

**WORLD STUDENTS CHRISTIAN FEDERATION
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**THE DEMONSTRATIONS OF EMPIRE TODAY:
WHAT CHALLENGES TO CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES**

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Currently, it is easier to hear people say that today's world is lead by few well known people of the planet. Whoever dares to oppose their desire is fought until his last entrenchment.

There are several young of our time who don't understand really why such things can exist whilst one believed that government's system that is called « democracy » should make the thought evolve in a more just way. In fact these are reflections on such ideas that brought many people to discover that nowadays empires do still exist and they want to dominate the world at any cost.

If such is a case in the secular world, what is it happening in the religious field? We will see briefly the reflection on the signs of the empire today as per the following outline:

- Some definitions
- Empire in the politico-economic arena
- The demonstrations of empire in the religious sphere
- The Christian communities facing the challenges of the empire

I. Tentative definition

Empire can be defined in several ways, in particular when one knows that the word meant something in the past centuries and that today, it covers with other aspects even though all of them are more or less close.

a). In its first assertion, Empire² is the regime where the sovereign political authority is exercised by an emperor.

It is also a set of territories, or countries governed by a unique authority³.

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² Talking about the empire, we prefer to use E (e capital letter) because it designates a nearly personalised entity. Henceforth we will therefore write Empire in lieu of empire.

The exposé is intentionally of a middle type in its development in order for a bigger number of young to be able to understand its content.

³ Petit Larousse Illustré, 1996, p.382. For sure this laconic definition does not cover all the ideas we will be developing here.

When looked at it from this perspective, the empire has some given geographical limits, having one person who leads it and the institutions that tend to give to the emperor the whole power.

However, there exists today Empires that cover a precise territory but where the emperor only has a regulatory power of the society. The institutions governing the country are absolutely democratic. This for example is at the moment the case of Japan.

b). According to another point of view, the Empire is also a powerful and very large industrial, commercial and financial group. This kind of empire spreads on several countries or even several continents⁴.

c). Here, the kind of empire that especially interests us is the one that can be schematized like a political subject that in fact regulates the world exchanges. It is the sovereign power that governs the world⁵.

II. Empire in the politico-economic arena

While speaking of the industrial, commercial and financial Empire, we deal with the role of the multinationals that manage the world economy⁶ through commercial societies that are found in several countries with different names. They sometimes operate under assumed names in order to serve the same objectives. Sometimes, they are shield societies that discharge officially what their job specifications indicate but they also get involved in playing several roles more or less occult, of which the blanching of dirty money. Their true owners are those people who control the wheelworks of the world economy.

More than ever before, the demonstrations of the Empire are today visible through the hegemony of some well known institutions in some countries from the North⁷. When looked at closely, «the Empire means above all», for these

⁴ As a general rule, they are not legion to operate in some corners of Africa.

⁵ Michael Hardt and Tom Negri (H&N) wrote a very interesting book on the Empire. This book met with several works of critics. We can refer to it as indicated here.

M. Hardt and A. Negri, Empire. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000

⁶ People in Africa know very well the multinationals like Air France, Shell, General Motors, British Airways, etc, just to name a few because their number is impressive and their functioning mode everywhere is practically the same: Their leaders are somewhere in the North and the branches are spread throughout the world. The big parts of the interests are repatriated and only a very small portion is allocated to the host country under the title of cooperation or development.

⁷ Nowadays while talking about the countries from the North, one especially thinks about those industrialized countries that are regrouped in what is known as G8. Certainly that group is more and more widening to other emerging industrialized countries which in recent past were among the poor but they play today a key role in the world economy. One opposes the phrase 'Countries from the North' to that of 'Countries from the South' and these ones include the great cohort of countries with a low income but which nearly all of them are located in the South hemisphere, while others are significantly in the North hemisphere.

countries, «the new shapes of unlimited sovereignty that knows no boundaries anymore or rather that only knows flexible and mobiles borders »⁸.

In its demonstrations, the Empire is an entity with neither spatial nor temporal limits. It is yet being governed and kept by people whose sole concern is to be the only masters commanding the history.

Since their office is located somewhere in the North, the new emperors impose their rules and force the poor and the voiceless to follow their way.

No part of the world escapes their ascendancy. And since the borders became flexible and mobile for these new masters, the world became therefore a global village.

The most positive demonstrations as well as the most pernicious of the Empire are various and we put them pell-mell:

a) The New Technologies of Information and Communication (NTIC) that have the ambition to reach everybody are part of the signs of the Empire.

