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THE REFLECTION MEDIUM

# **AFRICA TOMORROW**

Inculturation is a difficult and delicate task, since it raises the question of the Church's fidelity to the Gospel and the Apostolic Tradition amidst the constant evolution of cultures.

*Ecclesia in Africa, 62*

**Vol. 17 / No. 2 / December 2015**

SALVATORIANUM



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Cover designed by Fr. Stanislaw Golus, SDS  
ISSN 1821-8083

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# Editorial

Dear Readers,

*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it? I, Yahweh, search the heart and penetrate the mind, to give to every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings (Jer. 17:9-10).*

Is the human person trustworthy? Am I right to live with the conviction that within the depths of your heart and mind, you are exercising your freedom to give your brother, indeed all men, what is rightfully theirs; to love your sister, indeed all women, graciously and with respect in a way that protects their dignity; and to plan your life's priorities and purposes thoughtfully in a way that gives your child, indeed all children, the opportunity to let their littleness blossom forth into greatness... am I right to live with the conviction that you deserve my trust? Or must I resign myself to the fact that your heart, no matter how well I think I know you, has become so selfish and perverted that I cannot trust your manipulations, schemes, and subterfuges?

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of October, 1980, during a General Audience that immediately garnered attention in the international public forum, Pope (St.) John Paul II gave academia an opportunity to examine its conscience about the many and diverse determinisms that riddle its social scientific conclusions. Aligning himself with Paul Ricœur, the Pope sharpened his focus to target three intellectuals who suspect the human heart, i.e., thinkers who have attempted to structure their theories about the human heart without any reference to the God who created and designed it. They have relegated the human heart to a continual state of suspicion because they believe the dynamisms present in the heart have overtaken the human person's capacity for freedom and holiness. From their perspective, the heart is fated to be perpetually untrustworthy.

Corresponding his own views to Ricœur's critique, the Pope cited three well-known figures in the world of academia, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Frederick Nietzsche, and then suggested discreetly and forthrightly that we should suspect these

masters of suspicion. Karl Marx, for example, espouses a point of view that condemns the human heart to an unbridled desire to profit, to acquire, and to possess. "I am what I have" is the principle that governs the human heart even when the person himself or herself is not conscious of it. A person may perform an act of true altruism, but according to Marx's way of thinking there is a subtle, hidden purpose to the altruistic act, namely, the desire to accumulate the esteem, honour and respect and even material benefits that may ensue because of the act of charity.

Sigmund Freud raises his voice to suggest that even subconsciously the sexual instinct, the desire for sensual and emotional self-gratification, and the felt wish for personal fulfilment through relationships governs the human heart. The human person sinks into the mind-set, "I am what I feel," and loses his/her very sense of what it means to be a human being that freely acts according to the norms of truth independently of feelings, attractions and impulses.

Frederick Nietzsche holds the human heart in suspicion because of the human inclination to control and dominate. The human person has the attitude expressed in Plato's *Theages*, "Each one of us would like to be lord over all men if possible or, even better, be God."<sup>1</sup> This will to power masks the fear that there always lurks the possibility that everyone will ignore me, forget about me, marginalize me or give me very low priority. Nietzsche harbours the conviction that reinforcing one's sense of privilege, influence, prestige, and power brings satisfaction to the human heart. "I am because I control and influence" is the theme song of the human heart given over to this school of suspicion.

Do humility and meekness serve the thirst for power? The meek and humble person disarms the famous, the powerful, and the influential with his or her sincerity and transparency. The persons in first place find themselves ready to invite the meek and humble to come higher and remain close by bonds of friendship. Mother Teresa's friendship with Princess Diana is a paramount example. Only persons with Mother Teresa's integrity could accept

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<sup>1</sup> *Theages*, 125e8-126a4, cited by Nietzsche in *Will to Power*, §958.

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friendship with the rich and powerful and remain steadfast in their primary friendship, namely, the one they enjoy with God.

Hence a person like Mother Teresa of Kolkata radiates the prototype of a new and more liberated kind of human being: a human being that habitually remains outside the range of suspicion while accepting as a primary mission in life the task of serving others so that they, too, may find true freedom in a lasting friendship with God. “I am because God is... God is, therefore, we are; we are, therefore, I am” seems to accurately describe the range of this person’s freedom within the Family of God. With God, nothing is impossible; and this holds true at every moment of one’s existence. I may always live in the freedom, the faith, the hope, and the love that bind human beings together in their freedom and in their personal identity as children of God. It is possible to have a heart of flesh, free of suspicion. It is possible to be trustworthy.

In his article on the contemporary scandal of faith and the Kierkegaardian resonance, the Claretian Fr. Philip Ogbonna introduces us to the scandalous complexity that defies the machinations of reason when we in faith cross the threshold – a threshold fraught with contradictions – of Eternity’s entrance into time. The person who crosses the threshold of faith, finds liberation from the schools of suspicion. With Fr. Ogbonna, we acknowledge that the point of emphasis is not a coming into being but rather the Eternal One’s coming into the spatial-temporal actualization of any possibility and the individual, historical incarnation of the Eternal. It is the Eternal One who liberates.

With the incarnation of the Eternal, the human person who crosses not once but repeatedly the scandalous threshold of faith knows that his very existence is made possible by faith. He or she lives in a state of rebirth, of renewal, as a follower and a disciple. The transition to this new state of existence is a liberating one: the individual gains the possibility for true action, free from all suspicion, because God has chosen to take care of the individual’s guilt and the responsibility incumbent upon the individual’s sin.

God forgives sin. The renewal in faith in all of its prismatic dimensions, a faith that defies the contours of human reason, is God’s gift to anyone who chooses to receive it.

The Salvatorian Fr. Marcel Mukadi complements handsomely the convictions that Soren Kierkegaard and Philip Ogbonna express about the positioning of the human person – each and every human person – before God. Fr. Mukadi draws from the sacramental nature of the Catholic Church and explains how the deacon – the Church servant who is called to join himself to Jesus precisely in meekness and humility – has his own vital role to play in the growth of the Family of God. The deacon is meant to be a very special blessing to us all: he is meant to be a stimulus for us to cross the threshold from the false security of human reasoning into the scandalous complexity of faith.

The deacon, however, is not God. There are limits to what he can do; and he accepts those limitations with the spirit of the divine Deacon, Jesus Christ, who is among us as one who serves.

Father Bernard Witek continues his serial presentation of principal themes from the Book of Proverbs. One of his points of focus is the slanderer: one who spotlights others, reveals their secrets, and then lays bare the claim that these others are worthy of suspicion is himself worthy of suspicion. Fr. Witek's exegesis brings to light the futility of those who would subscribe to the materialist school of suspicion: generosity engenders honour, but greed proves to be quite futile indeed. The righteous person who looks for the good of others, for the good of the community, is the one who – before God – preserves a good name.

Fr. Patrick Mwanja, a Spiritan Father, brings to the forefront of the public eye a very timely issue indeed: from the treasury of his divine Heart, God has acted with the intention of giving a good name to those elements of African culture that not only resonate with the truth of the Gospel but bring into sharper focus Gospel truths that may have remained hidden from the public eye if confined to dry, doctrinally mastered scripts, that do not fit the cultural expressions that have developed with beauty and grace throughout the centuries. There are elements of culture that are seeds of goodness, truth and beauty: they do not deserve to be suspected but rather cherished.

The one who has acted from within cultures to bring forth their beauty and power is God himself, the Logos, one with the Father in eternity; and in time rendered incarnate by the power of the Holy

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Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, and given the name Jesus. This divine activity of the Logos has planted seeds of the Gospel within cultures so that, by the mysterious activity of the Holy Spirit, all may come to the living waters of salvation, come to the knowledge of the truth, accept the presence of the crucified and risen Redeemer in their lives, and so find communion with him even if they have not learned precisely that he goes by the name of Jesus. They may not have not enjoyed the opportunity to participate directly in the social dimension of Church life, but their heart and conscience have remained open to the goodness, beauty and truth that flow forth from within the Heart of our Lord and our God.

Mr. Arockia Dhas Calisthu addresses a dilemma that faces particular tribes, societies, and nations who desire earnestly their rightful place in the international forum where intellectual life seems to shine forth its rays into even the darkest political, economic, philosophical, religious, and social controversies and crises. In order to participate in the dynamics of a global forum that carries the ability to impact the life of the smallest, most forgotten person and at the same time the lives of the rich, the influential, the talented, and the powerful... in order to find one's rightful place within this forum one must carry the basic tools of communication. Having carefully studied the writings and conclusions of perhaps the world's most noted expert on the history of international culture, Fr. Walter Ong, S.J., Mr. Dhas offers his own thoughtful insight into the requirements of local language development. If the local people were not to pay attention to these requirements, they might not only lose their voice in the international forum but may also find their own language becoming extinct.

Mr. Dhas, therefore, offers hope to those who are in a position to make the political and educational decisions needed to facilitate the effort to cultivate and fortify the languages that need to be resilient and capable of adaptation, in their grammar, syntax and vocabulary. Languages need to describe what is concretely available to one's society and to the world; languages need to explain in the more abstract categories of the arts and sciences what others have already described. When languages come to flower, cultures more beautifully come to flower. Consequently there is a new order in the world.

Ms. Ijukaine Elfrida details example after example in order to demonstrate the truth of her conviction that there are influential people and organizations in the world who deserve to be suspected. As a lawyer, she chooses an issue that money-making commercial enterprises would like to ignore: that of stealing the Traditional Knowledge that indigenous people have been using for centuries to create traditional medicines and other useful products. The true possessors of the Traditional Knowledge are left unprotected by global policies because patent protection is presently considered only for products that involve an invention. Traditional medicines are products of nature and so do not fit this category. It goes without saying, however, that the local African experts who have been handling the medicines for centuries have developed skills that the “bio-pirates” would not have discovered without studying the African methods.

The ones doing the stealing are obviously masters of the materialist school of suspicion. Having stolen the Traditional Knowledge and the natural formulae of the medicines associated with that knowledge, they devise a manipulation or two in order to label it an “invention” and then proceed to acquire a patent. The patent allows them to prepare products, based on Traditional Knowledge, and then market them among masses of people throughout the world, who – as consumers – will fill the pockets and purses of these bio-pirates with money. Meanwhile the members of the local tribes and the indigenous cultures who are really the guardians of Traditional Knowledge and the products that come forth from an intelligent application of Traditional Knowledge are, practically speaking, left penniless.

Ijukaine exercises her abilities and knowledge as a lawyer to offer very practical and at the same time very necessary recommendations to right this insidious wrong. Her article opens our eyes to the down-to-earth fact that it is incumbent upon all of us to examine how we have subscribed to the materialist, psychosocial, and power/ prestige schools of suspicion. Thankfully God has graced all of us with the ability to learn how to extricate ourselves from these three forms of “heart disease” so that we may live in the justice, peace, truth and freedom of the children of God.

*The Editor*

# PHILOSOPHY & HUMAN SCIENCE

## The 21st Century Scandal of Faith and the Kierkegaardian Resonance

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### **Abstract**

For Kierkegaard, scandalization is both the constant presence and the constant reminder of an unsettling objective incertitude where faith, nevertheless, triumphs. But again, this faith always contains an echo of the scandal that one has traversed. From Kierkegaard's point of view, the impending possibility of being scandalised is the crucial junction where one can go in either of two directions. At this junction, we may either shy away from the scandalization or we may turn to faith; but we never reach faith except through the dilemma of scandalization.

Kierkegaard resolves the dilemma in what he calls *renewal*. The task of renewal is to save and redeem temporality. The very meaning of temporality is essentially at stake: temporality needs a renewal. The dialectic here is that what is renewed has already been, for otherwise, it would not be a renewal; but renewal changes the very fact that it has once been into something quite new and other. Now, when the Greeks (Plato) say that all knowledge is recollection, they are saying that the whole of life which now is has also been before. When it is said that life is renewal, the meaning is that the life which once had being, now enters into a new fullness that was not there before.

## **1. Kierkegaard' Approach: Faith Precludes Hegelianism**

Kierkegaard's point of departure in virtually all his writings is the issue of faith. Ironically, a large part of the content of faith concerns matters not derivable directly from the ontological structure of man's finitude. Consequently even the most careful and systematic rational and empirical scrutiny of the structure of the human being's finitude does not entail faith and its content. Epistemologists and idealists may have thought that faith is grounded on the reasonable, but Kierkegaard reversed the order by his emphatic affirmation that faith derives its energy from the infinite passion of objective uncertainty. Behind this striking reversal in a Christian theology that depended on the reasonable is Kierkegaard's critical view of Hegelianism.

Hegel aroused Kierkegaard's interest through an attempted identification of historical becoming with the immanent movement of logical categories. Kierkegaard realised that if history is the quest of infinite Spirit for freedom, the existential assignment of finite spirit suffers corruption, for in the Hegelian mindset it is the juxtaposition of logical contraries that generates process and becoming, not the decisive experiences of the individual. Kierkegaard lashed back at Hegelianism, protesting Hegel's pretentious diatribe: Kierkegaard made the incisive assertion that logically necessary relations, being necessary, cannot become, otherwise they are not necessary. What must be, always has been and does not suffer change – but is this what individuals experience?

Apart from his dialectical method, another distinguishing characteristic of Kierkegaard is that he weaves together both the philosophical and theological dimensions within a distinctively dynamic approach in examining these issues, and his work should be understood from this perspective. Consequently, his treatment of any topic in his individual fashion weaves both dimensions together. Robert Perkins acknowledges that this approach is innovative, when he affirms:

Kierkegaard's interpretation of theology will never be far in the background, for Kierkegaard's appraisal of Christian theology was innovative and was served by his critique of idealism. His theological

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views are and were as welcome to the average theology professor as his supposed appraisal of philosophy was welcome to other professors.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. The Problem of the Moment

Kierkegaard's treatment of the "Scandalization" of Faith springs from the problem of the *Moment*. By *Moment* is meant the point at which eternity chooses to interact with temporality. This kind of intersection happens precisely at the *Moment* in which the Absolute Paradox appears in human form. Here, Kierkegaard represents the *Problem of Lessing*. Kierkegaard's intervention indeed has solved age-long religious and epistemological problems. If the Moment were a merely a *historical fact*, contemporaneity would be an advantage.<sup>2</sup> If it were an *eternal fact* immediately available to all generations, it could not be the Moment. In reality, it is an absolute fact that simultaneously has become historical. This presents a difficulty that cannot be essentially resolved in terms of time. This paradox can only be apprehended in faith; and it is only God who can give the condition and the possibility for faith. Faith was a great challenge for his time: the world seems to face even more serious challenges to faith today; but already, Kierkegaard was proposing a convincing answer.

