'expriment pas une exigence éthique, un impératif à réaliser par moi, ici et maintenant, quand elles ne désignent pas le processus par lequel j'accède ou j'émerge à l'humanité dans le monde tel qu'il est, par lequel je fais cette vérité qui rend libre." (A Contretemps, p. 259).
Christianity. In this early stage, the voyage into the formative period of Christianity, right in the midst of the Jewish struggle under the Greco-Roman domination (culturally by the Greek thought and politically by Roman law), seemed then the sole promising horizon for Eboussi's sensitive awareness of the conflict of interpretations which was irretrievably dividing Christian denominations. But, the reality in the mission territories, namely the perpetuation of an alienating relation between the missionaries and the natives, forced Eboussi to shift his focus from a past original meaning to present relations.

More critical in tone, Eboussi's second approach to Christian traditions touched raw nerves because it aimed more at practices than doctrines. Indeed, reviewing the change of personnel, the new waves of recruiting young Africans into "dying" missionary religious congregations as well as the superficial change of role in the head-offices of African churches, Eboussi discovered that things have not really changed. The new lay missionaries and the priests fidei donum have reiterated the old guard's condescension. Meanwhile, African prelates and clerics in positions of

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27 See his contribution to the 1972 symposium "Foi et Guérison", held in Yaoundé: September 10-13, 1972. It was published in Croyance et Guérison, ed. M. Hebga (Yaounde: Clé, 1973) as "Christianisme comme Maladie et comme Guérison" (pp. 127-139), followed by a discussion (pp. 140-147).

28 "Où git le problème? Dans ce qu'on a appelé le conflit des interprétations... l'ensemble des embarras que nous avons relevés plus haut invite à nous interroger nous-même, c'est-à-dire à prendre en ligne de compte la singularité de notre point de vue..." ("Christianisme comme maladie", pp. 127, 130).

29 This was in 1974 with "La Démission" Spiritus 56 (1974) 276-287.

30 "Des groupes anémisés, menacés d'extinction chercheront leur salut dans l'apport de sang neuf africain. On recrutera, on sera même fondatrice, fébrilement, sans discernement, mais aussi sans scrupules sur les moyens et sur les méthodes." ("La Démission", p. 279).

31 See Pius XII's Encyclical Letter Fidei Donum (April 21, 1957) calling for a new type of missionaries for Africa.

32 "La même désinvolture à l'égard de l'Afrique, le même mépris de l'autre et la même certitude qu'on détient la vérité et le salut, la même absence de reciprocité ont été réitérés. Le désir de faire triompher ses convictions, son mode de penser et de sentir, l'a emporté sur le respect et la recherche de la vérité." ("La Démission", p. 280).
responsibility are entertaining an indignant hide-and-seek relation with the missionaries: the latter are used to obtain money from their home-societies but denied responsibility and leading roles in Africanisation. Such a relation, according to Eboussi is not only immoral but also alienating. It calls for a radical solution: an "orderly departure of missionaries from Africa". The result of this call was a bitter discovery that a direct challenge to an ongoing human relation can unleash the powers threatened by an open denunciation.

No wonder that Eboussi's third approach to Christianity turned out to be a scrutiny of what is finally at stake in God-talk in Africa. It appeared that God-talk in Africa is entrenched in the bastion of "knowledge-and-power". To reckon with this, Eboussi envisioned empowering the African Christians in his fourth approach. Indeed, after a careful analysis of the means, aims and

33 "Les indigènes ne se rencontrent entre eux que par la médiation du missionnaire, soit pour s'opposer à lui, soit pour coexister au sein de structures qu'ils n'assument pas... Sans la présence «odieuse» des missionnaires, maints groupes religieux, maints diocèses africains éclateraient en factions rivales, se pulvériseraient en bandes tribales ou claniques." ("La Démission", p. 286)

34 "Et ici, il faut dénoncer deux erreurs commises par les Africains. La première est d'ordre moral, lorsqu'ils consentent à la simple inversion d'une attitude coloniale, en proclamant que les missionnaires du fait de leur «nature» d'étrangers et de Blancs ne sauraient plus être que des exécutants. On les déclare inaptes à penser selon des catégories africaines, à sentir à l'afrique... le raisonnement est de type raciste... la fin «surnaturelle» ou «transcendante» ne saurait absoudre son immoralité foncière... La deuxième erreur est, pourrait-on dire, dialectique. L'esclave qui travaille est indispensable et devient le maître du maître." ("La Démission", pp. 282-283).

35 "La Démission", p. 287.

36 Eboussi's contribution to the symposium on "God in Africa" held in Bakara/Chad in September 5-8, 1977, reveals his new preoccupation. The title of his paper, "Enjeu de «Dieu»: Le Savoir-Pouvoir" (published in Dieu en Afrique, Douala: V.P.A.O, 1979, pp. 6-12) suggests very well that the question of "power" has come to the front of his concern.

37 In "L'Enjeu de «Dieu» en Afrique" the Christian traditions of the missionaries share in Western "rationality" as a power that reduces others to its own understanding while denying them the same right to interpret Christianity: "Se lier aux autres «sur mode de la pure théorie» n'est possible que si l'on jouit du pouvoir de traduire «en vérité» et en «raison consciente» le mutisme, la confusion et l'inconscience des pratiques et des paroles des autres, que si l'on peut leur enlever la parole... Le pouvoir de traduire, d'expliquer et d'interpréter unilatéralement fait corps ou système avec les pouvoirs de tous genres qui organisent la vie courante." (pp. 6-7).
practices of mission, he suggested an "African Council\(^3\) as a unique ecclesiastical forum where Africans can devise new initiatives for their own evangelisation. This strategy of making the act of re-appropriation less a task of an individual and, more a community project, unfortunately, yields no immediate result.\(^4\)

Eboussi's fifth and last attempt to come to grips with Christian traditions inherited from the missionaries adopted an unusual approach: Eboussi hid himself behind the often critical voices of African writers.\(^5\) This way of proceeding signalled the growing distance between Eboussi and Christianity as an institution. His conclusion is an appeal to conversion so that the next generations of African writers could be inspired by experiences not conducive to blasphemous utterances.\(^6\)

\(^3\) Eboussi's lasting impact on the quest for an African Christianity will remain his contribution to the symposium *Civilisation Noire et Eglise Catholique* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1978), held in Abidjan on September 12-17, 1977. In his paper entitled: "Pour une Catholicité Africaine. Etapes et Organisation", both the strength and the weakness of the Christian tradition as received from the missionaries are evaluated. To overcome the forces of inertia, Eboussi claimed that only a meaningful project can mobilize energies and initiatives. To be effective, such a project according to him, has to come from an unprecedented gathering of all Africans, i.e. in an African Council: "On ne donne pas l'initiative, encore moins la commande-t-on; on n'ordonne pas l'invention... Je propose en conséquence qu'un Concile de l'Eglise catholique en Afrique soit convoqué. La mutation spirituelle de notre continent, les problèmes gigantesques et inouis qu'il affronte, désignent ce recours comme nécessaire et ce moment comme favorable et bon." (in *A Contretemps*, pp. 70-71).

\(^4\) It takes seventeen years to Eboussi's appeal to finally have some echoes. Indeed, as John Paul II's post-synodal exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* recognizes, "from 1977 to 1983, some Bishops, priests, consecrated persons, theologians and lay people expressed a desire for an African Council or African synod, which would have the task of evaluation evangelization in Africa vis-à-vis the great choices to be made regarding the Continent's future." (# 5). The Synod of Bishops held in Rome (April 11 - May 06, 1994) was only a partial fulfilment of Eboussi's proposal who already warned against an attempt to come to grips with Christian traditions inherited from the missionaries, he suggested an unusual approach: Eboussi hid himself behind the often critical voices of African writers. This way of proceeding signalled the growing distance between Eboussi and Christianity as an institution. His conclusion is an appeal to conversion so that the next generations of African writers could be inspired by experiences not conducive to blasphemous utterances.

\(^5\) In "Ecrivains Africains devant le Christianisme" *Pirogue* 28 (1978) 1-32, it is obvious that behind the voices of the African writers, its is the voice of Eboussi himself speaking.

\(^6\) "Fallait-ils les [écrivains africains] faire taire, faut-il maintenant étouffer leur voix parce qu'ils «parlent mal», parce qu'ils blasphèment?... Mais je vous le demande, peut-on défendre Dieu? Qui le peut? Qui a le droit? A qui appartient-il? Qui n'a pas le droit de l'aider ou de le bafouer?... la liberté d'aimer ou de haïr Dieu est l'ultime don de Dieu que nul ne peut enlever à l'homme... Longtemps, les adorateurs de Dieu ont gouverné le monde. L'ont-ils fait selon la Loi?... Quelle n'a pas dû être la faute de ceux qui croient en Dieu, si au terme de leur règne sur le monde, le nom de Dieu suscite le ressentiment des affamés?" ("Ecrivains Africains", p. 32). On African writers and the missionaries, see: L. Laverdière, *L'Africain et le missionnaire. L'image du missionnaire dans la littérature africaine d'expression française*.
When *Christianisme sans fétiche* appeared in 1981, the gap had already widened between Eboussi and the Christian tradition represented by the Church as an institution. But the core of the Christic model had already been defined: "Christianity is neither a means for knowledge, nor a means for power. It is a (hi)story of love."

C - Further Considerations

So, what do we learn from Eboussi's attempt to re-appropriate in a responsible manner Christian traditions? First of all, Christianity is not just Jesus proclaimed Christ. Second, it is not simply Scriptures opened to everyone and anyone's understanding. Finally, Christianity is not a tradition freely available to humanity for unconditional adhesion. Positively, Christianity is a living reality made of human beings constituted around meanings translated into institutions, rituals and creeds which guarantee its historical survival. If Eboussi's re-appropriation of Christianity as presented in the Christic model fell into oblivion, it is because: 1) it threatened the

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42 Eboussi officially left the Society of Jesus in 1981. In fact, it seems that the decision had been taken in 1979 when he started teaching philosophy at the University of Abidjan.

43 Eboussi Boulaga, "Ecrivains Africains devant le Christianisme" *Pirogue* 28 (1978), p. 32: "Le Christianisme n'est pas un moyen de savoir, un moyen de puissance. Il est une histoire d'amour." The French word "histoire" can mean both history and story.

44 The constitution of a defined community, the community of those who are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Spirit. Karl Rahner's theory of "anonymous Christian" is perhaps a good pastoral device but it hardly holds the heart of Christian "Confessions" of the majority of Christian denominations.

45 Spinoza had paid the price in his own Jewish tradition for having thought that scripture can interpret itself; see, Samuel Preus, "A Hidden Opponent in Spinoza's *Tractatus*" *Harvard Theological Review* 88/3 (1995) 362ff. The reformers believed so; but the reality was the endless fragmentations of the reformed groups into denominations.

46 The ecumenical dialogue shows again and again that the dividing lines are not easy to erase. No one is really ready to renounce himself.
institution (missionary institutes and local hierarchy), 2) it downplayed the rituals (priority to God's presence over the mediations), 3) its relativized the creeds (dogmas have only relational meaning) and, 4) it was a very personal attempt. Only his idea of an African Council made its way to become the synod on Africa.

A reflection on the various stages of his process of re-appropriation of the Christian heritage seems to offer a better vantage point by which we can appreciate the cultural approach as well as the socio-political approach propounded by the movements of "Inculturation" (and "Liberation"). According to one of the most shrewd theologians attentive to the movements behind the recent theological concepts of "inculturation" and "liberation", we are in attendance at "one of the greatest events in the history of humankind... two-thirds of the human race which have for many centuries now been living in dependence on and therefore under the domination of the West are in the process of becoming aware of their personality, of their own values, of their resources and their human dignity." Even a quick reading of Des Prêtres noirs s'interrogent definitely confirms this observation. Precisely because Eboussi deliberately set his task of reappropriation within the framework of this tension (cf. his concept of crisis), his own failure to propose an acceptable interpretation of Christianity out of the Western heritage reveals the epistemological


48 A. Abble & al., Des Prêtres Noirs s'Interrogent (2e ed.: Paris: Cerf, 1957). This book often seen as the major cornerstone in the claim of an "African Theology", is a collection of articles of priests from Africa and Haiti. They claimed that their only aim is "Faire la vérité dans l'amour" (p. 18). But the truth ranges from the call to adaptation (see, V. Mulago, "Nécessité de l'adaptation missionnaire chez les Bantu du Congo", pp. 19-40.) to a fierce criticism of colonial domination (see, R. Dosseh & R. Sastre, "Propagande et Vérité", pp. 137-152.), including some sketches of a theological prospective (see: J. Thiam, "Du Clan Tribal à la Communauté Chrétienne", pp. 41-56; and, M. Hebga, "Christianisme et Négritude", pp. 189-203.).