Therefore, the internet that once was intended almost exclusively to armies from the countries of the North for the purpose of fast communication is today accessible to all. But then, all internets' users or nearly all of them know that they are «netted» by those who control the world for « the needs of security for all» as they say. The Empire recruits everybody so that each provides the information it possesses and so that when time comes it uses this information as it pleases without moving from its command station⁹. But from time to time, the poor who have no access to these services escape this control because the Internet is not yet introduced in their village and even in city, some don't have access due to the lack of electricity there. Even in the big cities that are served with electric energy, the inopportune interruptions of power don't let people enjoy these NTICS properly.

In addition, the purchasing power of several people in Africa is so low that it is not possible for them to buy a personal computer and to get their own telephone so to connect at will. And what about the cybercafé? This is yet another problem for these shopkeepers because their devices are so often grilled by the inopportune electric blackouts.

The telephone today is almost everywhere except in the most remote villages where accesses are very difficult. However each one also knows that his/her

⁸ Cf. critic note on the book by H&N supra, January 2002

⁹ There is no doubt for anyone that all the messages either sent by email or SMS are registered and stored somewhere in view of investigation needs in case of any aggression or terrorism. Moreover it is in the same way that in the ports, airports, and other public places we are all shown on the radar screen without consulting us, this for common security as they say. Incidentally this seems to be true.

telephone, landline or mobile, depends on a transmitting station that controls everything!!!

The radio informs and must train people up to the most remote villages. What happiness for all!! But each one also knows that henceforth, the peasant who has his small radio set must be able to get regularly the means to buy the batteries that will allow him to have access to information. In the same way, none ignores the polluting effect of the batteries in decay. In addition, the radio can also channel pernicious ideologies, an ominous propaganda in lieu and place of a sound education hoped for. One remembers the negative role played by the radio «mille collines» (thousand hills) in Rwanda before and during the 1994 genocide there, etc.

The ambition of the Empire is to impose its rule in the whole world in term of globalization. It assumes that a world order exists and of which nobody should depart from except itself that makes a reading of its own. In fact the «modus operandi»¹⁰ of this world order is implemented by the international institutions. Thus, the United Nations, since the Gulf War until the Kosovo, sustain and implement a right of intervention as a fashion of regional and national crises resolution and resemble more and more to a globalised police. The NGO, through the defense of the human rights, provide the necessary moral framework to all regulating interventions of the UN. The Empire puts some systems into place for the legalization of force. It intervenes everywhere it assumes is necessary. As said above, the Empire therefore knows no borders or, better, it displace them as it wills, by adjusting and correcting through the juridical police intervention those contradictions that tend to weaken its sovereignty. According to the Empire's point of view, the power is at the same time everywhere and nowhere. Nothing or no one has to oppose it in a durable manner to its hegemonic aims.

Several authors ended up by personalizing the Empire by giving it an American face. However, not only the USA has pretensions of a modern empire but also the other countries from the North, Europe and also countries from the East. Some African countries alas have the same desires. But in general, Africa undergoes their repeated multilevel assaults.

But the Empire also appears in the religious sphere.

¹⁰ In these lines we freely exploit Saverio Ansaldi's article without making direct quotes: cf. *Les Multitudes dans l'Empire* (Multitudes in the Empire). Written in November 2000

III. The demonstrations of the Empire in the religious sphere

The desires of domination are also present in the religious¹¹ domain: firstly in the time of the mission during the past centuries and then today under other forms.

a) The mission at the service of the Empire?

History recorded that the past centuries' mission had many possible incentives: The first goal is to bring *the holistic gospel to the holistic man*¹² and to all peoples that had not yet known it. Unfortunately, most Africans reported later that the missionary who brought the gospel came in the same boat as the one who came to colonize the African lands. Therefore, the Bible and the cannon were brought together and reached the African at home and in his/her soul. It's almost admitted by all people that the missionary, even animated with good faith, has sometimes been used to prepare the hearts in accepting the reality of the colonization. In several parts around the world the missionary and the colonist were accomplices in the miserable situation of the «indigenous» peoples. The missionary, generally a chaplain on the boat of the «slave ship» first and on that of the «colonists», didn't have a lot of choices since his physical protection largely depended on the strength of firearm of those people who advocated for other reasons/things than him. As the colonial Empire got settled, the missionary also installed his places of worship, his schools of literacy in national languages for the British and the French cultures. The missionary put also deeds of gospel testimony into place and these included clinics, nurseries, centers of agriculture, etc. In resisting the expropriation of his lands the African knew very well that he had neither the physical force nor the power to refuse what was happening¹³ to him.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Christian mission and colonization succeeded in spreading the colonial Empire everywhere they were able to, at least in Africa. Henceforth, the colonized lands belong to the new masters of those places. The industries of the colonizing countries could find the raw material at a cheaper price so as to have their products with no much worry. All

¹¹ We'd like to exclusively focus on Christianity. We can have a lot of things to be said by covering the issue in Islam and endogenous religions (Africa traditional religions)

¹² The holistic Gospel to the holistic men was a very dear phrase to the late pastor Seth Nomenyo, the then Secretary to the Theological Animation, at that time known as «Communauté Évangélique d'Action Apostolique» (Evangelical Community for Apostolic Action). Today the CEVAA is called Community of Churches in Mission.

