

Topic : Problematic of the Stranger in the Divine Economy and Key Stakes of Today's Migratory Issues.

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Introduction

The reality of migrations which can be viewed through the prism of immigration and emigration is an identity seal of human beings in general and the human gender in particular, man being able to define himself easily as a moving being.

This idea is carried out by Bernard Lefort when he says: *“Being travelling people is part of our condition.”*¹ The migratory fact is an essential and fundamental element of life. As a matter of fact, the right to move implies the right to life. However, the control, and better still the restriction which is observed in the differentiated use of this right according to where one finds oneself on the planet, is the main cause of what is being called *“the migratory crisis”*. In fact since the beginning of the XXIst century, the migration of populations from Southern countries towards Northern countries has not stopped kindling the attention of media and fueling Western countries policies. If we consider the case of Africans with images and life stories brought back either from the Sahel roads or from the Mediterranean Sea, one can observe that the number of candidates bound for Europe increases years after years, leaving on the way numerous dead as well as potential candidates for modern slavery in Maghrebi countries. The Mediterranean Sea has not stopped swallowing human lives who actually were considering crossing the sea as the last step before the fulfillment of their so-called dream.

To the above risks one must add the whole battery of laws on immigration which are in force in most Western countries and which do not always warrant a long-lasting and acceptable stay to those who finally succeed in reaching them. According to Gerard Jaeger, *“In northern countries and in order to support alarmist speeches, people's opinion presupposes that this mass of population exclusively converges towards the North and that this continuous flux will lead the West to its loss.”*² Paradoxically, at the same time, an analysis of the phenomenon within countries of departure, especially the migrant's condition, seems to be neglected.

¹ Gérard, Jaeger. *L'immigration. Un état des lieux à repenser*. Ed. Eyrolles. Paris. 2016. p. 8

² Gérard, Jaeger. *Op cit* p. 16

However, and as Jaeger underlines it, half of these migrations concerns Southern countries among themselves, while travels to all Northern countries actually concern only 130 million people. And neither Europe nor the United States of America which by definition and by essence is migrants-based country, are the sole destination of this human transhumance. In the June 9, 2006 edition of the daily newspaper *Le Monde*, Koffi Annan, former UN general secretary declared: *“ever since there are borders, men cross them in order to visit foreign countries and to live there and work as well...As long as there will be nations, there will be migrants. Whether you like it or not, migrations will continue because they are part of life. The question is not to prevent them, but rather to manage them better”*.³ This reality is strongly underlined in the Bible. The first act of faith in God, which is thought to be in Abraham’s vocation, is intimately linked to this ability of man to move: *“Now the Lord had said unto Abram: Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father’s house, unto a land that I will show you”* (Gen. 12:1). From then on the faith of the believer will permanently swing to the rhythm of his/her ability to run in and out. In the same light, the Lord Jesus’ commission his disciples the day after his resurrection is driven by the same move: *“Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit...and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of world”* (Mt.28:18-19). Therefore the new people of God is set on the road and placed in a situation of permanent migration thanks to the faith in Jesus-Christ. This faith recalls God’s recommendation to the Israelites concerning the migrant: *“You shall neither wrong a stranger, nor oppress him: for you were strangers in the land of Egypt...but the stranger that dwells with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God”* (Ex.22:20; Lv.19:34). Unfortunately a glance around us shows that this divine commission is outdated because migration has become a major capital in the conception of national policies and inter-countries diplomacy, on a backdrop of populist discourse and xenophobia. Thus there is the necessity for being more precise with the divine will that surround this concept, considering the notion of the stranger as the crossroads. This light which is contained in biblical writings of the Old and New Testament -and which is brought to us through an updated exegetical reading- would appear as a proposal from churches in order to address current key stakes related to today’s migratory issues. That is the goal that we plan to achieve through our communication.

³ Gérard, Jeager. Op Cit. pp. 17-18

1- The Holy Scriptures and the Migratory Fact

It must be underlined that in a first context especially the Old Testament, the word stranger indicates any person who, not being an Israelite, belongs to what is referred to as “nations” or “Gentiles”. These people are submitted to other chiefs and to a religion different from that of Israel.⁴

- The stranger to the family, the clan, the tribe or the country. In Hebrew, he is a “zar”.
- The stranger who dwells temporarily in the country. He is called “nokri” by the Jews.
- The stranger who settles in the country. In Hebrew he is called “ger”; in the priestly literature, he is called a “tosab”.⁵

One fundamental fact is worth noting: each of the categories of strangers has to face a specific problematic. If the “zar” is viewed as an enemy, “*allophilos*” in Greek or pagan, the “nokri”, on his part, does not have any right; he relies on the hospitality which, in the East, cannot be turned away from him; the “ger” or “tosab” can be integrated into the Israelite community. One of Moses’ son is called “Gerschom”, which literally means “*I live in a foreign country*” (Exodus 18: 13-27).