49 The Christic model being ultimately a "non-Christian" interpretation of Christianity. Indeed, what Eboussi strove to achieve was an interpretation of Jesus Christ solely from and within the perspective of Judaism of the Second Temple. For him, such an understanding shed better light on the patristic and dogmatic periods.
impasse confronting attempts at "inculturation" (and "liberation").

In effect, the recourse to a traditional figure like "ancestor"50, or to rites such as "initiation"51 or religious vision52 like "Vodun"53 and practices like "sacrifice" serves only to supply local categories for translating an already given interpretation.54 To put it otherwise, they are reinterpretations of what the Jewish affair of Jesus and the Jewish-Christians have become in the scriptural exegesis and dogmatic statements of the all Gentile Churches of the West.55 In doing so, this approach eludes to its own detriment an important epistemological problem: Christianity, as it


54 This is typical to most of Afro-Christologies; see: Chemins de christology africaine (Paris: Desclée, 1986); J.S. Pobee, Exploring Afro-Christology (New-York: Peter Lang, 1992). E. Messi Metogo, Théologie africaine et ethnophilosophie (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1985) has been very critical in reviewing these methodological approaches; he wrote: "La plupart des travaux théologiques effectués par les Africains relèvent purement et simplement du comparatisme concordiste, l'objectif étant de montrer à tout prix que les catégories de la révélation biblique ou de la théologie chrétienne existent déjà dans les religions traditionnelles africaines." (p. 9). See also, Kâ Mana, Christ d’Afrique. Enjeux éthiques de la foi africaine en Jésus-Christ (Paris: Karthala, 1994). Referring to O. Bimwenyi-Kweshi’s Discours théologique négrö-africain: problème de fondement (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1981), Kâ Mana wrote: "Le théologien zairois invoquait l'univers métaphysique d'un monde complètement désintégré au cœur même des Africains et de leurs aspirations. Il semblait ignorer que, face à la force du monde nouveau qui avait désintégré l'ancien univers religieux africains, devaient naître de nouvelles vérités." (p. 31).

55 Since the holocaust has transformed the fate and destiny of the Jewish People into a burning issue in Christianity, many theoretical constructions have been made to maintain and safeguard both the uniqueness of Judaism and the specificity of Christianity. Michael B. McGarry, Christology after Auschwitz (New York: Paulist Press, 1977) who reviewed the literature distinguishes the "Single covenant" and the "Two-Covenant" theories. See also: J. Pawlikowski, Jesus and the Theology of Israel (Wilmington: Glazier, 1989); C. Thoma, A Christian Theology of Judaism (New York: Paulist Press, 1980); N. Lohfink, The Covenant Never Revoked (New York: Paulist Press, 1991). The major impression from these writings is that Christianity is but Judaism for Gentiles.
now stands, is not a tradition freely available to humanity for unconditional adhesion.\textsuperscript{56} Indeed, none of the fundamental reinterpretations of its essential meanings which have given rise to institutions, rituals and creeds occurred without serious clashes. So, we learn from the clashes between the Eastern and Western Christianity as well as the clashes in the West between Catholics and Reformers which all ended in splits, that significant theological reinterpretations often lead to changes in institutions\textsuperscript{57}, rituals\textsuperscript{58} and creeds\textsuperscript{59}.

It is from this background that the recent vigorous intervention of the Roman Catholic curia regarding "liberation theology" and its tight control over the movement of "inculturation" in Africa testify to the impasse of these trends which seek "a new theology... and not merely a prolongation of the theology established in the West."\textsuperscript{60} To put it bluntly, the problem is not about our life in

\textsuperscript{56} It is not rare to hear or to read that Christianity is first and foremost a Person, Christ; that is, it is not a doctrine or system (religious or philosophical). This echoes the distinction between faith and religion, see: K. Barth, Church Dogmatics, vol. IV, 3, 1 & 2 (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, ); H. Kraemer, Religion And The Christian Faith (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956). The fact is that the Person of Christ is itself part and parcel of a tradition. Indeed, one only understands him from the Jewish tradition which not only saw many crucified Jews during the Roman occupation, but also crystallized in some of them, their hope of a messiah. On the Jewish expectations of the time, see, P. Grelof LišpCrancejuive l'heure de Jésus (Paris: Desclée, 1978).

\textsuperscript{57} The Eastern structures of patriarchates are distinct from the Roman Catholic hierarchy and, the latter is distinct from the Reformed and the many other Christian denominations that now exist.

\textsuperscript{58} The sacraments are understood and celebrated very differently. For example, one can take the eucharist as understood and celebrated in Roman Catholic tradition and the Reformed churches. The question of "priesthood" is another one.

\textsuperscript{59} It is important to note that if Councils ever define faith, the first council (Nicaea - 325 AD.) produced a "creed" which was further completed by the council of Chalcedon (451). If Chalcedon had expressly forbidden any new creed ("Since we have formulated these things with all possible accuracy and attention, the sacred and universal synod decreed that no one is permitted to produce, or even to write down or compose, any other creed or to think or teach otherwise" Decrees of the Ecumenical Council, vol. 1, ed. Tanner, p. 87), the question of Filioque set the East and West on two different credal formulas. During the Reformation split, new "confessions of faith" were written. So are "The Augsburg Confession" (presented by certain Princes and Cities to His Imperial Majesty Charles V in 1530), "The Thirty-Nine Articles" of the English reformation (1563).

\textsuperscript{60} Marie-Domique Chenu, "A New Birth: Theologians of the Third World", p. 18.
Christ but about our understanding of Christ. It is a problem between Christian communities relative to a "legitimate" or an "authoritative" or a "normative" interpretation of Christ and who has the truth.

Eboussi's initial insight gets to the point in specifying the "conflict of interpretations" as the major problem. Furthermore, his decision not to take dogma as his starting point corresponds to the historical fact that faith does not start with dogma. The Reformers and their heirs had stigmatized the corruption of "Roman" Christianity and its entrenchment in Platonism resulting in syncretistic confession and cult. But their own return to the Bible as the ultimate source of pure

61 Indeed "if we have been totally united with him through likeness in death, so shall we be through a like resurrection" (Romans 6:5). What counts at this stage is Paul's profession of faith: "I have been crucified with Christ; the life I live now is not my own, Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

62 The question here could be summed up in Jesus' own words: "who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8:29). Peter responded: "You are the Messiah". The Council of Nicaea (325) further added: "One Lord Jesus-Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten begotten from the Father, that is from the substance of the Father, God from God..." And, Chalcedon (451) with more precision said: "One and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation..." Some Africans have added "Ancestor" or "Proto-Ancestor", "Master of Initiation".

63 Contemporary historical researches have shed new light on the non theological nature of the major breaks in Christianity. On the cultural dimension of the division between the "big Church" and the «non-Chalcedonian» Churches, see Giuseppe Alberigo, "Chrétienté et cultures dans l'histoire de l'église" in Église et histoire de l'église en Afrique (Paris: Beauchesne, 1988). For Mark Pattison, "The German reformation is imperfectly described as an appeal to scripture versus tradition. It was rather an appeal to history... The appeal to scripture was not itself the moving spring of the reformation, it was the consequence of the sense of decay and degeneracy... The reformation appealed to the bible, because in this earliest record of the church, it had a measure of the deviation from type which had been brought about." (M. Pattison, Isaac Casuabon: 1559-1614, 2nd ed. (Oxford: 1892) cited by J.Z. Smith, Drudgery Divine (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990), p. 13.). Eboussi's views on the tension between the Christian West with the "Missions" evolves in the same dynamic. If the Reformation turned to the bible as a "canon", historical researches paradoxically reveal that the bible itself is the result of an historical process. Eboussi has tried to shift from the bible to the Jewish existence during the Second Temple. The result raises questions because the Second Temple with its many groups and movements has no specific norm and, the historical discontinuity between Christianity and Judaism simple renders more complex the problem of normativity.

64 See "Christianisme comme maladie", pp. 127-128.

65 See, Melanchton, Apologia Confessionis Augustanae (1530) in Corpus Reformatorum (Halle-Brunswick-Berlin, 1834-; 27: cols. 419-644), esp. cols. 515, 540, 543-555, 569, 587-595; Oratio de Platone (1538) in Corpus Reformatorum 11: cols. 413-425, esp. cols. 424-425; Calvin, Institutio christianae religionis (1530) in Corpus Reformatorum 30, esp. cols. 80-90, 500, 867-891, 924-925, 1081-1089; see
Christianity has turned out to be problematic. In effect, critical exegesis has shown that "the Bible as we have it is messy". Indeed, behind the written text are layers of traditions. To put it positively, biblical research has ultimately proved that Scriptures themselves are part of a multifarious tradition. In a sense, even Scripture cannot be considered as starting point of faith. Long before the written text, there is a kerygma. And long before the kerygma, there is Israel's history and especially the itinerary of those Jews who encountered Jesus, listened to his words, believed in him and "took over" his message as a salvific message. So, it becomes impossible to find a normative criterion which is not first accepted by a community with a coherent tradition. It follows that radical change can only occur either in the context of general crisis or in a context of...

also, Traité des Reliques (1543) in Corpus Reformatorum 34: 405-442. I found these references in J.Z. Smith, Drudgery Divine, pp.13-14, note # 15. The idea of corruption of Christianity can be followed up under the theme of "hellenization of Christianity". It is often a polemical subject; see, W. Glawe, Die hellenisierung des Christentums in der Geschichte der Theologie von Luther bis auf die Gegenwart (Berlin, 1912); B. Lonergan, "The Dehellenization of Dogma" in Theological Studies 28 (1967) 336-351; this articles is a lengthy review of L. Dewart's The Future of Belief: Theism in a World Come of Age (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966) which envisioned the dehellenization of dogma as a further task after the demythologization of Scripture.

66 As Eboussi points out, paganism was no longer an external reality for the Jews of the Second Temple. From the Greek conquest of Alexander onward, the Greek culture became internalized.


68 Critical exegesis contrary to the reformers who viewed the bible as a "natural fact", has taken the biblical text as a "historical fact", that is something which occurred in a specific time and space, and bore the marks of human intentionality. The Second Vatican Council has validated this view in specifying the norm of interpretation: "Now since in the Bible God has spoken through human agents to humans, if the interpreter of the holy scripture is to understand what God has wished to communicate to us, he must carefully investigate what meaning the biblical writers actually had in mind; that will also be what God chose to manifest through their words." (Dei Verbum, # 12. This translation is from Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, vlo.2., ed. N. Tanner, p.976). The priority given to the editor's intention as God's intention does not resolve the problem of how we get to this original intention. Moreover, we know that the Church reserves to itself the "task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether in its written form or in that of tradition." (Dei Verbum, # 10).

69 The experience of Philip with the Ethiopian in Acts 8:26-40 shows very well that a written text in itself is not sufficient for the act of faith.

70 The idea of taking over has a distinctive connotation in the French expression "prendre la relève". It signifies both a continuity and a discontinuity.
a "loose tradition" like a cosmopolitan situation. The irony with Eboussi's Christic Model is that the model emerged in a Jewish society in crisis (Second Temple) but, very soon, was rejected with the coming a new central reference, i.e. rabbinic Judaism. It seems difficult to see how such a model can take hold in the present context of dogmatic Christianity.

The real benefit of Eboussi's ups and downs with Christian traditions, in spite of the impasse of his theological re-appropriation, is that he has dramatically shown what everyone should know: even with almost two thousand years of Western tradition, Christianity is not a Western "religion". The conflict of interpretation of the "same" tradition symbolized by the African quest for an African Christianity is essentially a conflict between Christian communities. When communities meet communities, the younger ones need leaders like Paul to remind the older ones the "freedom for which (all) have been freed".

