

**TANGAZA COLLEGE
CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA**

***INCULTURATION OF THE RITES OF
PASSAGE AMONG THE EWE OF TOGO
CASE STUDY: TWINS, PASTORAL QUEST***

By

**Aristide G. Vignidah, SVD
Moderator: Fr. Fernando Dominigues, STD**

February 2002

Nairobi-Kenya

MISSION AS WORKING FOR RECONCILIATION:

*A Challenge for the Church of a Divided Cote
d'Ivoire*

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all the Ivorian people in their search and prayer for peace and reconciliation in the country. I dedicate it especially to all my friends and those I have known who have fallen during this sad war; may their intercession bring peace in Cote d'Ivoire. The work is also dedicated to all the SMA missionaries working in Cote d'Ivoire despite all the fears and difficulties. God bless all of them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like first of all to thank God for the gift of life and for choosing me to serve him as a missionary. His name be blessed forever. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Father Lacomara for accepting to be my moderator and giving some kind of advice that helped me during my research.


My special thanks to some of my confreres in the Society of African Missions, especially, Remi Kouassi, Dermot Roache, Jules Adator, Paulin Kouassi and Sylvere Attah, for their critics and advice that inspired me in my work.

I want also to thank Father Ronzani who gave me some suggestions about some part of the work, and also Anastasia Wanjiku, for her strong encouragement and support.

May God reward each one for their contribution.

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credits. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed: _____  _____

Name of Student: Jacques Alain Mahutin, SMA

Date: 24 / 12 / 04 _____

This long Essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the college Supervisor.

Signed: Aelred Lacomara, C.P. _____

Name of Supervisor: Fr Aelred Lacomara,

Date: 23 / 12 / 04 _____

General Introduction

Working for reconciliation is one of the biggest challenges of the Church in her mission to the world, especially to Africa where wars, ethnic clashes and hatred have divided the continent and the peoples among themselves. It is a great task particularly for the Church of Cote d'Ivoire, which is facing the biggest threat of its existence since its independence in 1960.

For forty years, Cote d'Ivoire enjoyed a stability that envied all the other countries of the west-African sub-region, faced with war and coups. Its economic success attracted people from neighbouring countries, and its main city Abidjan nicknamed, "*la perle des lagunes*"¹ because of its strong development, far ahead of all other capitals in the region, was the pride of the continent. However, since September 2002, after a foiled coup attempt, Cote d'Ivoire is divided between a rebel held North predominantly Moslem and a Government held South, predominantly Christian and animist.

The causes of this war are numerous, but the main point now is to know how to reach a lasting peace and reconcile the Ivorians with themselves. This is the big task of the Church today in that country. Being ourselves from Cote d'Ivoire, we know how much this war has affected the people of the country, who were used to peace and stability; we know the level of anger and frustration in the hearts of all, being Moslems or Christians.

In fact, the Church is held between the anger of her Christians in their accusations, justified or not, towards Moslems of supporting the rebels, and her mission to proclaim Christ's teaching of love and of forgiveness towards the

¹ The term means *the Pearl of the lagoons* because Abidjan is surrounded by many lagoons.

neighbour and even the enemy. She is also facing the anger of the Moslems in their accusations, justified or not, towards Christians of discriminating them. She has the duty to preach and work for justice.

So our objective in choosing this topic is to bring out some suggestions that can help the country in its process of reconciliation. For we believe that a true reconciliation can be effective if it is done through forgiveness and love. And this we know, it is not something easy to achieve.

So we will start by presenting *the actual situation* of the country. Presenting the socio-religious situation might help understand the political situation which follows, where after two years of war, the country is still divided into two. Presenting all these will help understand the dilemma of the Church. The second chapter, which is the *biblical understanding of reconciliation*, is an analysis of especially the New Testament references for reconciliation, forgiveness and love. We will refer to the teachings of Jesus and of Saint Paul that might help the Christians in their difficult mission of reconciliation. The last part, *mission of reconciliation in Christ*, is where we want to give our suggestions, adding them to what the local Magisterium is already trying to do. These are the pastoral challenges of the Ivorian Church, and even though they are not easy, in Christ, the Church will succeed in her mission of reconciliation.

Chapter One: Study of the concrete Situation

Introduction

Our first chapter is a presentation of the concrete situation of the country in its reality of war and anger, frustration and thirst for vengeance. Today Cote d'Ivoire has fallen into an inferno where the joy and peace of people have been replaced by the sad situation of division and incertitude of what will be tomorrow. We really want to show what is really happening, so that we will be able to explain the difficulty of reconciling Ivorians only at the political level.

1- Socio-Religious Situation.

1-1 Social reality: A country ethnically divided: the Ivoirité concept

"Cote d'Ivoire, like most African countries, is a country made of a big diversity of people, culture and religions."² However there is concept that was created in the 90s that is now a cause of trouble for the country: *Ivoirité*. The word in its original meaning emphasised nationalism, the valorisation of the Ivorian culture but later on it was used negatively as a means to exclude all those who are from foreign origin from running for the supreme office. And the one who started was the former President Henri Konan Bedie who used it during his time in office to exclude from the race to presidency Mr Ouattara on the basis that he was not a true Ivorian. So today the main point is: who is really an Ivorian and who is not? *Ivoirité* has now become "*True Ivorian*" that is, born from parents who were themselves originally from the country and the original meaning has been left aside. It is good to mention that 26% of the Ivorian population of 17.5 millions are foreigners with most

² Jacques Vallin, *Cote d'Ivoire: Mosaïque culturelle et identité nationale*, in *Jeune Afrique l'Intelligent*. All our quotations from This Magazine are from. [http://www.abidjan.net/Jeune Afrique l'Intelligent/Cote d'Ivoire](http://www.abidjan.net/Jeune_Afrique_l'Intelligent/Cote_d'Ivoire).

of them from neighbouring countries, especially Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso, with almost half of them born in the country and 70% of them being Moslems. The concept has also made the Ivorian people be seen as a xenophobe one because of the attack on foreigners by certain group of people, especially the young patriots, while in fact the majority of Ivorian live in perfect collaboration with the foreigners. "The word alone in itself has been enough to cause the crisis that is facing Cote d'Ivoire."³

1-2 Religious Situation: Suspicion between Moslems and Christians.

1-2-1-Religious partition

1-2-1-1 Moslems in the country.

According to recent statistics, Moslems make around 24% of the Ivorian population⁴. Officially the northern part of the country is in majority Moslem but normally the whole country experiences the Moslem presence. But it is good to remind the reader that many of these Moslems are from neighbouring countries Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea. They have settled in the country, with some of them being born there and considering themselves as being Ivorians though the Law in place denies them the Ivorian nationality.

1-2-1-2 The Christian community

The Christians make about 19.3% of the total population with 15.88% being Catholics mostly in the southern part of the country.

³ George Packer, *Welcome into hell in the New Yorker and Jeune Afrique l'Intelligent* in <http://www.abidjan.net/jeuneafrique/> 'Intelligent

⁴ *New People magazine. African countries profiles*, N*91, July August 2004,p17

The influence of the Christian religion, especially the Catholic Church, in the political affairs of Cote d'Ivoire is strong. All those who have ruled the country until now were Catholics except the current president who is a Baptist, even though he was a former minor seminarian, who recently changed his faith because of politics. Most of the Christian feasts, particularly the Catholic feasts like Ascension or Pentecost Monday Assumption or All Saints Day, are public holidays in the country. It was the heritage of the French colonisation, kept and extended by the late president Boigny and continued by his successors. The Christian influence is then significant.

1-2-1-3 The Animists.

They constitute the majority with 56.62% of the population being either in the traditional religion or in no religious faith. Most of them are in the southern regions and are counted among the "Southerners" even though the Senoufo of the North are known to be strong traditional believers.

1-2-2 Christians Vs Moslems/ South Vs North

If the division between Moslems and Christians is not as strong as the one in Nigeria for instance, the level it took at the start of the crisis is alarming. It is true that the rejection of the former Prime minister as being non-Ivorian has caused a lot of damage in the relationship between Christians and Moslems, as he himself claimed that it is because of his Moslem religion that he is being rejected.⁵ With the crisis, Moslems are suspected to be supporters of the rebels. During the war, churches were burnt by Moslems; mosques were destroyed or also burnt by Christians. The fact that Northerners supported the rebellion made Moslems become

⁵ His real intention was to gain the support of the Moslem community of the country.

suspect in the South, just because North is associated with Moslem. This is also the same in the rebel held areas. Southerners Christians are suspected to be spies of the government. The suspicion is strong in both sides.