The issue here is what one may call *contradictions of existence*, the notion of *coming into existence* or *coming into the world*. The reference here is not to *becoming* or the process of alteration but of *something's coming into existence*. The point of emphasis is not *coming into being*, but *coming into the spatial-temporal actualization of any possibility and the individual, historical incarnation of the eternal*. This is the ultimate *contradiction of existence*: the Eternal in time. It is not an issue of the Eternal

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<sup>1</sup> R. PERKINGS, "Kierkegaard's Epistemological Preferences", *International Journal of Philosophy of Religion* 4/4 (1973) 198.

<sup>2</sup> Here our author seems to mean that if the Moment were a mere historical fact those who were contemporaries of Jesus during his earthly life, like Mary, Joseph and the Apostles, would have a distinct advantage over us who are at a historical distance from Jesus' earthly life. Kierkegaard reforms this notion (editor's note).

coming into being but as entering into a temporal-spatial structure of existence with its particularity and contingency: the Incarnation.

God does not subsist as a temporal-spatial existent. He is eternal. The historical paradox is that God, the Eternal, has come into spatial-temporal existence at a particular time as an individual with a human nature. The issue is not the essence or being of God but the God-in-time, the entry of the Eternal into human existence. The problem here is not the relationship between revelation and history, between truths of reason and truths of experience, between truths of reason and truths of revelation, but the relationship between philosophical idealism and New Testament Christianity. This relationship presents an absolute qualitative contrast.

How can eternity enter into temporality (into the ordered totality of concrete durations) without disrupting the temporal order of time? Is this acceptable to reason? Or can this be called a point of departure, the point that disrupts reason and erupts into unbelief, atheism and agnosticism?

### **3. Objective Incertitude and the Triumph of Faith**

Kierkegaard emphasizes the fact that the passionate affirmation of faith has always to contend with the resistance of reason. The Paradox scandalizes reason. The Paradox is the Eternal in time, something which reason cannot comprehend and which leads reason to founder in its passion because it cannot conceptualize it and cannot categorize it in human thought. But faith triumphs in the paradox and must always contain an echo of the scandal that has been traversed. The message is that the true believer at every moment acts to overcome the possibility of scandal, for he cannot once and for all decide for faith and against scandalization. Why not?

This point needs to be understood. With regard to the Socratic paradox, the subjective thinker abandons the path of objectification, but this may not be simply left behind irrevocably. There will always be, and must be kept in view, an objective incertitude as a constant reminder. In the triumph of faith in the paradox, there equally remains an objective incertitude. Faith must always contain an echo of the scandal of objective incertitude. This distinguishes the experience of scandalization from mere

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*sacrificium intellectus* which is made once and for all and as a result of which the difficulties are decisively overcome.

In examining the problem, Hermann Diem says that in the latter case one is moving in the sphere of objective thought. The objective contradiction is removed on an objective plane in that an antimony is accepted as something objectively insoluble and at the same time accurately descriptive so that the thinker who has made at a certain moment this sacrifice of his understanding, consequently goes on thinking and exercising his reason within the area that he has cleared by this sacrifice – as though nothing has happened. There can be no question that his existence has been utterly reoriented by this crucial decision, however much he may deny this. Hence he marks himself out to be an existential thinker.

Some have pigeonholed Kierkegaard to be among those who have made this *sacrificium intellectus*. This is unjust. The scandal does not consist in the fact that man is to believe a self-contradiction and thus hold something 'senseless' to be true. It consists "in the fact that all the presuppositions of his being as an existence anchored in truth are called into question."<sup>3</sup> If he is to make the *sacrificium intellectus* and thus consent to the negation of his understanding, it would not help him in the least. By the aid of this understanding he has ordered his life up to now and has mastered it by thinking.

It is this very fact that *the human person does not already possess truth in the depth of his recollection*,<sup>4</sup> but, on the contrary, *that truth confronts him in the divine self-revelation at a particular point in the historical process which has now become irretrievable*. To come to terms with this "scandal," the human being must not isolate thought (the Hegelian weakness) and dissociate himself from other aspects of existence because it is the whole of human existence which the absolute paradox confronts, revolts and

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<sup>3</sup> H. DIEM, *Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence*, trans. by H. Knight, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd 1959, 70.

<sup>4</sup> S. KIERKEGAARD, *The Concept of Anxiety, A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, ed. and trans. by R. Thomte and A.B. Anderson, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1980, 89.

shocks. It is the whole of human existence that may resist the consequent *new orientation of life which this paradox brings*.

#### 4. Time and Eternity Touch Each Other: Temporality

How does this change in existence brought about by divine revelation work itself out in concrete details? For Kierkegaard, this already happened in that moment of the dynamic processes of historical becoming when revelation rendered existence meaningful within time, with the result that time constantly clashes interactively with eternity and eternity penetrates time. It is abundantly clear that through revelation, the eternal becomes historical and enters at a specific point the ordered series of concrete durations that we call “time”. Yet Kierkegaard makes a dramatic and disconcerting comment:

The Moment is that ambiguity in which time and eternity touch each other, and with this the concept of *temporality* is posited, whereby time constantly intersects eternity and eternity constantly pervades time. As a result, the above-mentioned division acquires its significance: the present time, the past time, and the future time.<sup>5</sup>

This is definitely insightful; according to Diem, “there is needed a more exact consideration of the eternal such as will take us beyond the Greek conception.”<sup>6</sup> The Greek understanding of the character of temporality is naïve, for the Greek philosophers had no idea of eternity in any deeper sense, and neither had they any conception of the meaning of future. For them *the eternal lies behind as the past that can only be entered backwards*.<sup>7</sup> The Greeks conceived of eternity as belonging to the past, as something that appears retrospectively as in Platonic recollection. Time has no direction, it is a mere passing away of all things; and life in time is not a question of the relation of the present to the past and future. Kierkegaard illustrates it thus:

It is as when I imagine a man walking along the road but do not posit a step, and so the road appears behind him as the distance covered. If the moment is posited but merely as a discripen [division],

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<sup>5</sup> S. KIERKEGAARD, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 89.

<sup>6</sup> H. DIEM, *Kierkegaard's Dialectic*, 70.

<sup>7</sup> S. KIERKEGAARD, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 89.

then the future is eternal. If the moment is posited, so is the eternal, but also the future, which appears as the past.<sup>8</sup>

Through revelation, eternity is not an endless future; it is particularised at a special point in the ordered series of concrete durations, and relationship to the eternal is hereby localised, becoming a point of decisive significance for existence. This *effect* of the absolute paradox is as paradoxical as the paradox itself, and consequently, from the point of view of Socratic thinking can only be understood as a *scandal*. But it is just so and not otherwise that the paradox itself insists on its being understood. Reason has understood the ground of scandal just as little as it has understood the paradox itself. In other words, the position is the reverse, that "the paradox does not allow reason to entertain any opinion of it, but as truth itself it is *index et judex sui*."<sup>9</sup> What offended reason asserts is quite right, but what is wrong is its supposition that this is an objection to the paradox it has discovered, whereas in reality it is the paradox which has provoked the very objection. For Kierkegaard, "all that the offended reason says about the paradox it has learnt from the latter, even though it maintains that it discovered it for itself, because it is under an acoustic illusion."<sup>10</sup>

If the claims of the absolute paradox are correct, then, the question can only be what sort of relationship exists between the eternal and the temporality to which the eternal gives significance. The eternal thus appearing through revelation is described in Christian terms as "the fullness of time." According to Kierkegaard:

The pivotal concept in Christianity, which made all things new, is the fullness of time, but the fullness of time is the Moment as eternal, and yet this eternal is also the future and the past. If attention is not

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<sup>8</sup> S. KIERKEGAARD, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 90.

<sup>9</sup> H. DIEM, *Kierkegaard's Dialectic*, 71.

<sup>10</sup> S. KIERKEGAARD, *Philosophical Fragments*, Originally translated and introduced by D.F. Swenson. New introduction and commentary by N. Thulstrup. Translation revised and commentary translated by H.V. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1974, 61-62, also cf. *The Concept of Anxiety*, 48.

paid to this, no single concept can be saved from a heretical and treasonable admixture that annihilates the concept.<sup>11</sup>

In *common usage*, the eternal is sometimes identified with the future and this is right inasmuch as the future is in a certain sense the whole of which the past is only a part. Furthermore, to identify the eternal with the future connotes the endless free and open possibilities of whatever is to become in contrast to the fixity of the past which has completed its becoming. The future, Kierkegaard holds, is the incognito under the mask of which the eternal – incommensurable with time – nevertheless wills to maintain its connection with time. But the allusion to ‘common usage’ cannot in Kierkegaard’s opinion be adequate in this matter and more precise conceptual formation and articulation are needed.

In Diem’s opinion, the human being encounters the revelation of the eternal in the present; consequently, the past, as a result of that present experience, becomes distinct from the future. In contrast to the fixity and finality of the past, the eternal contains the seeds of all creative development for the future, for it seals off the past thereby preventing it from hindering by its lifelessness the free vital possibilities of the future. At the same time too, the creative present moment establishes continuity between the future and the past because of the belief that the eternal is both the future and the past. This implies that what comes to be in the future is not an utterly different story from that which has been in the past. Once the creative present is realised, *we have with us the eternal* which is at the same time the future, reverberating too in the past. In this way the past lives again, and yet it too is no longer the same since, as it passes through the creative present, it becomes transmuted by eternity.

## 5. The Question of Sin

Further discussion on this is concerned with the qualitative transmutation and involves the question of sin. It is not possible to attend to Kierkegaard and escape this idea; therefore, in order to do justice to this present discussion and flesh out its meaning, I will give a very brief consideration to the discussion of sin with

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<sup>11</sup> S. KIERKEGAARD, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 90.

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particular reference to the transmutation just mentioned in the last paragraph.

The concept of sin does not belong to any particular science for science cannot treat the problem of sin. Kierkegaard writes:

The concept of sin does not properly belong to any science; only the second ethics can deal with its manifestation but not with its coming into existence. If any science were to treat of it, the concept would be confused.<sup>12</sup>

Kierkegaard regards an individual as a synthesis of body and soul held together by the *spirit* as the third factor. In other words, that man is a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal held together by the *creative present*. It is the spirit that must establish the synthesis of the body and soul; and, according to Kierkegaard, the spirit is the eternal and operates only when it establishes the first synthesis as identical with the second, that of the temporal and the eternal. This happens through the *moment* at which revelation comes, putting an end to the naiveté of the Greek outlook on the body and time, an outlook that disparaged both the body and time and so veered towards the position of qualifying both as coherent with sinfulness.

Kierkegaard does not deduce the idea of sin from the nature of body and time, but argues rather from the standpoint of faith in revelation. In *The Sickness Unto Death*, Kierkegaard describes the state in which the self stands on the heights of faith and overcomes the scandalization. In his very last affirmation in *The Sickness Unto Death*, Kierkegaard defines faith: by relating itself to its own self and by willing to be itself, the self is rooted transparently in that Power which constituted it. This, says Kierkegaard, is the definition of *faith*.

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<sup>12</sup> S. KIERKEGAARD, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 21. The editor notes that this position of Kierkegaard corresponds to the Thomistic position that sin is inherently irrational. The Neo-Thomist Bernard Lonergan put it this way: "By basic sin I shall mean the failure of free will to choose a morally obligatory course of action or its failure to reject a morally reprehensible course of action. Thus, basic sin is the root of the irrational in man's rational self-consciousness." B. LONERGAN, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, New York: Philosophical Library 1967, 666.

Sin stands in contrast to faith. It is the very essence of Christianity to affirm and reaffirm that *the opposite of sin is not virtue but faith*. Because *whatever does not proceed from faith is sin*, sin therefore, can only be understood “as the stage on the way of faith which hinders the attainment of that goal.”<sup>13</sup> For Kierkegaard sin is before God in despair not to will to be oneself, or before God in despair to will to be oneself. The lynchpin of this definition is the despair before God.

The sin may have become a state of despair over one’s despair. Sin, for Kierkegaard, is a detachment from the good, but when one despairs over one’s despair, everything which is of the nature of repentance and everything which is of the nature of grace is an enemy. Despair here means a total unwillingness to consider repentance and grace. And then there is the clinching notion that despair is *before God*. It is the despair of the forgiveness of sins.

One has come to know that having a self is something eternal. Now one meets the challenge of a self that is face to face with God – this is the basis of the definition of sin. Kierkegaard notes that ordinarily the self which in despair will not be itself is a position of weakness. Before God, in despair the self that does not will to be the self that he is, i.e., a sinner, is one who is defying God and so he wills to dispense with the forgiveness of sins. The self in despair that will be itself, i.e., a sinner, is ordinarily a defiant self. But face to face with God, the one who in despair wills to be his sinful self is manifesting weakness: he does not believe that there is forgiveness. He intends to remain a sinner as if weakness were to be the condition of his self in eternity.

Sin defies what is decisive, that for God all things are possible. Kierkegaard puts it this way: “The believer possesses the eternally certain antidote to despair, viz., possibility; for with God all things are possible at every instant.”<sup>14</sup>

The natural man does not know and cannot know himself to be a sinner by the light of his reason, he needs revelation in order to realise this. The idea by which Christianity most decisively and

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<sup>13</sup> H. DIEM, *Kierkegaard’s Dialectic*, 73.

