

Law, Religion and Reconciliation in Africa



Edited by
M. Christian Green
Jean-Baptiste Sourou
Célestin Gnonzont



LAW, RELIGION AND RECONCILIATION IN AFRICA

Editors

M. Christian Green
Jean-Baptiste Sourou
Célestin Gnonzion[†]

Associate Editors

Abiola Akiyode-Afolabi
Mahfoud Ali Zoui
Komoé Guy-Roland Kossonou
Loreen Maseno
Kenosi Molato

 **PROSS**

Law, Religion and Reconciliation in Africa

Published by African Sun Media under the SUN PReSS imprint

Place of publication: Stellenbosch, South Africa

All rights reserved

Copyright © 2024 ACLARS

Abstracts of conference papers published in this volume were peer reviewed and approved by the editorial board of the conference before the conference took place. Papers submitted for publication were subject to a further round of single-blind peer review by two reviewers, resulting in further revision of the papers for publication.

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any electronic, photographic or mechanical means, including photocopying and recording on record, tape or laser disk, on microfilm, via the Internet, by e-mail, or by any other information storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission by the publisher.

Views reflected in this publication are not necessarily those of the publisher.

First edition 2024

ISBN 978-1-991260-26-0

ISBN 978-1-991260-27-7 (e-book)

<https://doi.org/10.52779/9781991260277>

Set in Palatino Linotype 10/13

Cover design, typesetting and production by African Sun Media

Portrait of Célestin Gnonzion by Justin Oussou, artist, painter, and professor of graphic art, Department of Information and Computer Sciences (SCI), University Félix Houphouët-Boigny (UFHB) Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

SUN PReSS is an imprint of African Sun Media. Scholarly, professional and reference works are published under this imprint in print and electronic formats.

This publication can be ordered from:

orders@africansunmedia.co.za

Takealot: bit.ly/2monsfl

Google Books: bit.ly/2k1Uilm

africansunmedia.store.it.si (e-books)

Amazon Kindle: amzn.to/2ktLpkL

JSTOR: <https://bit.ly/3udc057>

Visit africansunmedia.co.za for more information.

Contents

INTRODUCTION	i
<i>M. Christian Green and Jean-Baptiste Sourou</i>	
FOREWORD	vii
<i>Jean-Baptiste Sourou (English translation)</i>	
PRÉFACE	xiii
<i>Jean-Baptiste Sourou</i>	

I. NATIONAL COMMISSIONS & RELIGIOUS
COUNCILS OF RECONCILIATION

1	The palaver tree and reconciliation in Africa: The case of the Ivorian military-political crisis from 2002 to 2011	3
	<i>Komoé Guy-Roland Kossonou</i>	
2	Political violence, electoral justice and political accountability in Kenya and Côte d’Ivoire	13
	<i>Elias O. Opongo</i>	
3	“If you are strong, let’s meet outside. I will show you”: The dark side of the National Reconciliation Commission in Ghana	27
	<i>Saibu Mutaru</i>	
4	The South African TRC and Meccan Amnesty: An analysis of justice, forgiveness and reconciliation	45
	<i>Nabil Yasien Mohamed</i>	
5	The Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) and its roles in reconciling religious conflicts in contemporary Nigeria	65
	<i>Mujahid Hamza Shitu</i>	
6	The contribution of the Mozambique Christian Council to peace and reconciliation in Mozambique	83
	<i>Maurício Jesus Sérgio Chipatime</i>	

II. AFRICAN TRADITIONAL APPROACHES
TO RECONCILIATION

7	Traditional chiefly power and its implications for peacebuilding, reconciliation and human rights in Ghana	99
	<i>Seth Tweneboah</i>	

8	African indigenous religions and the practice of <i>Mmaditsela</i> marriage negotiations: Bridging and resolving ethnic differences in Botswana ...	115
	<i>Senzokuhle Doreen Setume</i>	
9	Conciliation and reconciliation: Marriage and intermarriage as strategies in pursuit of peace in traditional Shona Culture	127
	<i>Enna Sukutai Gudhlanga & Angeline Mavis Madongonda</i>	
10	The uniting power of customary oaths among communities affected by ethnic violence in Kenya's North Rift	139
	<i>Susan M. Kilonzo</i>	
11	Conflict, religion and mediation in African traditional society: A case of conflict between Muslims and traditionalists in Epe, Lagos State	155
	<i>Danoye Oguntola-Laguda & Joseph Moyinoluwa Talabi</i>	

III. MEDIATION AND ARBITRATION IN RELIGIOUS & CUSTOMARY COURTS AND TRIBUNALS

12	Religious courts and tribunals in Africa: An overview	171
	<i>Mark Hill KC & Andrew Scarafile</i>	
13	Religious courts and tribunals in Nigeria	191
	<i>Idowu A Akinloye, Oladiran Ayodele & Jeremiah Olalekan Adeniji</i>	
14	State oversight of religious courts: The Kadhis' Courts in Kenya	207
	<i>Faith Kabata</i>	

IV. RECONCILIATION IN POLITICAL AND POST-CONFLICT CONTEXTS

15	Religion in Ethiopia: Its role in conflict and peace	225
	<i>Mohammed Dejen Assen</i>	
16	The peace of war in an agonistic space: Critical perspectives on the African Great Lakes Region	247
	<i>Emmanuel Bueya Bu-Makaya, SJ</i>	
17	Depoliticizing Njuri Ncheke as a model for continued influence in peacebuilding among the Ameru people of Kenya	263
	<i>Julius Kithinji</i>	
18	The intricacies of peacebuilding and reconciliation: Reassessing traditional ceremonies of deliverance and forgiveness in Mozambique	277
	<i>Marlino Eugénio Mubai</i>	

V. WOMEN, GENDER & RECONCILIATION

19	The nexus between gender justice, reconciliation, ecclesial enculturation, biblical interpretation and the UN Sustainable Development Goals	293
	<i>Linda Naicker</i>	
20	Socio-political factors determining women’s participation in crisis management following the 2019 legislative elections in Savè, Benin	307
	<i>Tchokomi Sabine Toungakouagou Sama</i>	
21	Owning the right to truth, trauma and reconciliation in South Africa’s Constitutional Court Art Collection (CCAC)	323
	<i>Yolanda van der Vyver</i>	

VI. PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION IN THE PRAXIS OF RECONCILIATION

22	“We don’t want Boko Haram insurgents back!”: Operation Safe Corridor (OSC) and the problematic of forgiveness in Islamic jurisprudence	337
	<i>Afis A. Oladosu</i>	
23	Forgiveness or restitution?: A critique of a false dichotomy in African indigenous religious ethics of reconciliation	353
	<i>Simeon O. Ilesanmi</i>	