In January 2003, four armed gunmen killed Imam Mahmoud Samassi, founder and Imam of the Lycee Technique Mosque in Abidjan at his residence. On January 8, the National Council of Imams, CNI, and the High Council of Imams (COSIM) marched in Abidjan to protest Samassi's murder. In February unknown assailants in gendarme uniforms killed Mohamed Sangare, the assistant Imam for the Abobo⁶ Mosque in Abidjan. Also in February, during curfew hours, several gendarme and police officers searched and looted several residences in Anyama, a predominantly Muslim district in Abidjan. In addition, according to the CNI, government security forces "forcibly searched" seven mosques and reportedly looted residences of at least 10 Muslim leaders in Abidjan. In late October 2002, CNI said that government forces searched all mosques in the western town of Man. On October 30, 2002, the CNI issued a statement asserting that since the September 19 rebellion, the Muslim community had fallen under "unfair suspicion" and was suffering arbitrary arrests, beatings, and killing by security forces. The CNI statement claimed that state television and radio had created a climate of hatred. Also in October, Mamadou Sy, Imam for the central mosque of Bouake, called on all sides to cease violence and "hateful rhetoric."⁷

Rebels in Bouake and elsewhere in the north executed more than 100 persons, most of whom were Christian, who were members of the armed forces or

⁶ One of the ten districts of Abidjan, and predominantly Moslem

⁷ The whole of this paragraph is from the US Department of States, *International Religious Freedom Report 2004* in <http://www.google.com/cote d'ivoire/catholic church>

persons thought to be loyal to the Government. Also in April 2004, MPCCI forces severely beat and tortured three Christian priests at the Saint Jean Bosco Mission in the northern city of Korhogo while searching for an escaped prisoner. The MPCCI security forces also beat members of the congregation that tried to assist the priests. The same month Maurice Dodo, a church leader in the western town of Daloa, reported that western rebels held him for 12 days. He reported being tortured and threatened with death before being released. Rebel forces searched and damaged a Catholic church in the northern city of Tengrela. Two months later, rebel forces looted a church still under construction in Bouake.⁸

2- Political Situation⁹

2-1 A continuous rebellion in a country divided in two: North and South

Since 19 September 2002, Cote d'Ivoire is a country divided between a Rebel held North and a government held South. The rebellion started after a foiled coup that left hundreds of people dead. The rebels took control of the northern towns of the country with the help of the local populations themselves. Months later another rebellion started in the West of the country, with two different groups, who claimed that they wanted to avenge the death of the Former military ruler General Guéi, killed in the first hours of the rebellion in the main city Abidjan on 19th September 2002. But later it became clear that they were all part of the same group but with different names. Today they all form one group: the *Forces Nouvelles*¹⁰.

⁸ US Department of States, *International Religious Freedom Report 2004* in http://www.google.com/cote_d'ivoire/catholic_church

⁹ For any information on the Ivorian crisis, confer <http://www.abidjan.net>.

¹⁰ New Forces

In the west the two main tribes, Dan and Guere, attacked each other leaving hundreds of people dead and many villages destroyed. A lot of exactions were committed by both the regular army, FANCI¹¹ and the rebels and which have caused a lot of anger and frustrations calling for vengeance from both parts.

The rebellion is a reaction to the whole politic of exclusion, started by the successors of Houphouet Boigny, the late President, in their greediness for power. "Since the beginning of the war, at least 3 to 4 thousands people have been killed, and more than a million have been obliged to run away"¹² and take refuge in the southern part of the country, or leave the country, especially the foreigners. In fact, thousands of foreigners left the country, either because of fear or because of harassment by some corrupt police and gendarmes.

Today the situation remains in a status quo, in a situation of no peace-no war, a situation that does not satisfy most Ivorians who want to crisis to be ended, either peacefully for some, or through war for others¹³. But generally the majority is for a peaceful solution to the crisis. Even though the disarmament process recently failed because the rebels refused to lay down their weapons on the deadline of October 15th 2004, pardon and reconciliation are the words in the mouths of the vast majority of Ivorians.

¹¹ FANCI means *Forces Armées Nationale de Cote d'Ivoire*; *National Arme Forces of Cote d'Ivoire*

¹² Georges Packer, *Welcome into hell*

¹³ Those who really want a solution through war are the Young Patriots, with their famous leader Ble Goude, supported and financed by the government.

2-2 Reconciliation Attempt

2-2-1 *The end of fighting*

Since the beginning of the war, a lot struggles have been going on by people who are eager to put an end to the crisis.¹⁴

From inside the country itself, starting with the local people, to the outside, peace and reconciliation are the common words in each person's mouth, calling on every Ivorian and non-Ivorian living in the country to work for peace and reconciliation. With the help of neighbouring Heads of States and especially the French President and the United Nations, meetings to end the crisis took place, with the most important being Marcoussis in France and Accra I, II and recently III.

2-2-2 Marcoussis

In order to end the crisis, the French president, on the pressure of the international community, called for all the political parties, the then three rebels groups and the government to meet in France and find a solution to the problem. So from 15-24 January, they all met at Marcoussis, a French city, where decisions were taken and promises were made. The meeting had in fact solved the problems and if all the parties had respected what they promised, Cote d'Ivoire would have today come back to its prosperity. The only decision that has been respected so far is the complete ceasefire in all fronts, the forming of a government of national unity, which however has not been able to function very well because many times, the Opposition¹⁵ with the ministers from the rebellion, walked out, accusing the ruling party of not respecting the agreements.

¹⁴ Cf. Kate Davenport, *On the Edge* in *BBC Focus on Africa Magazine*, January-march 2004, p17

¹⁵ Today the Opposition Parties form a coalition called G7, led by the PDCI and the RDR

Some of the decisions taken were: a government sharing power with all the political Parties, a transfer of executive powers to a chosen Prime Minister while the President would keep his seat, and the conferral of the defence and security minister posts to the rebels, this until new elections are held in 2005. But the violent reaction it caused in the southern population and even in the Army forced the Head of State to change his mind, because the regular Army menaced even to remove him if he agrees to the decisions. So Marcoussis, though it had everything to end the crisis remains a problem for all.

2-2-3 Declaration of "end of war"

On July 2003, at the great satisfaction of all, the soldiers, both Rebels and regular Army, declared the end of the war in Cote d'Ivoire and called for all the political leaders, including the President to follow them and do everything to reconcile the Ivorians among themselves.

Peoples, in the country and even outside, hoped that that declaration of the soldiers, both from the regular Army FANCI and the rebels now New Forces, would force the politicians to solve their differences and reconcile all Ivorians. The process of reconciliation has been going on between the FANCI and the New Forces but it has always been spoilt by the greed and selfishness of the politicians.

2-2-4 Accra

The blockage of the Marcoussis' decisions pushed the West Africa community, ECOWAS, whose Chairman is the actual Ghanaian President John Kuffuor, to call for special meetings to help solve the problem, with the presence of the heads of State of the Sub-Region, and the UN Secretary General Kofi Anan. Three times they met in the Ghanaian capital and twice none of the parties was able

to respect the promises made. However the last meeting held last July has brought some hope that a solution towards peace has been found, with the rebel groups and political parties returning to the power sharing government after long months of boycott.

2-2-5 Reconciliation among Ivoirians.

The Ivorian people understood how important it is for them to reconcile, that is why they founded the "*Collectif pour la Reconciliation*", which is a group made of religious leaders, both Moslem and Christian, and civil leaders who travel round the country to call on the Ivoirians to reconcile. In the same line, most religious and profane songs are a call to reconciliation, and it is a word that has taken a great importance in the vocabulary of each citizen.

3- The Church faced to the Crisis

The Catholic Church in front of the crisis is facing one of her strongest challenges. In fact the Church is accused by some of supporting the government in their 'politic of exclusion'¹⁶, and by others, she is accused of supporting the rebellion because some bishops refused to leave their dioceses despite the war, like the bishop of the diocese of Man¹⁷, Mgr Joseph TEKY, who preferred to remain in his diocese though most of his priests ran away, with some of them beaten seriously by the rebels.