¹³ In Dahomey (Benin) for instance, the fierce resistance of the King Béhanzin of Abomey met the strike of fire from the well-armed colonist with no resistance and he was finally compelled to surrender. The King was deported and he died in exile.

the investment done at that period was first focused at the interests of the colonizers. The roads and the railways served in bring the raw material from the countryside toward the seashore where the boats waited for their loadings toward the metropolis or toward its customers.

The mission got settled and also had the goal to illuminate the African peoples. It was the missionaries who brought several Africans out of the illiteracy, the ignorance and other several evils that mined them. *«It is necessary to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God»*. **All missionaries were not necessarily the auxiliaries of colonists.**

The mission that had become attached to the service of the Empire was not that negative. But this is not enough.

b) The anarchical proliferation of religious denominations

For a long time, only those Churches that descended from the 19th century mission had a right of city in several African countries. The Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches were only some dozens in several African countries until the era of African independences. But since these forty (40) last years, several denominations at the service of the new Empire were settled into several African countries, even relaying what was at one time called «the cold war». No one ignores that some Churches were sometimes planted by well rooted lobbies outside of the continent. Not only their spiritual ideology is meant to divert the real faith, but also their practice is contrary to all African morals. Several Churches and other «spiritualising» groups are waiting rooms of occult practices and illicit trades. They are financed strongly by gurus of the Empire who control all those accepting to pledge to them allegiance¹⁴. Several jobless young graduates are attracted by the work and the wages that are proposed to them in return for services that have nothing to do with the ideal expected from young believers;

Throughout the big majority of more than four hundred (400) denominations that sometimes are next to each other on the same national territory, several among them are at the service of the Empire that looks for dominating at any cost the country that it didn't succeed in grabbing through politics or weapons.

In the face of all that, what to do?

¹⁴A story went around that in one of the African countries there was at one time a Christian group recruiting many young to be hired in the pastries on a condition of their allegiance to the planetary family ideology. According to the hearsays from those who approached the group, mass marriages were celebrated. This group exploited the misery of the unemployed youngsters.

IV. The Christian community and the young students facing the challenges of the Empire

While revisiting the demonstrations of the Empire, we can easily find that:

- It is deployed in the economic domain by nearly taking in hostage all wheels of economy in poor countries in general and particularly in African countries
- Through the international financial institutions, it brings several on their knees because the debt burden can't allow them to deal with the essential.
- It controls the world through the communications in the name of the necessary security for all.
- The population weak strata that are the women and the young are used for undisclosed ends.
- Through the religious confessions, the Empire penetrates everywhere and reduces the pockets of resistance to its ambition to control all the systems of management of the poor countries as well as other many things, etc....

Therefore one may note that several African countries are not really free and that, in order to have peace, it becomes necessary to get into the favour of those persons who are responsible of the Empire. At best, numerous young can only find a job at the cost of compromising with mafia environment. For unemployed girls and female students, the local intermediaries require the «right of thigh» (having sex) before they begin looking for a job.

The religious communities and especially the Christian ones that should have a prophetic vision of their mission let themselves embark easily in tasks that are incompatible with their ethical vision of life.

That's why the Christian communities in general and the Christian students in particular must take up their responsibility. They need:

- To be courageous enough to point out those who are the representatives of the Empire on the global as well as the local level.
- To denounce the Empire malevolent practices which sole goal is to control the whole world willingly or not.
- To reject compromising actions that are proposed to do away with poverty
- To reinforce the capacities of the women and the young so as to meet the basic needs.
- To put into place appropriate mechanisms for solving problems as related to unemployment of the young. In this regard the Churches have to accept to cooperate with all those who can honestly help them fight against poverty and numerous illnesses that weaken several people.
- To help the African governments in controlling the anarchical implantations of religious communities which officiate under the cover of Empires.

- To encourage the young to stay in their country instead of willing always to attempt the migratory adventures that may end up in unsure wreck landings.

Conclusion

Empire today refers to the notions of centers and peripheries. The Empire is at the center and rejects all others at the periphery. However it knows that threats to its integrity exist because it is unmasked by the oppressed of all kinds.

It is up to the dominated people by the Empire to take up their responsibility in order to reject its dictate everywhere it attempts to impose itself. The combat can be very tough and perilous but if nothing is done, one will have been defeated before even having started. By God's grace, the victory is possible.

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