VII. EDUCATION FOR RECONCILIATION

24	The psychological foundations of education on pluralism, reconciliation and living together	371
	<i>Moussadak Jlidi</i>	
25	Rethinking the role of higher educational institutions as instruments of peace, religious tolerance and reconciliation	393
	<i>Jennifer Heaven Mike</i>	
26	Education, reconciliation and peace: The case of the Ivorian military-political crisis from September 2002 to May 2011	419
	<i>Glédé Gnomposon Alain Gonhi</i>	

INDEX	433
-------------	-----

INTRODUCTION

The lists of conflicts, insurgencies, civil wars and global wars on the African continent is long. These battles can begin as internal election crises or ethnic conflicts, but they can lead to genocide and related humanitarian disasters of displacement and emergency and eventually lead to diaspora and exile. In such cases, forgiveness and reconciliation are needed to sew the social fabric back together and restart the construction of a more resilient, peaceful and prosperous society.

But forgiveness and reconciliation are rarely easy. There are valid questions about whether forgiveness can or should proceed without apology and whether reconciliation requires restitution or reparation. The shift from retributive justice to restorative justice takes time and effort. National truth and reconciliation commissions and official grants of amnesty have been one way that nations have sought to emerge from conflict – but some have argued that these become calls for reconciliation without getting at the complete truth. Religious councils, particularly within and among Africa's Christian and Islamic bodies, have provided alternative, collective means to work toward reconciliation, but they too have not been without critics and can be difficult to implement when the conflict involves the religions themselves. Besides these Christian and Islamic resources, there have also been calls to draw more on Africa's considerable indigenous religious and cultural traditions – specifically, the iconic custom of the palaver tree, with a native council convened beneath its branches – to achieve better peace, informed by local cultures. Indeed, African groups have means both to transform and resolve conflicts, but also to prevent them. Among the preventative methods is intermarriage, which can be a method of building bonds between communities at the most fundamental level of the family.

The year 2024 is shaping up to be a year of notable and widespread elections around the world – what some observers have described as a make-or-break year for democracy, with elections affecting approximately 4.5 billion people in more than 65 countries, encompassing more than half of the world's population.¹ In that context, it is notable how frequently elections have been the site of contestation and violence in African nations and how often African nations have bounced back from electoral crises. Some crises that seemed, to commentators in other parts of the world, particularly in the global north and west, to risk imminent disaster, such as the Kenyan constitutional referendum of 2010, passed peacefully and largely without incident. Yet as one report on the coming elections in South Africa, Africa's most industrialised nation, puts it, "South Africa's ruling party is in its shakiest moment since 1994, when the then-newly elected president Nelson Mandela and his African National Congress Party (ANC) spelled the end of apartheid and

1 Ravanshi A and Serhan Y. 2024. "A Make-or-Break Year for Democracy Worldwide", *TIME*, 10 January.

ushered in a new era of majority rule.”² While political participation is said to be ticking upward in countries like Ethiopia and Zambia other African nations, such as Burkina Faso and Mali, are said to have troublingly low indicators of political participation and Niger and Gabon have experienced recent coups d’état.³ As one report puts it, “Democracy is in trouble, and Africa is now part of this pattern.”⁴

Indeed, since our Abidjan conference was the first ACLARS conference in a francophone nation, it is notable that it occurred at a time in which many formerly French colonies were experiencing political turmoil. As one observer has described it, drawing on an evocative French term for a mad scramble, “For observers of French Africa’s geopolitical convulsions, this has been as concerning as it has been inevitable. Since the fall of a number of dusty liberation regimes in the 1970s, dozens of African states have toggled between democracy, dictatorship and some mélange of the two. But politics, like fashion, is cyclical. Since 2020, straight-up juntafication has made a comeback: Chad, Mali, Niger, Guinea, Sudan, Burkina Faso and, last month, Gabon, have succumbed to the *bousculade*.”⁵ He continues, “The current coup-fest is largely restricted to West and Central Africa, and is a response to the termination of a major historical phase: We have now arrived at the end of French colonialism, which didn’t end when most people insisted it did, back in the 1950s and 60s, but is most certainly ending now. What’s unfolding in Africa is a major inflection point, and may turn out to be more consequential than the revolutions that transformed the Arab world in 2010.”

Amid these legal and political concerns, there are also profound theological and spiritual principles at stake. As the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu described the task of national reconciliation in his statement on upon his appointment to head the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the “healing and reconciliation of a deeply traumatised and wounded people is a deeply spiritual exercise.”⁶ In describing the work facing the TRC, Tutu observed, “We cannot be facile and say bygones will be bygones, because they will not be bygones and will return to haunt us. True reconciliation is never cheap, for it is based on forgiveness which is costly. Forgiveness in turn depends on repentance, which has to be based on an acknowledgement of what was done wrong, and therefore on disclosure of the truth. You cannot forgive what you do not know.” Tutu recommended an orientation “towards the victims of human rights abuses rather than the perpetrators” and a concentration on the “rehabilitation of victims and restoration of their dignity, emphasising restitution rather than retribution and reprisal.”

-
- 2 Levin G. 2024. “Global Year Ahead Lays Bare Strife Between East and West”, Voice of America (VOA) News, 16 January.
 - 3 International IDEA. 2023. “Bedrocks of Democracy Under Threat Across the Globe”, International IDEA News, 2 November.
 - 4 Cheesman N and Derosiers ME. 2023. “How democracies contribute to global authoritarianism”, *The Africa Report*, October 11.
 - 5 Poplak R. 2023. “Africa says adieu to French power”, *The Globe and Mail*, 15 September.
 - 6 Tutu D. 1995. “Statement by Archbishop Desmond Tutu on His Appointment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission”, South African Truth and Resonciliation Commission, 30 November.

But these larger political and theological points should not obscure the many lessons about both reconciliation and democracy contained in this book. The chapters cover national commissions and interreligious efforts, but they also explore African traditional resources for reconciliation. In several African nations, these traditional practices have received legal and even constitutional recognition in the form of customary courts and tribunals aimed at mediation and arbitration. Intermarriage serves to prevent and resolve conflict in many traditional African communities, but these marriages are not always free from gendered considerations that emphasise some women's acquiescence and sacrifice in these relationships. Gender, particularly the role of women in peacebuilding and reconciliation, is also a focus of several chapters that discuss barriers and obstacles to women's participation in both church and society along with instances in which their trauma and resistance is commemorated through art. Other chapters productively mine theologies of sin, forgiveness and restitution in Islamic and Christian theology. Still others take up reconciliation as a matter of education for peace, introducing to our pages an intersection of law, religion and education – a topic ACLARS has been seeking to take up for several years.