In the North, many missionaries remained though they were harassed, and most of those who had run away came back. But an important point is that, many of

¹⁶ This fact is not consensually accepted as true. If the rebels call it exclusion, the government and most of the Southerners call it the fight for the true Ivorian identity. But the truth is that people are sometimes being harassed, of course not by everybody.

¹⁷ The Diocese of Man in the Western part of the country, from where I am, experienced most of the fierce fighting.

the Catholic Christians, especially in the West are from Burkina Faso, whose citizens are being accused of supporting the rebellion and fighting with them. The problem for the Catholic Church is to be able to impartial in her preaching against war and exclusion, and also put forward her Christian values without taking any side.

If the Northerners are accused of supporting the rebellion, and if the North is said to be in majority Moslem, we cannot forget the fact that many Christians are also from the North and that we have in that part of the country a lot of parishes, whose parishioners do not fully disagree with the reason why the rebellion started.

The mission of the Church here is not an easy one, but despite all the difficulties, she has to preach the Christian values.

Conclusion

The Ivorian problem, as we can see, is not a simple and only political problem. "The crisis has some regional implications, some religious, economic and political dimensions."¹⁸ It is a very complex one and quite impossible to solve only at the political level. However, we think that the process of reconciliation will be a success if the religious leaders, and especially the Christians leaders, bishops being the firsts, implicate themselves more in the process, with impartiality, that is, without any political stand, Reconciliation in Cote d'Ivoire will work. Today Christians themselves¹⁹, especially in the Western part look at themselves with hatred.

¹⁸ G. Packer, *Welcome into hell*.

¹⁹ Some Guere priests and some Dan priests suspect each other. Burkinabe Christians are rejected in the west by even Christians because of being suspected of supporting the rebels.

Reconciliation is an important value in Christianity and being preached it can help solve a lot of problems and bring peace and harmony among people. Love, peace and forgiveness are great Christian values and they are foundation stones for any good reconciliation. Our next chapter is to see what value has reconciliation in the New Testament and how it can help the local Church in her mission for peace and reconciliation among her children, which, as we have said above, is not an easy task for her.

Chapter Two: Biblical Understanding of reconciliation

“Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man.” Gandhi

Introduction

After giving the actual reality of the Ivorian situation and their strong need for reconciliation, it is important to understand how essential it is to have a true reconciliation in order to attain peace. For a true and sincere reconciliation to take place, there must be in first of all, a true love that is manifested in forgiveness and then in reconciliation. This second chapter on the biblical understanding of reconciliation has the purpose of giving particularly the New Testament teaching on the Christian values of love and forgiveness.

We do not pretend to exhaust all the biblical teaching on reconciliation, but drawing from some part of Jesus and Saint Paul's teaching we would like to try to give the important thing that is reconciliation for any Christian who has Jesus Christ as Lord and example.

1- The First Commandment: Love

1-1 Love of God and Love of Neighbour

1-1-1 The first commandment in the Old Testament context.

When asked about which commandment is the greatest, Jesus did not hesitate to say that loving God is the greatest commandment that could exist. He made reference of course to the Law by quoting the first Commandment: "...*you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your strength and with all your soul...*" (Mt 22:37)

The Jewish people recognise only one God, Yahweh, who they must worship and respect. The command to love God is a call to worship him alone and no one else. The historical background of this commandment is primarily the liberation

from the slavery in Egypt. The Jews discovered that God is a powerful God who cares for them and is ready to remain their God if they remain faithful to him. He is the God of their ancestors, and their liberation is because of his fidelity to them, and it is the result of a true and strong love from Him. To love God is then to remain faithful to him, to obey his Law and decrees and to have no other God than he alone.

The second part of the commandment is the love for the neighbour. This is found in the book of Leviticus (19:18) and is similar to the first one. Loving God implies keeping his Laws and especially his call to care for each other as he always expressed through his prophets. So to love God is also to love one's neighbour.

However, for the Jew the neighbour is not someone outside the Jewish community. The neighbour is the fellow Jew and the non-Jew is the enemy because he does not worship God but idols. And as PHEME PERKINS says, "the love of neighbour command...was often used to reinforce the boundaries of the Jewish community."²⁰ So for the Jew, "loving one's brother...is (loving) one's fellow Jew"²¹ and not anybody outside the Jewish community. He must be ready to even give his life for his fellow Jew, but he must have no look for the Gentile who does not have God.

1-1-2 The Love command in the New Testament.

The use of the parable of the Good Samaritan by Jesus in Luke 10:30-37 is to show that the *neighbour* is not restricted to one's culture or religion or nation. The neighbour is any human being, for as human beings we are all created in the image

²⁰ PHEME PERKINS, *Love Commands in the New Testament*, p12

²¹ PHEME PERKINS, *Love Commands in the New Testament*, p12

of God. (Gn2) So in the New Testament, *love of God* and *love of neighbour* are the same, and it is stronger than in the Old Testament.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength...and love your neighbour as you love yourself” (Mk 12:30-31). The New Testament understanding of love of God and of neighbour takes great importance in the person of Jesus. The Christians understood that the love they bear and which they are able to give to others comes from God himself who ‘is love’. They are able to love because God loved them first in Jesus²²; he is “the great love with which God has loved us” (Eph 2:4). Saint Paul teaches that if we are able to love, it is because the Lord Himself has poured his love in us through the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5), and it is that Spirit who helps us love God and our neighbour, even with the capacity of going beyond our human nature. So “first of all, it is God who is the first subject of love...”²³ and this love must be extended to the Church for which the Lord gave his life. But if we refer to what Jesus said in Matthew 25:31-46, it is clear that this love is not restricted to Christians but it is extended to all human beings. And showing love to anyone is showing that love to God himself.

So the Incarnation has given another dimension to the First Commandment. Loving God and loving the neighbour are no more two commandments but one commandment expressed differently. With God becoming human in Jesus, love of neighbour becomes extended to any human being whatever being his culture, his religion or his origin. Jesus, resurrected, is no more restricted to the Jewish culture

²² Saint Paul in Rom8:35-39 explains that no power can come between us and the Love of God manifested in Jesus Christ.

²³ Romano Penna, *Paul the Apostle. Wisdom and Folly of the Cross*, p194

and people; he is now universal. And if loving the neighbour means loving Jesus who is both God and man, loving the neighbour also means loving God. Anything done to any human being is done to God himself through Jesus Christ. Another point of the teaching is to love as we love ourselves. "Do to others what you would like them do to you" said Jesus in Luke 6:31; and this is a call to express a true love as one would be happy receive. It is a call to sincerity in the love we offer to others.

To conclude this part, we can say that the commandment to love God and the neighbour remains the most important one. "Christ loved (us) and in his love God's own love is revealed. This love becoming an event, by its very nature demands to be given, shared, and experienced repeatedly."²⁴ However, Jesus in his teaching of love goes even beyond the Decalogue teaching of loving the neighbour, by asking his listeners to love not only the neighbour, which meant for the Jew to hate the enemy, but to love the enemy the same way they love their neighbour. So love of enemies becomes again one important teaching of Jesus about love.

1-2- Love of Enemies

1-2-1 The teaching in the context of the time of Jesus

At the time of Jesus, the Romans had conquered the Israeli people, and the many attempts of rebellion ended in the crushing of the rebels by the Roman army. The Romans were then considered as the enemies of the Israeli people, and one day, the Jews believed, God was to crush them. Also, many other people whom they had to fight or conquer in order to possess or protect the Promised Land had surrounded the Jewish people, since their freedom from slavery in Egypt. The concept of enemy is then not foreign to their mentality. The enemy was someone of whom they had to

²⁴ Romano Penna, *Paul the Apostle. Wisdom and Folly of the Cross*, p199

be careful of and even hate. The enemy only wants the fall of the Just; his desire is to destroy and to make suffer the innocent just.