The book of alliance exhorts the Israelites not to oppress the “gerim”. For example, Exodus 22:20 says: “*You shall neither wrong a stranger, nor oppress him; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt*”. Likewise, Exodus 23:9 also speaks for itself and is laudatory on this matter.

Deuteronomy’s legislation positions “gerim” on the same level with widows and orphans. It also recommends charity for them. Deuteronomy 14:29 strongly underlines the following: “*And the Levite (because he has no part or inheritance with you) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do*”. Priestly legislation also recommends them to charity (Leviticus 19: 33 and subsequent), but acknowledges that they have more important rights (Leviticus 19: 10; 23:22; Numbers 9:14...). However this legislation demands that “gerim” must be submitted to some religious obligations (Leviticus 16: 29; 17:8 sub; 20:2; 22:18 sub; Numbers 19:10).

At religious level, “gerim” relates more to the people and this prepares for their identification. So, “ger” in Hebrew was identified with “*proseluos*” or “*proselite*”⁶

⁴ « *Etranger* » in *Nouveau dictionnaire biblique augmenté et révisé*. Ed. Emmaüs.Saint-Léger. 1992. p.441

⁵ *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de la Bible*, Ed. Brepols Turnhout, Paris, 1960, P.595

⁶ *Idem*

However, two main categories of people among strangers were not taken into account and consideration:

1. Slaves who had been bought with money, and war prisoners whose life depended on their masters. These slaves submitted to Israelite laws (Gn. 17 :12 ; Ex.21 :20-21).
2. People who, without being Israelites, had adopted Israelites' religion, also referred to as proselytes (Gn 34 :14-17 ; Es 56 :6-8 ; Act 2 :10).

Moses' law and the Old Testament make a distinction between strangers who have settled among the Israelites but do not belong to their race and temporary non Israelite visitors. Here the stranger is to a certain extent considered as a citizen with rights and duties.

God ordered the Israelites to treat the stranger with much benevolence: *“And if a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. But the stranger that dwells with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God”*.(Lev 19: 33-34)

This disposition reminds the Israelites that they have experienced the condition of a stranger in Egypt and can therefore understand the state of mind in which a migrant finds himself. Banning them from oppressing or exploiting strangers presupposes vulnerability, fragility and a precarious state which summarize the real condition of the latter, should they let it shown or not. Simply knowing that one is away from home is enough to disturb a person mentally and psychologically, as the said person has no guaranty neither for his security nor for the goods at his disposal. Therefore he becomes the mirror of the human condition which is moving on the earth. Under the sun, man remains a stranger whose life is assimilated to the life of a traveler. That's what the author of the epistle to Hebrews and Peter the apostle expressed in the following terms: *“they all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seeing them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and exiles on earth...Dearly beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles, abstain from fleshly lust, which war against the soul”* (Heb.11:13; I Peter 2:11). This condition which relates to instability indicates that man does not have the paternity on assets which, as a matter of fact, are means put at his disposal by the Lord for his fulfillment during his pilgrimage on earth. One of the conclusions of Job's meditation on the meaning of life takes us to that reality, when Job says: *“And I said: Naked came I out of my mother's womb and naked shall I return there”* (Job 1:21).

The migrant status and the consideration that he is given derives from this global understanding given to the Israelite by God concerning his life. Therefore, the Law used to safeguard the interests of strangers. On the religious level, banning imposed on Israelites also concerned the stranger. He had the right to offer sacrifices to God and in case of involuntary sin, he could benefit from forgiveness granted to the individual or to the collectivity; refuge towns prescribed in Leviticus 17:8 and Numbers 15:14 protected him against a blood avenger. However, considering his status as stranger, the Law did not submit him to all religious duties imposed on the Israelites. According to Exodus 12: 43-46 for example, the law on the celebration of Easter was not compulsory for a stranger as it was for an Israelite. Through circumcision which was applied to a stranger, equality of religious law restored the meaning of celebrating Easter feast. Meaning “crossing”, Easter carries the genes of the coming out, the liberation, the restoration of a dignity that was muffled for a long time in the past (Ex.12:49). Finally, the Law on the celebration of the Jubilee in Leviticus 25:45-46 prescribes the liberation of a stranger who has been enslaved. He could be redeemed and become the property of his master’s children through inheritance. In order to safeguard and preserve its status as a saint population, some negatives prescriptions will be adopted concerning a stranger who is not assimilated. It is the case of laws banning mixed marriages between an Israelite and a stranger, forbidding accession of a stranger to the throne or exercising priestly activities.(Ex.34 :16 ; Dt. 17 :15 ; 23 :4, 8-9 ; 25 :5 ; Nb.18 :4).