To avoid allowing the relation among Christian communities to degenerate into suspicion that "some do not really belong to the brotherhood", it is often now suggested that we promote an ecclesiology of communion, i.e. a communion of equal local churches. And, in the present context where many have become allergic to "institution", some would rather advocate the rediscovery of the freedom of the Spirit: a kind of new pneumatology. In either case, the effort consists in curving or tempering what appears as an excessive exercise of power by few centres: "Western Church" (as opposed to "Third Church"), "Rome" or more specifically the Vatican (as opposed to local Churches). Perhaps, and this is my contention, an understanding of the Church which lets itself be puzzled by some sayings of the Lord, can provide a better vantage point for legitimate differences.

\[\text{\footnote{This idea is what is behind the subtitle of Kwame Bediako's \textit{Christianity in Africa: the Renewal of a Non-Western Religion} (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).}}\]

\[\text{Galatians 5:1.}\]

\[\text{\footnote{See Galatians 2:4.}}\]
John spoke up. "Master", he said, "we saw a man casting out devils in your name, and because he is not with us we tried to stop him". But Jesus said to him, "You must not stop him; anyone who is not against you is for you".  

The story, as most commentators point out, reflects difficulties, perhaps controversies in the early Church. In Luke, the story is preceded by a discussion among the disciples to know who is the greatest. Whether this happened during Jesus' lifetime or not matters even less. What counts and definitively betrays the spirit of Jesus is his banishment of hierarchy and exclusivism from his disciples. The greatest will have to be the least and the master will have to be the servant. Only integrity which is judged from the "fruits" should regulate the relation among brothers. Paul spells it fiercely in his own words: "for freedom Christ has set us free". Indeed, freed from the yoke of slavery, and this is not a word with only a symbolic meaning for Africa, no Christian should be enslaved to anything other than Christ. With Paul explicating Jesus' words and deeds, the relation among Christian communities or Churches cannot be patterned on "either/or"; using a vivid and theologically bearing image of the time, Paul states: "neither circumcision nor

74 Luke 9:49-50. See the parallel in Mark 9:38-41. The context of Luke 11:23 and Matthew 12:30 shows that those who were against Jesus were not acting in his name out of the group of the disciples but, were people opposing his mission. Only in Acts 19:13-16 do we find people acting in the name of Jesus and Paul being disowned. John has the story of John the Baptist's testimony on the report that Jesus was now baptising and everyone was going to him (John 3:22-30). For the Baptist, Jesus "must grow greater" and he, John, "must grow smaller" (John 13:30).


79 Galatians 5:1.
foreskin. Only a faith in action, distinctively characterized by labours of love and perseverance through hope rather than mere assent to dogma or scrupulous observance of rites, should testify to the unity of Christian communities.

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80 Galatians 5:6.

81 A more synthetic expression would be "faith active in love".

82 See 1 Thessalonians 1:3.
Ch. 3 - Margin of Credibility: Jesus, Son of God and God.

La règle ici proposée invite à tout ramener à ce qui se passe parmi les hommes qui parlent, désirent, souffrent et meurent, s'opposent ou coopèrent et en cela réalisent leur destinée et leur être définitif. Ainsi fait l'historicisation.

Eboussi Boulaga

Introduction

The first two chapters of this third part of the dissertation have in turn taken up the foundation of Eboussi's thought and its immediate consequence for both African and Christian traditions. The present chapter, the last of our critical evaluation, exclusively focuses on Christ, the ultimate sign of contradiction characterized by Paul as "a stumbling block to Jews and a foolishness to Gentiles" and, we should add, the most sensitive and divisive issue for Christians.

1 Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 191: "The rule which is now proposed compels us to measure up everything to what is ongoing among human beings who speak, desire, suffer and die, who oppose each other or cooperate and, in doing so, fulfill their destiny and final being". [CWF, 197].

2 1 Corinthians 1:23

3 The conflict of interpretation over the person of Jesus Christ and the meaning of his work has been a major and decisive argument in Eboussi's deliberate choice for interpreting Christianity only from within the Jewish experience of the Second Temple. See, Eboussi Boulaga, "Christianisme comme Maladie et comme Guérison", pp. 127-129. Recent scholarship has shown that there is not just one single understanding of Jesus, right from his own days (cf. Mark 8:27-29), throughout the early communities (cf. R. Brown, The Churches The Apostles Left Behind, New York: Paulist Press, 1984), the Fathers of the Church (cf. A. Grillmeier, Le Christ dans la tradition chrétienne. De l'âge apostolique à Chalcédoine, Paris: Cerf, 1973), the early Councils [Nicaea I/325 to Constantinople III/680-681] (cf. P. Smulders, "Développement de la christologie dans le dogme et le magistère" in Mysterium Salutis, t.10., Paris: Cerf, 1974, pp. 237-347), up to the present day (cf. B. Sesboüe, "Le Procès de Chalcédoine. Bilan et
Indeed, more than any other aspects of the Christic Model, the status of Christ in Eboussi's reappropriation has captured the attention of his critics. Two of them, namely, Metena N'nteba⁴ and Gustave Martelet⁵, are called upon to frame the problem at stake in this chapter. Their analyses and criticism coupled with what we now know of Eboussi's perspective, will be the basis of our own further considerations.

A - "Jesus Christ Is Not Simply God..."

Metena presents Eboussi's approach to Christianity as the most articulate and systematic representative of the "two major orientations which... characterize inculturation in Africa."⁶ Eboussi who advocated the renunciation of "adaptation", "indigenization" and "inculturation" should be surprised to find himself leading one of the trends of inculturation⁷. But, before any further explication of Metena's view on Eboussi, it is worth noting what the other orientation perspectives" in Recherches des Sciences Religieuses 65 (1977) 45-80).


⁶ "Inculturation in the 'Third Church': God's Pentecost or Cultural Revenge?" in Towards the African Synod, p. 132.

⁷ In a recent interview, Eboussi made clear his view on inculturation. To the question "Croyez-vous à une inculturation vraiment harmonieuse?", he answered: "Personnellement, je n'emploie pas le mot. Ceux qui ont lu mes ouvrages savent que l'inculturation passe pour moi par la prise en charge de soi-même qui ne peut déboucher que sur l'inventivité la plus totale, que sur la perennisation sur un mode complètement transfiguré de ce qui nous lie au passé, de ce qu'on appelle notre culture." (Horizons Africains # 473, pp. 52-53).
stands for. Its typical representative is Mgr. Anselme T. Sanon. A twofold activity, according to Metena, characterized Mgr. Sanon and his disciples' approach to inculturation. The first is "hermeneutical", and it consists in "transposing the essential emphases of Christianity into an African name and an African face", while the second, more "cathartic", consists in the "purification of African culture under the irradiating effect of 'the light of revelation'." Metena's presentation is straightforward, simplistic enough to foster a long and vigorous critique well summed up by the metaphor of "theological plastic surgery".

No doubt, Metena's short contribution to a collection of articles prepared in view of the Synod on Africa could only offer a sketch of a complex endeavour which constitutes the various approaches to inculturation. Still, it remains important to note that one can hardly identify without great simplification Mgr. Sanon's perspective of inculturation with, for example, that of Charles Nyamiti. In effect, if with Nyamiti, the aim, the procedure as well as the normative principle

8 "Inculturation in the 'Third Church'", p. 132.
9 "Inculturation in the 'Third Church'", p. 132.
10 "Inculturation in the 'Third Church'", p. 132.
11 "Inculturation in the 'Third Church'", p. 135.
13 Sanon first presented his views in his doctoral dissertation in Paris; see, Tierce Eglise, Ma Mère, ou la conversion d'une communauté païenne au Christ (Paris: Beauchesne, 1970). The same views have been reformulated in Enraciner l'évangile: initiation africaine et pédagogie de la foi (Paris: Cerf, 1982).
14 See Ch. Nyamiti, "My Approach to African Theology" in African Christian Studies 7/4 (1991) 35-53. We do not intend to present a full study of Nyamiti or Sanon's thought. The focus of this chapter is entirely on Eboussi. So, this note and the following ones are reminders of the complexity of African approaches to theology.
15 According to Nyamiti, inculturation is not "a new Christian teaching resulting from a sort of combination with African religious or cultural elements (as is found e.g. in the so-called African Independent Churches). But it is the very self-same Catholic teaching (without any addition or subtraction to its content of faith) but presented in accordance with African needs and way of thinking. Hence its originality will not consist in the content of faith, but in the manner of presentation, interpretation and
of inculturation are clear and distinctly established. With Sanon, the aim is more fluid because it is a reclaiming of "worldviews". Precisely because of this shift of perspective, what is at stake is not so much that of understanding Christian mysteries as that of Africans living these mysteries. It follows that the procedure of inculturation is "comprehensive" even if the normative principle remains Christian revelation. Even with Barthélémy Adoukonou and his essential focus on the religious aspect of African culture, inculturation takes a different path which cannot be reduced to formulation of that very same faith." (Ch. Nyamiti, "My Approach to African Theology" in African Christian Studies 7/4 (1991), p. 38).

16 "I start by choosing the Christian mystery or topic as subject of my study. After... I try to find out the appropriate African cultural item or theme which can be employed for theological elaboration of the Christian mystery... The next step I undertake is theological reflection... I try to bring about what I have called intrinsic employment of cultural themes in theology... Such employment of cultural themes involves two main processes: a) identification of such themes with Christian mysteries, b) explication of the implications involved in such identification." ("My Approach to African Theology", p. 43).

17 "See, Ch. Nyamiti, "A Critical Assessment On Some Issues In Today's African Theology" in African Christian Studies 5/1 (1989), p. 10: "As an agent of purification, transformation and ennobling of the African religions and cultures, Christianity considers itself superior to African religions and cultures. It is these latter that have to find their fulfilment in Christianity, and not the other way round."

18 In Sanon's writings, the quest of an African theology is the fruit of an experience by African converts who discover in their new faith cultural and cultic elements which do not necessarily belong to the "deposit of faith": "Le converti accédant à la foi chrétienne nouvelle rompt foncièrement avec la tradition comme fait culturel et religieux; or, à l'intérieur de sa foi nouvelle, il retrouve d'autres éléments culturels (qui sont liés à la foi de l’évangélisateur): cette constatation devrait l'inviter à réfléchir sur sa propre culture en fonction de sa foi nouvelle." (Enraciner l'Evangile, pp. 133-134.)

19 For Sanon it is the totality of what constitutes him as an African, i.e. traditional initiation that should be the starting point of his dialogue with Christian faith: "Je ne puis être pleinement fils de l'Eglise qu'à partir de ce que je suis, fils de l'initiation." (Enraciner l'Evangile, p. 140).

20 "Lire ou relire l'initiation traditionnelle à la lumière nouvelle qui la surprend, la provoque et la convie à aller plus loin, à rendre compte de ce qui lui avait été confié, de ceux qui lui avaient été confiés." (Enraciner l'Evangile, p. 205).


22 With Adoukonou, every religion including African religions are simply called to let themselves be judged by the cross of Christ, if indeed their ultimate formal common ground is God: "... parce que la Vérité est une, le critère de vérité et la méthode théologiques ne devraient pas différer par rapport à ceux de
Mgr. Sanon's. So, the theological trend of inculturation needs not to be reduced, methodologically, to Mgr Sanon's perspective. Besides, Eboussi himself had dismissed the trend as permanently at risk of "bad faith, amusement and diversion"; and thus, he cannot be counted among theologians of such an orientation.

Nevertheless, Metena is right in pointing out that Eboussi's approach to the question of Christianity in Africa constitutes a distinctive orientation. This we have tried to make manifest by exploring both the foundation of Eboussi's thought and its articulation in the Christic model. At this stage of our reflection, the question is not Metena's presentation of the Christic model but his objection to and critique of Eboussi's Christ. Indeed, as Metena put it: "Eboussi's Christic model evacuates the divine pre-existence of Christ in the very act of affirming his possible divinity." Metena came to this conclusion from a linguistic analysis of the following "propositions" taken from Eboussi's *Christianisme sans fétiche*: "Jesus Christ is not just simply God. He is son of the Mother, son of man before being Son of the Father or Son of God. For us he is the figure of fulfilled humanity." To make his point, Metena broke these propositions into three parts. Thus:

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l'histoire des religions. Le point de vue formel qui relie toutes les religions est celui de Dieu." (Jalons pour une Théologie Africaine, t.1., p. 73).

23 See, *Christianisme sans fétiche*, p. 186; for a full quotation, see Part II Chapter 4, footnote # 2.

24 Metena N'teba, "Inculturation in the 'Third Church'", p. 138.

25 "Jésus-Christ n'est pas tout simplement Dieu. Il est fils de la Mère, fils de l'homme, avant d'être Fils du Père ou Fils de Dieu. Il est pour nous la figure de l'humanité accomplie." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 141). It is important to keep this French original in view. We will first follow Metena in his argumentation which started as an analysis of the structure of these propositions and ended as a judgement on their contents.