<sup>14</sup> S. KIERKEGAARD, *The Sickness Unto Death, A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*, ed. and trans. by H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1980, 82ff.

qualitatively differs from heathendom (Religiousness A), is precisely the doctrine of sin. Christianity assumes that neither the heathen nor the natural man is aware of the nature of sin. In order to identify sin and disclose what it is, the knowledge of the self-revelation of God is necessary. Kierkegaard has reminded his readers of this very important point which cannot be overlooked:

The qualitative distinction between paganism and Christianity is not as a superficial consideration assumes the doctrine of Atonement. No, the begging must start far deeper, with sin, with the doctrine of sin – as Christianity in fact does. What a dangerous objection it would be against Christianity if paganism had a definition of sin that Christianity would have to acknowledge as correct.<sup>15</sup>

## 6. Sin Positions the Person "Before God"

In developing this point sin is given a further definition. Whereas for Socrates sin is merely negative – sin is ignorance – Christianity, according to Kierkegaard, declares sin to be something that brings forth consequences that are *positive*, *sin is not a final negation of the self but a position that places the self before God*.<sup>16</sup> This, according to Kierkegaard, is the tenet for which dogmatic orthodoxy in its refined state and orthodoxy in *grosso modo* have contended; and every definition of sin which has made it out to be something merely negative, such as weakness, sensuality, finitude, ignorance and so on has been challenged. *Orthodoxy has perceived very correctly that the battle must be fought here – that the decisive struggle must be fought out here.*

A contextual constituent of sin is the self as infinitely potentiated by the conception of God, and thus in turn is the greatest possible consciousness of sin as a deed. This is the expression for the fact that sin positions the person: the positioning factor in sin is specifically this, i.e., that sin is "before God." Within the plan and the grace of God – i.e., within the context of the Paschal Mystery – it is a *happy fault*. The human being realizes who he is in the state of humility and achieves this realization in the presence of the God who graces him with a self that is eternal

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<sup>15</sup> S. KIERKEGAARD, *The Sickness Unto Death*, 88-89.

<sup>16</sup> S. KIERKEGAARD, *The Sickness Unto Death*, 96.

and transparently free from despair and hence is grounded in his forgiveness.

Sin is not simply the imperfect, is not that which, in existential dialectic, has not yet ripened into being and hence is the non-existent only in the sense of the not yet existent. If, on the contrary, sin positions a person, then the whole movement of the existential dialectic is decisively changed. The sphere of non-being is everywhere present as nothingness from which there arises deceptive appearance, sin, sensuality divorced from spirit, time divorced from eternity. The point is now to clear this away and to call forth the sphere of truth, being and existence. "Orthodoxy has correctly perceived that when sin is defined negatively, all Christianity is flabby and spineless. That is why orthodoxy emphasises that there must be a revelation from God to teach fallen man what sin is, a communication that quite consistently, must be believed because it is a dogma."<sup>17</sup>

Kierkegaard has seen the solution in what he calls *renewal*. The task of renewal is to save and redeem finitude for it cannot be left aside. The reason is that it is finitude (temporality) which is essentially at stake and so needs to be renewed. There is dialectic here: What is renewed has already been, for otherwise, it could not have been renewed, but renewal changes the very fact that it has once been, into something that is quite new and other. Now, when the Greeks (Plato) say that all knowledge is recollection, they are saying that the whole of life which now is has also been before. When it is said, on the other hand, that life is renewal, the meaning is that the life which once had being now enters into a new fullness of life.

This renewal takes place in the moment of faith when revelation brings simultaneity, and – for the Christian – the *passage* into historical becoming is realized. This passage contains two acts. The first is from the negative standpoint – the life of the body and temporality, which previously were not redeemed by the spirit and eternity, stand out as sinfulness. Thus, sin positions the person in a certain condition of life, not simply as a question of the continuing consequences of particular sins, but of sin as of

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<sup>17</sup> S. KIERKEGAARD, *The Sickness Unto Death*, 96.

a 'position which unfolds into an ever-increasing, positing continuum,' and which therefore increases with every moment in which the individual does not emerge from it. Hence, Kierkegaard says that, "every unrepented sin is a new sin and every moment that it remains unrepented is also a new sin."<sup>18</sup>

This continuing condition of sinfulness is the deepest essence of sin, and the particular sins are not the continuation of sin but *the expression of the continuance of sin*;<sup>19</sup> hence, in any particular sin, the active presence of sin's continuing condition merely becomes clearly perceptible.

The second act is that from the positive standpoint, in the *moment of faith*, the irruption of the eternal cancels the positive non-being of sin. This does not happen by bringing into existence a new kind of being that did not previously exist; rather it happens by the fact that the temporality which previously was sinful now appears as the historical in which the presence of the eternal creates being and life. This is achieved by the fact that the same life of the senses appears, but now as a synthesis held together by the operation of the spirit. This event of *renewal*, therefore, is concerned with the very problem which occupied Kierkegaard from the time of his first decision to treat the Hegelian idea of mediation. The dual Socratic movement towards infinity, in which the ego resigned its finitude in order to win the eternal by the act of choosing its true life, could be accepted as a solution only if the ego already possessed the eternal in the depths of recollection. But according to Hermann Diem, this presupposition is destroyed by revelation and all the difficulties of any transformation of being recur to find their solution only in the act of renewal.

## 7. Renewal and the Experience of Scandalization

Objectively, the dialectical moment in the two-edged movement of renewal lies in the absolute paradox working itself out both negatively and positively. From the point of view of the concrete individual, it lies in the experience of *scandalization*.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> S. KIERKEGAARD, *The Sickness Unto Death*, 105.

<sup>19</sup> S. KIERKEGAARD, *The Sickness Unto Death*, 106.

<sup>20</sup> Scandalization refers to the constant presence and constant reminder of objective incertitude. With regard to the triumph of faith in the paradox, such

Human reason recognizes that the fact of divine revelation does not preclude the qualitative distinction between the divine and the human. Rather indeed in the experience of scandalization this distinction becomes transparent for the first time; the human person cannot obviate the distinction. For this purpose, the human being must first be able to realise his or her sin in order to believe that God is intending to forgive the sin.

Every step to this awareness of sin through the deepening of personal existence contains in itself the possibility of revolt against the paradox of the divinely human, which, is the possibility of scandalisation. If an individual wishes to realise the fact of his life as sinful and to believe in the forgiveness of sins, he must always do so in tension with the resistance called forth by the paradox itself, that is, he must overcome, through faith, the possibility of scandal. As a sinner, man is separated from God by a seemingly bottomless abyss. God is separated from the human being by the same abyss when he forgives sins. If we were ever able to attribute to the human being qualities that belong to God – beauty, kindness, goodness, strength, love – in one respect the human person will never in all eternity resemble God, namely, in forgiving sins. Forgiveness is a re-creation.

If the ever-present possibility of scandal is set aside, then as has been remarked, sin is no longer positioning the person before God, and the qualitative distinction between the divine and the human is obfuscated by man himself. Unless it is safeguarded by this possibility of scandal the doctrine of the divinely human merges into heathen pantheism and necessarily leads to blasphemy.

The problem that Kierkegaard is pointing out is what he calls the *fundamental misfortune of Christianity*. He refers precisely to what Christian denominations have made of Christianity, namely, that their perennial manner of preaching the doctrine of the God-man has *evacuated this doctrine of its true meaning*. The

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faith must always contain an echo of the scandal that has been traversed. In Kierkegaard's understanding, "the possibility of being scandalised is the parting of ways. From the possibility of this crux we either turn off the scandalization or to faith; but we never reach faith except through the possibility of scandalization." *Kierkegaard's Writings*, XII, 78 and IX, 68. Scandalization is probably what Lessing called the "Ugly Ditch."

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consequence is that the qualitative distinction between the divine and the human is removed in favour of a more pantheistic understanding, first by way of distinguished speculation, and then in the streets and lanes of the populace.

This is not just in Kierkegaard's era but in the present age, too. On the theological level, a closer look demonstrates that there is no real difference between recent theological writings and speculative philosophy. Kierkegaard's diagnosis of the disease of the present era is this: Theology in our day seems to have taken as its model the philosophical categories; and one wonders if theologians are aware of this deviation. In the process they reduce God to the parameters of human reason. To know the truth of Christianity, it will not suffice to approach it as an academic scholar (which seems to be the current practice). The issue is that of superficial knowledge, possessed without reality or significance.

Scriptural hermeneutics, presently a subject for study by every scholar, can be deceptive for those who may be tempted to read into the texts meanings and interpretations that are not there. Hence Scripture study should be left to those whose body and mind and soul enjoy the purity necessary to penetrate the scriptures.<sup>21</sup> The mysteries of Christianity can only be appreciated by one who approaches the true practitioners, the religious mystics and the saints, and then strive to live as they do. This observation, like that of a watchman, neither accepts being part of the problem, nor pretends to offer any solution. It is merely an observation regarding the shift in the theological circle.

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<sup>21</sup> Editor's note: one notices how closely Kierkegaard's position and the position of our author resembles that of St. Athanasius in his concluding words of *De Incarnatione*: "For the searching and right understanding of the Scriptures there is need of a good life and a pure soul, and for Christian virtue to guide the mind to grasp, so far as human nature can, the truth concerning God the Word. One cannot possibly understand the teaching of the saints unless one has a pure mind and is trying to imitate their life... Anyone who wishes to understand the mind of the sacred writers must first cleanse his own life, and approach the saints by copying their deeds. Thus united to them in the fellowship of life, he will both understand the things revealed to them by God and, thenceforth escaping the peril that threatens sinners in the judgment, will receive that which is laid up for the saints in the kingdom of heaven." See *De Incarnatione*, n. 57.

## 8. A New Self through the Passion of Faith

From the discussion one comes to the understanding that, never in human history has any religious doctrine brought God and the human being so closely together as Christianity has done, nor could anyone do this but God himself. Every human discovery of such a truth remains but a dream, an uncertain fancy. But never has any doctrine so cautiously guarded itself against the most horrible of all blasphemies, that of supposing that this step, after God has taken it, should come to mean no more than that the divine and the human in the last resort merge together. Never has any doctrine been so protected against this as is Christianity by its insistence on the moment of scandal. In the end we may say with Kierkegaard:

Woe to babblers, woe to the frivolous thinkers [and theologians] who have explained away the moment of scandalization, and woe, woe to all hangers-on, and woe to the whole tribe who have learnt to think likewise and praised them.<sup>22</sup>

The consequence is that the individual who is to believe in the God-man (the incarnation), must become a new person. The old sinful self, with its sin-permeated plausible structure must be destroyed and a new self created. This new self is an achievement made possible by passion. From the Christian point of view, man cannot become a self by himself, but rather he must allow his old self to die and become a new self through the passion of faith which God makes possible.

In this sense, faith is not intellectual but a passion that transforms the individual's whole existence. The Christian is a believer who has discovered his self-identity by allowing God to give him or her that identity in a moment of forgiveness that allows the person to transcend himself or herself and enter the state of renewal that is entirely characterized by authenticity, i.e., the truth. The believer becomes committed to God's entrance into history. The very nature of this fact, however, is such that it cannot be believed only intellectually. *It requires not a change of thought but a radical change of character.*<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> S. KIERKEGAARD, *The Sickness Unto Death*, 117.

<sup>23</sup> S.C. EVANS, *Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript, The Religious Philosophy of Johannes Climacus*, New Jersey: Humanities Press 1983, 268.

As the absolute paradox clashes with man's natural way of thinking, the Incarnation can only be believed by the person who has died and been reborn, the individual who has been gripped by the life-transforming passion of faith. The individual who exists in virtue of this passion that God has made possible cannot think of rendering his faith *provisional* because his very existence is made possible by faith. He cannot therefore regard God's appearance merely as a doctrine to be assented to intellectually. God is not just a Socratic teacher who vanishes into insignificance, but rather he is the one to whom the individual owes his life.

The individual's attitude towards God must in such a case be that of a follower and a disciple. I have earlier explained the process of this rebirth, that is, "renewal." A non-believer is not expected to be familiar with these details. In summary, the meaning is that the individual is *saved from slavery and redeemed from captivity*.<sup>24</sup> To make this possible, the teacher, as his choice, *takes away the wrath which hung over the deservingly guilty*.<sup>25</sup> In other words, *the transition to the new existence is a liberating transition in which the individual gains the possibility for true action*.<sup>26</sup> To gain this liberation, God himself must take care of the guilt and the responsibility that is incumbent upon the individual's sin.

The fact that faith cannot be attained merely by intellectual reflection and is never simply the conclusion of historical evidence is strength, because it places all human beings who are faced with the choice on an equal footing. The redemption of the human self is not an affair of the esoteric knowledge of a gnostic. If Christianity were an intellectual doctrine amenable or even reducible to rational understanding, more intelligent people would have an advantage. If it were an ordinary historical fact, those with more evidence, contemporary eye witnesses and so on, would have an advantage.

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<sup>24</sup> S. KIERKEGAARD, *Philosophical Fragments*, 21. This, I think, is rooted in Colossians 1:12-20, but especially verses 13-14: "He delivered us from the power/domination of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

<sup>25</sup> S.C. EVANS, *Kierkegaard's Fragments*, 269.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

*Deo Gratias*, Christianity's paradoxical character erases the difference between the near and the far, the members of the past generation and those of the present generation. The difficulty of making the choice for faith is the same in every age. Every disciple receives faith with its prismatic dimensions from God firsthand. This is an expression of the deep humanism one sees in Johannes Climacus,<sup>27</sup> a humanism that demands equality before God and all people. In this view, salvation is equally difficult for every human being in every time and place since no person can achieve faith himself; and, yet it is also equally easy, since God grants the faith in all its prismatic dimensions to everyone who wills to receive it. This is the principle of equality in Kierkegaard, which has served exemplary purposes for all those who would wish human beings to shine in all their graced transparency.

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<sup>27</sup> Climacus is not the 7<sup>th</sup> century Christian monk who lived on Mount Sinai; rather it is the nom de plume that Kierkegaard used for himself (editor's note).

# Language Resources: Concreteness vs. Abstractness

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## **Abstract**

This study reviews the weaknesses that may inhere in an infrastructure of concrete resources in underdeveloped societies that consequently impose distress on the abstract thinking that ought to function as a significant factor for the development of a well-established society.<sup>1</sup> Because of its potential for an enormous scope of knowledge that coheres with priorities wisely set and managed and a reservoir of energy that sustains reasoning into a far-off future, *the ability to think abstractly* can motivate all concerned towards an optimistic development of society. But this ability requires access to concrete data banks. This ability for abstract thinking results from an integrated development of a body of knowledge that has accumulated through a cognitive process initiated by exposure to concrete data and sustained by insight and wisdom.