Later on, this warning is going to feed a religious Puritanism which will lead some Jews neither to eat nor drink with the Gentiles. Actually this must be seen as an exception, not a rule, because Israel expected that one day with the return of the Messiah, strangers would become integrated into the kingdom. Therefore Israel is not the only people to benefit from salvation: salvation is destined to all nations on earth, should it start with the Israelites.

In certain cultures in Africa, the stranger is the one to kill a snake in a house, because house members always say that the snake is a totem of the father, the mother or the tribe. Therefore, they cannot kill it. The stranger’s presence is then necessary to cast out anything that might jeopardize the family.

The entire Gospel, all the Good News is the celebration of the witness that we have to render to the Truth and the Person of Christ as Light and Savior of the world. His crown is not a diadem that was put on his head; it is rather a crib, a trough waiting for his celebration. The salvation he brings is cosmic and universal because through Him, “*All flesh shall see the salvation of God*”, according to Isaiah 52:9-10 and Luke 3: 6. Through him, as Isaiah 52 says,

« Break forth into joy, sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has made bare his holy arm in the eye of all the nations, and all the ends of earth shall see the salvation of our God ».

One can notice that if in the divine economy, strangers generally didn't always benefit from important rights, it must be said however that they had the chance of enjoying generous gifts from wealthy people in welcoming localities. As far as the God of the alliance is concerned, what must be put forward concerning the human being is more his dignity than his status.

. The New Testament prescribes the love of the neighbor, and even the love of the enemy. But parallel to this prescription, it is written in the gospel not to give food to dogs in a house at the expense of children (Mt. 15: 21subs). Likewise, it is advised not give priority to pagans at the expense of the children of the Israel people, because after all, *“salvation is of the Jews”* (John 4:22). With reference to salvation that comes from Jews, who among us here is of Jewish origin? Aren't we all strangers compared with the salvation which is brought and given to us by Jesus-Christ?

Still in the New Testament, one of the key faith confessions that has shaped the Christian faith throughout the ages until today and even till the end of time was made in a foreign land, at Cesaree of Philippe. It is Peter's faith confession to Jesus: *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”*(Mt. 16:17).

The parable of the prodigal son provides us with some indications on the migration philosophy. While the prodigal son migrates with the “goods” that he got from his father, it is not the case for many candidates to migration today. He travels *“into a far country”* (Luke 15: 12-16). For this prodigal son, the foreign country is a den of vice and of fortune squandering. In that foreign land, he is compelled to do petty jobs. He wants to fill his belly with the husks that swine eat, but he doesn't find some. He wants to take care of lambs, but finds himself keeper of swine (v.15), which a low-grade job. The prodigal son makes a sudden u-turn: he thinks about his Father and his Father's home.

The prodigal son uses an expression which should be of his significance in this conference, when we consider the re-conceptualizing of the paradigm of the “stranger”: it is the expression “my father's home” (v.17). It can be seen in this expression: *“How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!”* Here I

am (outside, in a foreign land) and I am suffering terribly. For this son, the only solution is to return to his father's home for a dignified, plain and accomplished life. As long as we will be caught by sin, we will be in a foreign land even though we are in our home country. As long as we will not work for God's kingdom, we will remain strangers to God and to his house. And no matter how tasty what **we will eat, be it caviar** or foie gras, it is husk for swine. Thanks to this parable, the concept of the stranger is not related to a space as we tend to believe nowadays. It is related to a state, a relation of broken dignity that needs to be restored and rebuilt. It is no more a move "*from inside to outside*", but rather "*from outside to inside*". We therefore move from "*oikofugism*" to "*oikopetism*". The home becomes an attraction center and not a repulsion center.

If we go back to the swine-keeping job of the prodigal son, we find out that precarious jobs of today's immigrants in so-called "Northern" countries extend from prostitution, dishwashing in restaurants, corpse-washing in mortuaries, street cleaning, hospital and market cleaning, tomato and apple picking, to sweet potatoes harvesting in farms.