26 (P1) corresponds to preposition #1; (P2) to proposition #2; and (P3) to preposition #3. It should be noted that proposition #2 is itself divided into two: (P2') and (P'2).
1. Jesus Christ is not just simply God  

2. He is
   - son of the Mother (P'2)
   - son of man
   before being
   - Son of the Father (P''2)
   or
   - Son of God.

3. For us he is the figure of fulfilled humanity

According to Metena, "all of Eboussi's thought evidently comes into play in the proposition (P2), which condenses the major thesis of his christology." In effect in the play with "parallelism and homonomy" (son of the Mother/son of man - Son of the Father/Son of God) Metena sees ultimately a "clash" subtly hidden in the typography (son - Son) but revealed by the logical construction of the proposition. Indeed, "for Eboussi, says Metena, only the attributes relative to human generation [son of the Mother/son of man], i.e. the predicates of type (s), are quidditatively applicable to Jesus. Those of type (S) only 'suit' him once the existential priority of the former has been posited." Having said so, it becomes obvious that the status of the divinity of Eboussi's Christ is problematic. So, Metena's later attempt to exonerate Eboussi from "adoptionism or Arianism" is hardly convincing. What was important, a point made by Metena, is the fact that

27 Metena N'teba, "Inculturation in the 'Third Church'", p. 136.

28 (s) is for son with small s, i.e. son of the Mother and son of man.

29 (S) is for Son with capital s, i.e. Son of the Father and Son of God.

30 Metena N'teba, "Inculturation in the 'Third Church'", p. 137.

31 He wrote, "In fact Eboussi, who is far too intelligent to fall into adoptionism or Arianism, exiles the Christ into a transcendence which removes him from all domestication and all ideological recycling." ("Inculturation in the 'Third Church'", p. 138).
Eboussi's approach, in spite of the fascination of the Christic model, "cools down the spontaneous enthusiasm of faith and the unconditional adherence to dogmatic statements."\(^{32}\)

That Eboussi's approach has a disturbing side to anyone who takes "dogmatic statements" as essential or absolute is obvious from the opening sentence of his presentation of the Christic model: "To emerge from alienated belief is to experience the transfiguring power of Christ prior to dogmas."\(^{33}\) Perhaps one need not engage in a complex linguistic analysis to realize that Eboussi's chief concern is related to his initial quest to get beyond an encounter where Africans were defeated and subjected to Western domination.\(^{34}\) Indeed, when Eboussi invoked the "classical" teaching on God's transcendence to charge that fixing God's Revelation in Israel's history or in the life of Jesus was fetishism,\(^{35}\) he was not only rejecting that there could be any historical "proof" or "material signs" of the Deity\(^{36}\); more importantly, he was also, and perhaps primarily, positing a strategic principle\(^{37}\) which would exclude any possible sectarian, imperialistic or political control

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\(^{32}\) Metena N'teba, "Inculturation in the 'Third Church'", p. 135.

\(^{33}\) The original French metaphor of stream has a more vivid connotation of "before" or "ahead of": "Sortir de la croyance aliénée, c'est éprouver la puissance transfigurante du Christ comme en amont des dogmes." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 87). The English translation Christianity without Fetishes, p. 85 kept the metaphor but the reading is not clear.

\(^{34}\) In an interview in Ivoire Dimanche # 681 (26 fev. 1984), p. 22, he was asked to summarize his books. The answer reflects this sense of being caught in one's own thought: "La crise du Muntu et Christianisme sans fétiche se prêtent mal au résumé. Car ils visent moins à livrer une information et à défendre des thèses qu'à faire faire l'expérience d'une pensée qui se déroule d'elle-même à elle-même et qui défait patiemment les noeuds dans lesquels elle s'est empêtrée elle-même."

\(^{35}\) "Pourquoi en effet pense-t-on échapper au positivisme ou fétichisme de la Révélation en fixant la manifestation de Dieu, non dans un morceau de bois, mais dans une tranche de temps - deux mille ans, trente ans?" (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 17).

\(^{36}\) See, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 127: "... il n'y a pas de preuve ni de signes matériels du surnaturel" possibles."

\(^{37}\) Speaking of "African spirituality" Eboussi insinuated the following remark which shed light on the idea of "strategic principle": "La spiritualité africaine ne va pas de soi ni sans dire. Le dire actif d'un sujet vivant et situé fait partie de son contenu et de sa réalité... Le discours peut devenir la stratégie de la résistance au second degré. Il est alors le langage de pratiques réflexes." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 80).
So, what Eboussi was battling with is the "symbolic domination" resulting from a particular community claiming to have a "divine meaning" of the totality of history and people's lives in a self-manifestation of God. The idea of "incarnation" becomes in itself a stumbling block for Eboussi because it bears seeds of domination. Eboussi did not dare to directly reject the belief in incarnation. Essentially, he challenged the idea of revelation on which it is founded by calling upon a well accepted teaching, that God is incommensurable to history or any historical event or reality. With this remark, we can now come back to Metena's critique of Eboussi.

First of all, it has to be noted that Metena forces upon the Christic model a dogmatic perspective which Eboussi deliberately and very clearly set aside. Indeed, the Christic model intends to be an experience of the power of Christ "en amont des dogmes" ("prior to dogmas"). In effect, in this perspective, the initial experience of Christ hardly started with the confession of a "pre-existent" Christ. "The resurrection is the point of departure for this understanding. The end is the beginning. The apostolic preaching proceeds from «the events of these days» (Acts 3:24), Jesus' death and glorification, that is, his definitive being. From here one can return to Jesus' public life, even to his hidden life and the mysteries of his origin." So, Metena's legitimate concern about the

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39 "Dès lors que Dieu est «intervenu» dans le monde, l'institution qui revendique d'être son «lieutenant», sa présence en différé, s'octroiera des droits divins. Quand Dieu s'«incarne», il assume l'histoire et la culture dans lesquelles il entre et leur confère, en raison de sa personne et en celle-ci, une nature et un fondement divin." (Christianisme sans fétiches, p. 16).

40 "Les potentialités impérialistes, totalitaires et sectaires de la doctrine de l'Incarnation reçoivent leur plein développement dans des situations de dépendance et de l'exploitation religieuse de la misère humaine." (Christianisme sans fétiches, p. 16).

41 *Christianity without Fetishes*, p. 127. This text is important for anyone who wants to understand Eboussi's position on dogmas. The mysteries of Jesus' origin formulated in dogmatic statement are not historically the starting point of the confession of faith, just as they are not its end as far as Christian
"divine pre-existence" of Christ was simply not the primary or central concern of Eboussi. Eboussi's perspective, one may say, is that which gives priority to the historical process of our knowledge of Christ. In effect, prior to the proclamation of Christ as the pre-existent Word, there was the recognition of the crucified as risen Lord. Perhaps, even more than a priority of knowledge, Eboussi's perspective gives priority to our life in Christ. Indeed, as Christians, we primarily and truly relate to Jesus Christ not as the pre-existent Word, but because we experience that "the one who sanctifies, and the ones who are sanctified, are of the same stock." (Hebrews 2:11). In fact, the propositions quoted and analyzed by Metena appeared in the condition of possibility which renders the "Christic model" capable of being recaptured or reappropriated by Africans. In this perspective, the core of Eboussi's argument is the "quoad nos" of the person of Jesus, not what he is "in se".42

It is precisely Eboussi's focus on the quoad nos which should guide us in the interpretation of the proposition (P2): "He (Jesus Christ) is son of the Mother, son of man, before being Son of the Father or Son of God". It seems to me, from a close look at this proposition (P2), that we are most probably not in presence of two parallel phrases. Indeed, if "Son of God" and "Son of the Father" are co-ordinated by a conjunction (or) which indicates choice, "son of man" and "son of the Mother" stand in grammatical apposition43. In effect, if grammatically "son of man" can replace "son of the Mother" because the construction is "nonrestrictive"44, it nevertheless adds explanatory existence is concerned in daily life.

42 "Jésus ne se substitue pas à Dieu... Le maintien de cette différence entre Jésus et Dieu ou de cette identification de Jésus avec Dieu comme processus "quoad nos" est nécessaire au sens de Dieu." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 142).

43 Apposition is "a grammatical construction in which two typically adjacent nouns referring to the same person or thing stand in the same syntactical relation to the rest of the sentence." ("Apposition" in Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield: G.& C. Merriam Company, 1967). From the original French version, it is unlikely that this sentence could be the case a "coordination" with the conjunction (et/and) not expressed.

44 It means "son of man" does not limit the main idea conveyed in the sentence by "son of the Mother".
information which clarifies the meaning of "son of the Mother". However, because of the co-ordinating conjunction (or), in the case of "Son of God" and "Son of the Father" we are in the presence of two distinct phrases of equal importance, and of the same meaning. "God" and "Father" are interchangeable in this context. So, the proposition retains its full meaning if it is read: 1) "Jesus Christ is son of the Mother, son of man, before being son of the Father"; or, 2) "Jesus Christ is son of the Mother, son of man, before being son of God". If we remove "son of man", the meaning remains; we only lack a specification which dispels the ambiguity of "Mother" written with capital letter ("M").

Having given little attention to this "Mother", Metena has focussed on the identity of the "son/Son" from the "Father" or "God"'s perspective, and not on that of the "Mother" as Eboussi was trying to do. The "Mother" in question is the "Mother" which pervades the history of religion: the "Cosmic Mother", the "Mother of Vegetation" or "Virgin-Mother", and the "Mother of the Hero". What all these archetypes have in common is that they enact the mystery of "birth" and "death", the triumph of "life" over "death". The essential "message" of the myth of the Cosmic Mother is that living has its beginning and its end in the living. Life overflows human existence which itself is not necessary for the emergence of life. What does this entail? That the son of the cosmic Mother is not determined by any tribal, ethnic, or family link. Applied to understanding Christ, it means that he is at the origin of a "fraternity which is beyond ethnic and genealogical

45 "L'histoire des religions offre abondamment le thème de la Vierge-Mère qui est identiquement celui de la Mère... La figure archétypale de la Mère est, comme on l'a dit plus haut, la matrice sans laquelle on ne saurait être et dont il faut cependant sortir pour vivre, avant d'y retourner «transfiguré», en traversant la mort." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 132). On an interpretation of incarnation from this perspective, see Eugen Drewermann, De la naissance des dieux à la naissance du Christ, trad. J. Feisthauer (Paris: Seuil, 1992); Drewermann's approach (too psychological) can be tempered and supplemented by the exegetical perspective of R. Brown, The Birth of the Messiah (Garden City: Doubleday, 1977).

46 "Le message est ici que le vivant sort du vivant et y retourne. L'homme n'est pas nécessaire pour produire la vie. Elle vient de plus loin, d'ailleurs." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 133).
ties." Now, human destiny is no longer determined by birth (black or white etc.) or by family status (rich or poor etc.) because, in the dynamic of the Christic model, human beings are not prisoners of human determinations. As a further consequence, for Eboussi, the cosmic Mother yields to an understanding of God which is beyond the category of "person".

As for the "Mother of Vegetation" and the "Mother of the Hero", the basic message is that, it is only in dying that one both comes to life and gives life to others. The son of the Mother of Vegetation is the one who, like a grain, has to die to self in order to produce a crop which will become bread for the multitudes, food for eternal life. In Eboussi's perspective, the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection should not lead to a doctrine of culpability, because eucharist can only be given with the cross, as life freely handed over for the coming God's kingdom, i.e. the beginning of a new relation among human beings, the breaking in of the new heaven and new earth, life where elements of death are no more.

With the "mother of the Hero", the dimension of "being-for-others" is accentuated. It is precisely in the context of the presentation of the Mother of the Hero that the preposition analysed by Metena appeared. The identity of the hero yields to the affirmation that "Jesus Christ is not just

47 "Une fraternité au-delà de l'ethnie et des liens généalogiques" (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 133).

48 See, Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 138.

49 "La Mère cosmique nous contraint à dépasser le "personnalisme" comme représentation absolue de dieu. En un sens, il est impersonnel, au-delà de la personne et du monde qu'il fonde, qu'il crée, en se retirant." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 140). On the insufficiency of the category of "person", especially regarding the definition of Chalcedon, see Bernard Sesboüé, "Le Procès de Chalcédoine. Bilan et Perspective." Recherche des Sciences Religieuses 65 (1977) 45-80.