The perception of what abstractness is, and the conception of how abstractness relates to sound reasoning, wise decision-making, and systems of implementation that are both practical and ethically viable in developing countries are influenced by various cultural

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<sup>1</sup> Abstract thinking in developed cultures has produced greater development in comparison to underdeveloped cultures. In developed cultures, abstract thinking enjoys a broader range of possibilities, because there are support systems in place for this broader range: there may be a traditional commitment to such habits as open-mindedness that encourages a multi-faceted relationship with international societies whereas underdeveloped societies may remain confined to more rigid cultural mindsets that do not allow them to participate wholeheartedly in the global network and hence leaves them out of touch with advanced developments. Thus, developed regions remain in the category of producers and underdeveloped societies remain as consumers.

forces that, practically speaking, may include a dynamism that reduces the society to an over-dependence on these cultural forces. Consequently this over-dependence can prevent the society's participation in the operational global network, more precisely, in that dimension of the global exchange of information that truly represents the opportunities – available to any country, developed or developing – for adopting the scientific innovations that are being broadcast in the international public forum and for benefiting from the technological advancements and the consequent expansion of concrete resources. The main objective of this study is to critically analyse the main factors behind the inefficiency of understanding new concepts through the unfortunate absence of a real correlation between concreteness and abstractness of language resources.<sup>2</sup>

One of the most debated questions in sociolinguistic analysis on the correlation between abstractness and its concrete exemplifications concerns the availability of the resources that ought to function as key factors to improve understanding of the transmitted concepts in a new culture where the efficiency of the language diminishes because the linguistic properties that would make the language accessible to local knowledge are simply not available – nor are there available concrete resources in the culture that can provide assistance in the language dilemma.

The main theories that have been developed to account for the hoped-for correlation between concreteness and abstractness are the social cognitive theory of Edwin B. Holt and Harold C. Brown (1931),<sup>3</sup> the functional context theory explained by Thomas Sticht (1976)<sup>4</sup>, context availability theory elucidated by Schwanenflugel,

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<sup>2</sup> Concrete entities are considered to be individual entities, especially, those of a physical nature. As such they show forth characteristic shapes, parts, materials, and so forth. Abstract entities, on the other hand, refer to universals and so lack individuality and the physical attributes that identify individuals. See D. Crystal (1995) *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>3</sup> See E. Holt – H.C. Brown (1931) *Animal Drive and the Learning Process: An Essay toward Radical Empiricism*, New York: Holt.

<sup>4</sup> See T. Sticht (1976) "Comprehending Reading at Work", in M. Just and P. Carpenter, eds., *Cognitive Processes in Comprehension*, Hillsdale, New Jersey: Erlbaum.

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Harnishfeger, and Stowe (1988),<sup>5</sup> the dual coding theory of Paivio (1986)<sup>6</sup> and the language game theory introduced by Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953)<sup>7</sup>. These theories shed indispensable light on the central issues presented in this paper.

The vocabulary, grammar, and style of a language are not static, closed systems but open systems that help local and national languages to connect to the international communication network and hence give developing countries access to all advances in abstract, scientific, technological, and ethical thinking. This ability to open language to international breakthroughs is at the heart of the conclusion reached by this present paper.

## Introduction

The abstract thinking that develops in tandem with meaningful strides in intellectual development, i.e., in the development of knowledge and of wisdom unaffected by charades of thought that certain religions may try to insinuate and any social class divisions that are entirely unacceptable has the potential to lead to great development in any society.<sup>8</sup> Current forms of abstract thinking, however, seem highly pretentious in some of the developing cultures especially in Africa and Asia because of the influence of social-ethnic division and emotionally modified cultural aspects such as rituals and customs that some cultures may try forcibly to link to religion and to caste.<sup>9</sup> The capacity for abstract thinking may

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<sup>5</sup> See P. Schwanenflugel – K.K. Harnishfeger – R.W. Stowe (1988). "Context availability and lexical decisions for abstract and concrete words", *Journal of Memory and Language* 27, 499-520.

<sup>6</sup> See A. Paivio (1986) *Mental Representations*. New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>7</sup> See L. Wittgenstein (1953), *Philosophical Investigations*. Oxford: Blackwell.

<sup>8</sup> One acknowledges that true religion opens the mind to all valid insights and advances in wisdom since the Author of insight and wisdom – the one who has designed the human mind – is not the human being but rather is God himself (editor's note).

<sup>9</sup> Division refers to differences in the ability to control the means of social production and to differences in class membership. Divisions are crucial for determining political preferences, life style choices, access to health and educational opportunities, and levels of income and wealth.

suffer greatly because of the various forces of culture and other divisive institutions in developing countries that impede abstract thinking.

## 1. What is Abstraction?

In his classic study of Human Understanding, Bernard Lonergan put it this way:

So far from being a mere impoverishment of the data of sense, abstraction in all its essential moments is enriching. Its first moment is an enriching anticipation of an intelligibility to be added to sensible presentations; there is something to be known by insight. Its second moment is the erection of heuristic structures and the attainment of insight to reveal in the data what is variously named as the significant, the relevant, the important, the essential, the idea, the form. Its third moment is the formulation of the intelligibility that insight has revealed. Only in this third moment does there appear the negative aspect of abstraction, namely, the omission of the insignificant, the irrelevant, the negligible, the incidental, the merely empirical residue. Moreover this omission is neither absolute nor definitive. For the empirical residue possesses the universal property of being what intelligence abstracts from. Such a universal property provides the basis for a second set of heuristic procedures that take their stand on the simple premise that the non-systematic cannot be systematized.

... So far from being an impoverishment of sensible data, abstraction is an enrichment that goes beyond them. Because abstraction goes beyond the sensible field, the frontiers of the abstract are not coterminous with the frontiers of the experienced. Hence, full and exact knowledge of the systems to be reached by abstraction by no means denies the existence of an empirical residue that is non-systematic. Again, just as in abstraction we prescind from the empirical residue, so when we come to the concrete applications of abstract principles and laws, we are forced to take into account the non-systematic conditions under which the systematic has its concrete realization.<sup>10</sup>

Abstraction, then, is a process of perceiving meaning, purpose, possibility, intelligibility, significance, value, system and operation in concrete presentations of data that without the process of abstraction may remain inutile as non-systematic empirical residue.

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<sup>10</sup> B. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, New York: Philosophical Library 1958, 88-89.

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At the risk of generalization, developing regions like Africa and Asia seem to show evidence of social divisions that obviate the abstract thinking of intellectuals. They are simply not given the opportunity to learn the process of discovery by means of enriching abstraction and insight. The influence of social class is clearly manifest in the academic outcomes within particular educational systems of Africa and Asia especially in group assignments.<sup>11</sup>

The social cognitive theory states that an individual's knowledge acquisition can be directly related to observing others within the context of social interactions, experiences, and outside media influences. The abstract thinking that functions as a key factor for knowledge acquisition is mainly influenced by education and experience in any society.

The functional context theory stresses that learning has everything to do with environmental influence on the person. Knowledge attainment always depends on education and experience in any society. Education and environment function as key factors for the acquisition of that type of knowledge which people typically refer to as wisdom. Emphasis on the educational methodology and the environment, which is in itself a resource, can lead to optimistic development in most of the wealthy societies where education forms the students to be creative.

The context availability theory argues that concrete words activate a broader contextual verbal support, which results in faster processing. The dexterity and agility of abstractness is acquired with the assistance of the existential accessibility of concrete resources that function as the symbols of a wealthy society.

The dual coding theory claims that there exists a dual coding system responsible for the storage of semantic representations related to concepts. The two codes involved are *analogue codes* and *symbolic codes*.

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<sup>11</sup> The group assignment is a technique that teachers use in most academic disciplines. The group assignment fails to meet its objective because what the students produce is usually not consistent with a measurable growth in abstract thinking in reference to the topic upon which the group assignment is focused. The method adopted by students in group assignments often leaves the burden of research in the hands of one or two persons from the group.

One uses **analogue codes** to mentally represent images. Analogue codes ordinarily retain the main perceptual features of whatever is being represented, so the images we form in our minds are highly similar to the physical stimuli. A notable exception to this is the mental distortion that often accompanies representations of images of a trauma victim. They are a near-exact representation of the physical stimuli we observe in our environment, such as trees, rivers, but also items made by human beings, whether they are elaborate or simple. In this essay, these are referred to as concrete data, or concrete resources.

One uses **symbolic codes** to form mental representations of words. They represent something in a conceptual manner as opposed to a perceptual manner. Similar to the way a watch may represent information in the form of numbers to display the time, symbolic codes represent information in our mind in the form of arbitrary symbols, like words and combinations of words, to represent several ideas. In the present essay this particular form of symbolic coding is referred to as abstractness. Each symbol (x, y, 1, 2, etc.) can represent something other than itself. The specific representations that are involved are established by convention.

One example of such a convention is the letter x. X is often used to represent more than just the concept of an x, the 24<sup>th</sup> letter of the alphabet. It can be used to represent a variable in mathematics and, as such, is often joined to the letter y. X can be a symbol for multiplication in an equation. Concepts like multiplication can be represented symbolically by an “x” because we arbitrarily assign it a deeper concept. Only when we use it to represent this deeper concept does the letter "x" carry this type of meaning.

Linguistic properties function as a coding system of semantic representations in any culture where language customarily reflects the society<sup>12</sup>. Abstractness is related to the concrete representations that constitute the source of the idea about an object. Hence, abstractness requires concrete resources – analogue codes – for

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<sup>12</sup> People who speak different languages name colours in different ways. The English system is based on wavelengths of light. When a beam of light is passed through a prism, it appears on a surface as a rainbow colours, ranging from red to blue and including all the thousands of discriminable hues.

distinctive acquisition of the new concepts. If thousands of linguistic properties come into play to explain an idea, learners are going to encounter difficulties in the acquisition process of new knowledge. In a word, there would be a lack of a heuristic principle, i.e., a principle by which concepts may be quite adequately explained in as succinct a manner as possible.

In developing regions the understanding of new knowledge suffers because language resources to develop a new idea about an object are limited. New concepts are expected to become understandable in the local language with the availability of linguistic terms that are already meaningful in the culture and are capable of expressing the properties of knowledge and so give access to understanding of the new concepts.

The language game theory posits the dependency of statements on the existential involvements of the ones using the language. Language involves me with non-linguistic activities. If I say, "I am eating now," I am probably engaged in an activity that one normally calls "eating." Eating is a non-linguistic activity. The term 'language-game' is used to refer to:

- Contrived examples of language use that are simpler than our own everyday language. For example, a text message: "How r u?"
- Simple uses of language that correspond to how children are first taught language (training in language).
- Specific regions of our language with their own grammars and relations to other language-games. How we talk about the economy is different from how we talk about our malaria. Health and economics are two regions of our language.
- All of a natural language as an entire family of language-games that either give us easy access to understanding the mindsets, customs, and convictions of other cultures or, on the contrary, deprive us of such access.

These meanings are not separated from each other by sharp boundaries, but blend into one another (as suggested by the idea of family resemblance). The concept is based on the following analogy: The rules of language are analogous to the rules of games;

thus saying something in a language is analogous to making a move in a game. The analogy between a language and a game demonstrates that words have meaning depending on the uses made of them in the various and multiform activities of human life. This fact is going to feed into a very important conclusion to the present essay, namely, that human consciousness is polymorphic.

The words with their etymological references and relations within the linguistic organic structure give rise to thousands of interpretations that are common in a context of literacy.

All the above-mentioned theories explain the strength of language resources with their multiple linguistic properties that make it possible to interpret concepts that are new and relate them to new cultural trends. Hence these theories explain how to utilize the strength of language in order to devise an efficient method that allows for profound understanding with the help of existential reference points, with points of comparison with already existing language resources, and with the help of the concrete resources that become available in new cultural settings.

## **2. Importance of Infrastructure**

According to cognitive theory, the infrastructure of language provides a greater understanding of concepts in the encoding and decoding process that is involved in the transference of an idea that is abstract into the message that is concrete.<sup>13</sup> The cognizance of concepts mainly relies on the agility and dexterity of local knowledge resources to interweave new concepts with what has already come to be known through local traditions and inter-regional, international communication. The ability of local

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<sup>13</sup> The theory posits the existence of single coding system to which people can understand the uniqueness of the abstract concepts through the linguistic properties. The multiple resources of language in the form of linguistic properties make the understanding of concepts complex. Here lack of expertise with the properties and grammatical features of foreign languages that have multiple meanings and grammatical idiosyncrasies that differ from the local linguistic properties cause misunderstanding and communication breakdown among learners. Therefore accessibility of the global language or the development of grammatical features in local language is expected to give access to local knowledge as well as international knowledge through linguistic properties for the profound understanding of global concepts.

knowledge resources to welcome meaningfully new conceptualizations develops in tandem with the ability of local intellectual resources to render themselves accessible to technological advancement and scientific innovations. In developed countries advanced accessibility means that intellectual resources are available to assist the learners to have experience with concrete exemplifications and innovations that enable a deeper understanding. This new and more profound understanding that depends indispensably on the concrete data banks as a source of insight and the consequent transmission of knowledge and the conceptions that help give rise to that knowledge.<sup>14</sup> The importance of the concrete is expressed with such aphorisms as: "To see is to believe" and "An image is worth a thousand words".

The availability of concrete resources instils more confidence in determining whether an idea is expressing the truth or untruth of what really exists. The inductive processes involved in determining the truth of an idea find their crucial determinants in what is concretely exemplifying or failing to exemplify the idea. In this process, the object that carries the idea in the form of a message functions as the medium. The concrete resources themselves may function as global media and hence do not require the assistance of linguistic properties in the evaluation process of the transmitted concepts. In developed countries resources that make concepts accessible, such as advances in technology and scientific refinements, function as great aids in the enterprise of fortifying the understanding of the abstractness of the concept. But in developing countries the transmission of abstract concepts with lack of rootedness in available concrete resources/ examples greatly diminishes the prospect that the abstract concepts will be understood. Developing countries fail to assist intellectuals with a well-advanced infrastructure because of several forces of culture,

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<sup>14</sup> Knowledge is an acquaintance that is immediate and unquestionable, linking one with abstract properties, and concrete data of sense together with concrete data of consciousness passing before one's mind. For complete descriptions of judgments of fact and judgments of value and hence the accumulation of knowledge, see B. Lonergan, *Insight*, especially Part II, "Insight as Knowledge."

traditional practices, and situations of material poverty that may be either avoidable or unavoidable.

Language is a most precious possession of human culture and has greatly influenced the patterns of human living by means of both written and oral forms of communication and comprehension at all stages of human development. Since language functions as a communicator and sharer of ideas – ideas that often communicate needs and suggestions, there is a meta-need to discover a way of transmitting our new ways of thinking in oral and written forms of communication that correspond to our new world of rapidly accumulating inventions and discoveries. Advanced discoveries give access to new possibilities for abstract thinking, when new concepts are conveyed in a way that manifest great awareness and adaptation to the particular processes of listening and understanding that typify a given audience.