Finally the text about the demon-possessed man in Mark 5:1-13 is symptomatic with the problematic of the stranger. **Mark 5: 1-13: "Legion or stranger", a typical case of alienation.**

In the Roman army, a legion was a fundamental intervention unit made of 6,000 men divided into 10 cohorts and 30 **maniples**. This is the result of a reform undertaken by Emperor Marius in the year 108 before Jesus-Christ. In France, the legion is a military group created in Algeria in 1831 by Louis-Philippe, son of the Duke of Orleans and king of France from 1830 to 1848 (also called "the citizen king", he had to flee his country to seek refuge in England). The legion is mainly composed of foreign soldiers. That is why it is generally referred to as the foreign legion. One can therefore understand why the character in this passage is tormented by demons and nobody can bring him under control. He breaks all the chains that are used to subdue him.

Mark 5: 1-13: "Legion or stranger", a case of alienation. Jesus is in Gadara, on the land of the Gadarenes, located on the eastern side of the Tiberiad Lake where local and indigenous people live. It is still a pagan territory, not far from Palestine. Though it is not a Roman territory, Rome has a strong influence and domination over the territory. The character in the text is not a Roman either, but he has a Roman name. For him, it's a name of oppression. In

English, a stranger is called an “**alien**”. This is a typical case of someone living in his country but with an alien name. This name carries a demonic and evil power which alienates him. The stranger is not only someone who is not among his family, or who is not in his country of origin. He is first and foremost someone who has fled from God’s grace and protection. He is now under the power of external forces. When God is not the master of our lives and destiny, we become strangers to ourselves, to our neighbors and to God because the power of evil chains us. Clearly speaking, we are “aliens”, which literally means “strangers” to life and above all, to God’s grace. Jesus has to set us free.

“**What is your name?** », Jesus asks the man who is tormented by evil spirits that came from outside and took control of him.

v.9 “**My name is Legion, for we are many**”. The use of “**my**” as **for identification** is closely linked with “we” that introduces action. I am alone in front of you, but we act together. If these demons, driven by an evil spirit, act together, can we imagine how we, driven by the spirit of God and bestowed with “**common sense**”, could act even more together? If the spirit that chains the individual can put demons together, can’t God’s spirit which sets people free put us together for the benefit of people? The possessed man is abandoned and kept at a distance, alone amidst his numerous problems.

The character has a Roman name: for Jesus, the man who is not a Jew deserves God’s grace and salvation. But external constraints stemming from the external world are preventing him from benefitting from that grace. This text brings to light the problematic of all big ‘foreign names and foreigners’ that enslave Africa. These big “names” drag us into slavery instead of setting us free. There are numerous names of foreigners enslaving Africa today. You can find them in foreign corporations that exploit Africa. They are called Total, Shell, Bolllore, Adidas, not forgetting the names of all big international banks and other multinationals that work under the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The name “legion” appears to be synonymous of troubles, suffering, various forms of misery, as they are plenty. **Forces of slavery are never unique**. Generally speaking, they are numerous and varied.

Chained and excluded from society, this man has been deprived from his dignity, and has now to live among tombs. His neighbors are tombs and dead bodies. He is a living dead. By this we mean those who have been buried alive. He is living among tombs whose bodies are not those of saints. These tombs have been dug by our world’s evil powers. Only God knows how many we do have. Let’s not forget about the “**tumular**” culture in Africa which

varies from a population to the other: some bury corpses inside the house, others bury them outside...

Generally speaking, Christian faith which is dependent on Jewish faith is grounded in the logic and expression of walking. As a matter of fact in the Scriptures which constitute the basis and the reference mark of this faith, after the verbs “*to love and to talk*”, the verb “*to walk*” appears to be the most commonly used verb in God’s plan for the salvation of the world ⁷. To this verb should be added its multiple synonymous. If the movement of the walk (motion) is a characteristic element of human life in general, it appears to be its foundation as far as Christian life is concerned. In other words, in God there is no life which is apathetic, embedded in inertia, without positive change-driven initiatives in human lives and in the world. In the book of beginnings, Genesis, and in order to testify God’s intention, man is created at God’s image and according to his resemblance to the Creator. In so doing, like the Creator, man is intrinsically endowed with freedom which is consecrated by God (Gen.2:24), thus guaranteeing the right to self-affirmation: “*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh*”. To untie oneself from paternal navel and from maternal umbilical cord is a principle that lies deeply within a human being. It enables the human being to establish his aura and to leave one’s imprint in history. Therefore when God recommends that man should leave the family cocoon, get away from all spaces where he might be “*subordinated*” to the lordship of others, God’s real intention is to enable man to write his own history and to assert his freedom and dignity. Seen this way, “to leave” or “migrate” is surely a human act, but it is initiated by God for man’s fulfillment. That’s why the day after Christ resurrection -a foundation act of Christian faith and religion-, everything is focused on the dynamics of the movement: “*At the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, **came** Mary Magdelene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher...the angel of the Lord **descended** from heaven, and **came** and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it*” (Mt.28:1-2). The message of the angel and of the risen himself puts them at ease and set them into movement: “*He is not here: for he is risen , as he said. **Come**, see the place place where the Lord lay. And **go** quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead, and behold, he **goes** before you into Galilee; there shall you see him... And they **departed** quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy; and did **run to bring** his disciple word. And as they went to tell the disciples, behold, Jesus **met***