50 See, John 12:24: "I tell you, most solemnly, unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest."

51 See, John 6. (Discourse on the bread of life)

52 See, Christianisme sans fétiche, pp. 140-141.
simply God”. Metena certainly has the right to raise the dogmatic question regarding the divine pre-existence status of Jesus Christ in Eboussi’s thought. Yet, the "quoad nos" which Eboussi was trying to bring to the front through the metaphors of the myths of the "Mother" does not negate the divinity of Christ. Without forcing the argumentation, it seems that we have the major components of the Chalcedon debate in Eboussi’s "formula":\footnote{Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 141: "Jesus-Christ is not just simply God. He is son of the Mother, son of man, before being Son of the Father or Son of God."} Jésus-Christ n'est pas tout simplement Dieu. Il est fils de la Mère, fils de l'homme, avant d'être Fils du Père ou Fils de Dieu. Il est pour nous la figure de l'humanité accomplie.\footnote{The idea of "son of man" does not appear in Chalcedon. However, the sentence: "and in the latter days for us and for our salvation was born as to His humanity from Mary the Virgin Mother of God", comes close to the idea of "son of the Mother". It is important to note that the humanity of Jesus Christ stands in tight correlation with the "for us and our salvation".} The first proposition: Jésus-Christ n'est pas tout simplement Dieu is in agreement with Chalcedon. Indeed, Jesus Christ is not simply God: he is truly God and truly man. The second proposition: Il est fils de la Mère, fils de l'homme, avant d'être Fils du Père ou Fils de Dieu forcefully brings his humanity to the front while recognizing his divinity. Here Eboussi assigns a priority to the humanity where Chalcedon simply juxtaposes humanity and divinity. The third and last proposition of Eboussi: Il est pour nous la figure de l'humanité accomplie offers Eboussi’s motives for assigning priority to the humanity, i.e. the quoad nos. The appeal to myths to foster our understanding of the mystery of Christ is not in contradiction or opposition with the logos' perspective as Gustave Martelet tends to suggest by challenging Eboussi’s elaboration from the perspective of "muthos-logos".\footnote{G. Martelet, "Singularité des cultures et universalité du Christ" in Inculturation et Conversion, ed. J. Ndi Okalla (Paris: Karthala, 1994), 115-136.}
According to Martelet, if there had been some "confusion" in missionary activity and excesses in its evaluation, there is also a "reduction" in some reinterpretations of Christianity in Africa which runs the danger of distorting or falsifying the "transcultural character of the Message". One of the reinterpretations in question here is that of Eboussi. Indeed, Martelet starts his critical assessment of this attempt with Metena's analysis of "Jesus Christ is not just simply God..." But, unlike Metena, Martelet decided to take the bull by the horns and supposed that Eboussi's deepest thought is: "Jesus Christ is just simply not God." What is at stake, according to Martelet, is the divinity of Christ; or perhaps more subtly, with the affirmation of the divinity comes the "transcultural character of his Message", i.e. its irreducibility to any particular culture. In line with is supposition, Martelet went further by suspecting Eboussi's interpretation of the "Mother" as an attempt to deny the "virgin conception of Jesus". Indeed, for Martelet, it is not the 57

"Sans minimiser jamais la générosité dont firent preuve tant d'hommes et tant de femmes, on peut regretter que l'effort missionnaire du XIXe siècle n'ait pas été plus lucide sur la confusion inconsciemment opérée entre culture européenne et message chrétien." ("Singularité des cultures", p. 121). Italics are mine. Martelet may be right when he repeatedly says that, "l'inconscient culturel... a commandé la confusion" (ibid., p. 122). We have seen with F. de Medeiros, L'Ocident et l'Afrique, that long before the nineteenth century, the collective imagination of the West was fertile when dealing with Africa. One can only hope that this is not and should not be an excuse to exempt missionaries from being responsible people.

58 There are two excesses, perhaps one could say errors in judgement: the first consists in saying that Africa has not been really evangelized. According to Martelet, "quelles que soient donc les critiques que mérite l'Eglise d'Occident dans son œuvre d'évangélisation, elle a été apostolique au grand sens du mot et en dépit des obstacles historiques et culturels qu'elle a pu mettre à l'action de l'Esprit." ("Singularité des cultures", p. 117). The second error in judgment is founded in an illusion, that of a "pure Christianity". Indeed, there could never be a pure Christianity. The critique of the illusion of a pure Christianity seems to become a frequent Western argument to counteract the claim that in the mission, Christianity needs to be "de-Westernized"; see, Johann-Baptist Metz, "Unity and Diversity: Problems and Prospects for Inculturation" in Concilium 204/4 (1989), p. 81; and, J. Ratzinger, "Christ, Faith and the Challenge of Culture" in Origins 24/41 (1995) 679-686.

59 «Jésus-Christ n'est pas tout simplement Dieu. Il est fils de la Mère, fils de l'homme, avant d'être Fils du Père ou Fils de Dieu» is this sentence of Eboussi on which Metena bases his critique. Now, here is Martelet's starting point: "Supposons que cette seconde alternative: «Jésus tout simplement n'est pas Dieu», exprime le fond du fond d'une telle pensée, et essayons de nous libérer d'une étreinte négative à laquelle plus d'un semble ne pas savoir comment s'arracher." ("Singularité des cultures", p. 126).
humanity of Christ which is at stake in the "virginal conception" but his divinity.60

So, the status of Christ, his divinity or, more precisely, his pre-existence is once again at the heart of the questions raised over Eboussi's Christic model. What appears interesting with Martelet is that the need to assert the divine pre-existence of Christ is not simply intended to preserve a dogmatic affirmation, but to save that which makes possible the "universality of Christ"61, i.e. Christ's pre-existence. Martelet thinks that Eboussi, by downplaying the divinity of Christ, was basically rejecting the Western "conceptualization" (logos) to promote a more "symbolic approach" (muthos) more congenial to African cultures.62 So over against the pretention of the "logos" to determine everything through a clear and distinct conceptual frame, there is now the affirmation of a "muthos" which recognizes its own limits, i.e. its inability to apprehend the absolute. Indeed, "the interest of the muthos, is to stammer the unspeakable."63 Yet, according to Martelet, this turn to myths in order to free oneself from the "Europeans' logos"64 definitely reduces Christ to a product

60 According to Martelet, the virgin birth of Jesus is absolutely necessary for the confession of Jesus' divinity: "Ce n'est pas parce que la foi chrétienne aurait en horreur la sexualité qu'elle tient que Jésus est le propre Fils de Dieu dans la chair. Fils de Joseph au sens génital du mot, il ne serait qu'un homme adopté par Dieu." ("Singularité des cultures", p. 127). Martelet's argument is a bit weak. Indeed, ancient Egypt already knew the idea of the virgin birth as a way to affirm the divine nature of a king, or the divine essence of a man invested with royalty; see,, Eugen Drewermann, De la naissance des dieux, p. 37. So, the recourse to myth is not fundamentally against Mary's virginity. There is more in Jesus divinity than Joseph not having intercourse with Mary. See also, R. Brown, The Birth of the Messiah (New Updated ed. New York: Doubleday, 1993), especially, Appendix IV. A - Historicity of the Virgin Conception, pp. 697-708.

61 "...de toute evidence chrétienne, cette divinité du Christ n'est pas une surimposition dogmatique dont un esprit culturellement averti ne peut que, sans regret, se libérer; elle relève, tout au contraire, de ce qu'il nous faut bien appeler la transculturalité du Message." ("Singularité des cultures", p. 129).

62 "C'est donc le muthos qui semble revendiquer la relève du logos dans le service culturel de la foi; c'est par lui, pense-t-on, que sera fait droit à l'africanité traditionnelle lésé par l'impérialisme rationnel du dogme arbitrairement occidentalisé." ("Singularité des cultures", p. 130).

63 "L'intérêt du muthos c'est de balbutier l'indicible." ("Singularité des cultures", p. 131).

64 "Singularité des cultures", p. 133.
of a culture, a human affair.\textsuperscript{65}

Martelet has developed a remarkable presentation of the narrow, human, and as such finite, horizon of the cultural problematic as he correlates it with the problematic of myth.\textsuperscript{66} But the result of his argument is less impressive. In effect, it was an easy way out from Eboussi's problematic to presume that he negates the divinity, that is the divine pre-existence of Christ.\textsuperscript{67} In Martelet's view, the reference to Christ in the Christic model simply disguised a human project, a product of human finitude, one doomed to death. However, by following on this track, Martelet seems to have fallen into his own trap because he felt compelled to acknowledge that the "logos" is after all a human construct.\textsuperscript{68} "Muthos" and "logos" are two types of the one and the same human finitude. Martelet hardly tells us whether this formal identification of the "logos" to "muthos" is only valid when the divinity of Christ is negated.\textsuperscript{69} If not, then, what was at stake is not so much the fundamental finitude of "muthos" or "logos" as human expression, but the transcultural value which the

\textsuperscript{65} For this we just give a series of quotations taken from "Singularité des cultures": "le mythe est un effort de l'homme pris dans sa propre contingence..." (p. 132); "le mythe est une composante de l'anthropologie. Il surgin dans l'homme comme une réponse inchoative à des questions de finitude sur lui-même, sur le monde, sur «Dieu»" (p. 132); "la réponse donnée par la culture à une telle situation demeure entièrement cernée par la nature, contresignée qu'elle est par la mortalité" (p. 133).

\textsuperscript{66} "On voit dès lors comment le mythe est une des modalités fondamentales et fondatrices de la culture. En effet qu'est la culture sinon l'acte par lequel le seul interrogateur patenté de ce monde qu'est l'homme élabore les significations qui répondent à ses inépuisables questions?" ("Singularité des cultures", p. 132).

\textsuperscript{67} "Le prologue de saint Jean ne dit pas qu'en Jésus «la chair est devenue Dieu» mais que «le Verbe s'est fait chair»... Le nier, si l'on voit vraiment ce que parler veut dire, c'est nier l'identité divine du Christ dès son humaine conception." ("Singularité des cultures", p. 127).

\textsuperscript{68} "Si différente qu'il soit du muthos dans sa structure, le logos est lui aussi et tout d'abord une manière dont l'homme essaye de répondre par concept, et non plus simplement par symbole, aux questions que le fait d'exister dans le monde lui pose." ("Singularité des cultures", p. 132).

\textsuperscript{69} The question comes to mind because in his article, Martelet has a section on liberal theology with the following remark: "Sous deux formes différentes, Jésus de l'histoire et Christ de la foi, «Evangelium Christi» et «Evangelium de Christo», se retrouve la même attitude d'esprit que dans la négation de la conception virginale. Dans cette double rupture ou cette négation, il s'agit du refus de la divinité historique du Christ..." ("Singularité des cultures", p. 129).
affirmation of Christ's divinity gives the Christian Message. Given that for Martelet the "logos" is characteristic of European cultures and the "muthos" of the African (and other third world countries!), we find ourselves confronted once again with a crucial dimension of Eboussi's interrogation: the relation between human beings and their communities. It was to avoid any type of domination resulting from one claim of normativity over the other that Eboussi presents the Christic model.

Furthermore, for Eboussi there is no conflictual perspective between "muthos" and "logos". Martelet probably has little or no knowledge of Eboussi's dissertation in philosophy on the relation between "myth" and "dialogue" in the works of Plato.70 Eboussi's thesis is that "myth and dialogue are two forms or modalities of one and the same reality: language or discourse."71 Moreover, "without dialogue, myth, at least in Plato, is dumb, unarticulated, unformed."72 Consequently "without myth, dialogue is hollow and uninteresting or meaningless."73 Through these propositions, Eboussi intends to go beyond those who deny any value or truth to myth and, those who only concede partial truth value to myth, as well as those who fully contend that myth has an irreducible value of truth.74 Indeed, as he noted, in Plato's writings where myth and dialogue are at play, "myth" only appears in "dialogue", both forming a system in what Eboussi called "un procès de parole"75. In this interplay of "myth" and "dialogue", what appears fundamental and most


71 Note de Synthèse, p. 6.

72 Note de Synthèse, p. 6.

73 Note de Synthèse, p. 6.

74 See, Note de Synthèse, pp. 7-18.

75 "Mythe et dialogue ont ceci de commun, d'être une intrigue cognitive. Ils défont un noeud et déploie une réponse à une question implicite ou explicite. En bref, ils sont symboliques, discursifs et performatifs. Les différences partent de ce que mythe et dialogue ont d'identique. Ils sont un procès de
essential is the position of "subject(s)" in their relations.\textsuperscript{76} At the heart of any human language and discourse is the subject in relation with another subject. Truth for Eboussi results from this open communication.\textsuperscript{77}

It is within the matrix of human finitude and its quest for truth or meaning that the Message of the "\textit{Kurios}" has to resonate, and indeed has resonated: "the Word was made flesh and he pitched his tent among us."\textsuperscript{78} As paradoxical as it may be, it takes both the "muthos" and the "logos" to understand and welcome the unexpected, i.e. "things that no eye has seen and no ear has heard, things beyond the mind of man."\textsuperscript{79} In effect, as far as human existence is concerned, there could be no disqualification of both "muthos" and "logos" in bringing to expression the experience and understanding of God. The real question is how do we go "beyond" them. The confession of faith\textsuperscript{80} is not enough to eliminate the fact that the \textit{Kurios}, in his glory, has not simply abandoned like a garment his human historical experience among us.\textsuperscript{81} The paradox has to be maintained.