Also in the same context, the enemy was the one who did not know God and obey his Law (Ps 37:20). For love of God, the enemy must be hated and the lover of the Law of Yahweh must pray for the fall of God's enemies. The Jew always relied on God to destroy his enemies (Jos 21:44), thus praying to him to make his enemies fall. And in fact, the fall of an enemy was the sign that God is truly the God of Israel (2Sam 3:18). However, Yahweh's protection from one's enemies required obedience to His Commandments and to the Law. If one obeyed the Law of Yahweh, he should be assured that Yahweh was with him and would deliver him from the hands of the enemy, so any victory over the enemy was the work of Yahweh. (Ps 18:17)

So as we can see, the enemy or enemies are not people that must be loved, on the contrary, they must be hated and rejected. It is true, as Eduard Schweizer explains, that there is no much mentioned in the Law about hatred towards one's enemy, as stated by Jesus in Matthew's Gospel. Nevertheless, it is clearly stated that the neighbour must be loved and in fact this is the normal state of things, and the neighbour is of course, as we have already mentioned above, an Israelite and not a foreigner²⁵. Jesus however, transcends this aspect by calling on his listeners to love not only the neighbour but also the enemy.

1-2-2 The teaching of Jesus in Luke 6:27-35

"But I say this to you who are listening: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly..." (Lk6:27-28) In the gospel of Matthew as in the one of Luke, the call to pray for the

²⁵ Cf. Eduard Schweizer. *The Good News According to Matthew*, p132

enemy is clear but if in Matthew it is one of the teachings, in Luke it is the main teaching of the Sermon. In that sentence, four verbs are used: *love, do good, bless* and *pray* and the four are synonymous, so we have here a kind of parallelism to stress a point and *Agape* is the main idea that comes from the four verbs.

When we listen to Jesus speaking to his disciples in this Sermon, we realise that “ethnicity, gender, social status, appearance, and wealth are no basis for restricted love. Enemies are to be treated as neighbours.”²⁶ In fact, true love is beyond feeling, it is action, something one does for the neighbour, and here the same kind of love in action is asked for the enemy²⁷. From verses 27 to 35, Jesus explains what it means to love one’s enemies. The bad acts of others must be paid back with a good action, contrary to the Old Testament law of retaliation of an “eye for an eye” (Ex 21:24). Jesus goes towards total generosity, towards a one-sided kindness and as Christopher Owczarek says, it is “a call to total Surrender, defencelessness and generosity”²⁸. The positive act must be an answer to the negative and evil acts of others, people are asked not to fight for their rights or to seek any kind of compensation or justice.

In verses 29-30, Jesus calls on his listeners to behave in an extraordinary way, in a way that is totally beyond human nature, for he asks them to show a kind of total vulnerability in front of the enemy and not to look for self-defence. When attacked, the disciples are called to let themselves being beaten without trying to counterattack; to give a smile when insulted; to give to people even more than what they want to take from them by force; to especially pray for their persecutors, and

²⁶ Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, pp154-155

²⁷ Cf Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, p133

²⁸ Christopher Owczarek, *Sons of the Most High*, p138.

really to good as a response to the bad people are doing to them. This is the root of the whole philosophy of *non-violence* that has inspired many great figures like Gandhi or Martin Luther King who saw in the teaching of love of enemies “the greatest force at the disposal of mankind”²⁹ and used it in their non-violent campaign against colonisation in India and racial segregation in the United States. That way of behaving is the particularity of the children of God and all those who behave as such will become, as he said, like God the Most High. (Lk6:35)

Verses 32 to 34 give us what kind of love must the children of God show to the world. In fact love is not only the characteristic of good people for even the wicked ones love their fellow friends and defend each other meaning that they cannot be divided against each other (Lk11:17-18). Sinners and bad people are those in need of conversion so the behaviour of the good must lead them to a change of life, for in fact, what credit do the good ones get if they behave as evil as the sinners? Jesus calls on his listeners to do better than the sinners so that they may understand the bad way they behave and then change. Thus doing we would have won people for God because if we behave like them, it means that we also need conversion.

Doing good to get something in return or giving in order to receive back is the characteristic of a perfect pagan. A perfect Christian is the one who loves without expecting anything from the loved ones; he rather gives an unselfish love, a love without any earthly reward (Lk6:35). Jesus promises a special reward to those who will be able to love their enemies: they will share in his Sonship with God, having the likeness of God and behaving like him. We become true children of God

²⁹ Mohandas Gandhi on non-violence. All our quotations from Gandhi are taken from the internet on www.google.com/ Gandhi

when "...we learn to love not only good people but also evil ones, the unrighteous as well as the just..."³⁰

1-2-3 Examples of love of enemies

The example of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 highlights the teaching about love of enemies. The Jews considered the Samaritans inferiors; they under-regarded them because they considered them to be unholy. In the story, Jesus explains that one of the same Samaritans helps a Jew who had been attacked and left for dead on the road while a priest and a Levite, both Jews passed by and changed their direction. The one who became the neighbour of the wounded Jew is in fact the Samaritan who *did good* to him. So the main identity is not 'what I am' but rather 'what I do', because the way one behaves shows his real identity. Jesus asks his listeners to do like the one who showed mercy to the suffering person. And even though he himself was chased from a Samaritan village (Lk9:51-55), he never spoke badly of the Samaritans.

Too, the climax of the love of enemies can be found on the cross. Jesus asks his Father not to condemn those who were killing him, but to forgive them (Lk23:34). He had the power to retaliate but he preferred to forgive them and show them his love. In fact, there is no sin when you do not know what you are doing, and on the cross, Jesus excuses his persecutors in front of the Father, and by praying for his killers he communicates to them his life and thus doing shows them kindness. Arrested, he showed non-violence, tortured and dying, he showed the same and more showed love and forgiveness. To Paul who was persecuting him, by participating in the arrest and killing of the Christians (Ac7:58; 9:4), Jesus appeared

³⁰ Eduard Schweiser, *The Good News According to Matthew*, p 134

and chose him to be his Apostle. He never punished him for what he did, on the contrary, he honoured him by choosing him to preach and heal in his name. The disciples on their part forgave Paul for the bad he did to them and accepted him as one of them (Ac9:11-17).

1-2-4 Love of enemies in the early Church

The Early Christian communities were facing the problem of the persecutions, both from the Jews and from the Romans. Christians were expelled from the synagogues, rejected, humiliated and even killed because of their faith in Jesus. Instead of retaliating or cursing those who were persecuting them, the gospel writers asked their community members not to hate their persecutors, but rather to love them. This aspect is clear in Luke. Chased from a Samaritan village, Jesus rebukes his disciples who wanted to punish the villagers; crucified, he prays for those who delivered him, condemned him though he was innocent and killed him. The Christians were asked to behave in a way that would make their persecutors change their lives, as Paul and Silas did with their jailor by saving his life though he treated them badly (Ac16: 25-34). The gospel writers asks their community members to bless and speak only well about those who cursed and rejected them; thus doing they will show that they are truly Christians.

However, the Christians need to have a strong faith in the Living God of Love from whom they get the strength needed to bear the persecutions of others and who alone can help them love their enemies, because without the power and grace of God they will not be able to face death without keeping anger and hatred in their hearts, and also without fear and strong desire for vengeance. To have such courage,

the disciples must believe that God is omnipresent and lives in all peoples and that he alone can change the hearts of the wicked.

2- Reconciliation in the New Testament.

2 1- Jesus' teaching on Forgiveness: A reading of Matthew 18: 21-35

2-1-1 Forgiveness is a must.

When asked by Peter about how many times he is supposed to forgive anybody who offends him, Jesus answered saying that one has to forgive not seven times as Peter thought, "but seventy-seven times" (Mt18:22).

The question of Peter, as Warren Carter says, "...is not about the offending person's responsibilities... (it rather) focuses on the offended person's role."³¹ It comes after the call of Jesus on his disciples to reconcile privately for any sin committed against self by any member of the community. Jesus asks the offended to make the first step and solve the problem quietly and thus gaining back his brother or sister (Mt18:15).

However, if normally the primary focus is on the offending person who looks for a way of asking forgiveness for the evil he has done to his neighbour in order to bring back harmony in the community, and if this is the first step for any good reconciliation, the responsibility of the offended person is crucial for it determines whether reconciliation is possible or not. In the question of Peter there is no doubt that the disciples understood that forgiveness is a must. However, the point was how often this must be. And the response of Jesus is clear: there must be no limit in forgiveness; people must forgive as many times as they are offended.

³¹ Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, p 369

Here Jesus is clearly preparing his disciples for the community life they will live when he departs from them. As human beings, it is obvious that they will not live without offending each other, but for the life in the community to remain harmonious, it is crucial that they learn how to forgive any person who offends them and this should be without limit. After teaching them to love their enemies, he is asking them to forgive each other the same way he asked them to love each other. They must be “a community of repeated forgiveness”³², because their Father in heaven never stops forgiving their offences and also asks them to do the same to each other.