⁷ Jean Samuel, Hendje Toya. Rapport du Secrétaire Général de l’EEC au synode général de Foubot, mars 2010, p.3

them, saying All hail. And they came and held him by the feet... Then Jesus said unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see me. (Mt. 28:6-10). All these words belonging to the semantic field of the walk and expressing the quest for life –in opposition to inertia, resignation, or acceptance of death -, are clear testimonies and affirmation of the fact that everything is “movement” in the history of salvation which is granted to us through Jesus-Christ.

Therefore the walk, fundamentally a biological and existential act, bears a spiritual and evangelical meaning and range which are characteristics of a church in mission. The church which is created from the great commission we talked about previously has a “migratory” dimension in its Greek etymology: the “*ek-kaleo*”. The Gospel of salvation heralds that man is a “walking being”, and better still, a migrant whose peregrinations on earth prepare him for his entry into his final fatherland which is in heaven. This reality is expressed this way by apostle Paul: “*For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made by hands, eternal in the heavens*”. (2 Co. 5:1). This implies a consequent management of this status of pilgrim and a stranger, which is peculiar to all human beings and not only to a specific category, be it made of nationals from poor countries.

2- Is there a need to « Go »? : Root Causes and Consequences

Deep in a man lays the utmost desire for well-being, more-being and better-being. He cannot reach that goal if he doesn't move. In a speech to a selected group and while proclaiming the gospel of the resurrection, Apostle Paul tells Athenians that in Jesus-Christ “*we live, and move and have our being*” (Acts17: 28). Moving from a place to another, be it voluntarily or forced, is in line with the logic of satisfying existential needs, which is life.

How did one come up with making needs satisfaction -which is natural-, the magical key, the must-have solution to human problems? It becomes imperative to research the root causes of the situation if we want to address the issue objectively.

The main reason that candidates for mass migration to Northern countries put forward is the uncertainty of getting a stable job and of building a sure life project that cannot be guaranteed by studies and vocational training in Southern countries. To this existential reason one must add the ideological representation of the superiority of “the foreign” –and all that can be acquired there - on “the local”. The myth about the superiority of the image of the foreigner, namely the man with a white skin, has been inherited from a long-lasting historical construction that goes back to the first contacts between Africans, Arabs and Europeans. On

this issue, Mauny says: “*when a civilization is a judge of another civilization, except for extremely rare cases, she does it according to her own criteria so as to consider herself as too superior*”.⁸ That is what happened when Arab and Europeans authors came into contact with Africa. With help from prejudices and misunderstanding, Africa has been portrayed as a continent without civilization, without history. As an example, historian Kange Ewane agrees with this belief, explaining that this mechanism justifies the attribution of paternity of evangelism in Cameroon to English Alfred Saker instead of Afro-Jamaican Joseph Merrick: “*It has become a quasi-natural habit among western authors as well as their African disciples, to lend more easily to the White than to the Black*”.⁹

The image of the Negro-African that was created by the Arabs and the Romans and which has been circulating until nowadays by Arab and Western literature, press and mass media belongs to a mythical order. Yet it’s this image that justifies the rush towards foreign countries by many African students. The latter are haunted by the ‘white skin-man’ superiority complex they have developed and the expected outcomes.

According to Dieudonne Ondigui Mebenga, « *Emigration can only be the result of a deep and serious malaise and bad-being* ». ¹⁰ This assertion upholds that the migratory initiative must be considered as the ideal solution that people concerned use to address their various problems. This actually may explain an answer provided by a Cameroonian migrant who returned home from Lybia. To a journalist who was asking him: “*What are your plans now?*”, he replied: “*I am going to try again*”. This answer clearly shows that it may be superficial to make such an issue a common place by saying: “*what are they looking for? Where do they go? Why can’t they stay in their country?*” Or « *you people are staining Africa with your shameful adventures* ». Therefore we should fight hasty conclusions on the myth that depicts the West as a paradisiacal land where migrants’ sufferings will be over. The problem can be found in lifestyle, and better still, in the content of life that is offered to migrants in their countries of origin. As regards Sub-Saharan African countries in particular, the image they present is depicted by Ondigui in these terms: “*Most displaced people come from countries where life is not easy at all, states where dictatorship policy prevails, where the economy belongs to a minority which is protected by an invisible hand of a superpower*”.¹¹ Getting involved in a migratory initiative is not entering a race for a paradise,