There is an unmistakable challenge, for example, when the lack of availability of concrete resources and thereby the lack of experience with those same resources, gives rise to a milieu with poor background information about the new concepts at issue. New concepts require the assistance of the existentiality of concrete resources to elucidate the meaning of the concepts.<sup>15</sup> The intelligibility of new concepts and, on the practical level, the ability of the local people to incorporate new concepts into the operational use of their language highlights the distinctive role that language must play in forms that are both oral and written. The lack of concrete resources and the weaknesses of linguistic properties in a culture lead to the fast disappearance of language.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See M. Heidegger (1971) *On the Way to Language*, transl. by P. Herz. San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins Publishers.

Existentiality refers to *Da-Sein* as the being-in-the-world who defines himself or herself in terms of possibility. This is not a possibility that arises from the fanciful but rather is rooted in the problematic of the self-being as it actually exists. The term existentiality gives emphasis to this fact that the possibility is intrinsic to the being as it actually exists.

<sup>16</sup> The effect of insufficient infrastructure leads to lack of grammatical features indispensable for giving access to all local and international knowledge. Without these grammatical features there ensues a code mixing of two languages. This code mixing slowly weakens the local language.

### 3. Impact of a Lack of Infrastructure

During the recent past few years, the number of languages has vanished because of the lack of linguistic properties that the society needs in order for the languages to be functional.<sup>17</sup> Communities abandon native tongues because of the unavailability of grammatical properties that give access to developments in local knowledge and international knowledge. The society that is highly influenced by orality has failed to develop the concepts that are the results of abstract thinking beyond the forces of culture. Often these transcultural concepts can be more intelligible to an audience only through concentrated reflection on what is expressed – the kind of reflection that needs a written form that is either unavailable or only of minimal importance in an oral culture.<sup>18</sup>

Education and experience function as key factors to develop a system of knowledge that can be truly called creative.<sup>19</sup> Once the innovations are in vogue, grammatical properties and the ability of the language to incorporate new vocabulary assist the spread of knowledge. New knowledge is born from old knowledge with the help of creative thinking and meaningful expression.<sup>20</sup> The

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<sup>17</sup> In most oral forms of communication intellectuals find difficulty in using one linguistic feature to describe ideas because of the lack of linguistic properties in their language. So they are in a set of circumstances where they choose to switch codes to another language, i.e., a language that is well established with its linguistic properties.

<sup>18</sup> See W.J. Ong (1982) *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, London: Methuen. Father Ong has emphasized that the society that is highly addicted to oral culture has failed to improve the kind of creativity that employs critical thinking as a functioning source of knowledge production.

<sup>19</sup> Education and experience function as stimuli for thinking beyond the forces of culture and emotions. Without education and experience individuals and groups can be naively exposed to subjectivist projection, the fallacy of interpreting another's culture within the perspective of one's own culture, and to anthropomorphic projection, the fallacy of explaining existentiality and abstractness in terms of feelings rather than in terms of coherent insights.

<sup>20</sup> The main distinction between old knowledge and new knowledge is that through the process of exploration old knowledge becomes information, while new knowledge is born from a type of abstract thinking that develops in tandem with new innovations in concrete circumstances and so transforms the meaning of the information available through old knowledge.

accessibility of new abstractness becomes easy when language users link the existence of the old knowledge resource reservoir, which is still dynamically functional in the language, to a heuristic capability of accessing the existence of concrete resources that are connected to linguistic properties. Therefore each developing society has to think creatively beyond forces of culture and traditional practice that highly affect the abstract thinking; and the developing society must pay attention to the heuristic character of language in expressing the novelties of an existentially changing scientific/technological concrete order.

In any industrialized society, new knowledge is introduced through education and mass media in a language that guarantees wider diffusion of new concepts because it is known and used by the majority of the people.<sup>21</sup> The role of education and the mass media in facilitating the transmission of knowledge has occupied a significant position in cultural infrastructures.<sup>22</sup> According to Walter Ong, the society which employs better accessibility to media and education assists the learners to update their knowledge and comprehend what they know with the help of a new degree of abstractness.

The window of opportunity for success in integrating transmitted thoughts into cultural frameworks is often closed because there is a lack of the language resources needed to assist intellectuals in their attempts to grasp the new concepts that are easily understandable through the current advanced technology if that technology were available. What also could assist intellectuals in this enterprise are the efficacious cultural dynamics to be found

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Oral culture is the traditional practice of most developing countries where there is an absence of the type of abstract thinking that brings forth creativity and a richer understanding of the abstract concepts that are born outside of one's own culture.

<sup>21</sup> Industrialized society refers to a society that makes use of technology to enable mass production, and is able to support a large population because of the high capacity for division of labour.

<sup>22</sup> Through his emphasis on the role of mass media and education in his *Orality and Literacy*, Father Walter Ong gives insight about the efficiency of accessibility to conceptual knowledge, practical knowledge and production in today's world of advanced technology and science.

in education and religion.<sup>23</sup> Any society that suffers a lack of accessibility to technology and education may lack understanding of abstract concepts, the type of concepts that require more effort and free thinking. The lack of awareness of the coding system necessary to involve the mind with the forms of abstractness that are most aptly expressed through metaphorical language gives rise to glaring inefficiency and hence a corresponding lack of intelligent networking that forms the interconnections between abstractness and concreteness.

Contextualization of language in both the processes typical of orality and the processes typical of literacy poses its own challenges in most of the cultures where there are limited concrete presentations of data and hence little concrete knowledge that can ground the insights necessary for enriching abstractions. The weaknesses of languages that characterize a specific society with availability of limited number of concrete resources issues forth poor possibilities for development and vitiates even further the languages.<sup>24</sup> In a word, language shortcomings present a vicious circle. Weaknesses in language prevent access to concrete representations of data and the enriching abstractions that arise from them. The lack of concrete resources and the lack of abstraction give rise to an even more vitiated language structure. When local languages cannot incorporate the concrete terminology

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<sup>23</sup> Language resources refer to the properties that are available for better encoding and decoding in the transference of ideas and the formulation of the message – from the communicator’s point of view – and similarly the coding and decoding involved when one transforms the communicated message into ideas that arise from an adequate understanding of the message – this is the receiver’s point of view. The idea which is the source of communication is abstract. The message which is the grammatical property that gives access to the understanding of concepts is concrete. Without concrete resources, understanding abstractness becomes impossible. The existence of source objects and available grammatical properties assist a profound understanding of abstractness.

<sup>24</sup> English language speakers increase every day because of the advanced linguistic properties that characterize the English language. English links local knowledge sources to international knowledge media while the languages that fail to give access to international knowledge in this world of globalization tend to retard the development of local cultures. Languages that do not encourage interdependence tend to disappear.

of technological and scientific innovations, these innovations remain stigmatized as foreign elements that, supposedly, do not take into account indigenous practices anchored in the local language. Hence they may be too brusquely considered to be residue from a consumer culture that has no place in the indigenous society.<sup>25</sup>

The international recognition of a great number of languages has occasioned the development of useful, purposeful concepts that accompany the advancements in knowledge about science and technology. Countries that do not have access to the language resources remain underdeveloped. The development of any language, in fact, depends on the availability of concrete representations of relevant data. There must be an effort to provide reliable access to these data. New concepts are understood within a language that has a vocabulary and a grammar that enables comparisons among the contemporary concepts available in a culture.<sup>26</sup> In African and Asian culture, mastery over English language may be adversely affected because of factors that may be either external or internal to the cultures. Without elaborating too much, one can just mention South Korea as an Asian country that has mastered English language precisely as an international language, has mastered concrete presentations of data, and has mastered the art of insight and abstraction; and this country, South Korea, has shown her creativity with enterprises that have become

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<sup>25</sup> See K Prah (1995) *Mother Tongue for Scientific and Technological Development in Africa* (German: Deutsche Stiftung für Internationale Entwicklung). Prah points out that technological advancement and scientific innovation are essential in any culture because they give easy access to global knowledge and develop awareness about life styles that benefit the human person and human society ethically, psychologically, physically and spiritually and in contrast those life styles that may be inimical to psychological, physical, moral and spiritual health. Thus interdependency can generate the abstract thinking that results with greater innovations and advancements.

<sup>26</sup> In *Orality and Literacy*, Fr. Walter Ong discusses possibilities of using comparisons as a literary method for understanding new concepts that are strange to certain cultures. Here Ong stresses the development of advanced practices in local cultures in order to have better understanding. Development in society is necessary in order to have a profound understanding about the concepts that carry heuristic value for any given culture.

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household names. Samsung is just one example. In short, an Eastern country, South Korea, is the most advanced technological country in the world.

#### **4. Factors Affecting the Cognitive Systems of Africa and Asia**

The current practice for the transmission of thoughts and ideas through orality and literacy seems greatly determinative of the ability of developing countries to enter the mainstream of global academic communication. Global academic language has played a great role for providing local knowledge sources with the assistance they need to develop the intellect in its cognitive processes of enriching abstractions and cultivating insights. The people exposed to the opportunity to experience academic life in developing countries on the African continent, nevertheless, find themselves in a dilemma whether to rely on the same culture of orality in which they have developed their strength of knowledge acquisition and acquaintance with concrete representations of data and enriching abstractions; or whether they should rely on literacy with the intention of developing those language properties that transmit thoughts and ideas in written styles of expression that are multifaceted including the metaphorical and aesthetic styles that function in their own right as meaningful coding systems.<sup>27</sup>

It goes without saying that many African cultures have developed an oral tradition in the form of musical expression and story-telling. When the intellectuals are forced to involve themselves with a new system in their academic disciplines, they suffer.<sup>28</sup> A literary culture requires creativity and at the same time

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<sup>27</sup> The aesthetic character of language refers to the beauty of language that attracts a manner of intellectual perception and presentation that relies on connotative semantics whereby words function as symbols and may even carry onomatopoeic qualities. Aesthetic styles enable multiple interpretations that every individual is capable of and provide an intellectual context for concentrating on the goodness, purity, forthrightness, and beauty of what is presented. Thus aesthetics functions as a motivator that attracts a person to be more attentive to both the concrete presentations of data and the abstractions that arise from them.

<sup>28</sup> Educational systems that depend largely on literary practice increase the possibility of creativity, initiative, and eventually greater productivity.

stimulates it through its symbolic expressions. This is true both in academic and non-academic disciplines. It is essential that an academic be familiar with literary styles because they bring forth creative dimensions not only to language but to patterns of living that stimulate social, economic, religious, cultural, industrial, scientific, technological, musical, ethical, and artistic development. Mastery of English, for example, as a literary language can be useful to Africa and Asia; but the grammatical features of the various languages used on these two continents is so different from English that it becomes difficult to make English accessible to local knowledge, and to make local knowledge accessible to English. Just to cite one example: some of the African and Asian languages are tonal languages and so they need to be written in a way that they can be pronounced correctly with the proper tones.<sup>29</sup>

A student's indifference to grammatical properties makes it rather difficult to learn and become fluent in a foreign language. Writing is still seen to be an alien practice in an oral culture: some suggest that writing confuses the memory because of the dissimilarities of grammatical properties from one language to another. Perhaps writing has failed in African culture because tradition has not emphasized writing as a privileged instrument for acquiring knowledge of concepts and other forms of abstraction; nor has tradition given much emphasis to the transmission of abstractions in the cultural communication media. Orality, a form of communication where listeners must depend on the speakers, has greatly influenced the culture of developing countries. Because listening does not permit the learner to do a prolonged study of the transmitted message – precisely because the message remains unwritten – the student systematically falls into a state of

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Involvement with the written word may seem strange for some Africans because of the influence of traditions that accentuate the oral. Oral tradition is the practice of many Africans. Educational advisers and supervisors have failed to adopt new systems that take advantage of literary culture. People memorize, and do not produce. So they remain customers not producers. One reason why this all happens is because they do not have the written word available to them for concentrated thought, insight, improvisation, and invention.

<sup>29</sup> See P. Ladefoged – K. Johnson (2011) *A Course in Phonetics*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., Boston: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning.

impoverishment of language resources. The student, therefore, is likely to suffer deprivation of the means needed in order to correlate concreteness, insight, abstraction and understanding.

The weaknesses in the coding system create a negative attitude towards self-expression through literary forms of communication. Most languages in Africa use foreign alphabets, which give them access to abstract forms of expression from other cultures.

Colonialism became one of the reasons behind the lack of a capacity to engage in cognitive processes that move from concrete presentations of data to enriching abstractions and insight.<sup>30</sup> Even though the use of foreign alphabets to develop their own literary forms would also give them more access to the linguistic and communication media of other cultures, the fact that foreign alphabets were forced upon our ancestors as if by coercion, left our people indifferent or even resentful towards the literary culture being thrust upon them. Foreign language was not a tool for development: foreign language was a tool for oppression and subjugation. In other words, it was an anti-intellectual tool since it

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<sup>30</sup> In what concerns the topic of the present essay, Egyptian hieroglyphic script and the African Ethiopian Geeze script dating back as old as 3000 BC and 500 BC respectively prove to be the origins of writing. Under colonial rule, however, all evidence of African advanced skills would have been suppressed, books destroyed and higher skills silenced. The editor notes that colonialism was internationally justified on a premise that the African was less than a human: see Immanuel Kant's incomprehensibly racist attitude towards Africans in his book on aesthetics, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime and Other Writings*, ed. by P. Frierson and P. Guyer, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2011, 58-59. Kant begins his diatribe by an absurd claim: "The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling." His thoughtless critique only gets worse from there. In this he joins John Locke, David Hume and Georg Hegel. The amazing lapse in philosophical reasoning on the part of these and other philosophers is called the **subjectivist fallacy**, the tendency to interpret other cultures according to the limitations and prescriptions of one's own culture. In other words, Kant had the confused notion – and indeed false notion – that African cultures needed to be like German rationalist culture in order to be of value. When one rises above the Kantian and colonialist attitude, one learns easily that the panorama of African cultures shows praiseworthy features not to be found in present-day European cultures. Just to mention one: the superior understanding on the part of Africans about the meaning of the term "human family."

seemed to be a rude and a crude replacement of the rich local traditions. Hence language lost its expressive power.<sup>31</sup>

People develop the ability to abstract only when they are exposed to concrete presentations of data. Hence the absence of concrete objects and constellations of data, i.e., the absence of the opportunity to visualize the transmitted concepts, has affected the ability to understand *a posteriori* data presentations that were meant to confirm the truth of the abstractions. In many cultures, oral and written forms of knowledge have become less and less comprehensible to the people if they have not experienced firsthand the data presentations that originate and confirm the content of what is communicated. At the risk of repetition it must be emphasized that understanding concepts without the assistance of the visual aids becomes a difficult enterprise indeed.