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\textsuperscript{76} "Mais le point focal de toutes les différences réside dans le champ positionnel du sujet par rapport au procès de parole qu'il assume. Qu'est-ce à dire? Le dialogue est la production de deux individus au moins ou du dédoublement d'un seul prenant tour à tour la place de celui qui interroge et de celui qui répond. \textit{Chacun est la spontanéité d'où vient ce qu'il dit; il en a l'initiative et la responsabilité... Il est au principe, au milieu et à la fin de son discours.}" (Note de Synthèse, p. 21). Italics are mine.

\textsuperscript{77} "L'important à souligner est la relation d'un destinataire à un destinataire, d'un \textit{je} à un \textit{tu}, leur réversibilité, leur coréférence à un \textit{il}, comme régulateur et mesure du procès de parole, leur oeuvre commune. La vérité est le résultat de cette concertation, la lumière ou l'énergie qui jaillit de ce courant alternatif." (Note de Synthèse, p. 22).

\textsuperscript{78} John 1:14

\textsuperscript{79} 1 Corinthians 2:9

\textsuperscript{80} See, "Singularité des cultures", pp. 134-135: "Informés par la révélation à laquelle nous donnons notre foi, nous déclarons qu'un tel événement, survenu dans le Christ et fondant la promesse de sa répercussion finale en nous, n'a rien à voir avec les effets ou le message d'une culture."

\textsuperscript{81} The Risen Lord is the one and the same who was crucified, died and was buried. The agony on the cross and the three days in the tomb are not side events in his Lordship.
Christ's divinity, knows that he cannot get rid of its Jewish "muthos-logos" and, even some subsequent Western dogmatic reinterpretation. It seems easy to affirm that Christianity is not about a "doctrine" or a "system" but a "Person", Christ. One can even go further and state that He is the eternal Word made flesh, the Lord who now sits at the right hand of the Father. It becomes however more difficult when it comes to explaining this confession without being entangled in human language, trapped by a particular interplay of "muthos-logos".

C - Further Considerations

By forcing onto Eboussi a dogmatic question apart from which he sought to elaborate his re-appropriation of Christianity, Metena and Martelet bring to the centre-stage one of the most delicate and divisive issues in Christianity, the identity of Jesus Christ. In a sense, since the Arian

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82 "A travers la culture et le langage utilisés par le Christ et par les témoins qualifiés de son incarnation, celle-ci possède un caractère absolument original et entièrement privilégié de révélation... Aussi peut-on penser que les éléments culturels devenus porteurs de cette révélation y jouent un rôle de médiation et non d'obstacle." ("Singularité des cultures", p. 118).

83 See the unsuccessful attempts by contemporary theologians to overcome the "two natures" coming together in a "single person" and a "single subsistent being" of Chalcedon: B. Sesboüé, "Le Procès de Chalcedoine. Bilan et perspectives" in Recherche des Sciences Religieuses 65 (1977) 45-80.

84 See, "Singularité des cultures", p. 120.

85 From the Arian controversy (is Jesus really the real God? cf. Nicaea I - 325) up to the iconoclastic controversy (can Jesus really God be represented in icons? Nicaea II - 787), the fundamental issue was the identity of Christ. For more that 450 years of its history, Christianity had been confronted with the "christological problem" of the divinity of Christ. In Constantinople I (381) the question of the plural nature of divinity raised by the Sabellians, the Arians and Pneumatomachi will be at the heart of the assertion of the coetemity and consubstantiality of the Holy Spirit as correlated to that of the Jesus Christ. At Ephesus (431), behind the question of "Mary the Mother of God" stands the problem of the "communication of properties" in Jesus as God and man. Chalcedon (451) which finally defined the "real God and real man" in "two natures" and "one person" will not end the christological problem. Indeed, after Constantinople I (533) affirmed that in Jesus there is "one subject" and "two natures", Constantinople III (680-681) found itself confronted with the controversy around the "will" of Jesus: the council affirmed "two real wills", one divine and one human. Beginning with Lateran I (1123) the Church will be entangled in political and moral questions, thus the christological problem will recede into the background.
crisis has revealed that the Christian idea of God depends on the understanding of Christ, Christian theology is a Christology. So, in spite of Eboussi's will to retain an understanding of Christianity primarily in accordance with the Jewish experience during the Second Temple, he could not avoid a latent question of the confession of Jesus as Lord.

Behind the linguistic question ("Jesus Christ is not just simply God") raised by Metena, Martelet has grasped a more important problematic, namely, the condition for the possibility of the transcultural character of the Christian Message. Indeed, at stake in the divine pre-existence of Christ is the universality of the Christian Message. To further our consideration of this question of the divine pre-existence of Christ, we will anchor our reflection in the following point made by Eboussi:

The oldest preaching of the Church, as can be seen in the Letters of Paul and the Acts of the Apostles, begins with Jesus' baptism, with his public life. This is Mark's point of departure as well. The other evangelists have prologues: John on the preexistence of the Word, Matthew and Luke on Jesus' birth and childhood. It is generally admitted that these prologues were written in the light of the Paschal events, that they begin with the end, and intend to reveal Jesus' uniqueness from start to finish. He is a human being, but by no means like others; he is God and man, from the beginning. Even better, he is God before becoming a human being. Does this matter to us? Absolutely, we shall be told. Indeed, here we have, demonstrated, the basis of his salvific power: he is divine in his being. Indeed, God alone can forgive sins, create from nothing, and conquer death... Perhaps such assertions stand out, but they must be the expression of an act of faith, and not of an initial belief.86

86 Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 127.(My translation).
To make his point on the question of the divine preexistence of Christ, Eboussi set the theological argument upon the background of the result of historical critical studies of the New Testament. The rhetorical question: "Does this matter to us?" gives a false impression of continuity between the exegetical problematic and the theological position which follows. Its aim was to assert Eboussi's view that, between the initial belief (i.e. faith in the risen Lord) and the "expression" of that act of faith (i.e. articulating its content), there is a process. This process is precisely what historical and critical exegetical studies have shown. So, without denying bluntly the divine preexistence, Eboussi took the cover of historical studies to posit the confession of the divinity of Christ in the very dynamic of the development of the understanding of the disciples, i.e. as a result of the Paschal Events (Resurrection and Pentecost). For Africans, it means that in order to experience Christ and the power of his resurrection, the starting point cannot be dogmatic statements but the itinerary of the disciples who encountered Jesus, died to their own hope in order to receive as a grace the life of the risen Lord.

The theological argument which finds necessary for the efficiency of the "salvific power" that Christ should be the preexistent Word, is in fact reinterpreting for the sake of universality the early Church's interpretation of the uniqueness of the one who was raised from the dead. Indeed, it asserts Christ's divine preexistence as an intrinsic condition for the possibility of his Lordship where the early Christians finds in Christ's Lordship the possibility of the assertion of his preexistence. Subtly, we are brought back into the problem of the conflict of interpretations. The understanding of the "eternal Word" is only given in "history"; as such, even a theology of the "Word" is rooted in "history". It follows that the assertion or the confession of the divine

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87 In this Eboussi has the backing of the Biblical Commission, see J. Fitzmyer, "Biblical Commission's Instruction on Historical Truth of Gospels" in Theological Studies (1964) 386-408.


89 Martelet uses contemporary expressions like "universality" and "transcultural".
preexistence has never been and could not be in a vacuum. John who starts his Gospel with an unparalleled hymn to Christ's divinity⁹⁰ ends it with an emphasis which betrayed the frailty of any testimony, i.e. the need to be "received" by others. The assertion of the divine preexistence is a backup to the entire Message; indeed, only "from his fullness" do we receive "yes, grace in return for grace."⁹¹

During the Patristic period, the divine preexistence of Christ was an integral part of the understanding of the human condition in the light of creation. Human beings were said to be created in the "image and likeness" of God. In this case, God was the Father who created with Christ as the archetype.⁹² Martelet's position which links the "transcultural character of the Message" to the divine preexistence is itself a continuation of a reasoning developed during the Scholastic period. This argumentation is based on the premise that "salvation was impossible except through someone who was simultaneously true God and true man."⁹³ In this perspective, the focus is entirely on the "work of Christ"; as a consequence, the salvific power is seen less as an "act of the Father".

For us, the preceding remarks or observations are a warning against a hasty hunt for heretics. The recourse to the divine preexistence plays a different function according to the concern

⁹⁰ In the beginning was the Word:
the Word was with God
and the Word was God...
The Word was made flesh,
he pitched his tent among us,
and we saw his glory...
Indeed, from his fullness we have, all of us, received;
yes, grace in return for grace. (John 1:1.14.16)

⁹¹ John 1:16


of each period or situation. In Christian theology it is an essential element in a Trinitarian view of God, especially in the explanation of the "economy". Our confession of the Trinity on the other hand should not obliterate the fact that God remains "incomprehensible" even after the revelation of Christ. To say so should not be viewed as downplaying our belief that in these "last days, God has spoken to us through his Son, the Son that he has appointed to inherit everything and through whom he made everything there is." The divine preexistence of Christ, we know, helped the Fathers to explain creation; and, particularly, humanity created in the image and likeness of God. It had also served theologians to explain the act of redemption in Christ. Eboussi has strongly drawn our attention to the fact that it could also serve and, indeed, has served to assert both the uniqueness and the absoluteness of Christianity in such a way that there was no other alternative to non-Christian religious traditions but to assent or dissent from the Christian message. In effect, if Jesus Christ is indeed "true God from true God", in the presence of "other words", his manifestation can only be the unique appropriate Word expressing both God's will and act of salvation. This is a sound argument from human logic.

History however has taught us that the experience of those who came to believe in Jesus as Lord did not proceed straightforwardly from a logical construct. The last events which led to the resurrection experience were scandalous and foolishness as far as human understanding of God is concerned. Before the resurrection becomes the starting point of faith in the Lord, the agony in

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94 Some of the dogmatic writings on Trinity lack this humility which calls for caution in our statements on God. Karl Rahner held that, according to St Thomas, that even in the beatific vision God will remain "incomprehensible": "God always lies beyond the understanding of any finite created mind, even that of angels and of men in a state of ultimate fulfilment, and the created soul of the God-man." ("An Investigation of the Incomprehensibility of God in St. Thomas Aquinas" in Theological Investigations, vol. XVI, trans. D. Morland (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979), p. 244).

95 Hebrews 1:1-2

the garden and the death in total abandonment on the cross leaves little light, if any at all, for a sound human argument about divine preexistence. Hans Urs von Balthasar, who was struck by these events, has an interesting theological insight in line with our own reflection. With von Balthasar, we hold that "love alone" can explain this "dying away into silence" of the "Word" because the "hiatus" set forth by the terrible actuality of the second person of the Trinity being subject to the night of abandonment, baffles human intelligence and its understanding of God (or the divine). That the final word of God was given in the silent response of the Father to the dereliction of the Son on the cross, had forced Urs von Balthasar to posit the possibility of abandonment in the inner life of God.

All in all, it is perhaps in this silent abandonment that the real divinity of Christ is given. Among the evangelists, Mark stands alone in this line; in effect, unlike Matthew, Luke and


98 Mystery Paschale, p. 79.

99 "La Parole faite chair devient la Parole devenue muette en s'enfonçant dans l'abîme de la mort. Elle devient non-parole, puisque le dialogue avec le Père se brise et que dès lors tout dialogue avec les hommes devient impossible. Non-parole encore, parce qu'aucune parole articulée et intelligible ne peut projeter de lumière dans la profondeur de cet abandon. La parole est communication, et la conclusion de l'Alliance dans la nuit est rupture de toute communication..." (H. Urs von Balthasar, La Foi du Christ (Paris: Aubier, 1968), p. 94.