⁸ Raymond, Mauny. *Les siècles obscurs de l’Afrique noire*. Ed. Fayard. Paris. 1970. p.5

⁹ Fabien, Kange Ewane. *Semences et moissons coloniales*. Clé. Yaoundé. 1985. p.24

¹⁰ Dieudonné, Ondigui Mebenga. « *Emigrations : Causes et conséquences pour l’Afrique* ». In *Aube nouvelle*. No 64. Déc. 2005. p.21

¹¹ idem

which means a place for rest, of consumption of the over-abundant goods that seem to make Northern countries. It is rather a logic that does not hide the denial of an established system in the migrants' home countries. It is a revolt against practices that are current in that system. Migration appears as an opportunity to get a job and to earn one's living with dignity. It is a possibility to express oneself, to live and to exercise one's right to live. Be it voluntary or forced, migration has a root cause that can be found in the lifestyle which is designed and offered to the population in countries of origin. In this light, Jean Marc Ela confirms: "*Repressive powers speed up brain drain and impose an environment which is favorable to the reign of arbitrary*".¹² In those conditions what is generally accepted is the prescribed alignment system: any declared or undeclared intention to criticize or denounce leads to anathema, even for the most obvious cases. This situation can be seen in many African countries through inertia demonstrated by trade unions whose vocation is to defend users' rights in any domain; the prohibition of any form of peaceful protest marches under the pretence of the law on trouble to public order that can gag any voice which contradicts the power in place, a humane power with its limitations and errors. Choked in its drive to express itself, driven into a corner, the people are compelled to leave at all costs and by all means, even if this departure means sacrificing what is left of their dignity or accepting to die on the desert Saharan roads, in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea or hanged on barbed wires at the border. Finally, emigration is no fun at all. It is because man feels himself a stranger in his own home country that he searches for a welcoming soil which, due to unforeseen situations, tends to become a land of pitfalls.

3- The Living Condition of the Stranger

In order to define concepts such as stranger and native, one has to abide by universally accepted criteria. Mongo presents this like this: "*Foreign community can be distinguished by particular parameters: external geographic origin, linguistic and cultural difference, and particular ethnic self-consciousness*"¹³ According to this author, coming from a different territory does not enable the stranger to have a historical grounding in his soil of adoption. This is due to the fact that the stranger is not the first occupant of the soil and he does not have a collective ownership right like the native. Having a linguistic and cultural difference

¹² Jean Marc, Ela. *Quand l'Etat pénètre en brousse...Les ripostes paysannes à la crise*. Ed. Karthala. Paris. 1990. p.23

¹³ Nsime Mbongo. « Identité et altérité en Afrique : Etude de la contradiction autochtone-étranger, le cas de Douala ». In Catherine, Coquery (dir). *Etre étranger et migrant en Afrique au XXe siècle*. Ed. L'Harmattan. Paris. 2003. p.281

means that the stranger's civilization values can be expressed in his new residence but will not with legitimacy impose themselves because only native's beliefs, customs, habits, way of talking, lifestyle and way of thinking, arts and professions have the primacy and are the reference, not to speak of the model.

The same applies when both the stranger and the native realize that they belong to a different ethnic group or nation. This leads to the affirmation that the native and the stranger do not fit themselves in the same community of destiny; neither do they have a common perception of their role and place in the country or town or in the same hierarchical position. The native experiences a "*fusion-like*" identity with his milieu: he is the one with whom people should identify. According to author Mbongo, he is "*the identity*". On the contrary, the stranger is out of phase with the milieu and thus cannot be referred to as "*a reference*"; *he is the other, the alterity, the unauthenticity*"¹⁴. He is the *allogenous*, the one whose genes come from elsewhere, in opposition to the native whose genes are embedded in the city or in the country of origin. The concept of "*autochthon*" (native) comes from the Greek "*chtonè*", meaning the "*soil*". An *autochthon* is a person whose origins are in the country where he lives. He is somebody who belongs to the land. The following words are synonymous to *autochthon*: *indigenous* person and *aborigine*. The word *aborigine* derives from the Latin word "*origo ou inis*" which means origin. He is a person who has lived in a country or on a given soil since the origins. It is on the basis of the semantic shades of these two words that the Greek elaborated on the philosophy of democracy with Plato and Aristotle. The borrowed the said democracy from Egypt where some of them had gone for studies. Nowadays, in the Americas as in Australia, strangers came in and seized the right to "soil" from *aborigines* and *indigenous* people, thus transforming the latter into strangers on their own lands. It is important for us to underline that when one uses the two concepts of "*autochthon*" and "*allogenous*", one immediately gets into the semantic field of genetics, and not in the dynamics of social relations. That is why in some of our countries and churches, some people insult God's sovereignty under the belief and perception that they belong to the "clean race or tribe", in opposition to others who must belong to the "unclean" race. We are therefore delving into Mendel's philosophy with genetics, and into Hegel with "*Synthèse de l'Histoire universelle*" and the "*Phenomenology de l'esprit*". With this *Synthèse* and this *Phenomenology*, Hegel's goal – on behalf of the Prussian power - was to shape a society where men would be pure and perfect.