The first part of the book includes chapters on the efforts toward reconciliation by national commissions and religious councils. From the site of this year's conference in Côte d'Ivoire, Roland Kossonou writes of the tradition and symbol of the palaver tree in African reconciliation with application to the 2002-2011 Ivorian military and political crisis. Both a "sacred space" and a "court of justice", the palaver tree and its associated traditions and practices aim at a "guarantee of peace and social cohesion" through reconciliation. Elias Omondi Opongo of Kenya then takes a comparative approach to extract the lessons learned from the International Criminal Court's resolution of electoral justice issues in Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya. In both nations, disputed elections became the occasions for violence and, ultimately, intervention by the ICC, which Opongo analyses through a theory of alternative leadership deficiency (ALD). "If you are strong let's meet outside, I will show you!" is the striking admonition from a court testimony that Saibu Mutaru analyses in exploring the "dark side" of the National Reconciliation Commission in Ghana. A focus of his analysis is the inherent tension between the forward-looking healing and reparative aim of the commissions and the damage that can be done by "uncontrolled remembrance of painful and traumatic situations" from the past. Nabil Yasien Mohamed, a South African Islamic scholar based in Egypt, provides an international and interreligious comparative analysis of the Meccan Amnesty and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Mohamed explores how the Meccan Amnesty, while known in Islamic history as an event of forgiveness and reconciliation, was not without retributive moments and exceptions in ways that parallel the South African TRC, which has been criticised for "not realizing justice and reparation for past wrongs." These chapters on national commissions are followed by exploration of the role of religious councils. Mujahid Hamza Shitu examines the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) and both its role and its challenges in reconciling religiously related conflicts in contemporary Nigeria.

Maurício Jesus Sérgio Chipatime examines the contribution of the Mozambique Christian Council to peace and reconciliation in Mozambique.

The second part of the book focuses on African traditional approaches to reconciliation. Seth Tweneboah examines traditional chiefly power and its implications for peacebuilding, reconciliation and human rights in Ghana. In part through Max Weber's notion of traditional authority as resting in legitimacy attained through both the hallowing of tradition and pious obedience, Tweneboah examines the ambivalence of the traditional chiefly office when peacebuilding and reconciliation are achieved at the expense of human rights and social equality. Senzokuhle Setume explores, drawing upon her own personal experience, the practice of *Mmaditselana* marriage negotiations as a means of bridging and resolving ethnic differences in African indigenous religions in Botswana. As mediator, the *Mmaditselana* serves to achieve a meeting of the minds and resolution of any conflicts between the brides' and grooms' families, clarifying expectations in a way that can forestall future conflicts, as well. Enna Sukutai Gudhlanga and Angeline Mavis Madongonda also examine conciliation and reconciliation strategies through marriage and intermarriage, this time in the traditional Shona culture of Zimbabwe. Through analysis of two key Shona epics – the *Chaminuka* and the *Makate/Nehoreka* – they examine how different types of marriage and intermarriage have been used for peacekeeping and peacebuilding in traditional Shona culture in ways that can inform marriage practices and peacemaking today. Susan Mbula Kilonzo explores the uniting power of *Muma* (customary oath) among conflicting ethnic communities in Kenya's North Rift. Danoye Oguntola-Laguda and Joseph Moyinoluwa Talabi examine conflict, religion and mediation in African traditional society, focusing on the case of conflict between Muslims and traditionalists in Epe, Lagos State, Nigeria. Through a theory of "counterculture", they analyse a notable incident of restrictions on attendance at a religious festival that elicited protest and violence between local Muslims and African indigenous religion groups.

The third part of the book features a set of chapters on mediation and arbitration in religious and customary courts and tribunals. Mark Hill and Andrew Scarafile provided an overview of religious courts and tribunals across the African continent. They provide a detailed taxonomy of tribunals by type, procedure, access to state funding, subject matter, and recognition and enforceability by the state, as well as procedures to state oversight and review. Idowu A. Akinloye, Oladiran Ayodele, and Jeremiah Olalekan Adeniji examine the role of religious courts and tribunals in Nigeria. In particular, they analyse recent calls for the integration of religious courts into the Nigerian judicial system, noting that discrimination exists against some religious courts, even as some courts based in *sharia* or customary law have more favour. Faith Kabata analyses state oversight of religious courts, specifically the Islamic Kadhis' Courts in Kenya. Her analysis focuses on the capacity of the Kadhis' Courts to both foster religious freedom and human rights in a context of "multicultural vulnerability".

The fourth part of the book focuses on reconciliation in conflict and post-conflict contexts. Mohammed Dejen Assen analyses the role of religion in reconciliation and peacebuilding from an Ethiopian perspective. It is a post-conflict conflict context in which ethnic identities have led to an ethnic federal political structure and regional ethnic conflicts in the regions of Oromia and Tigray, in which Ethiopia's Christian and Muslim communities have attempted strategies to promote peace that had the effect in some instances of exacerbating conflict. Emmanuel Bueya Bu-Makaya, from the Democratic Republic of Congo, provides a critical perspective on conflict in the African Great Lakes Region, examining "the peace of war in an agonistic space". Bu-Makaya examines the meaning and phenomenology of conflict in the "world war" in Africa's "bloody diamond" region, and the tension between irenicism and agonism in what can be called a "palabrian agonism", the term "palabrian" suggesting the ritual and moral significance of the iconic African palaver tree. Julius Kithinji examines the *Nuri Ncheke* courts of the Amero people of Kenya as a model for continued influence in peacebuilding and sustenance, with a focus on the specifically religious dimensions of this judicial body. Mario Eugénio Mubai explores the intricacies of peacebuilding and reconciliation and the role of traditional ceremonies of deliverance and forgiveness in Mozambique. Spirits have been called upon for both revenge and peace in Mozambique's civil wars, which have taken on the characters of "wars of spirits" in illustration of the connections between the living and the dead.