The parable of the unforgiving servant is to illustrate his teaching, and thus doing Jesus tells them that as they are forgiven, they too must forgive their fellow men and women who offend them.

2-1-2 Message of the parable of the unforgiving servant.³³

As we have already said, the parable of the unforgiving servant comes to stress the point on the duty to forgive each other as God himself forgives everybody.

If Jesus starts by portraying God as a king, for sure his intention is not to show that God is a tyrant, but to convey the message that he might become one if his message of forgiveness is not heard. In fact, the king tried to settle his account with his slaves, with the word slaves in this context meaning their total loyalty to him. The first one to be called was someone who owed him *ten thousand talents*, with *one talent* being the annual wage of a normal worker. This means that it was a big amount of money even impossible to pay. By being unable to pay, he showed the

³² Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, p369

³³ W. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, pp 370-375. Carter gives us a good exegesis of this parable, and we refer to it for that part.

king that he was not a faithful slave, so the king to assert his authority must punish him as an example to the others. But with the slave falling on his knees begging for pardon, and thus surrendering himself to the power of the king, the king's pride and honour is restored. He then forgives the slave "out of pity" and let him go in peace.

The second part of the parable is the reverse of the first. The forgiven slave finds himself in the shoes of the king in front of one of his fellow slaves who owed him some amount of money that was however very little compared to what he himself owed their king. The anger of the king kindled when he discovered that the same slave he forgave could not in his turn forgive his fellow slave who owed just a little money even though the guy felt to his knees like he did in front of the king. For sure the king, as Carter says³⁴ is not angry really because the slave did not forgive, but because the slave did exactly what he used to do himself. His honour thus wounded and his authority challenged, only a strong reaction could make his subjects understand that he is not weak. The slave is sent to be tortured until his debt is paid back; with the huge amount it is clear that he will be tortured till death for there was no way for him to pay back.

The conclusion of the parable is clear for those listening to Jesus: "Drawing from this cultural image, the ending shows that God will act as a tyrant king if God's will to extend forgiveness is not done."³⁵ God's power of forgiveness is not controlled by his honour or pride but by his love. He wants all human beings to forgive each other as he always forgives them. However, he will stop forgiving anybody who does not want to forgive his fellow human being, with in fact the fellow slaves representing the fellow human beings.

³⁴ W. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*. p 374

³⁵ W. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*. p 374

Forgiveness is one important aspect of our Christian life; it shows our difference from the 'world'. In the teaching of love of enemies, it appears very clearly that loving the enemy means first of all being able to forgive him '*from the heart*' (Mt18:35). It is quite obvious that one cannot pretend saying that is something easy to forgive the enemy and love him, it is even one of the most difficult thing to do and in fact, it is a miracle as Owczarek says³⁶. But the disciple of Christ is called to transcend his human nature and behave in an extraordinary way; he is called to forgive even the impossible, for forgiveness brings reconciliation and as St Paul says reconciliation is a new creation.

2-2 Reconciliation as New Creation in Saint Paul

2-2-1 God's reconciling love in Jesus Christ

The teaching of Paul is that God has brought us back to himself by reconciling us to him through the blood of his Son. The death of Christ is then the way chosen by God to save humanity from the power of sin and bring him back to life.

At Creation, the fall of the first man had broken the good relationship that existed between God and humanity (Rom5:12). As the author of the second chapter of the book of Genesis says, God and Man lived in perfect harmony with God and He used to visit them in the Garden of Eden. Man created in the image of his Creator, he was without sin and so was a perfect being. But cheated by Satan, man disobeyed his Creator and ate the forbidden fruit; thus doing he turned his back to God and was unable to receive him. The shame of their act made them hide

³⁶ C. Owczarek, *Class Notes on love of enemies in Luke and Acts*.

themselves (Gn3:8): the friendship was no more. They were now under the power of sin and of Satan.

The Incarnation had the purpose of restoring what was broken in the beginning. Jesus came to bring back humanity to the Father by breaking the power of sin and of Satan. Through Adam, sin came into the world; in Jesus, life came and sin and death were destroyed and the power of Satan over humanity removed (1Co15:22). As Paul says, through his death on the cross, Jesus reconciled all things to the Father, thus making peace (Col 1:20). Christ died for our sins and rose for our salvation. This means that in Christ's death, the old Creation was destroyed and in his resurrection, a new Creation was accomplished. With Christ rising from the dead God renewed his Creation. He destroyed the power of sin over man and gave a new freedom to him who was under the power of sin.

So, with the fall of the first man who made the whole humanity become sinner through him, God needed to reconcile to himself his creation that had turned away from him. And as we have already said, that re-Creation was accomplished in the death and resurrection of Christ. Though we had turned away from him, God did not abandon us to the power of sin, on the contrary, he, the offended, made the first step to bring us back to him. That last saying brings us back to what we have said previously: true forgiveness brings reconciliation and in reconciliation there is a new creation.

2-2-2 Reconciliation as New Creation

With the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Old creation has left the place for the New Creation to exist. With God's reconciling love in Jesus, a New Creation was brought about. By reconciling themselves with each other, Christians accept to

be part of that re-Creation; they leave the old person affected by hurt and the pain of the offence to wear the new clothes of the one who forgives and accepts to become new in Jesus Christ.

In forgiving and reconciling with each other we participate in God's act of making all things anew. When we reconcile, the old reality caused by conflict or by the offence is replaced by the new reality brought about by reconciliation. Like the old Adam has been replaced by the new Adam who is Jesus Christ, thus reconciling humanity with God, also when reconciliation is brought about between two people, things become new. The old life is left to the past, and the new life changed by reconciliation becomes the present and turn towards a future full of brightness: There is New Creation.

Conclusion

We have tried here to discuss about the biblical understanding of Reconciliation. The most important for us now is to see how the highlighting of this aspect can help the Ivorian Church in her mission to reconcile the Ivorian people with themselves. This is her pastoral challenge and her duty.

Chapter 3: Mission of Reconciliation in Christ: Pastoral challenges

“Speak tenderly to them. Let there be kindness in your face, in your eyes, in your smile, in the warmth of your greeting. Always have a cheerful smile. Don't only give your care, but give your heart as well.”

Mother Theresa

Introduction

One of the biggest challenges of the Church of Cote d'Ivoire today, is to be able to reconcile the Ivorian people with themselves. This is not an easy task, as we have tried to explain in the last part of our first chapter.

If in many levels of the society, people are trying their best to find a solution, the internal wounds and even pride make very difficult to achieve reconciliation. But this is a must for the Church to bring together the children of this country. Working for reconciliation is her biggest task and the church must put all her efforts to achieve it. However peace and reconciliation can be achieved if justice is restored, and if people are accepted the way they are, and if economic justice is restored. Human beings are equal in themselves, and no culture or nobody must claim superiority over the other. This is the mission of the Church today in Cote d'Ivoire, to restore people in their dignity and equality. The Church must work to renew the country; she has the duty to participate in God's work of recreation by helping Ivorians become new people, renewed by forgiveness and love. This is not an easy task but it is a possible one.

1- Preaching against War and Division: Justice and Peace

1-1 The Role of the Bishops

The role of the Church leaders in the actual situation of the country must not be neglected. In fact Bishops play a very important role in the life of the faithful. They are the light of the Christians who are ready to accept any recommendation

coming from them. Their spiritual and especially moral influence cannot be denied. Their voice is strong enough to change the life of the faithful.

Today people think that if the Church leaders had reacted in the beginning against what everybody accepts to be the cause of the actual war, the country would not have been where it is now.

There was a time when Christians participated in the exploitation of innocent peoples; when people were harassed because of their origin, be it foreign or not; when poor people were brutally evicted from their homes because suspected to be supporting the Opposition³⁷; when opponents were assassinated by the famous *Death Squad*³⁸; when Christians themselves were among the most corrupted of the country. The question, as Simpoire asks, is to know how many bishops stood up and reacted against all these? How many bishops called on their Christians to behave according to their faith? The answer is not many, even though some of them spoke out but in a language that was most of the times not clear for the normal Christians.