¹⁴ Ibid, p.282

In fact, these philosophies are the ones that were used for political goals and led afterwards to the ideology of the « Aryan race », thus justifying the shameful exploitation implemented by the Nazi regime that killed millions of persons throughout the world during the last century. The only fate for the allogenous is alienation.

Whatever the years and places, the stranger has always been stigmatized and discriminated. He has been despised and sought after (but not loved), not desirable and indispensable. He is viewed as a threat to the fulfillment of autochthon people in that he is now part of the consumption chain of resources which are not always enough for all. In this light, logics and policies of marginalization and exclusion from sharing come into play. However in the impulse for production, the stranger is appreciated as he is a potential to be exploited on a permanent basis and at low cost. The drawback of this perception is that in the name of the instinct of self-preservation, the stranger will build self-defense mechanisms. At the psychological level he undergoes a double pressure: rejection and self-affirmation, because he is a stranger in his home country and his welcome country. For him, “my home” and “personal belongings” are concepts that are hard to define. Being a stranger positions the individual in an unstable living condition. Nothing is acquired with certitude, things can change overnight. It is because of this psychological and social pressure which the stranger has to address on a daily basis that God recommends legislators to enact specific laws to be observed concerning a stranger who is on the Israelite soil.

Once a man, always a man whatever the fate bestowed to us by life. Differences related to race, ethno-tribal origins, socio-professional status and religion should not serve as tools for categorization, exclusion or marginalization of a human being. As a matter of fact, there is no belly specific to the Black and another one specific to the White. Likewise, the heart of the poor is not different from that of a rich man. It is the same case with the blood that runs in our veins. All men are equal in humanity. And when they forget this equality, they are reminded by death. Exposing this truth lies in the consideration and care that God recommends for the stranger. But in our “globalized” world, there seem to be a paradigm inversion. So, depending on his North or South origin, the stranger is welcomed and considered as a “*god-solution*”, source of happiness and “*salvation*”, or as “*a problem*”, the incarnated evil which we should address or get rid of, or as a trade financial resource to be exploited.

Selected Immigration: the concept of selected immigration, which is the order of the day in many Western countries because it leads to populist calls, is a perfect illustration of what has

been said. Selected immigration is an ideological and political construction that enables a country to filter people who have the right to enter and live on its territory. This selection is made according to pre-established criteria, generally intellectual and economic criteria, be it to fill highly qualified jobs or on the contrary, low qualification jobs for which the receiving country lacks resources. These economic reasons may also stem from a more global analysis on the profit these immigrants may bring, criteria including age, professional qualification, health situation, capital brought. Other criteria such as the ability to get integrated in the receiving country exist or even co-exist. They include the ability to understand the language, culture, or values of the welcoming country. This policy is opposed to completely random immigration criteria, such as the lottery for access to Green card in the USA, or a Human Rights-based criteria. The same policy is also based on demographic criteria grounded on repopulation goal. Finally, it can also be a result of complete immigration freedom: in this case, political will is replaced by a mix of individual wishes. According to a more political discourse, selected immigration, selected immigration is opposed to forced immigration. That's is what former president Nicolas Sarkozy -who himself is a son of a migrant in France- did through a bill that he helped pass in February 2009. This bill made a clear distinction between immigrants who were accepted for their economic value and their ability to adapt and those immigrants who could benefit from the right to family regrouping or to asylum¹⁵.

Nicolas Sarkozy notably wanted to attract what he termed exceptional competencies, that is highly qualified people such as computer specialists, biotechnologies experts, scientific experts and men and women of culture. He proposed to grant them a three-year visa card. These proposals from Mr. Sarkozy, already being implemented in England, Germany and Austria illustrate *“a will for radicalization which does not help reflection”*, and as the then speaker of the French Socialist Party puts it: *“Considering the problem that is being addressed, it seems to me that its extremely inhumane to think that we are solving a problem by chasing men who may have got married, and eventually had children, who have been there for ten years and who will be sent back to their homes”*¹⁶.