The fifth part of the book examines the role of women and issues of gender in reconciliation. Writing from South Africa, Linda Naicker explores questions of human rights and gender equality in the Christian Church, arguing for disrupting barriers to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through contextual bible study. Through the prism of African Women's Theology, Naicker addresses the ways in which "ecclesial enculturation" and biblical interpretation intersect with male hegemony to disenfranchise women and curtail the advancement of the SDG 5 on gender equality. Sabine Toungakouagou Sama examines socio-political factors determining women's participation in crisis management following the 2019 legislative elections in Savè, Benin. Through analysis of women's participation in peacemaking around Africa and examples from Tchabè history and culture, Toungakouagou Sama, draws lesson about women's agency from women's rising to participate in conflict management in the context of the election crisis. Yolanda van der Vyver examines questions of truth, trauma and reconciliation in South Africa's Constitutional Court Art Collection (CCAC) through analysis of Judith Mason's *The Blue Dress*, an artwork said to depict arrested African National Congress fighter Phila Ndwandwe's struggle to preserve her dignity in prison under apartheid. The artwork has been praised, but also controversial, as a commemoration of trauma and cultural reappropriation by a white woman artist of a black woman's experience, even as it has also served to raise important questions about the responsibility to examine traumatic pasts in a constitutional democracy.

The sixth part of the book addresses the role of philosophy and religion in the praxis of reconciliation. Afis Oladosu of Nigeria writes on the problematic of forgiveness

in Islamic jurisprudence through analysis of the Operation Safe Corridor (OSC) programme of amnesty for Boko Haram insurgents. Oladosu discusses several controversies presented by the programme, including the rejection of one former Boko Haram fighter, Wilberforce Yohanna, through the lens of the Islamic law of sin and forgiveness. Simeon Ilesanmi, Nigerian by birth and based in the United States, writes on forgiveness and restitution, comparing the writings of Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka and South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Through analysis of Soyinka's tort model of restitution and Tutu's atonement model of restitution, Ilesanmi offers a critique of what he argues is a false dichotomy in African indigenous religious ethics of reconciliation.

The seventh part of the book addresses different frameworks for education toward reconciliation. Moussadak Jlidi of Tunisia explores the psychological foundations of education and how to promote pluralism, reconciliation and better ways of "living together". Beginning with the crises that spawned the Tunisian revolution of 2010-2011 and the democratic transition of 2012-2013, Jlidi examines the educational psychology of peace and reconciliation and the way to impart and develop pacific epistemologies of conflict resolution through education. Jennifer Heaven Mike analyses the role of higher educational institutions as instruments of peace, religious tolerance and reconciliation, using her home institution of the American University of Nigeria as a case study. Alain Gonhi of Côte d'Ivoire bookends Roland Kossonou's chapter at the book's inception, examining the 2002-2011 Ivorian military-political crisis through a lens of education for reconciliation and peace. Gonhi maintains that education can contribute to peace and reconciliation, but that the process has been difficult within the Ivorian education system.

This introduction is followed by a foreword by Jean-Baptiste Sourou in both English and French on law, reconciliation and the role of the media, also providing words of commemoration of our co-editor Célestin Gnonzion, whose sudden death took ACLARS by such a surprise in August 2023, as we were moving forward with plans for the "Law, Religion and Reconciliation" conference in his home country of Côte d'Ivoire. Gnonzion, a scholar of law, religion and media, played a leading and exceptional role in the conception of the conference and, thus, this volume. We honour his contribution with posthumous co-editorship, so that his name and memory may continue to be a blessing for our organisation.

M. Christian Green

*Senior Fellow, Center for the Study of Law and Religion, Emory University, USA
Publications Manager, African Consortium for Law and Religion Studies*

Jean-Baptiste Sourou

Professor of Social Communications and Religious Studies, Founder and President, Centre for Documentation and Research on Art and Social Sciences, Republic of Benin

Célestin Gnonzion†

Research Professor at Felix Houphouët-Boigny University, UFR Information, Communication and Arts, Côte d'Ivoire

FOREWORD

It was at the conference in Abuja, Nigeria in 2018, that Célestin and I began to entertain the idea of holding an ACLARS conference in a francophone country. Taking into account certain circumstances, I suggested his country as a possible host, but with the firm promise that we would both work together, hand in hand, for the success of this conference.

For those who knew him, Célestin was not the type to put himself forward. His effectiveness lay in his silence and self-effacement. He had confided in me his perplexities about the organisation at his university, but each time, I reported everything to the ACLARS office, where solutions were proposed and found. Finally, Célestin arrived in Gaborone, Botswana, in 2019 with very concrete, enticing and convincing proposals for Abidjan. The machine was set in motion!

The theme of the conference was chosen: “Law, Religion and Reconciliation in Africa”. We worked on it with Professor Rosalind I.J. Hackett, who is in charge of the Programme Committee at ACLARS and was very much in favour of the idea of a conference in Côte d’Ivoire, as a sign of geographical, cultural and linguistic openness. A strong Ivorian delegation was invited to Nairobi, Kenya, in 2021. There, the announcement of the conference was to be held in Abidjan was greeted with great enthusiasm by all the participants. Célestin felt relieved, because he could count on members of his faculty, including the dean at the time and his head of department.

Back at our respective institutions, Célestin and I called each other and exchanged information regularly about the progress of the preparations, the establishment of a local committee and the various contact he made with the university authorities. We had rediscovered the collegiality of our university years in Rome, and that made our work easier. I even promised Célestin that a week before the conference, I would come to his home in Abidjan to give him all the help he needed. It relieved him greatly – and we both dreamed about it!

What a shock when on the night of 31 August 2022, I was informed of Célestin’s death! Incredible. It was a cruel trick that someone was playing on me. I immediately called the head of his department, Professor Edmond Doua, who unfortunately confirmed the sad news. It was a thunderclap in a serene sky. Within a few minutes, I informed the ACLARS Board of Directors. Everyone was stunned and taken aback. It was a hard blow, very hard for all of us. What would come next?

It was decided that we should continue the preparations and make a success of the Abidjan conference to honour the memory of our dear friend and late colleague. Célestin would never have wanted the conference not to be held as planned because of him, and not to go there would have been to disregard all the efforts he made up to that point. ACLARS was represented at Célestin’s funeral. We sent a written tribute on that occasion in which we stated that we would miss him very much,

but that we would not and could not every forget him, as he was undoubtedly an important member of the ACLARS family.

Then, the ACLARS administrative committee sent me to Abidjan in October 2022 to set the organisation of our conference back in motion. The welcome was warm. Our local contact, Sadia Zouzou, allowed me to do some very rich and promising ground work toward holding the conference. We were able to contact several political and administrative authorities and the heads of various university institutions and faculties, and to visit hotel infrastructures. I was also able to pay my respects at Célestin's tomb in Williamsville Cemetery before leaving. The ACLARS 2023 Abidjan conference was back on track, thanks to the help of several local actors who were convinced of the importance of holding the conference on Ivorian soil and who were determined to make our work easier.