The exposure to the source of knowledge lays a strong foundation that generates greater understanding of transmitted concepts in any situation. The finalization of the meaning of transmitted concepts depends on the demonstration of clarification on the basis of the truth of existentiality. The function of grammar in the process of finalizing the transmission of new concepts that interface with verifiable constellations of existential data in a system of interlinkages that enjoys rigorous methodological integrity strengthens the power of the logic that links concreteness to abstractness.

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<sup>31</sup> Code switching is one of the problems in today's global practice and academic sector as well business sector. The well-educated people using two different languages weaken their acquired language because the mix of foreign language shows that there are not enough grammatical features in their language to express some of the ideas so they are restricted to the option of borrowing words from the foreign language. Thus, the local language falters. In the mix of languages we may find the local language intermingled with English. Because English developed its features historically prior to many other languages, it developed grammatical features that allowed the language user to define local knowledge and international knowledge at the same time that most local languages were not having enough linguistic properties or grammatical features to express informational content derived from foreign cultures. The origin of the language and the countries that use this language show that there is a great interrelationship between the development in patterns of life style and development in linguistic properties.

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Our proximity to the source of knowledge is of great importance because in many cases, we ourselves function as the channels of communication. The rhythm of speech is a key factor for the accuracy of transmitted concepts.<sup>32</sup> We are the media that bring direct information to people: we are the people's link to the concrete presentations of data, to the enriching abstractions, and to the insights. In other words, we are functioning as sources of information. Communication success depends greatly on how resourceful we are with language.

Orality as a global cultural practice assists human beings to receive and communicate knowledge easily in comparison with the more rigorous communication standards of literary tradition and the thousands of interpretations that are possible especially if what is written in a number of situations is expressed ambiguously. This is why we have needed the science of hermeneutics, popularized by Paul Ricœur. Orality with the accompaniment of nonverbal signifiers enables the accuracy of greater understanding of new concepts that in new cultures is able to develop according to the attentiveness of the communicators – both the receivers and the givers of the communication – and so gradually enhances the clarity of the message.

The new system of thought transference by means of literary tradition, on the other hand, is in a greater position to develop critical thinking that lends itself to creativity. Hermeneutics only accomplishes its aim when the one receiving the message is able to study what he or she has received: this usually means the message has to be written. The exception to this, of course, is the body of researchers who spend the necessary time listening and re-listening to oral presentations that have been taped.

If the intellectuals in developing countries lack experience and interest in expressing themselves through writing, their lack of awareness of the advantages of literary tradition restricts them in their international relationships and consequent accumulation of knowledge. Eventually this lack of experience and interest has repercussions both for the society within which the intellectuals

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<sup>32</sup> Writing cannot purely transfer what is said in Orality: see Ong, *Orality and Literacy*.

live and work and for the external, international community that is suffering a lack of communication with the local intellectuals.

## 5. The Effect of Insufficient Infrastructure

The utility of language depends on the availability of resources inherent in the language that assist access to local and universal knowledge.<sup>33</sup> At this point in the present essay it should be abundantly clear that there is a big challenge when one is attempting to understand a certain body of knowledge that enters the culture through a foreign language. Father Walter Ong's concept emphasizes that many languages have disappeared in recent years because of an untold story that is really the true one, but yet is one that does not reach the awareness of many people. That untold story is the failure of the available language resources to communicate essential new clusters of information in a way that is understandable to the people receiving the information. Lack of understanding has led to a style that settles uneasily into a pattern of imitation and memorization without comprehension. This pattern is a sign of the inability of language resources to develop systematic linguistic properties that cohere with new clusters of concrete representations of data in a manner that can link the data to heuristic abstractions. This inability obviates a deeper understanding of the abstractions transmitted in the communication process.<sup>34</sup>

The current widespread practice of accepting information from international media and then adapting that information to one's local situation through a process of imitating what the content is communicating without really attempting to understand the ethical, scientific, philosophical, sociological, political, economic and religious implications of the content is simply *acquisition with no awareness*. Our learning process suffers because we tend to want to have some ready-made knowledge to achieve our personal and

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<sup>33</sup> See W.J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*; 30<sup>th</sup> ed., London 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Physical properties of language refer to the existence of objects and the grammatical features that function as the coding system of the objects. An abstract idea does not have physical properties. Through the assistance of linguistic properties in the form of concreteness, the abstract is understood. Through the assistance of linguistic properties in the form of concreteness, the abstract is understood.

group purposes and to be identified in the academic world as a well-established, healthy, prosperous society.

The motive of wanting such recognition compels an individual to try to digest as rapidly as possible something that is intellectually and/or scientifically dense. Because the responsible academician feels the pressure, he formulates conclusions, practical implications for the local situation, and consequent policies and methodologies without too much thoughtfulness. He or she lacks the sincerity and modesty necessary to admit that he or she really does not have clear knowledge about the idea that he or she has received as a transmitted message; yet he or she feels the need to inject the transmitted message into the ongoing local media of communication. When people are forced to learn new ideas under these constraints, they tend to resign themselves to memorizing the linguistic properties that function only as a coding system for the language – and not as a system of explanation of incoming messages. Because they succumb to a more or less thoughtless memorizing of the unfamiliar linguistic properties that are necessary to explore and interpret the meanings of incoming messages, individuals neglect the properties inherent in the abstractness that language property resources are intended to elucidate. The final consequence is tragic: they do not really know the language; and they do not really know the content of specific messages that come to them vis-à-vis the language.

## **6. The Lack of Concrete Referents**

Every genre of development depends on the availability of resources within any given culture. The weaknesses of a language that a specific society has accepted as part and parcel of its very identity may become exacerbated if concrete resources available in that society as referents for understanding abstractions are perennially diminishing to the degree of a real impoverishment. The lack of availability of concrete resources results in poor development especially in educational systems: this leads to the fast disappearance of languages.

The everyday language of the marketplace and the village square is not the same as the language of schooling and the media. The language of such formal situations as academics differs from

other formal and informal sectors. International languages of academia suffer when societies and cultures do not recognize the telltale distinctions between everyday language and the language of schooling and the mass media. When one focuses on Africa, one cannot fail to notice that the history of African language and culture shows a reluctance to acknowledge a clear distinction between these two modes of language.

In some parts of Africa and Asia students do not get enough opportunity to practice language in formal situations. The opportunities provided for them to prove their language ability by way of assignments, tests and examinations prove to be quite inadequate so that as a consequence students remain incompetent in language. The current methods for examining students do not encourage critical thinking and rigorous practice of language so that they can enrich their life skills. Rather it inclines them to feel satisfied with mere memorization of materials that a given institution provides for them, an institution that is often a mixture of competent and incompetent professionals. Teachers capable of communicating subject matter effectively are not available: often the reason is that the teachers themselves are not trained to be methodologically resourceful in their pedagogy.<sup>35</sup>

Students skilled in literary methods of communication are ready to add to those skills the hermeneutical abilities needed to employ the proper methods of interpretation for the materials they are reading, and to express themselves in a writing style that make themselves correctly understood even in the international forum. An oral culture with the accompaniment of nonverbal signifiers enables a more accurate understanding of new concepts when the concrete referents indispensable for understanding abstract

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<sup>35</sup> The current public employment methods are corrupted in most of the academic sectors in developing countries. The intelligence of people is checked giving first priority to certificates, diplomas and the status of the persons without giving any priority to the ability for innovative thinking. Instead of employing competent people, persons known to be of high status are employed. Many times people are employed without interviewing simply by reviewing certificates. Because those with academic responsibility fail to make intellectuals who can think creatively beyond the forces of culture and traditional practices, the labour pool for jobs that require abstract thinking shrinks.

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concepts are available and pertinent to the content of transmitted messages.

If the language properties in a coding system that are necessary to specify and make distinctions are not available, then the ones using that coding system fail to gain access to new abstract concepts because they are using a coding system that carries a limited range of expressions, a very limited vocabulary and so has to over-rely on metaphors as conveyors for meaning. Those operating with such limited language properties fail to understand the various interpretative ideologies involved in the to and fro of literary communication because they are inexperienced in catching the nuances. The lack of concrete language resources gives rise to the incompetence of those who would want to master techniques of interpretation and expression and so would want to develop their awareness of denotative and connotative semantics of the coding systems that employ a myriad of metaphorical expressions that are available only in languages with a much more sophisticated system of vocabulary. It goes without saying that the number of vocabulary items available in the language must be suitable enough for international messages to enter the language with ease of interpretation and comprehensibility.

The existence of concrete objectivity – objects in the environment with which everyone is familiar – acts as an intellectual control on the accuracy of the ideas expressed through innumerable metaphorical expressions.

Orality has developed the attitude of interpersonal communication with the accompaniment of non-verbal signifiers such as facial expressions and the tone of voice. Oral imitation employs only those linguistic resources that one needs to memorize and so enters easily into a person's mental operations without a rigorous functioning of cognitive process. Strange concepts in new cultures always suffer in the process of the communication if the cultures receiving them do not have the concrete tools for understanding them. Memorization becomes the primary tool for conveying abstract knowledge. But are students only memorizing? Or are they really learning?

Memorizing can only be a successful educational method if those doing the memorizing make the effort to learn and internalize

what they have memorized by using dictionaries and other language resources, by working to understand fully the meanings of words, phrases, and entire bodies of material that they have been memorizing, to develop their vocabulary and tools of interpretation, to develop their understanding of the rules of grammar, and by applying what they have memorized to their personal experience not only in the academic world but in all the details of their daily lives. Only in this way do they become aware of the connections between the language they are using, the content of what they are learning, and the implications of that content for both their own culture and other cultures in the international forum.

Language is closely tied to the visual organizations, combinations, and reorganizations of letters, words, punctuation symbols and grammatical elements. Dictionaries, written grammatical rules, punctuation, and all the rest of the apparatus that make words into something understandable and at the same time as points of reference for further research all manifest the indispensability of the visual character of language. The abstractness of sentences through the use of coding systems and the changes in meaning that take place with just slight differences in the placement of words and punctuation in the organic structure gives rise to a myriad of variations in how ideas can be interpreted. Correct, meaningful, and profoundly influential interpretations of ideas are possible when there are concrete, objective resources to which the people of any given culture can refer when they go to interpret what they are hearing or reading in their language.

At present, the alphabet known as Standard English gives accessibility to a recorded vocabulary of at least 1,500,000 words of which not only present meanings but also hundreds of past meanings are known. Such an extensive vocabulary supply paves the access to a new culture where a coding system with different grammatical properties seeks concrete, objective resources to use as referents in order to understand abstract expressions that derive their meaning from concepts anchored in concrete experience. Concepts have a way of carrying their etymologies with them forever. The words that we use when we speak or write have some untold stories and meanings that enjoy a long and varied history.

The establishment of the bond between the abstractness and the concrete resources enables clear understanding of the transmission of concepts.<sup>36</sup> The presence of the source of a communication with the accompaniment of nonverbal signifiers adds more accuracy to the cognitive process. The receivers of a transmitted message are more competent in their grasp of the various meanings contained in the message and are more aware of whether or not they are understanding the message correctly if they are operating linguistically in a milieu where they are exposed to the relevant concrete referents that give precise cues to the meanings and possible applications of the abstract notions conveyed by the transmitted message. These abstract notions, in their turn, may transcend the day-to-day schemes and patterns of living in the local culture. Those who have experience in cross-cultural communication and the appropriate experience of the relevant concrete data, i.e., the relevant concrete reference points from which abstractions derive their meaning, are in a position to formulate insights, to detect oversights, to make judgments of fact, judgments of value and hence grow in a cumulative knowledge of their own culture and other cultures. Language resources provide the raw materials for all these cognitive processes.

Aestheticism of language through literary creativity with metaphorical expressions is in a condition today to help scientific discourse become available to much larger populations – especially if those populations are not necessarily grounded in technical, scientific discourse. Direct experience with concrete data and the resources within which these data are embedded generates deeper understanding and productivity of intelligence in a culture.

## Conclusion

Admittedly there are weaknesses in the coding system of developing countries that makes it difficult for the residents of these countries to understand accurately the abstract notions that

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<sup>36</sup> A simply oral dialect will commonly have resources of only a few thousand words, and its users will have virtually no knowledge of the oral semantic history of any words. Written texts all have to be related somehow directly or indirectly to the world of sound that constitutes the natural habitat of language so as to yield their meaning (See Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 1982).

are communicated to them by media that originate outside the local cultures. The lack of access to the relevant concrete data and the resources that embed those data challenge the populations in developing countries to understand the abstract notions that usually derive from data banks that these countries simply do not have.

Therefore making the concrete resources available for comprehension and cultivation of inter-cultural communication should be a priority: accessibility to these resources makes language more meaningful to those who are using the language; and the language is more likely to last into the distant future.

When the educational infrastructure of a country falters, local languages themselves are liable to disappear.<sup>37</sup> The responsibility of reinforcing the academic infrastructure of a country lies in the hands of the government and of the intellectuals who have the capacity to develop the infrastructure through innovations. To develop innovations one needs to put aside negative attitudes towards foreign languages for indeed foreign languages give access to international knowledge and the existential reality from which that body of knowledge is arising.

The government should develop infrastructure and accessibility to quality education in public sectors within a context of creative benchmarking. The abstract thinking which is influenced by a variety of cross-cultural forces affects development in the ability

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<sup>37</sup> Education and experience stimulate thinking that generates knowledge that produces new opportunities for abstract constructions that account for all the concrete data of experience. When educational systems that are concerned with seeking the truth in its philosophical, historical, economic, political, sociological, psychological, ethical, scientific, technological, legal, and religious dimensions – and always with methodologies appropriate to the particular dimensions of the truth that are under study – are made accessible to greater and greater segments of the population, everyone grows in their ability to think and communicate in abstractions, and in their ability to make relevant judgments of fact and judgments of value, to communicate the judgments they have established, and act with ethical appropriateness according to those judgments. Therefore each developing society is responsible for giving quality education that is accessible for all. Since quality education provided by private institutions is expensive, accessibility is denied to people who live below the poverty line if governments are not concerned about giving proper financial aid.

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to think and be aware. The people need to be united in their desire to seek and know the truth within the various domains of human existence – including the domain of eternity. In many developing countries people suffer divisions based on politics and religion. The pursuit of political truth with its ramifications for social and economic ethics and the pursuit of religious truth with its ramifications for the eternal destiny of each and every human being must be pursuits that persons may conduct in freedom – without fear of prejudice, discrimination, coercion, or humiliation.