100 Urs von Balthasar's approach is still (and can only be) a human attempt to come to grip with the mystery of God. According to him, the "kenosis" of the Son has to be viewed in the larger perspective of the eternal "super-kenosis" of the Father: "We shall never know how to express the abyss-like depths of the Father's self-giving, that Father who, in an eternal «super-Kenosis», made himself «destitute» of all that he is and can be so as to bring forth a consubstantial divinity, the Son" (Mystery Paschale, p. viii [Preface to the 2nd edition]). As Wolfgang Treitler has noted, "the concept of kenosis has become the fulcrum of both the content and the form of theology for von Balthasar... The concept of kenosis is in this respect a total determination of God by means of which God can be approached in his infinite mystery as absolute love." (W. Treitler, "True Foundations of Authentic Theology" in Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work, ed. D.L. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), p. 171).

101 Matthew and Luke have infancy narratives which show that, from his conception, he has no human father: he is the Son of God.
John, he only had one confession of the "Sonship" of Christ by a human being; and, this happened only after his death, by a pagan. With Mark the evangelist, one needs not to be a Jew or to have followed Christ during his ministry or, even more, to have witnessed the resurrection in order to confess that he was indeed the Son of God.

Jesus, Son of God and God? The margin of credibility, as we can grasp from Eboussi's Christic model, is not so much the assertion of his divine preexistence as it is the process by which the assertion comes to be, as well as the type of human existence which the assertion fosters among peoples. Indeed, if the pagan centurion can confess the Sonship of Christ before the resurrection and without being his follower, and if, as Eboussi has pointed out, Paul's proclamation of the "kerygma" can lead to faith in Christ without any knowledge of the "infancy narrative" of Matthew and Luke and, the "prologue" of John, then the narrative of divine preexistence only testifies to what was essential: in Christ, God is among us. The "old world" can no longer continue without radical change. We have to die to ourselves and to the world in all its alienating powers in order

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102 Right from the prologue, John has been asserting the divinity of the eternal Word.

103 In Mark, the Sonship is introduced right from the beginning (1:1). It is confirmed by a voice from heaven at the baptism (1:11) and the transfiguration (9:7). If the "unclean spirits" expressly recognized him as "Son of God" (3:11), the only human witness is the pagan centurion (15:39). The idea of "Christ, the son of the Blessed One" in 14:61 drew hostile reaction. And, Peter at Caesarea Philippi (8:29) only recognized him as "Christ".

104 "But Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The centurion, who was standing in front of him, had seen how he had died, and said, 'In truth this man was a son of God'." (Mark 15:39).

105 "S'il est possible de donner foi en «Jésus Seigneur» et ressuscité avant d'entendre ces récits ou sans les avoir entendus comme les chrétiens pauliniens, il y a lieu de supposer qu'ils ne disent rien d'essentiel ou mieux qu'ils ne racontent que l'essentiel." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 127).

106 As we have already noted this call to radical change is at the heart of the Christic model. "Qu'on s'en félicite ou qu'on le déplore, Jésus appelle à la conversion et annonce quelque chose de radicalement différent qui met en cause la religion et le pouvoir liés au temple et à la caste sacerdotale, le principe ethnique et la sacralisation de la loi. Il introduit des germes «anarchie» en niant les couple antithétiques selon lesquels l'ordre social s'organise, se «hiérarchise»: riche-pauvre, grand-petit, honnête-malhonnête, savant-ignorant, homme-femme..." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 148).
to hasten the new heaven and new earth.

In a sense, what counts is not so much the status or identity of Christ. What counts is what God has done in Christ. If the two should not be totally dissociated, what God has done in Christ compels us (more than the identity of Christ) to respond (to God's acts for us and for our salvation) by an active engagement. It is only in this active response that one can come to the full meaning of God in Christ. "The good which God does to us can only be experienced as the truth if we share in performing it (Jn 7:17; 8:13f); we must «do the truth in love» (aletheuein en agape [Eph 4:15]) not only in order to perceive the truth of the good but, equally, in order to embody it increasingly in the world, thus leading the ambiguities of the world theatre beyond themselves to a singleness of meaning that can come only from God."107 To express it in Eboussi's terms, "what Christ does, each one of us must do it, from where he/she is, for his/her own tradition."108

The horizon which now appears for the confession of faith is not just simply that of an assertion, of a mere verbal statement of a dogmatic formulation, but a surrender of one's life and hope as a response to God's nearness manifested in Christ words and deeds. Indeed, the highest exercise of human freedom occurs when an individual-in-community comes to grasp the full extent of the meaning of the Christ event as becoming oneself in the very decision of surrendering one's life to God, i.e. receiving oneself (w)ho(l)iy from God. Truly, "to any who did accept him he gave the power to become children of God. These were begotten not by blood, nor by the urge of the flesh, nor man's will, but by God himself."109

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108 "Ce que Jésus fait, chacun doit l'accomplir du lieu où il se trouve, et pour sa propre tradition." (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 155).

Conclusion: African Metamorphoses

Africa is always producing something new

Eboussi Boulaga's attempt to recapture the meaning of Christianity from within Second Temple Judaism is most unusual. Indeed, he not only set the task of re-appropriation outside of the dogmatic articulation of the "big Church", but also and more importantly, he put the entire focus on the "subject" in contrast with the focus on "culture" by the advocates of "inculturation" or, on "poverty and exploitation" by the proponents of "liberation". This is something unusual in the field of "third world theologies" or more specifically in "African theologies". Paradoxically, neither has Eboussi's contribution to the problematic of Christianity in Africa ever come to the front, nor have his insight and method been considered for themselves. Our first task, and main contribution in this dissertation, has been to offer a systematic articulation of the Christic model as a consistent and challenging point of view rooted in an insight and cast in a perspective which can be fairly substantiated. Indeed, providing solid bases for the many assertions and presuppositions of Eboussi has also been part and parcel of our project.

(Paris: Cerf, 1980), note # q.).


2 Greek proverb cited by Frank M Snowden, Jr., Blacks in Antiquity, p. ix.
Our tacit contention, and perhaps the driving force of this dissertation, is our confidence that Eboussi's perspective recapitulates the deep quest of the African theological trends of inculturation and liberation. Indeed, the turn to the subject is a turn to that which is at the heart of the concern of inculturation and liberation, i.e. the African human being. With the turn to the subject unavoidably comes a shift in theological concerns. The problem is not precisely a confrontation with or an antagonism between cultures, namely Western and African cultures, as most problematics on inculturation often suggest. Indeed, like the gigantic battles in Chinese opera where no one is seriously hurt because no significant damage happened which would affect the life of the protagonists, present-day discussions on inculturation hardly bring about serious and significant changes in the relationship between Africa and the West. The "Third Church" is very much a "Tertiary Church".

Everyone knows what happens once it has been conceded that Christ can be presented as the "Ancestor", the "Healer", the "Initiator" etc. In the West, Africans will earnestly be reminded that the analogical perspective has to be constantly kept present, in order to avoid any reduction of the Christian "faith" and "mysteries" which have been faithfully preserved in the Western traditions for two thousand years. Moreover, Africans are called upon not to close themselves off to the challenges of the "modern world" with its technological consequences for faith, and to contemporary issues of the "post-Christian" West, such as abortion, in vitro fecundation, euthanasia, sexual "orientation", dignity of and equal rights for women etc. Africans who respect this frame and rightly subordinate their African "rituals", "stories" and "myths" to the unique event of God's "historical" intervention in Israel are accredited in the circle of theologians. Eboussi has not fulfilled this condition, and he is not among the "natives" ranked as "theologians".

But, as the proverb says, "Africa is always producing something new." Inculturation has
recently become the target of both missionaries and Africans. According to Eugene Hillman³, "in spite of the rhetoric of incarnation, inculturation, indigenization and contextualization, the general scene is characterized by little more than literal translations, cautious adaptations and questionable substitutions. Full-blooded incarnations of Christianity, if they exist anywhere in Africa, are well-hidden."⁴ This judgment, on other missionary lips, is sheer lament: African clergy and particularly members of the hierarchy are more Western-minded than African. It means, they often resist even "cautious adaptations".⁵

On the African side, Laurenti Magesa⁶, after distinguishing between an "official level" and a "popular level" of inculturation in East Africa, blasted the official "project of thinking and mathematical calculation"⁷ as "mostly inconsequential", "hardly comprehensible"⁸. Magesa went further when he noted that "the dialectic of inculturation in Eastern Africa has shifted. It is no longer primarily between missionary Christianity and African religion; it is fundamentally between official attempts at inculturation and popular Christian praxis."⁹ Kå Mana agrees that Christianity

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⁴ E. Hillman, Toward an African Christianity, p. 10.
⁵ We should keep a humorous suspicion when some missionaries become more African than Africans.
⁸ "What has been achieved on this level has been some intellectual synthesis of western missionary Christian and African cultural themes or elements. In other words, the results have been mostly inconsequential - one can even say hardly comprehensible..." ("The Present and Future of Inculturation", pp. 57-58).
has become an affair internal to Africa. Indeed, he saw an attempt at inculturation like that of O. Bimwenyi as a misjudgment on the changing reality of Africa. A test case for all is the awakening of the Daughters of Anowa, questioning both the African and Christian tradition on their treatment of women.

Perhaps, more than any other African theologian, Barthélémy Adoukonou has been confronted with the situation of change in his own field of study: the Vodun. In effect, recent political changes in the West African State of Benin, which ultimately led to an official recognition of this religion, has ignited latent conflicts with Christianity (and Islam). In search for a peaceful solution, Adoukonou surprisingly has resorted to the principle of the "intrinsic dignity" of individuals as human beings. Anticipating the "signs of the times", some, like Aylward


11 "Le théologien zairois [O. Bimwenyi-Kweshi] invoquait l'univers métaphysique d'un monde complètement désintégré au coeur même des Africains et de leurs aspirations. Il semblait ignorer que, face à la force du monde nouveau qui avait désintégré l'ancien univers religieux africain, devaient naître de nouvelles vérités." (Christ d'Afrique, p. 31).


13 It could be surprising but thoughtful enough to note that Oduyoye raises the question as a question of "humanity": "Who defines the humanity of woman? Is it the male or is it God? If it is God, how do we get at the God-originated definition of womanness? Is family life a vocation, a demand of biology, or a convenient base for organizing human society? Patriarchal systems often forbid questions of this genre." (Daughters of Anowa, p. 5).

14 Adoukonou has attempted a Christian understanding of this traditional religion of Benin (West Africa); see, Jalons pour une Théologie Africaine, t. 1&2.

15 The fact seems so "unusual" that the edition of The New York Times, March 10 (1996) Y 3, had almost a full first inside page on the subject: "At African Heart of Voodoo, Pride Over Heritage".

16 "La nouvelle réalité face à laquelle toutes les anciennes formations sociales sont tenues de se positionner est celle de la liberté sacrée de l'individu, de la dignité intrinsèque de toute personne humaine... La nouvelle société dans laquelle nous sommes appelés à vivre est celle de libre confrontation des visions du monde, des options éthiques et religieuses." (Le Vodun en Débat. Propositions pour un dialogue, p. 31). See also, Vodun, Démocratie et Pluralisme Religieux (Cotonou: Publications du sillon Noir, 1993).
Shorter\textsuperscript{17}, are already making themselves champions of the new challenges of tomorrow's Africa, i.e. the cities.\textsuperscript{18} Truly, there is always something new in ever changing Africa.

The positive contribution of Eboussi's turn to the subject should now appear more clearly as antagonism with the West fades. In effect, African traditions themselves are the focal point of a new internal confrontation. Indeed, for emerging African human beings, the need of a "vigilant memory" regarding African traditions had already indicated, in Eboussi's perspective, a serious shift in dealing with cultures. The fact is that African cultures can no longer play the role they played in the past because they are now part of a different configuration of the world. In a sense, they are not simply to be evaluated, judged and purified from the Christian perspective which itself is no longer exempted from critical appreciation. With Eboussi's focus on the subject, it appears that African cultures could not enter into relation with Christianity without first being considered anew from a non-Christian perspective. They are first to be re-appropriated in the light of what they became through the crisis (encounter with the West) in strict correlation with what future African human beings as subjects want for themselves. Only in this way can one avoid the confusion between "becoming Christian" and the so-called "Westernization". The shift opens avenues to new attitudes and questions. In effect, African subjects can now stand in the presence of God and ask: how do we become "one in Christ Jesus"\textsuperscript{19}?