LAW, RELIGION AND RECONCILIATION IN AFRICA

This theme was self-evident in a country where, after the 2020 presidential elections, the president-elect found it necessary to create a ministry in charge of reconciliation. A decade earlier, following the 2011 post-election crisis, the authorities also felt the need to set up the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CDVR), which after three years of work in the field issued a final report and made recommendations. The recommendations included the organisation of an interdisciplinary conference in the humanities and social sciences that would propose to answer certain questions: What is Côte d'Ivoire? What does it mean to be Ivorian today? What can modern Côte d'Ivoire be?

It is well known that forgiveness and reconciliation are important moments for the stability of a society and for states. The recent history of Africa reminds us that many countries that have gone through serious social crises (Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Togo) or civil or internal conflicts (Mozambique, Cameroon, South Africa, Tunisia) have ended up resorting to it to sew up the social fabric and relaunch the construction of the national edifice. Our 2023 conference in Abidjan was therefore timely, as it presented itself as an international contribution to one of the points of the final report of the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CDVR).

As is the hallmark of ACLARS, our meeting in Abidjan took into consideration the legal aspects of respect for human rights and justice in Islam, in African traditional religions with their socio-cultural roots, and in Christian denominations, especially the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church had, after all, held its second Synod of Catholic Bishops for Africa in 2009 on the theme: "The Church in Africa at the Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace". It was a meeting in which the African bishops examined, without half measures, all the problems that undermine the lives of the African people and advocated solutions through reconciliation and social justice at all levels, even within the ecclesial communities.¹

1 Sourou JB. 2010. *L'ora della maturità. La Chiesa in Africa ai tempi del secondo Sinodo* [The time of maturity. The Church in Africa at the time of the second Synod]. Bologna: EMI.

M. Christian Green, with her great and long-standing expertise, presents in the introduction the important themes dealt with in Abidjan in this book. These include, for example: national commissions and religious councils for reconciliation, African traditional approaches to reconciliation, mediation and arbitration in religious and customary courts, reconciliation in conflict and post-conflict contexts, women, gender and reconciliation, philosophy and religion in the practice of reconciliation and reconciliation through education. The other major theme, that of the role of the media in reconciliation and peace in Africa, was addressed in depth in the commemorative panel organised by the Training and Research Unit (UFR) in Information, Communication and Arts of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny University in memory of their colleague and our friend, Célestin Gnonzion.

MEDIA FOR RECONCILIATION AND PEACE

The seven speakers at the commemorative plenary panel on media described various aspects of the contribution of the media, especially journalists, to the consolidation of a peaceful society through reconciliation, even if they were not able to lead the various social agents to avoid the creation of hotbeds of tension. Thus, in his paper, “Media and peace education in Africa”, Professor Doua showed how, through peace education, traditional and digital media participated in the establishment of a peaceful social climate and promoted “living together”, an essential factor for inclusive economic development in Côte d’Ivoire, in the faces of the various socio-political-military crises.

That task has been well fulfilled by community radio stations, said Michelle-Carine Topé, a journalist and communication specialist who has shown that the vast majority of them tried to provide appropriate responses to safeguard a peaceful social climate, through programmes devised during periods of military-political crises on Ivorian soil. Radio stations can find very important support for peace and reconciliation in the songs of reggae music authors, the most illustrious of whom, Bob Marley and Peter Tosh, have advocated peace and unity in societies through their positions. Pierre Mendel Guei spoke about this in his presentation on “Rastafarianism, peace and dynamism of social cohesion in Africa”. But the task of the media can only be fulfilled if they themselves are imbued with the ethics and deontology required by their profession.

This is, in fact, the fight that Célestin led as a teacher, researcher and journalist in his country. He is the author of several publications, including “Perdiems, gombos and accompanying measures: the words and rites of corruption in the Ivorian press”,² published in 2012, and “The press and post-crisis reconstruction in Africa: Ethical

2 Gnonzion C. 2012. “Perdiems, gombos et mesures d’accompagnement: les mots et les rites de la corruption dans la presse ivoirienne” [Perdiems, gombos and accompanying measures: the words and rites of corruption in the Ivorian press], *European Scientific Journal* 8(23):65-83.

requirements”,³ published in 2013. In November 2011, Célestin was designated Country Ambassador for the International Centre on Media Ethics, an independent, international, nonprofit organisation that works directly with journalist and media institutions around the world. On 12 April 2013, Célestin was elected head of the new Ivorian Network for the Promotion of Ethics in Society (RIPES), an independent nonprofit organisation initiated by a group of Ivorian intellectuals.

It is on this angle that the presentations of Wally Karim and Alfred Dan Moussa, the latter a former president of the Union of the Francophone Press, were focused. Their presentations highlighted the need for ethics in the management and consumption of digital social media that are so prized by all African social strata. Finally, there was the presentation of Sidiki Bamba, who argued that Ivorian media are facing a kind of dilemma, especially when it comes to the partisan or so-called “neither neutral nor partisan” press. Should we deal with current events in the service of the interests of an individual, even if he or she is influential in propaganda, or should we work in service of social cohesion? This is an equation that is often difficult to solve for many media outlets across Africa.

In the end, holding an ACLARS conference in Côte d’Ivoire, a francophone country, was proof of the increasingly desired openness of our organisation to all the geographical, cultural, and linguistic areas of the continent. Although the organisation initially brought together more researchers from anglophone countries, it has always had a continental vocation. Indeed, in recent years, the participants in our conferences have come from more and different countries: Benin, Niger, Cameroon, Algeria, Côte d’Ivoire, Morocco, DRC, Senegal, Tunisia, Togo, Nigeria, Ghana, Eswatini, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Kenya, Mozambique, Botswana, Rwanda. The principle of rotation in the choice of the of the conferences is now well instituted in the organisation, and ACLARS is in the process of making every effort through publications and communication channels to achieve its ambition.

This essay is also a good opportunity to thank all those who contributed locally to the success of the Abidjan conference, particularly the Local Committee and its president, Professor Nènè Bi Séraphin, the local academics in Abidjan and Bouké, the political and administrative authorities at different levels and our local contact, Sadia Zouzou, who spared no effort. The tenth ACLARS conference kept all its promises, as I believe our friend and colleague Célestin would have wished.