The bishops have realized that they must take a clear stand according to their faith, in front of the present crisis. It is clear that people might interpret their freedom differently, especially those who expect them to be on their side, but the gospel of non-violence must be preached; the gospel of love of enemies must be announced at all cost. Recently, on October 23rd 2004, the Episcopal conference met in Abidjan the main city and the decision that came out was a call on all the parties to work for peace, for "a return to war in the current situation would be a disaster for

³⁷ After the first Coup in December 1999, tens of slams were destroyed by the military power, and the same thing happened in the early hours of the rebellion. Innocent people were accused of supporting the rebellion and they were either expelled from the country or killed for the most unfortunate.

³⁸ *L'Escadron de la mort* or *Death squad* in English was responsible for the death of hundreds of people. Nobody knew who they were and where they came from. For any information on it, refer to Ivorian news on <http://www.abidjan.net/actualites/archives/2000-2002>

the country...this idea is to be completely rejected". Using an African proverb to assert their opinion, they said that "one cannot quench fire with fire".³⁹ They called on all the political and military leaders to remember the people that is lost and does not know where to go or what to do.

It is clear that the government would have hoped that the Church would stand firmly against the rebels and condemn them, but the bishops know that their duty is to be on no stand, if not on the one of Christ.

Even if the Catholic Church is fighting for peace on its side, the Moslem leaders are also doing their best to bring people together. Recently, Imam El Hadj Harrissou Fofana condemned the attempt by some foreign muezzins to launch a campaign of intoxication from mosques, in order to create a situation of hatred and anger, so that war may resume. The National Council of Muslims rejected some money given to them by some political leaders in order to create division. "According to Imam Fofana, the National Council of Imams and Muezzins of Cote d'Ivoire refused "the money of the corrupt politicians", saying that they would prefer freedom and independence in poverty, to opulence with slavery and destruction. He says the concern must be for peace, for love between Ivorians and foreigners, love between religious communities, and respect for each other and the beliefs of each community."⁴⁰

³⁹ The declaration of the bishops is found in the article *L'Eglise craint un Coup d'Etat.*, in *L'Inter* in, <http://www.Abidjan.net/actualites/L'Inter>, 10-24th-2004

⁴⁰ Harrissou Fofana: "Il faut ivoiriser les fonctions d'imam et de muezzin en Cote d'Ivoire in *Notre Voie* in <http://www.eburneanews.net>, 3 June 2004

1-2 The fight for justice as the duty of every Christian

To follow the example of their spiritual leaders is the duty of every Christian. Preaching against war and division is a responsibility that falls on all and this must be for each one a strong appeal.

War is an expression of hatred and this is contrary to the call of Jesus to love the neighbour as oneself and to love the enemy. So the Christian must work for what his faith calls him/her to do: fight for peace. This means that they have to free themselves from any ethnic, political bound, and they have to speak the truth and denounce anything that favours division and hatred among the Ivorian people. It is quite clear that in the current order of things, Christians face a big danger, because as individual they might put their life in danger, in denouncing any exaction, or exploitation or any injustice done by the political or military power of the zone where they live. This may result in something close to martyrdom. But as the Lord said in the Gospel, "happy are those who are persecuted for justice" (Mt5:10).

Christians must find in Scriptures the source of their courage and strength, and "every instance of the Ivorian Church is called upon by the crisis. Priests, religious and all Christians are called to be, as Paul says, ministers of reconciliations."⁴¹ The fight for human rights must be the concern for every Christian, and as Pope John XXIII said in his encyclical, "the rights of all should be effectively safeguarded and, if they have been violated, completely restored."(*Pacem in Terris*, n°62)

⁴¹ S. Sempore, *L'Eglise Catholique à l'épreuve de la crise Ivoirienne, à temps et à Contretemps*, p11

Pope John Paul II in his speech on World Day of Peace this year 2004 said that “the task of creating world peace is one which all people share. It is indispensable,” he said, “that everyone involves himself on behalf of justice, in respect for human rights, and in recognition of the duties that are implied.”⁴² This is the task of every Christian, of course, but it is also a call for the Christian to involve also others in that task.

1-3 Restoring social and economic justice

We have explained in the first chapter of our work that the Northern part of the country, in majority Moslem, is less developed than the South, in majority Christian. There is no need to accuse anybody on this fact, but the real need is to bring a kind of equality about these two parts of the country.

The Church has already started helping in the development of the less developed parts of the country by building hospitals, digging boreholes, but she needs to call upon the government to remedy some of these social injustices, of which not even the government can be made responsible. This does not mean that there are no schools or hospitals or water facilities in the North and it does not mean also that the North is extremely underdeveloped; it simply means that as compared to the South, the difference is clear, and this is one of the reasons brought about by certain members of the rebellion. But nature cannot be blamed for giving forest to the South and savannah to the North. The cocoa and coffee farms that are the roots of the Ivorian economy are found in the Southern part of the country, hence the better development of the South as compared to the North.

⁴² Pope John Paul II, *Homily on World Day of Peace*, in <http://www.zenith.org>

Nevertheless, the responsibility of the Church today is to call for a better life, not only for the Christians, but for all those living in the country. The equitable sharing of the wealth of the country is the duty of the government. Health care, social security, protection from the national police and gendarme, without harassment are some of the things that the Church has to fight for every person.

A lot of injustices are committed with impunity, like harassment of foreigners by some corrupt police or gendarmes, the daily racquets on the roads of the country, today both by police and by rebels, and which the Church has the duty and responsibility to be denouncing always, by calling on the authorities to take actions that can stop them and ease the tension that is growing too high. In fact, the politic of impunity must be stopped. Armed forces, who behave badly, not according to the Law, must be brought to justice and face trials.

2- Working for reconciliation: Pastoral Challenges

2-1 Internal healings

A serious challenge for the Church is to be able to heal the wounds of the Christians and reconcile them with themselves. And this is particularly a big problem for Mgr Joseph TEKY, the bishop of the diocese of Man⁴³, in the western part of the country. As a reminder, this is the place that witnessed heavy fighting, with the main tribes Dan and We, attacking each other and killing hundreds. Christians themselves forgot their faith and acted according to their ethnic belonging. The bishop, who remained in his diocese despite the war and its dangers, has the big challenge of reconciling the children of this region. Some Burkinabe

⁴³ Cf. map

Christians were also accused of fighting at the side of the rebels and participating in the killings of local peoples.

However, Christians have to remember their faith. As children of God, they are not limited to their ethnic group. They have rather been made free from all these, and as Christians, they are all brothers and sisters. There is need to forgive each other, as Jesus taught. In fact, if Christians want to be reconciled with the Moslems, they have to start with themselves. Healing the wounds with pardon is strongly necessary. Violence is contrary to the Christian faith, and it must not be carried about by Christians.

In the North, bishops and priests are working seriously to reconcile people. There, local Christians, that is, those originally from there were not attacked. A lot of priests remained despite the persecutions. Fr Jean Fouchot, a priest from the Society of African Missions, working in the North, explains: "our role as pastors wherever we are" he says, "is to invite our Christians to pray for themselves so that they may be workers of peace, and put in their lives, forgiveness and reconciliation, in the South as in the North."⁴⁴ Together with many other SMA priests, and other missionaries like the Salesians of Don Bosco, and local bishops, like Mgr Marie - Daniel Dadiet, Auxiliary of Korhogo⁴⁵, they are working seriously to bring about pardon and reconciliation between the people of the North and those of the South.

⁴⁴ Jean Fouchot, *Dans le Nord en pays senoufo*, in *Terre d'Afrique*, February 2004, p 6

⁴⁵ See Map.

*2-1-1 The creation of committees of reconciliation*⁴⁶

This is one way we think the message of reconciliation can go to the affected peoples. Even though people in most of parts of the two areas, rebel and government, still look at themselves with not a good eye, there are always many moderate who are eager to find a way of reconciliation and peace, with true forgiveness. It is clear that the bishops will have the duty to find people from the Christian communities with which they are working, who will have the responsibility to be messengers to the peoples. In fact, all tribes have a lot of priests who are respected by the Christians and who are able to work strongly for reconciliation. This is something that has been working already with the civil authorities.