Selected immigration strongly contributes to despoiling human resources with reference, the grey, in short, all potentialities of countries that supply migrants, asphyxiating these countries

¹⁵ Miriam Alma, « Sarkozy dévoile son immigration choisie. » in URL, [http:// www. France Terre d'asile](http://www.france-terre-d-asile.org). Consulté le 9 avril 2019.

¹⁶ Idem

and maintaining them in a permanent status of “*beggars and assisted countries*”. It is a cynic attitude which awakens agonies and evils of colonialist ideology that used to occur in previous centuries. This is a neo-Darwinist conception based on the theory of “*the survival of the fittest*”, a conception that nurtured and fertilized the ideology of the pure race with Nazism. The same selected immigration clearly shows the predation spirit which has been a trademark of Western nations throughout centuries is always alive. It is a new version of slavery and slave trade. For Southern countries, there are new slave traders and armed hands of this new ideology and they are the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

As long as the world economic order will be what it is, the fight against structural or temporal terrorism still has many long centuries to go.

Conclusion

From what has been said, we notice that be it voluntary or forced, migration positions the migrant in state of psychological uneasiness as well as social and economic insecurity. Thanks to its status which makes it unstable and without territorial anchoring in both country of origin and country of destination, faith community with former Israel has been and still remain the reference which in history provides us with a particular understanding of the migrant status and of special legal measures taken in order to frame it. Through our analysis, we have been able to grasp divine will as contained in sacred texts of the Old and New Testament. This analysis leads us to declare that the migratory issue as it has been raised in contemporary discourse is a topic that questions our humanity. When carried by a dehumanizing globalization the market economy positions the human being exactly like wood or oil, the Church, body of Christ and sacrament of his kingdom on earth should be scandalized and take a stand. We must clearly say today that the situation of migrants is dividing the international opinion. Between alarmist discourse heralded by one Mr. Donald Trump in the United States of America and in part of the European Union, and the will to welcome strangers as expressed by German Chancellor Angela Merkel as well as Vatican Pope Francis, churches voices and deeds are still not so audible and visible on the matter. As for me, this is what justifies the present conference.

In fact the migratory issue betrays our humanity, the stranger being considered as the sum of human aspirations, exposed to hearty impetus, solidarity and brotherly love. What can

churches do to address such a tricky issue? Church sermon on this matter is actually the expression of her understanding of her being and role as institution and sacrament of the kingdom of God. If the Church can be defined as a community of people who have been called out of the world in order to build the body of Christ, this fundamental call is unconditional and therefore is open to all men and women who freely and joyously devote themselves to the Lord. The Church becomes the framework in which the status of the stranger which used to be reserved for its different members is restored “ *Now therefore you are no more strangers and sojourners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the house of God*”, declares the author of the Epistle to Ephesians 2: 19. This verse is echoing the Epistle to Galatians 3:13 which advocates reconciled diversity and differentiated consensus. The same applies to shared solidarity, concerted development in order to build a community of destiny. In order to achieve this, we need tools that can channel energies around a unifying ideal to be built and sustained. Therefore we chiefly have to refrain from distorting roles and prerogatives.

The Christian is thus a person who has been regenerated by God’s Spirit, and who happily welcomes his newly status of redeemed person. Consequently, the duty of welcoming any foreign person becomes a founding factor of his “spiritual DNA”. In the parable of the judgment of nations by the Son of man, the Gospel underlines that welcoming a stranger is one of the conditions set by the Judge: “*Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come , you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in*” (MT. 25: 34-36).

The urgency of our mission is not dictated by the number of sermons delivered or the number of baptized church members neither the number of faith confessions well elaborated. What matters are the diaconal actions preparing for the coming Kingdom for those who live in extremely fragile and precarious conditions.

Therefore there is urgency in the framework of our Churches mission and witness, to build a synergy for concerted actions in order to accompany migrants in their projects. Our actions should be implemented in countries of departure (in that regard we appear as ambassadors to this august assembly) and in welcoming countries, without forgetting stop places which make up the migratory route. This can be achieved through organization of special training on migratory issues for church leaders, design of programs to accompany migrants, and construction of a theological center focusing on migration issues. If this is not done, all the hustle and bustle on democracy and human rights will simply appear as pure fantasy. In fact, democracy really exists in Southern countries only when it

serves Western interests. May this contribution be used as a basis for the dawning of a new missionary dynamics at the service of migrants.

Thank you indeed.

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