Côte d’Ivoire will pass the baton to Zimbabwe in 2024 to, I would say, continue to weave the rope of development in Africa – adding an important link to the theme dealt with in Abidjan through the Zimbabwe theme of “Law, Religion and Leadership in Africa”. Indeed, how can we live in a peaceful and reconciled Africa if the wishes of the people are not supported by committed leaders who are capable of defending, first and foremost, the ideals of the people by maintaining the course toward a hope that is realizable and not in vain? Leaders who know

3 Gnonzion C. 2013 “Presse et reconstruction post-crise en Afrique: Exigences éthiques” [The press and post-crisis reconstruction in Africa: Ethical requirements], *Revue Théologie Africaine, Eglise et Sociétés* [Review of African theology, church, and societies] 3:53-75.

how to articulate the desires of their people into concrete social projects for a better future. What contribution have law and religion made, and can they still offer in the exercise of leadership on the continent? The Victoria Falls stage will inevitably offer a continuation of the debate in Abidjan.

The question of leadership is constantly evoked in the various historical phases, painful or not, that Africa has experienced from the period of independence to the present day.⁴ Much ink has been spilled, both at the time of the military government that drowned the euphoria of independence under various forms of state management today, up to the 1990s, which was the period of the continent's second independence and a time when a real renaissance seemed possible with the multi-party system and the national conferences.⁵ As described by the great Cameroonian philosopher Fabien Eboussi Boulaga, this new period of independence "appeared as the revelation of a new spirit, a dazzling rocket, a luminous signal for the future. We thought we saw in it one of the most important political and philosophical events in our conscious, 'destinal', and most 'epochal' history".⁶

This was followed by a return to respect for human rights and freedoms of religion and speech. But these achievements have had difficulty bearing fruit in the daily lives of the population: health, well-being for all, education, training and empowerment of young people. The corollary has seen incessant migratory flows towards Europe with dramatic consequences: the gangrene of corruption, environmental tragedies, wars followed by major social crises.⁷ All this is denounced and widely relayed on social networks, which are very popular, especially among young people, who are very combative on the subject. They are youth who no longer want to suffer the same fate as their elders.

ACLARS will discuss this year in Zimbabwe the topic of "Law, Religion and Leadership in Africa" through an interesting selection of speakers and scholars whose work will contribute to painting not only the path taken by the idea of leadership in Africa, but also its place and role for the betterment of Africans today.

Jean-Baptiste Sourou, PhD.

Professor of Communications and Religious Studies,

Founder and President, Centre for Documentation and Research in Art and Social Sciences (CEDRES) in Benin

Member, ACLARS Board of Directors

4 Goudjo RB. 2024. *La démocratie en Afrique, le retour prévisible des vieux démons. Essai de relecture de l'Encyclique Centesimus annus* [Democracy in Africa, the predictable return of the old demons. Attempt to reread the Encyclical Centesimus annus]. Cotonou: La Croix du Bénin.

5 Sourou JB. 2019. *Rivogliono il loro pesce* [They want their fish back]. Allada: CEDRES.

6 Boulaga FB. 1993. *Les conférences nationales en Afrique noire. Une affaire à suivre* [National conferences in black Africa. A case to follow]. Paris: Karthala.

7 Sourou J. B. 2014. *Chronique d'un été glacial, le rêve naufragé des Africains*. [Chronicle of a freezing summer, the shattered dream of Africans]. Allada: CEDRES.

PRÉFACE

C'est à la conférence d'Abuja, au Nigéria en 2018, qu'avec Célestin Gnonzion nous avons commencé à caresser l'idée de la tenue d'un colloque ACLARS dans un pays francophone. Tenant compte de certaines circonstances, j'ai commencé à lui suggérer son pays comme possible hôte, mais avec la ferme promesse que nous allions tous les deux travailler ensemble, main dans la main, pour la réussite de ces assises.

Pour ceux qui l'ont connu, Célestin n'était pas du genre à se mettre en avant. Son efficacité résidait dans son silence et son effacement. Il m'avait confié pas mal de ses perplexités par rapport à l'organisation dans son université, mais chaque fois j'ai tout remonté au Bureau de ACLARS où des solutions ont été proposées et trouvées. Enfin Célestin est arrivé à Gaborone, au Botswana en 2019 avec des propositions très concrètes, alléchantes et convaincantes pour Abidjan. La machine était enclenchée !

Le thème des travaux fut choisi : « Droit, religion et réconciliation en Afrique. » Nous devions y travailler avec notre aînée, la professeur Rosalind I.J. Hackett, responsable du Programme au sein de notre association, et très acquise à l'idée des assises en Côte d'Ivoire, comme signe d'ouverture géographique, culturelle et linguistique. Une forte délégation ivoirienne fut invitée à Nairobi, au Kenya en 2021, où l'annonce de la tenue de la conférence à Abidjan avait été accueillie avec grand enthousiasme par tous les participants. Célestin se sentait soulagé, car il pouvait compter sur des membres de sa Faculté parmi lesquels le doyen d'alors et son chef de département.

De retour dans nos institutions respectives, Célestin et moi, nous nous appelions et échangeons régulièrement sur l'avancement des préparatifs, la mise sur pied d'un Comité local et les différents contacts qu'il prenait avec les autorités universitaires. Nous avons retrouvé la complicité des années d'Université à Rome et cela nous facilitait le travail. J'ai même promis à Célestin qu'une semaine avant la tenue de la conférence, je viendrais m'installer chez lui à Abidjan pour lui porter toute l'aide nécessaire. Cela le soulageait et on y rêvait tous les deux !

Mais qu'elle ne fut pas notre surprise générale, quand dans la nuit du 31 août 2022, je fus informé du décès de Célestin. Incroyable ! C'était un sal tour que quelqu'un était en train de me jouer. J'appelai immédiatement son chef de département, le professeur Edmond Doua, qui malheureusement me donna confirmation de la triste nouvelle. J'informai dans les minutes qui suivirent le Comité d'administration de ACLARS. Ce fut un coup de tonnerre dans un ciel serein. Tout le monde était abasourdi et interloqué. C'était un coup dur, très dur même pour nous tous. La suite ?

Il fut décidé que nous devions continuer les préparatifs et réussir les assises abidjanaises pour honorer la mémoire de notre cher ami et regretté collègue. Célestin n'aurait jamais voulu qu'à cause de lui la conférence ne se tînt plus comme prévu et ne pas nous y rendre eut été méconnaître tous les efforts qu'il avait déployés jusque-là. ACLARS s'était fait représenter aux obsèques de Célestin. Nous envoyâmes un hommage écrit à cette occasion où nous disions succinctement qu'il allait beaucoup nous manquer, mais que nous n'allions pas, nous ne pouvions jamais l'oublier, car il était sans aucun doute un membre important de la famille d'ACLARS.