The abstract thinking that assists the conception and perception of abstractness of an intellectual should not be subject to what philosophers call anthropomorphic and subjectivist projections. Persons and groups cannot give abstract, explanatory power to feelings: this is anthropomorphic projection. Persons and groups cannot give explanatory power to their own cultural perspective when they are attempting to interpret the convictions, tenets, and traditions of other cultures: this is subjectivist projection.<sup>38</sup> An intellectual must engage religion in the pursuit of an objective, eternal truth that withstands the vicissitudes of history. Indeed the intellectual must transcend the boundaries of his or her own culture in order to take advantage of the resources that other cultures and other languages provide in order to understand the ultimate source of all knowledge and conviction, namely, God himself. With trust in the divine author of all that is culturally resourceful and socially productive, all countries, both developing and developed, are in

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<sup>38</sup> Religion discusses the meaning of life including questions such as: 'Who am I?' 'Is there life after death?' 'Is there a God?' The abstractness of human value as the moral teaching of religion helps the society to build broader relationships with people both from within one's own culture and from other cultures in the international community. Thus, religion functions as an essential factor that gives access to international knowledge and so helps an individual to develop new levels of abstractness. When people, however, attempt to manipulate religion with personal and group misinterpretations of holy books, their abstract thinking may result not only in pretentious claims about their relationship with God but also may result in attempts to brainwash or use other types of coercion to influence the abstract thinking of others. This seems especially true when one tries to buttress one's own political power with religious tenets when the original holy books were certainly not meant to be political tools.

a position to generate knowledge and bring optimistic changes in society. Within the order of the created universe with its panorama of cultures and societies, nations can develop tools for perceiving and abstracting that are all-inclusive, perennially meaningful, and capable of a manifold of clearly beneficial innovation.

In a word, the abstract thinking that does not succumb to the fickle swaying of emotion, to the stranglehold of tradition, or to the prejudice against the adherents of one particular religion or another – this abstract manner of thinking corresponds precisely to the polymorphic form of human consciousness:

For human consciousness is polymorphic. The pattern in which it flows may be biological, aesthetic, artistic, dramatic, practical, intellectual, or mystical. These patterns alternate; they blend or mix; they can interfere, conflict, lose their way, break down. The intellectual pattern of experience is supposed and expressed by our account of self-affirmation, of being, and of objectivity. But no man is born in that pattern; no one reaches it easily; no one remains in it permanently; and when some other pattern is dominant, then the self of our self-affirmation seems quite different from one's actual self.

... In fact, the mind is polymorphic; it has to master its own manifold before it can determine what utterance is, or what is uttered, or what is the relation between the two; and when it does so, it finds its own complexity at the root of antithetical solutions.<sup>39</sup>

The observant reader notices that the polymorphism of human consciousness corresponds to the language-games theory of L. Wittgenstein.

Human beings think, learn, and arrive at new components of knowledge by means of positions and counter-positions, insights and inverse insights, new discoveries and corrections of mistaken interpretations of what has been discovered. The wisdom that leads to practicable solutions for the problems that exist today is a wisdom generated through the humble acceptance of the polymorphism of human consciousness. The dramatic pattern of everyday living intertwines with the intellectual pattern that academia fosters. The practical must at times give way to the mystical especially at the moments of a mystifying illness or the passage through death into eternity.

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<sup>39</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, 385-386.

Through education abstract thinking can become a habit even in the early stage of the learning process where people can learn to adapt practical knowledge gained from specific moments of experience with particular problems to new sets of problems. This manner of abstracting, generalizing and universalizing brings creativity. Innovative education that enables creative thinking can make the people perceive the world in a different way, give them the confidence to accept responsibility for analysing existing problems and finding solutions for them.

The disruption of free thinking that occurs with the formation and/or maintenance of classes and divisions in developing countries hampers understanding and acceptance of new, heuristic, logically and scientifically sound concepts. Hence there is a dire need today to use a language that all can understand and accept and that can assist us to understand concepts in their abstractness. I am speaking of a language that functions as a system of thought transference where an idea that is abstract may be formulated in a concrete message that is transmissible and accessible to the local knowledge of the receiver and still remains entirely admissible within the networks of international knowledge.

With a language that admits access to international knowledge, one can obviously generate new knowledge and hence bring forth the intellectual framework that produces new development. Development of the ability to deal with, interpret, and create abstractions is healthy because it interfaces with scientific innovations and technological development and their cross-cultural intelligibility. Wholehearted engagement in the process of formulating what is abstract in a way that is translatable into a concrete message, and creatively welcoming the contents of a concrete message in order to draw forth from the message new concepts and abstractions is a purposeful engagement because it gives rise to solutions for major existing problems in the society of today. In this scenario, the society is in the situation of developing infrastructures that employ grammatical properties that function as a meaningful and heuristic coding system where the object itself functions as an effective medium.

Abstract thinking can result with new knowledge that gives answers to all challenging questions and provides pathways to

solutions to existing problems. Old knowledge gives birth to new knowledge and gives access to a variety of sources that were hitherto inaccessible (Chomsky, 1920).

Not only the English language but every language that reflects the interpersonal and inter-institutional operations of the socioeconomic network in a particular region or country and the processes of abstract thinking that find their way into the public forum of that region or country should give access to international knowledge, too. If a local language has advanced grammatical properties and a vocabulary that is capable of expansion, there is easy access to international knowledge that leads to new innovations with new abstractness.

If local language, on the other hand, is weak in giving access to international knowledge, there should be analyses made precisely in the science of linguistics so that linguists in the local languages can institute acceptable, new grammatical structures within the languages and new rules for the formation of new vocabulary within these same local languages. All of these innovations would be for the purpose of allowing the local languages to express meaningfully abstractions that are arising from within other milieus, other cultures, and other fields of research. All formation of new infrastructures within local languages must, of course, be programmed into textbooks for pupils and students.

The willingness and the ability to enter the international forum in order to grow in one's knowledge of God, the world with its cultures and societies, and the human family with the persons that constitute that family – in a word, the willingness to learn with our eternal destiny in view – are at the basis for encouraging each other to think abstractly, to help others think abstractly, to connect abstract thinking to relevant concrete referents, and to form intelligent conclusions and applications that coincide with moral and ontological truth. Hence abstract thinking itself has a destiny: it encourages the formation of a language that everyone can understand and accept; and hence it encourages the formation of a new world order where peace and harmony will no longer be abstraction but rather existentiality.

# THEOLOGY & CULTURE

## Gaining Honour vs. Gaining Riches (Prov 11:12-16)

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### Introduction

There is a choice between “to be” and “to have”. Avenues of publicity in contemporary culture strive to imprint on our thinking the notion that we need to have, to get, to gain something; at the same time they shy away from saying that we need to renounce something, to give something up, to suffer material loss for a higher motive, for a more noble purpose. The author of the present essay proposes a contextual analysis of a group of proverbs to be found in the biblical book by the same name in chapter 11, verses 12-16. These proverbs all end with a statement that declares that gaining honour and a good name present an antithesis to the unbridled drive to accumulate material things or riches (v. 16). Hence maintaining one’s honour and preserving a good name seem to be more worthy of the human being.

### The Text

<sup>12</sup> He who despises his neighbour lacks sense<sup>1</sup>,  
but a man of understanding<sup>2</sup> remains silent.

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<sup>1</sup> The expression חָסֵר־לֵב literally means “lacks heart,” a synonym of a foolish, a stupid person (cf. W.D. REYBURN – E.M. FRY, *A Handbook on Proverbs*, UBS.HS, New York 2000, 247).

<sup>2</sup> The word תְּבוּנָה “understanding” is used here in the plural, while in other places in the Proverbs it is used in the singular (10:23; 15:21; 17:27; 20:5).

<sup>13</sup> He who walks as a slanderer<sup>3</sup> reveals secrets,  
but he who is trustworthy in spirit conceals the matter.

<sup>14</sup> Without guidance<sup>4</sup>, the people fall,  
but salvation [is] in the greatness of counsel<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> He who gives surety for a stranger will surely suffer<sup>6</sup>,

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<sup>3</sup> W. Bühlmann suggests that before the exile, the word רַכִּיל was used in the sense of “gossip” (Prov 11:13; 20:19; Jer 6:28; 9:3) and later in the sense of “slander” (Lev 19:16; Ezek 22:9; *Vom rechtem Reden und Schweigen: Studien zu Proverbien 10–31*, OBO 12, Göttingen 1976, 109); while for R.H. O’Connell the meaning of “gossip” is too weak in the OT context (“rākīl”, in W.A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, [CD-ROM], Grand Rapids 2001). Except for Ezek 22:9, there are five other instances when רַכִּיל is used in an idiomatic expression together with the verb הִלֵּךְ “walking” (Lev 19:16; Prov 11:13; 20:19; Jer 6:28; 9:3). The expression can be rendered as “he who walks as a slanderer” (cf. J.G. WILLIAMS, “The Power of Form: A Study of Biblical Proverbs”, *Semeia* 17 [1980] 41). In a figurative sense, the verb הִלֵּךְ refers to a way of living (E.H. MERRILL, “hālak”, in W.A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, [CD-ROM], Grand Rapids 2001); and it could be translated as “he who has an attitude of slander”.

<sup>4</sup> In the Bible, the word תְּהַלְלוֹת occurs only in the plural (Job 37:12; Prov 1:5; 11:14; 12:5; 20:18; 24:6). It has a sense of “guidance”, “advice” (cf. F. BROWN – S.R. DRIVER – C.A. BRIGGS, *The Brown-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, Boston 1906, Peabody 2000, 287).

<sup>5</sup> The noun יוֹעֵץ in the singular means “advice”, “counsel”, but many translations render it in the plural as “counselors” (e.g., KJV, NAB, NRSV, RSV) or “advisers” (NIV, NJB), while the Septuagint translates it by βουλή “counsel”. The proverb does not seem to be talking about the number of advisers, but rather about the quality of advice that even one counselor gives (e.g., L. ALONSO SCHÖKEL – J. VILCHEZ LINDEZ, *Proverbios*, Nueva Biblia Española, Madrid 1984, 278).

<sup>6</sup> The expression רַע-יָרוּעַ is unusual. In the Masoretic vocalization רַע “evil, bad” is an adjective. Some have proposed to change its vocalization to רַע, that is, the infinitive absolute of the verb רָעַע “to be bad”. Then the syntactic construction would be composed of two verbal forms of the same verb (infinitive + niphal) reinforcing the expression to sound stronger; and the translation would be “will have to suffer for it” (cf. B. GEMSER, *Sprüche Salomos*, HAT 16, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Tübingen, 1963, 54; W. MCKANE, *Proverbs: A New Approach*, OTL, London 1970, 429. A. Guillaume suggested that רַע could be derived from the root רָיַע “to be afraid” (“A Note on the Roots רָיַע, יָרַע, and רָעַע in Hebrew”, *JTS* 15 ns [1964] 294). P.A. Steveson translates the

but he who hates handshakes<sup>7</sup> is secure.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>16</sup> A gracious woman gains honour,  
but the violent<sup>9</sup> gain riches.<sup>10</sup>

expression by "will surely suffer" without noting any necessity of having to change the Masoretic Text (*A Commentary on Proverbs*, Greenville 2001, 150).

<sup>7</sup> In the Bible, the word תִּקְעֵם appears only here; and it could be considered as a participle of the verb תִּקַּע "to strike hands" (F. BROWN – S.R. DRIVER – C.A. BRIGGS, *The Brown-Briggs Hebrew*, 1075) or as a noun "striking hands" (L. KÖHLER – W. BAUMGARTNER, *A Bilingual Dictionary of the Hebrew and Aramaic Old Testament: English and German*, Leiden – Boston – Köln 1998, 1023). "Striking hands" is an idiomatic expression meaning the same as "shaking hands" in an agreement implying "pledge", "surety" (Cf. M. ROGLAND, "'Striking a Hand' (TQ' KP) in Biblical Hebrew", VT [1995] 109).

<sup>8</sup> This proverb could be a conditional affirmation (cf. G.E. BRYCE, "Omen-Wisdom in Ancient Israel", *JBL* 92 [1975] 27-28; T. HILDEBRANDT, "Motivation and Antithetic Parallelism in Proverbs 10–15", *JETS* 35 [1992] 437).

<sup>9</sup> The form of פְּרִיָּצִים is that of a plural masculine adjective; and many translations add the word "men" forming an antithesis between "woman" and "men" (e.g., KJV, NAB, NIV, RSV). NJB translates it in a more general sense as "violent people". Some suggest that פְּרִיָּצִים in this proverb could have a positive meaning of "vigorous, powerful men" (cf. G.R. DRIVER, "Problems in the Hebrew Text of Proverbs", *Biblica* 32 [1951] 180; O. PLÖGER, *Sprüche Salomos (Proverbia)*, BK 17, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1984, 134; A. SCHERER, *Das weise Wort un seine Wirkung: Eine Untersuchung zur Komposition und Redaktion von Proverbia 10,1 – 22,16*, MWANT 83, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1999, 73); however in all other instances in the OT this term is always used in a negative sense of "violent, ruthless".

<sup>10</sup> The Septuagint has an additional two lines and the antithesis is between two women and the slothful and the diligent. Some suggest that the Septuagint translated a text that had been later lost (B. GEMSER, *Sprüche Salomos*, HAT 16, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Tübingen 1963, 54; J. HAUSMANN, *Studien zum Menschenbild der älteren Weisheit (Spr 10ff.)*, FAT 7, Tübingen 1995, 152), but the others think that translator added those lines (J. COOK, "Contrasting as a Translation Technique in the LXX of Proverbs", in C.A. Evans – S. Talmon, eds., *The Quest for Context and Meaning: Studies in Biblical Intertextuality*, Fs. J.A. Sanders, Biblical Interpretation 28, Leiden 1997, 412-413; E. TOV, "Recensional Differences between the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint of Proverbs", in H.W. Attridge – J.J. Collins – T.H. Tobin, eds., *Of Scribes and Scrolls: Studies on the Hebrew Bible, Intertestamental Judaism, and*

## Composition

The passage contains three parts: verses 12-13, verse 14 and verses 15-16.<sup>11</sup> The first part (vss. 12-13) is a thematic unit concerned with behaviour related to the use of speech:<sup>12</sup> one *despises his neighbour* (12a) and *reveals secrets* (13a), and the other *remains silent* (12b) and *conceals the matter* (13b). Both proverbs are in a parallel relation to each other, AB/A'B'.