Since 2003, a committee for reconciliation comprising leaders from the various religious communities and the civil party has been working hard to bring people together and talk of peace, even though their efforts have always been spoilt by the message of hatred and anger from the politicians. And the Church needs something of this kind to be missionary to the people, not only in the cities, but also in the remote places of the country. Real sensitisation works when people are approached directly and talked to directly. Starting with their own Christians will normally work, especially that priests, catechists, or church leaders are really respected in their communities. People like to listen to them for advice and solutions.

⁴⁶ We cannot confirm that this is taking place everywhere, but it is our suggestion, knowing the peoples because being ourselves originally from Cote d'Ivoire.

2-1-2 Working at the parish level

If in the North, missionaries are seriously working with their parishioners, to teach them pardon and reconciliation as Christians, in the South, this is not always evident. (Here, we might talk according to our own personal observations on the ground, and maybe, feelings.)

Most people from the tribes of the South consider the rebellion as being caused by Moslems. Today, the anger of the people, and even of certain priests, can be an obstacle to any reconciliation. Many diocesan priests have run away from the war zones to take refuge in the southern parishes, (They are nicknamed PDG, meaning *Pretres Deplaces de Guerre*)⁴⁷ and some of them speak with anger about the rebels. However the necessity today is to let the Christian in each person speak. Priests have the responsibility to rather preach peace, forgiveness and reconciliation as taught by Jesus Christ. Today the bishops are calling for reconciliation and tolerance; every Christian must carry it in his heart and in his life. To cool down the anger in the hearts is now essential if we want peace and reconciliation to be possible.

2-2 Ministers of reconciliation: *"Blessed are the peace makers, they shall be called sons of God" (Mt 5:9)*

2-2-1 Towards Moslems

"The challenge of dialogue is fundamentally the challenge of transforming relationships between individuals, nations and peoples in religious, political,

⁴⁷ "Displaced Priests of War". This is an irony because it is the title used for the General Manager of a company.

economic, social and cultural life. It is the challenge of Christ's love for all people, a love that the disciple must reproduce in his own life."⁴⁸

Dialogue with Moslems is important if the country wants to return to peace. The Church of Cote d'Ivoire knows its duty to dialogue with them and find ways of ending the crisis. Both communities wounded each other, so if they want to find common ground, dialogue is an aspect none of the parties must reject.

If there is place where *interreligious dialogue* is strongly needed, it is Cote d'Ivoire. The process started before, with Christian leaders and Moslem leaders meeting to discuss about certain issues, but today it must go deeper and stronger. The dialogue here must not be only on faith, but essentially, on the accusations of both parts of being targeted or discriminated by the other.

We can clearly say that the Catholic Church in the country knows its responsibility to be true witness of Christ in his work of reconciling humanity with the Father. Taking the first step is one aspect. The teaching of Jesus, which we have explained in the second chapter of this work, calls on each Christian to make the first step as the Father did in his work of reconciling humanity with Him. It is true that Christians in Cote d'Ivoire feel offended even humiliated, but the call is to transcend their human nature and act in the extraordinary way.⁴⁹ They have to understand that they need to behave differently from others. They are supposed to be the peacemakers and not the war makers. Christians need to cool down the angers. Decisions taken in anger are normally not the best ones.

Christians must become peacemakers; it is their vocation and their role. The teaching of Jesus in Luke 14:26-30, must remind the Christians that they have made

⁴⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Homily on World day of Peace*, in <http://www.zenith.org>

⁴⁹ Cf. Chapter on love of enemies.

a choice and they have to show that they are truly, not children of this world, but children of God, if they want to avoid to be mocked at. In fact what would people say of the Church if she cannot be peacemaker though she always taught it?

2-2-2 Working for the separation of religion and politic

Even if religion is one of the causes of the actual war, the conflict has not yet become officially a religious one, and this is an aspect that most Ivorians want to avoid at all cost. The reaction of Imam Fofana against the extremists reflects clearly this mentality in the Ivorian people⁵⁰. It is clear that each politician belongs to a particular religious denomination and that it might be difficult for some not to favour it. But there is need today to avoid working according to one's religion. More, for the Christian, his faith calls him to be just in his decisions and actions. The Church must then work to sensitise the Christian leaders not to be unjust towards Moslems.⁵¹ She must also work in dialogue with the Moslems leaders to avoid looking at a political leader according to his religion belonging. This can continue to create strong division and frustration.

3 A church at prayer

"Keep watch and pray..." Mc 14:38

With this strong recommendation to his disciples, Jesus highlights the importance of prayer in our life as Christians. The church of Cote d'Ivoire knows the importance of prayer in her life; because in fact without prayer to the one who gives her strength and courage, she will be able to achieve nothing. God who always listens to us will certainly hear a true prayer done with faith, sincerity, humility,

⁵⁰ H. Fofana, : *"Il faut ivoiriser les fonctions d'imam et de muezzin en Cote d'Ivoire in Notre Voie in <http://www.eburneaneews.net>, 3 June 2004*

⁵¹ This does not mean at all that all the Presidents who were Christians have been unjust to Moslems.

confidence, perseverance and hope. That is why as a recommendation to all, the bishops called on all Ivoirians to pray and attend the pilgrimage at the Our lady of Peace Basilica in the Capital city Yamoussoukro to pray for peace. The Church does not forget that “prayer is a sacred covenant between God and human beings” as Ghandi said.

With the difficult situation in which the country finds itself, Catholic Christians rely on God to help find a solution to the crisis. On all the Catholic radio stations⁵², the Church calls to pray to the Prince of Peace, Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, with the Rosary, so that peace may return to Cote d’Ivoire. Daily prayers are prayers for peace and reconciliation that are accompanied by works for reconciliation, because the Church knows that without prayer, her works are vain. She needs God to help and find a lasting solution.

Conclusion

The challenge of reconciliation for the Ivorian Church is a very difficult one, as we can see. However, it is her duty, and she must work to make it a reality for the children of this country. We have tried to give our suggestions in the way we think it can work in Cote d’Ivoire. The Church on her part is trying her best, and with the help of God, we hope that reconciliation will become a reality, because most Ivoirians today are tired of the whole war, and want a solution through dialogue, and not through war.

⁵² Radio Espoir and la voie de l’Evangile are the two main stations, with some catholic radio stations in the country side.