Puis le comité d'administration me dépêcha sur place pendant le mois d'octobre 2022 pour remettre en marche la machine d'organisation de notre conférence. L'accueil fut chaleureux. Notre contact local, Sadia Zouzou me permit de faire un travail de terrain très riche et prometteur pour la tenue de la conférence. Nous avons pu contacter plusieurs autorités politico-administratives, les responsables de différentes institutions universitaires et de facultés et visiter des infrastructures hôtelières, et bien sûr j'ai pu me recueillir sur le tombeau de Célestin au cimetière de Williamsville avant de repartir. ACLARS, Abidjan 2023 se remettait en marche ... grâce au concours de plusieurs acteurs locaux convaincus de l'importance de la tenue de la conférence en terre ivoirienne et très décidés à nous faciliter le travail.

DROIT, RELIGION ET RÉCONCILIATION EN AFRIQUE

Ce thème s'imposait de lui-même dans un pays, où par exemple, après l'élection présidentielle de 2020, le président élu a créé un ministère en charge de la réconciliation. Une décennie plutôt, à la suite de la crise postélectorale de 2011, les autorités avaient également senti la nécessité de mettre en place la Commission Dialogue, Vérité et Réconciliation (CDVR), qui, après trois ans de travail sur le terrain a rendu un rapport final et fait des recommandations au nombre desquelles l'organisation d'un colloque interdisciplinaire en sciences humaines et sociales qui se proposerait de répondre à certaines questions : « Qu'est-ce que la Côte d'Ivoire ? Qu'est-ce qu'être ivoirien aujourd'hui ? Que peut être la Côte d'Ivoire moderne ? »

Nul n'est sans savoir que le pardon et la réconciliation sont des moments importants pour la stabilité d'une société et d'un État. L'histoire récente de l'Afrique nous rappelle que beaucoup de pays qui ont traversé de graves crises sociales : génocide (Rwanda, Burundi), crises postélectorales (Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Togo), conflits civils ou internes (Mozambique, Cameroun, Afrique du Sud, Tunisie) ont toujours fini par y avoir recours pour recoudre le tissu social et relancer la construction de l'édifice national. Notre conférence à Abidjan 2023 arrivait donc à point nommé car elle se présentait comme un apport international à l'un des points du rapport final de la Commission Dialogue, Vérité et Réconciliation (CDVR).

Comme c'est la marque de ACLARS, nos assises abidjanaises ont pris aussi en considération les aspects juridiques du respect des droits de l'homme et de la justice, mais aussi l'islam, la religion traditionnelle africaine avec son ancrage socioculturel et les religions chrétiennes, surtout l'Église catholique quand on sait que le deuxième Synode des évêques catholiques pour l'Afrique tenu en octobre 2009 avait pour thème : « L'Église en Afrique au service de la réconciliation, de la justice et de la paix. » C'étaient des assises au cours desquelles les évêques africains ont passé à la loupe sans demies mesures tous les problèmes qui minent la vie des populations africaines et ont préconisé des solutions à travers la réconciliation et la justice sociale à tous les niveaux, même à l'intérieur des communautés ecclésiales¹. Christian Green fait avec sa grande expertise de toujours une présentation des

1 Sourou J. B. 2010. *L'ora della maturità. La Chiesa in Africa ai tempi del secondo Sinodo*. Bologna : EMI.

thèmes importants traités à Abidjan dans ce livre. Il s'agit par exemple des commissions nationales et conseils religieux de réconciliation, des approches traditionnelles africaines de réconciliation, de la médiation et arbitrage dans les tribunaux religieux et coutumiers, de la réconciliation dans les contextes de conflit et de post-conflit, de femmes, genre et réconciliation, de philosophie et religion dans la pratique de la réconciliation et de la réconciliation par l'art et l'éducation. L'autre thème majeur, celui du rôle des médias dans la réconciliation et la paix en Afrique, a été abordé largement par le panel commémoratif organisé par l'Unité de Formation et Recherche (UFR) en Information Communication et Arts de l'Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny à la mémoire de leur collègue et notre ami Célestin Gnonzion.

LES MÉDIAS AU SERVICE DE LA RÉCONCILIATION ET DE LA PAIX

Les sept intervenants à ce panel en plénière ont dépeint plusieurs aspects de la contribution des médias et surtout des journalistes dans la consolidation d'une société pacifiée à travers la réconciliation, si en amont, ils n'ont pas pu conduire les différents agents sociaux à éviter la naissance de foyers de tensions. C'est ainsi que dans sa communication : « Médias et éducation à la paix en Afrique », le professeur Doua a montré comment par l'éducation à la paix, les médias classiques et numériques ont participé à l'instauration d'un climat social apaisé et promu le vivre ensemble, facteur indispensable à un développement économique inclusif en Côte d'Ivoire, face aux différentes crises socio-politico-militaires. Cette tâche a été bien remplie par les radios de proximité ou radios communautaires, a affirmé de son côté Michelle-Carine Topé. Cette journaliste et spécialiste en communication a démontré que par les émissions ou programmes conçus pendant les périodes de crises militaro-politiques en terre ivoirienne, elles ont tenté, dans leur large majorité, d'apporter des réponses appropriées pour sauvegarder un climat social apaisé. Les radios peuvent trouver un appui très important dans les chansons d'auteurs de la musique reggae, dont les plus illustres, Bob Marley et Peter Tosh, ont, par leur prise de position, prôner la paix et l'unité dans les sociétés. Pierre Mendel Guei est venu en parler à travers son exposé sur « Rastafarisme, paix et dynamisme de cohésion sociale en Afrique ». Mais la tâche des hommes de médias ne peut être bien remplie que s'ils sont eux-mêmes imbus de l'éthique et de la déontologie requises par leur métier.

C'est en fait le combat que Célestin a mené comme enseignant, chercheur et journaliste dans son pays. Il est l'auteur de plusieurs publications scientifiques dont « Perdiems, Gombos et mesures d'accompagnement : les mots et les rites de la corruption dans la presse ivoirienne »² paru en 2012 et « Exigences éthiques pour une presse responsable dans le processus de reconstruction post-crise en Afrique : le cas de la Côte d'Ivoire »³, en 2013. En novembre 2011, Célestin a été

2 Gnonzion C. 2012. "Perdiems, gombos et mesures d'accompagnement: les mots et les rites de la corruption dans la presse ivoirienne", *European Scientific Journal* 8(23):65-83.