\textsuperscript{18} "The Christian task in Africa is the evangelization of a continent in the process of rapid urbanization. In fact, it is, to a great extent, the evangelization of the urbanization process itself. If the Gospel of Christ makes a lasting impact on Africa, it will be because it has helped the urban process to become less invidious and less unjust, more human and more enduringly creative." (\textit{The Church in the African City}, p. 148). So, bye-bye to the villages; the future is in the cities. Indeed, the villages are becoming cities.

\textsuperscript{19} Galatians 3:28; the whole phrase could include v. 27: "All baptized in Christ, you have all clothed yourselves in Christ, and there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (\textit{The Jerusalem Bible}). Paul suggested baptism which for him means being assimilated to Christ in his death and resurrection: Romans 6:3-4. For Paul, it is by our participation in this process that we are one: 1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 10:12; Colossians 3:9-
Now, beyond cultural contentions, the new reality which emerges is that "human beings" with their "intrinsic dignity" as known "from the revealed word of God and from reason itself." From the revealed word, human beings are said to be created in the "image and likeness of God". It means that all stand equal before God, and all find their unity in God. According to reason, human beings are the ultimate centre of deliberation, judgment and decision. It follows that intercourse is only possible when there is an encounter of at least two distinctive and inalienable subjects. In both perspectives, human dignity entails "personal responsibility" and "moral obligation" to seek the "truth" and to live in accordance with it.

In a way, Eboussi's disconcerting theoretical conclusions on "revelation", "Jesus" and "God" are paradoxically rooted in Jesus' uncompromising attitudes toward "human dignity". It has never been recorded that Jesus used a divine prerogative either to force silence upon his opponents, or to force people to follow him. During his days, people did not befriend him.

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11. Today, we know that baptism alone does not seem to be a unique requirement for being "one" in Christ. Jesus. One can suspect the following question of Eboussi to be a quip: "Ce que doit être le christianisme, ce qu'est l'identité chrétienne peut-il se concevoir et se penser, de façon nécessaire et suffisante, à partir du même Credo, des mêmes rites, de la même référence à une Ecriture unique et à un seul Seigneur?" (Christianisme sans fétiche, p. 8).

20 Vatican II, Dignitatis Humanis # 2.

21 Vatican II, Dignitatis Humanis # 2.

22 His public life in Matthew started with the arrest of John the Baptist; an event which forced him to leave this hostile environment and Nazareth his home town to settle in Capernaum (Matthew 4:12). His return to Nazareth will be greeted with unbelief (Matthew 13:53) and the execution of John; once again, he was forced to flee (Matthew 14:13). Taking Matthew 11:20ff and 23:37ff seriously, Jesus often resolved into laments when his mission turned out to be unsuccessful. Except the "passion narratives", the most dramatic narrative where his authority was openly questioned is Matthew 21:23-27; but, even here, Jesus hardly forced upon his opponents a divine prerogative. He only suggested a divine authority with which God endows prophets.

23 See John 6:67
because he is a divine person. For us and for our salvation (quoad nos), Jesus Christ is "the figure of fulfilled humanity", the "second Adam" of the new creation, "first born from the dead". He is our salvation in that, he is what we are called to become, i.e. men and women of the new creation, born from the death of our old humanity with its hierarchies and discriminations, subtle or open reduction of others to means for our fulfilment. Indeed, the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God which constitutes the corner stone in Eboussi's Christic model implies that no one owes his or her human dignity to another human being, but to God. The "principle of illimitation" which proclaims God's nearness and unrestricted freedom and generosity even goes further by asserting that all human institutions or creations are now under God's judgment.

Even family-ties, often considered "sacred", fall under God's judgment in these "last days." Indeed, there is only one Father for whoever listens to God's words and puts them into practice. Giving God the name Father was not just an expression of Jesus' extraordinary piety. It opens the way to all humanity to become children of God, that is, "born not out of human stock or urge of the flesh or will of man but of God himself." In effect, when God ultimately reigns over the minds and lives of all human beings, our historical belonging (races, nations, tribes, genders, etc.) are subordinated to a more fundamental belonging. Before being "Black" or "White", "Canadian" or "Swazi" etc. we are brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of God. Before being rich or poor, free or slave etc. we are indiscriminately "created in the image and likeness of God".

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24 The exceptional character of Jesus is his openness to everyone. Indeed, if Jesus enjoyed dining with Pharisees, he was also notorious as friends of sinners. He even delighted in the company of children.

25 For himself (quoad se), Jesus Christ is the "image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15), now seated at "the right hand of the Father".


27 Hebrews 1:1.

In the same line of thought, Jesus' compassion toward the poor, the sinners and the sick is not just a preferential option. It is an integral dimension of the in-breaking of the kingdom of God. It reveals that discrimination and hierarchies are not part of the will of God. These walls of hostility and fear have not stance wherever God's free and gracious love abides.

What does this mean for Africa? What is the relevance of such a model for Africa, or more precisely, for the Church in Africa? If meaningfulness has always been an important dimension of theological endeavour, relevancy has become nowadays a criterion of its validity. As far as the Christic model is concerned, both its meaning and relevance for Africa as a whole and more particularly for the Church in Africa rest on what I would call the "revelation" of Christ. Eboussi would prefer to term it the "Christic reference"\(^\text{29}\), that is, the "instituting process" or the "constitutive operations" generated by the "words" and "deeds" of Jesus Christ and subsumed in the early Jewish-Christian community, before the advent of the Gentile Church, the "big Church". Indeed, before the Gentile Church became the unique accredited (orthodox) herald of the revelation of Christ, Jesus, and the early Jewish Christian community with him, believed that God's reign was at hand, Israel's redemption from the deep crisis which was shaking its very foundation would soon be completed. The process by which a new Israel was to come out of the crisis which was leading to its destruction, seems not only meaningful but also relevant to Africa and the African Church(es).

In effect, the priority given by Christ to God's reign relativizes all human institutions. All of them without exception, i.e. including the religious ones, need to be reviewed and transformed according to God's proximity. Africans and African Church(es) can learn from this. The unique dignity of all human beings manifested in Jesus' care for the sick, children, women, outcasts (cf. lepers), Samaritans, sinners and other destitutes (cf. tax collectors), - all members of the same

\(^{29}\) Christianisme sans fétique, p. 89.
Jewish society —, calls for conversion in many corners of African society where divisions based on tribal lines need to be addressed even within the Church. Jesus' subordination of rituals and other cultic practices to the love of neighbour as an expression of a heart turned to God may be an answer to the many "cries" of poverty and exploitation current in Africa.

With Jesus, it appears that one needs not to flee from the corruption and degradation of society to find God in an artificial community (cf. Essenes) awaiting a deliverance that comes from elsewhere than our own responsibility. The deliverance will come from within this historical confusion; it will happen not solely within the safe haven of the Temple (cf. Sadducees) or the private seclusion of a heart regularly cleansed by daily or weekly ablution (cf. Pharisees). African Church(es) will not meet the unprecedented challenge brought by the crisis which is still shaking the very foundations of the continent by stepping outside the "mess" or by transforming the churches into safe havens where one can "give thanks" for the wonder of salvation in Christ, and "commune" briefly with this mystery during one of the weekday or Sunday masses and services. God's word of salvation will not be effective in Africa if it merely develops a private piety made up of receiving the sacraments and following the Church regulations. In Catholic perspective this could be reduced to attending regularly Sunday masses, making offerings to the Church, having morning and evening prayer at home and, going to confession. Still, this is short of Jesus' essential requirement: the love of God and neighbour as the ultimate demand of Law and of Prophets.

However problematic the divinity of Eboussi's Christ appears in his Christic model, and however important an "orthodox" understanding of Christ should be from the "dogmatic" perspective, the interpretation of Christianity solely from within the Second Temple Judaism's crisis as meaningful and relevant for the African crisis offers an African Christianity capable of dealing with God's ultimate glory, that is, "the living human being." Eboussi has been aware of his deliberate choices which necessarily led to some overemphasis. It was important to point out his ambiguity about the divine preexistence which itself historically was a late, but mature
understanding of Jesus, the *Kurios*, - by the early Christian communities. Epistemologically, the recognition of deliberate choice and of possible excesses opens the way for new dialogue, not condemnation: "Only ideologists are always right; scholars know that everything they say is potentially wrong."³⁰ Truth is on the side of God whose last word in Christianity is a loud cry on the cross without any historical echo, except the yielding up of the spirit. With the Spirit, "life" is stronger than "death"; and so, we hail: *Marana tha!* Come our Lord.³¹

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³¹ Revelation 22:20. Eboussi elaborates his Christic model against the background of a dogmatic understanding of revelation. It seems interesting for us to end with a call from the Book of Revelation which, fortunately is the last word of the New Testament as it stands presently in the "canon" of the Churches. As far as Jewish background is important to the understanding of Christianity, the Jews are still waiting the messiah and a new glory for the city of David. Christians for their part are also waiting the messiah in his second coming, and the new Jerusalem from above. Indeed, all humanity is awaiting the "city of God", where God is all in all, where life abounds because human beings are no more wolves in sheep's clothing for one another, but sons and daughters of God.
Appendix

Biographical Notice

Eboussi was born January 17, 1934 in Cameroun. He had hardly finished primary school when he joined the Junior seminary of Efok (Yaoundé) as a candidate for the priesthood. However, instead of pursuing his training in the Major seminary as a future diocesan priest, he entered the noviciate of the Society of Jesus at Djuma (ex-Belgium Congo) on December 31, 1955, following on the footsteps of the late Father Engelbert Mveng. Eboussi did his Juniorate in Laval-France (1958-1959) where he obtained a B.A. in English. At this point, he had discovered Saint John Perse whose writings greatly influence his thought. After his philosophy at Valse-France (1959-1962) he taught English and Latin in a secondary school: Collège Libermann, in his native Cameroun. In 1964, he published “De l’actualité culturelle” in *Etapes* (student review) which reveals his critical attitude toward a burning issue in independent Africa, i.e., the cultural issue. This article is better known under the title: “L’Aventure ambiguë de Cheik Hamidou Kane” (*Abbia* 6 (1964) 207-213).

From 1964 to 1968, Eboussi completed his theological formation at Fourvière (France). At that time, this Jesuit institute which spearheaded in the ‘50s a “new theology” with H. de Lubac and Henri Bouillard was undergoing a deep internal change: students were allowed to take courses both within the theologate and at the university. So, in 1968, he obtained both a *Licentiate* in theology with a thesis on E. Troeltsch: “Dogme, histoire et société dans les Die Sozialehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen”, and a doctorate in philosophy at the University of Lyon with a dissertation on Plato: “Le Mythe du dialogue chez Platon. Essai sur le mythe et le dialogue comme formes du discours”. In the same year, he published another major article: “Le Bantou problématique” (*Présence Africaine* 66 (1968) 4-40) critically reviewing the book of Fr. Tempels, *La Philosophie Bantoue*. From 1968 to 1972, Eboussi taught in the Major Seminary of Yaoundé;

In 1981, Eboussi officially left both the Society of Jesus and the priesthood, as he later said, for the “same reason which led him to orders” (L’Inculturation, p.51). In the same year he published his second book: Christianisme sans fétiche (Présence Africaine, 1981). Does the book express a need to justify his departure as it has been suggested? A close scrutiny of “Christianisme comme maladie et comme guérison” (1973) and, “Enjeu de ‘Dieu’: le savoir-pouvoir” (1979), show that the essential problematic of the book was set prior to his leaving orders. Eboussi resumed his teaching career first at the university of Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire: 1978-1984) and then at the university of Yaoundé (Cameroun: 1984-1994) as lecturer in philosophy. He is presently director of GERDES-CAMEROUN, a center for the study of and research in socio-political and economic processes in Africa. He is also in charge of Terroirs, an interdisciplinary review. In 1991, he published Les Conférences nationales en Afrique Noire (Karthala, 1993). All in all, Eboussi is a pure product of the Roman Catholic Mission to Africa. Some have even suspected a priestly complexion in his present-day socio-political involvement. The drama of his early passion is the trial of “time”, as God fades in the shade of a “history” made of suffering and domination.
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