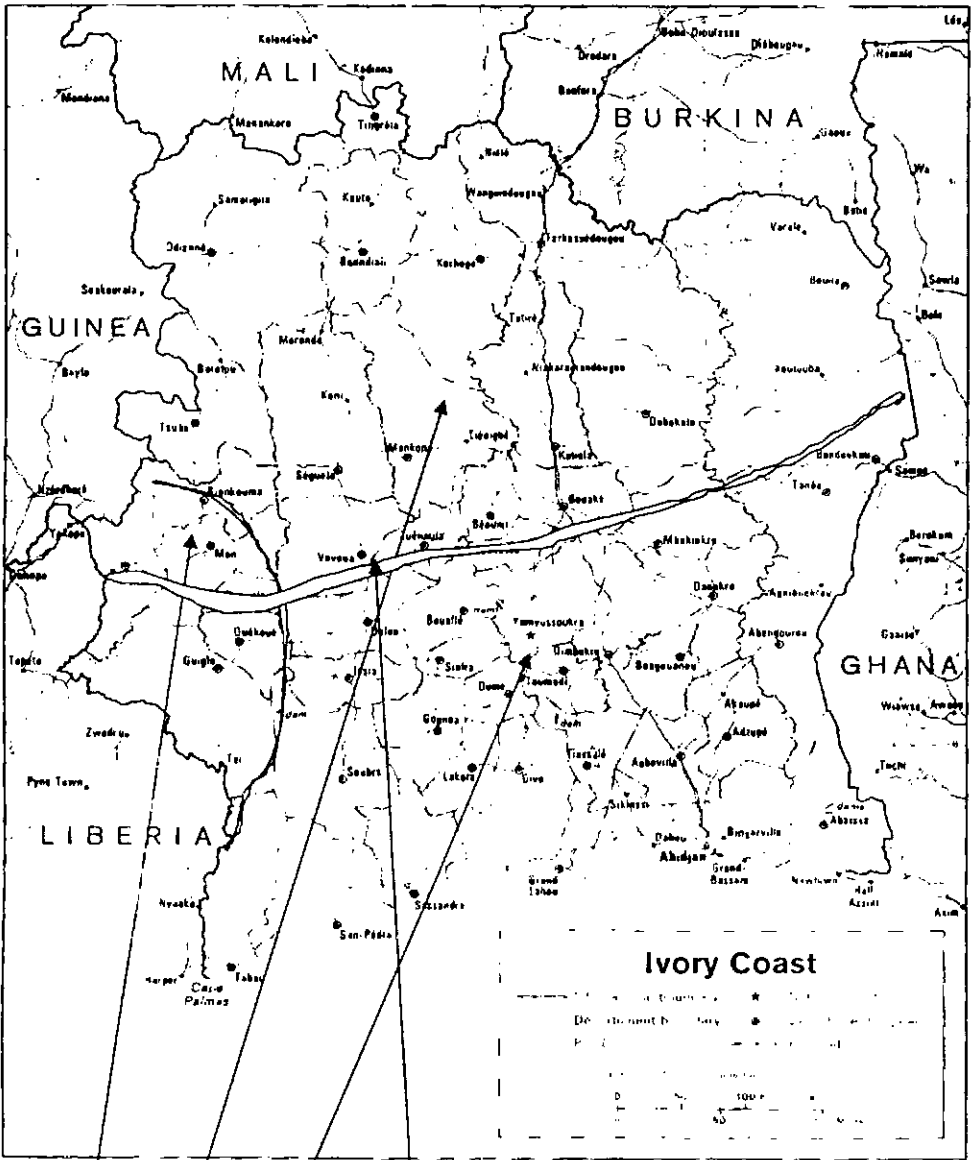
General Conclusion

Throughout this work on *reconciliation as a challenge of the Church of Cote d'Ivoire*, we have tried to suggest how the church in this country can reconcile the Ivorian people among themselves. By showing the actual reality of the country in the situation of war and hatred, we just wanted to show the actual difficult situation in which the Christians find themselves. However, despite all these things, Christians have to be witnesses of peace, love and forgiveness not only among themselves, but also and especially to others. And the purpose of the second chapter was to highlight the bible's teaching on love, forgiveness and peace, which will help the Church in her work for reconciliation in Cote d'Ivoire. This is not an easy task as we have seen in the first chapter, but it is her duty and in the last chapter we have tried to show some of the steps taken by the local Ordinaries in their search for peace, and we have also given some of our suggestions in the way we think reconciliation can be possible in Cote d'Ivoire.

The reader may have sensed some of our personal feelings throughout this work. But it has not been easy for us to totally differentiate ourselves from the people. In fact, being from Cote d'Ivoire and being a Christian, we share somehow the same feelings with the people. However the teaching of Jesus of being witnesses of love must prevail, that is why we have tried to show the actual reality scientifically from reliable sources.

We may not pretend to have exhausted in our suggestions all the ways the Church in Cote d'Ivoire can work for peace, but we hope that what we have suggested may help Cote d'Ivoire to return to peace.

Map



Diocese of MAN

North Rebels held areas

South Government held areas

Neutral zone held by UN forces

Sources: <http://www.google.com/cotedivoire/tourism/carte>

Bibliography

Books

- BECKER, Jurgen, *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles*, Westminster 1993
- CARTER, Warren, *Matthew and the margins*, New York (no date)
- CERFAUX, Lucien, *The Christian in the Theology of saint Paul*, London 1967
- DUNN, J. D. G, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, Edinburgh, 1998
- HARLON, J. Kevin, *Paul Pastor of Communities Today*, 1991
- LONG, Thomas G., *Matthew*, Westminster,
- OWCZAREK, Christopher, *Sons of the Most High*, Nairobi 2002
- PENNA, Romano, *Paul The Apostle: Wisdom and Folly of the Cross*, Vol.2, Collegeville Minnesota 1991.
- PERKINS, PHEME, *Love Command in the New Testament*, New York 1982
- SCHWEIZER, Eduard, *The Good News According to Matthew*, Atlanta 1975.
- SCHNACKENBURG, *The Moral teaching of the New Testament*, Germany 1965.
- SIMPORE, S. *L'Eglise Catholique à l'épreuve de la crise Ivoirienne, à temps et à Contretemps*, Abidjan, 2003

Journals

- Jeune Afrique l'Intelligent Magazine*
- BBC Focus on Africa Magazine*, January-March 2004
- Terre d'Afrique*, SMA Bulletin, February 2004
- Afrique Magazine*

Church Documents

- JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, Nairobi 1995

Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, St Paul, (no date)

Vatican II Documents, *Gaudium et Spes* in Austin Flannery, *Vatican II Documents The conciliar and Post conciliar Documents*, Bombay, 1995.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Scriptures

African Bible, Limuru, Kenya

New Revised Standard Version

Articles

Packer George, *Welcome into hell* in *The New Yorker and Jeune Afrique l'Intelligent*, in <http://www.Abidjan.net/jeuneafrique> l'Intelligent

Vallin Jacques, *Cote d'Ivoire: Mosaïque culturelle et identité nationale*, in <http://www.Abidjan.net/jeuneafrique> l'Intelligent

Davenport Kate, *On the Edge*, in *BBC Focus on Africa Magazine*, January-March 2004

Harrissou Fofana, *Il faut ivoiriser les fonctions d'imam et de muezzin en Cote d'Ivoire* in *Notre Voie* in <http://www.eburneanews.net/notrevoie>

Electronic

<http://www.google.com/coted'ivoire/catholicchurch>

<http://www.google.com/mothertheresa>

<http://Abidjan.net/jeuneafrique> l'intelligent

<http://www.google.com/ghandi>

<http://www.eburneanews.net>

Table of Contents

General Introduction	4
CHAPTER ONE: STUDY OF THE CONCRETE SITUATION	6
INTRODUCTION.....	7
1- Socio-Religious Situation.....	7
1-1 Social reality: A country ethnically divided: the Ivoirité concept.....	7
1-2 Religious Situation: Suspicion between Moslems and Christians.....	8
1-2-1-Religious partition	8
1-2-1-1 Moslems in the country.....	8
1-2-1-2 The Christian community	8
1-2-1-3 The Animists.....	9
1-2-2 Christians Vs Moslems/ South Vs North	9
2- Political Situation.....	11
2-1 A continuous rebellion in a country divided in two: North and South.....	11
2-2 Reconciliation Attempt	13
2-2-1 The end of fighting.....	13
2-2-2 Marcoussis.....	13
2-2-3 Declaration of “end of war”	14
2-2-4 Accra	14
2-2-5 Reconciliation among Ivoirians.....	15
3- The Church faced to the Crisis.....	15
Conclusion	16
CHAPTER TWO: BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF RECONCILIATION	18
Introduction	19
1- The First Commandment: Love.....	19
1-1 Love of God and Love of Neighbour.....	19
1-1-1 The first commandment in the Old Testament context.....	19
1-1-2 The Love command in the New Testament.....	20
1-2- Love of Enemies.....	22
1-2-1 The teaching in the context of the time of Jesus.....	22
1-2-2 The teaching of Jesus in Luke 6:27-35	23
1-2-3 Examples of love of enemies.....	26
1-2-4 Love of enemies in the early Church	27
2- Reconciliation in the New Testament.....	28

2 1- Jesus' teaching on Forgiveness: A reading of Matthew 18: 21-35.....	28
2-1-1 Forgiveness is a must	28
2-1-2 Message of the parable of the unforgiving ser	29
2-2 Reconciliation as New Creation in Saint Paul.....	31
2-2-1 God's reconciling love in Jesus Christ.....	31
2-2-2 Reconciliation as New Creation	32
Conclusion	33
CHAPTER 3: MISSION OF RECONCILIATION IN CHRIST: PASTORAL CHALLENGES.....	34
Introduction	35
1- Preaching against War and Division: Justice and Peace.....	35
1-1 The Role of the Bishops.....	35
1-2 The fight for justice as the duty of every Christian	38
1-3 Restoring social and economic justice.....	39
2- Working for reconciliation: Pastoral Challenges	40
2-1 Internal healings.....	40
2-1-1 The creation of committees of reconciliation.....	42
2-1-2 Working at the parish level	43
2-2 Ministers of reconciliation: "Blessed are the peace makers, they shall be called sons of God" (Mt 5:9).....	43
2-2-1 Towards Moslems	43
2-2-2 Working for the separation of religion and politic	45
3 A church at prayer	45
Conclusion.....	46
General Conclusion.....	47
Map.....	49
BIBLIOGRAPHY	50
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	52