3 Gnonzion C. 2013 "Presse et reconstruction post-crise en Afrique: Exigences éthiques", *Revue Théologie Africaine, Eglise et Sociétés* 3:53-75.

coopté comme ambassadeur pays du Centre international sur l'éthique des médias, une organisation indépendante internationale et à but non lucratif qui travaille directement avec les journalistes et les institutions de médias dans plusieurs pays à travers le monde. Le 12 avril 2013, il a été élu à la tête du nouveau Réseau ivoirien pour la promotion de l'éthique dans la société (RIPES), organisation indépendante à but non lucratif, initiée par un groupe d'intellectuels ivoiriens.

C'est sous cet angle que se sont axées les communications de Wally Karim et d'Alfred Dan Moussa, ancien président de l'Union de la Presse francophone, qui ont mis en évidence la nécessité d'une éthique dans la gestion et la consommation des médias sociaux numériques tant prisés par toutes les couches sociales africaines, et enfin la présentation de Sidiki Bamba qui soutient que les médias ivoiriens font face à une sorte de dilemme, surtout en ce qui concerne la presse partisane ou celle dite « ni neutre ni partisane ». Doit-on traiter l'actualité au service des intérêts d'un individu, fût-il influent en faisant de la propagande ou doit-on travailler au service de la cohésion sociale ? Une équation souvent difficile à résoudre pour certains médias un peu partout en Afrique.

Enfin la tenue de la conférence ACLARS en terre ivoirienne, pays francophone, était une preuve de l'ouverture de plus en plus souhaitée de notre organisation à toutes les aires géographiques, culturelles et linguistiques du continent. Même si au départ l'organisation a rassemblé plus de chercheurs provenant de pays anglophones, elle a toujours affiché une vocation continentale. En effet, au cours de ces dernières années, les participants à nos conférences proviennent de plus en plus de pays différents : Bénin, Niger, Cameroun, Algérie, Côte d'Ivoire, Maroc, RDC, Sénégal Tunisie, Togo, Nigeria, Ghana, Eswatini, Zimbabwe, Afrique du Sud, Kenya, Mozambique Botswana, Rwanda. Le principe de la rotation dans le choix du pays hôte des conférences semble désormais acquis aussi, et ACLARS est en train de mettre tout en œuvre à travers les publications et ses canaux de communication pour réaliser son ambition.

L'occasion est aussi propice pour remercier tous ceux qui ont contribué localement à la réussite du colloque d'Abidjan : le Comité local et son président, le professeur Néné Bi Séraphin, les universitaires locaux à Abidjan comme à Bouaké, les autorités politico-administratives à différents niveaux et notre contact local, Sadia Zouzou qui n'a ménagé aucun effort. La dixième conférence de ACLARS a tenu toutes ses promesses tel que notre ami et collègue Célestin l'aurait, je crois, souhaité.

La Côte d'Ivoire va passer le témoin au Zimbabwe en cette année 2024 pour, dirai-je, continuer à tresser la corde du développement en Afrique ou simplement ajouter un maillon important au thème traité à Abidjan à travers « Droit, religion et leadership en Afrique. » En effet, comment peut-on vivre dans une Afrique en paix et réconciliée si les vœux des populations ne sont pas supportés par des leaders convaincus et capables de défendre d'abord les idéaux des peuples en maintenant le cap vers une espérance concrète et pas vaine ? Des leaders qui sachent articuler les désirs de leurs peuples en projets concrets de société pour un avenir meilleur. Quel apport le droit et la religion ont-ils donné et peuvent-ils encore offrir dans

l'exercice du leadership sur le continent ? L'étape des Chutes de Victoria offrira inéluctablement une suite au débat d'Abidjan.

La question du leadership est sans cesse évoquée dans les différentes phases historiques, douloureuses ou non que connaît l'Afrique depuis la période des indépendances jusqu'à nos jours.⁴ Beaucoup d'encre a coulé que ce soit au temps des gouvernements militaires qui ont noyé l'euphorie des indépendances jusqu'aux différentes formes de gestion de l'Etat aujourd'hui en passant par les années '90, période de la deuxième indépendance du continent, où une vraie renaissance semblait possible⁵ avec le multipartisme, les conférences nationales, qui comme les décrit le grand philosophe camerounais Fabien Eboussi Boulaga « sont apparues comme la révélation d'un nouvel esprit, une fusée fulgurante, un signal lumineux que nous lançait l'avenir. Nous avons cru y voir un événement politique et philosophique des plus considérables de notre histoire consciente, "destinale", le plus "épocal" ».⁶

S'en sont suivi le retour aux respects des droits de l'homme, la liberté de religion et de parole. Mais ces acquis ont des difficultés à porter des fruits concrets dans le quotidien des populations : la santé, le bien être pour tous, l'éducation, la formation et l'autonomisation des jeunes et son corollaire de flux migratoires incessants vers l'Europe avec ses conséquences dramatiques,⁷ la gangrène de la corruption, les drames environnementaux, les guerres suivies d'importantes crises sociales. Tout ceci est dénoncé et relayé amplement sur les réseaux sociaux très prisés surtout des jeunes, qui sont très combatifs sur le continent ; une jeunesse qui ne veut plus subir le même sort que ses aînés.

ACLARS va en discuter à travers une intéressante sélection d'orateurs et de chercheurs dont les travaux contribueront à peindre non seulement le chemin parcouru par l'idée du leadership en Afrique, mais aussi sa place et son rôle pour un mieux-être de l'Africain aujourd'hui.

Jean-Baptiste Sourou, PhD.

*Professeur de Communications sociales et d'études religieuses
Fondateur et Président du Centre, Documentation et de Recherche en Art et en
Sciences Sociales (Cedres) au Bénin.
Membre du Comité d'administration de ACLARS*

4 Goudjo R. B. 2024. *La démocratie en Afrique, le retour prévisible des vieux démons. Essai de relecture de l'Encyclique Centesimus annus*. Cotonou : La Croix du Bénin.

5 Sourou J. B. 2019. *Rivogliono il loro pesce*. Allada : Editions Cedres.

6 Boulaga F. B. 1993. *Les conférences nationales en Afrique noire. Une affaire à suivre*. Paris : Karthala.

7 Sourou J.B. 2014. *Chronique d'un été glacial, le rêve naufragé des Africains*. Allada : Editions Cedres.



Portrait of Célestin Gnonzion by Justin Oussou, artist, painter, and professor of graphic art, Department of Information and Computer Sciences (SCI), University Félix Houphouët-Boigny (UFHB) Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.