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– <sup>12</sup> He who despises his NEIGHBOUR + but <b>a man of understanding</b>	lacks sense, remains silent.
– <sup>13</sup> He who walks as a slanderer + but he who is trustworthy in spirit	reveals <i>secrets</i> , conceals the matter.

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– <sup>14</sup> Without <i>guidance</i> + but <b>salvation</b>	the PEOPLE fall, [is] in the greatness of <i>counsel</i> .
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– <sup>15</sup> He who gives surety for a STRANGER + but he who hates handshakes	will surely suffer <b>is secure</b> .
+ <sup>16</sup> <b>A gracious woman</b> – but the violent	gains honour, gain riches.

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The closing verses (15-16) can be seen as a thematic unit that concerns itself with behaviour related to riches.<sup>13</sup> Cast in a negative

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*Christian Origins*, Fr. J. Strugnell, CTSRR 5, Lanham – New York – London 1990, 46-47).

<sup>11</sup> I have proposed this delineation in my dissertation (B. WITEK, *Dio e i suoi figli*, TG.T 117, Roma 2005, 54). Other proposed delineations: 12-14 (R.N. WHYBRAY, *Proverbs*, NCBC, Grand Rapids 194, 180); 14-16 (A. SCHERER, *Das weise Wort*, 83); 9-15 (O. PLÖGER, *Sprüche*, 137; A. MEINHOLD, *Die Sprüche*. I. *Sprüche Kapitel 1–15*, ZBK.AT 16, Zürich 1991, 189-190); 8-17 (R. SCORALICK, *Enzelspruch und Sammlung: Komposition im Buch der Sprichwörter Kapitel 10–15*, BZAW 232, Berlin – New York 1995, 186-189; H.F. FUHS, *Das Buch der Sprichwörter. Ein Kommentar*, FzB 95, Würzburg 2001, 195).

<sup>12</sup> For F. Delitzsch these two proverbs concern “the intercourse of private life” (“Proverbs”, in C.F. KEIL – F. DELITZSCH, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, VI. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, Peabody 1966, 171).

<sup>13</sup> For Delitzsch both proverbs are concerned with kindness, which, on the one hand, “brings injury,” and, on other hand, “brings honour” (“Proverbs”, 172).

light is the one who is expecting to gain and *gives surety for a stranger* but at the end is certain to suffer (15a). Presented in a negative vein, too, are *the violent* who *gain riches*, but they are only temporary goods (16b). Cast in a positive light is the one *who hates handshakes* (which might imply some dirty deals), and who, therefore, *is secure* (15b). Presented in a positive vein, too, is *a gracious woman* who *gains honour*. The text here seems to imply superior goods (16a) in contrast to material goods (16b). Both proverbs are in a chiasmic relation to each other: AB/B'A'.

The central proverb (14) seems to be an isolated saying; however, the word *people* belongs to the same semantic camp as *neighbour* (12a) and *stranger* (15a). *Salvation* (14b) refers to the expression *is secure* (15b). The word *secret* (13a) links to *guidance* (14a) and *counsel* (14b).<sup>14</sup>

Three proverbs in our passage are chiasmic (12, 14, 15)<sup>15</sup> while the other two are parallel (13 and 16). We note also the presence of an *inclusion* formed by the expressions: *a man of understanding* (12b) and *a gracious woman* (16a).

The relationships among all the parts of the passage can be presented thematically as follows:<sup>16</sup>

A	Consequences of behaviour related to the use of speech	12-13
B	Fall and salvation of the people	14
A'	Consequences of behaviour related to riches	15-16

<sup>14</sup> Such a relationship is possible because the noun טִּיֹּב means "secret" and "counsel" (cf. F. BROWN – S.R. DRIVER – C.A. BRIGGS, *The Brown-Briggs Hebrew*, 691).

<sup>15</sup> The chiasmic composition is reflected in the translation of vv. 12 and 14, while the translation of v. 15 makes it parallel. In the Hebrew text of v. 15, the literal translation that reflects a chiasmic word order could be as follows:

A	<i>Will surely suffer</i>
B	for he gave <b>surety</b> for a stranger,
B'	but he who hates <b>handshakes</b>
A'	<i>is secure.</i>

<sup>16</sup> Cf. B. WITEK, *Dio*, 56.

## Biblical Context

### Behaving as a Slanderer

The idiomatic expression of Prov 11:13a “walking as a slanderer” occurs in the Law of Moses in the following admonition: *You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbour* (Lev 19:16). In this context, a false accusation by a slanderer leads to the death of his neighbour. Subsequently, the slanderer responsible for the death of his neighbour would then take the dead man’s property.

The same expression is found in the Prophetical Books. Ezekiel lists slander as one of the sins of Jerusalem: *In you are those who slander to shed blood* (22:9). Jeremiah warns about neighbours and relatives in what follows: *Let everyone beware of his neighbour, and put no trust in any brother, for every brother is a supplanter, and every neighbour goes about as a slanderer* (9:3; cf. 6:28). The first line of 11:13 is almost the same as the first line of 20:19<sup>17</sup> where it is followed by an admonition: *He who walks as a slanderer revels secrets; therefore do not associate with a babblers*.

### Surety

The verb עָרַב with the meaning of “giving surety for somebody” is found eleven times in the OT and among them six times in the Proverbs.<sup>18</sup> Apart from Prov 11:15, two other proverbs in the First Solomonic Collection (10:1–22:16) are also against giving surety

<sup>17</sup> In the Hebrew text the expressions are in a reverse order, but the lines can be translated into English in the same way:

11:13	מְגַלֵּה-סוֹד	הוֹלֵךְ רֵכִיל
20:19	הוֹלֵךְ רֵכִיל	גּוֹלֵה-סוֹד

<sup>18</sup> Gen 43:9; 44:32; Isa 38:14; Ps 119:122; Job 17:3; Prov 6:1; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26; 27:13 (G. LISOWSKY, *Konkordanz zum Hebräischen Alten Testament*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Stuttgart 1993, 1110). There are five sentences where the verb עָרַב occurs together with the verb תָּקַע “to strike hands” (Job 17:3; Prov 6:1; 11:15; 17:18; 22:26) translated in 11:15 by “handshakes (cf. n. 7).

for others: *A man without sense shakes hands becoming surety for his neighbour* (17:18); *takes his garment when he gives surety for a stranger, and when for a foreign woman, holds him in pledge* (20:16; cf. 27:13). Other proverbs, too, give warnings about not giving pledges as surety for the debts of others; otherwise the one who would give his guarantees would later suffer (6:1-5; 22-26-27).

In Sirach, the author sees giving surety as something positive: *A good man will be surety for his neighbour* (29:14). However, on the practical level, he advises prudence for the one who is giving surety: *Do not give surety beyond your means, but if you give surety, be concerned as one who must pay* (8:13); *Assist your neighbour according to your ability, but be careful not to fall yourself* (29:20).

In Genesis the verb עָרַב is used in a positive sense. Judah becomes surety for his brother Benjamin (43:9; 44:32). The verb עָרַב three times is referred to God who helps those who cry to him (Isa 38:14; Ps 118:22; Job 17:3).<sup>19</sup>

## Riches and Honour

In Prov 11:16 it is not clear if the noun עֲשָׂר, "riches," is used as a synonymous or antithetic term to כְּבוֹד, "honour, glory". In the OT both nouns appear together in sixteen verses.<sup>20</sup> Apart from Prov 11:16, in all other instances these two nouns are used as synonymous, parallel or complementary terms. Riches and honour are gifts that God gives to the kings of Israel: David (1Chr 29:12), Solomon (1Kgs 3:13; 2Chr 1:11-12), Jehoshaphat (2Chr 17:5), and Hezekiah (2Chr 32:37). Riches and honour also characterise the rulers of other nations, e.g., the Persian king Ahasuerus (Esth 1:4) and his minister Haman (5:11). In the Book of Proverbs, both riches and honour are presented as gifts that flow forth from

<sup>19</sup> A. SCHERER, "Is the Selfish Man Wise? Considerations of Context in Proverbs 10.1–22.16 with Special Regard to Surety, Bribery and Friendship", *JOT* 76 (1997) 61–62.

<sup>20</sup> 1Kgs 3:13; 1Chr 28:12, 28; 2Chr 1:11, 12; 17:5; 18:1; 32:27; Esth 1:4; 5:11; Ps 49:17; Prov 3:16; 8:18; 11:16; 22:4; Qoh 6:2 (cf. B. WITEK, *Dio*, 57).

Wisdom (3:16; 8:18) and as rewards for those who fear the Lord (22:4). Finally, in Qoheleth they are gifts that God grants to a person who nevertheless does not receive from God the opportunity to enjoy them (6:2). All the above-mentioned instances would suggest that one should read “riches” in Prov 11:16 as a synonymous or complementary term for “honour”.

However, in the context of the First Solomonic Collection (10:1–22:16) there are two proverbs where עֲשָׂר “wealth” has negative connotations. The first one states: *He who trusts in his riches shall fall* (11:28a) in contrast to *the righteous who will flourish like leaves* (28b). Another proverb says: *A good name is better than riches* (20:1a) and in the second line there is a synonymous statement: *and a favour is better than silver or gold* (1b). Taking into consideration the literal context of the First Solomonic Collection, we can conclude that “riches” is used in a negative sense as an antithetical term to “honour”.

## Interpretation

### Riches: Reward of the Wicked

The word עֲשָׂר, “wicked,” does not appear in our text. Nevertheless it is one of the preferred words in the First Solomonic Collection (Prov 10:1–22:16).<sup>21</sup> In the literal context there are other terms that express meanings that seem synonymous to wicked behaviour and actions. Among them there are words that either connote or denote foolishness, falsity or violence. Such words we find in our passage. The *one who despises his neighbour* is called a foolish person who *lacks sense* (12a). *A slanderer* (13a) is opposed to a person *who is trustworthy in spirit* (13b); therefore, he is not just a person who talks too much, but someone who behaves in a false manner by detracting others and revealing secrets that others have entrusted to him confidentially. One observes that

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<sup>21</sup> Out of 262 occurrences of this word in the OT, it appears 78 times in Proverbs and 54 times in the First Solomonic Collection (10:1–22:16, cf. B. WITEK, *Dio*, 349).

the person *who gives surety for a stranger*<sup>22</sup> (15a) is someone who enters into dirty deals expecting to gain sordid profit. Finally, the closing proverb uses the term *the violent* (16b), a catch-all word that embraces all the other negative elements contained in our text. Wicked people may gain wealth (16b), but they seem to be blind to the fact that material things do not last forever (cf. 28a). Therefore, they can be compared to the people who act without paying attention to proper advice – at the end they will fall (14a). As another proverb in the same chapter states, they can be rich in this life but not in the life to come: *Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death* (4).

### Honour: Reward of the Righteous

The “righteous one” (קִיָּץ)<sup>23</sup> is presented as *a man of understanding* (12b), or as *a gracious woman* (16a), as one who is *trustworthy in spirit* (13b), and as the one *who hates handshakes* (15b) – i.e., the one who does not engage in unethical, double-faced dealing. A righteous person deals with his neighbour with respect (12b) and loyalty (13b). He knows what to say and when to say it, and thus keeps silence out of respect for his neighbour (12b). He is a trustworthy friend to whom a person can reveal any secret without the fear that others will come to know it (13b). With the people he doesn’t know well, he deals with prudence (15b), because he knows the risks of giving guarantees for the debts of others (cf. 6:1-5; 22:26-27). Such behaviour does not imply egoism or selfishness, but it should rather be interpreted as cautious way of dealing with others resulting from the social and economic contexts of the time.<sup>24</sup> A righteous person looks first for the good of others, for the good of the community. Economically he seems

<sup>22</sup> The adjective קִיָּץ “strange, foreign” does not indicate here a foreigner; rather it is somebody who is not a family member or does not belong to the circle of people who know each other (R.N. WHYBRAY, *Proverbs*, 181).

<sup>23</sup> This is another preferred term: out of 205 occurrences in the OT, it appears 88 times in the Book of Proverbs and 49 times in the First Solomonic Collection (10:1–22:16, cf. B. WITEK, *Dio*, 349).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. G. BERNINI, *Proverbi*, NVB 19, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Cinisello Balsamo 1993, 214; A. SCHERER, “Is the Selfish Man”, 64.

to be losing because is not entering into illicit deals (cf. 15b) nor is he using violence (16b). Such people understand well that it is better “to be” a good person than “to have” material goods, because a good name is more valuable than all the riches that a person may amass (22:1).

# **The Enigma of the *Semina Verbi* in African Culture and Tradition: A Point of Departure for a Christian Theology of Salvation in Africa**

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## **Introduction**

In his Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Missio*, John Paul II accentuates the need for dialogue between the Christian faith and non-Christian religions and religious movements. There he states that “through dialogue, the Church seeks to uncover the ‘seeds of the Word,’ a ‘ray of that Truth which enlightens all men’; these are found in individuals and in the religious traditions of mankind.”<sup>1</sup>

*Semina verbi* is a very ancient expression, coined by Justin Martyr, c. 150 A.D. It found a meaningful place in the documents of the Second Vatican Council to designate whatever is "true and holy" even in the non-Christian religions. According to the early Fathers of the Church, including Augustine, the 'seeds of the Word' do not fecundate the pagan religions, of which the Fathers give an extremely negative judgment as intrinsically infertile; the seeds of the Word are rather to be found in Greek philosophy and in the wisdom of the poets and the sibyls.

But in its modern version, the formula is applied precisely to the non-Christian religions, with two meanings. The first meaning

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<sup>1</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Encyclical Letter “Redemptoris Missio” on the Permanent Validity of the Church’s Missionary Mandate* (07 Dec 1990), Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1990, 56. The Pope was citing the Second Vatican Council documents, *Ad Gentes*, 11, 15; and *Nostra Aetate*, 2. The editor notes that throughout the present essay all fidelity to the prescriptions of *Dominus Iesus*, 9-11, regarding the absolute identity of Jesus with the divine Logos (they are one and the same Person) and, therefore, of the absolute identity of the dispensation of the Logos and the dispensation of Jesus Christ is observed. See also JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 6.

is that of the Second Vatican Council, in which the *semina verbi* are the mysterious presence of Christ the Savior in all religions, insofar as these contain what is “true and holy” and thus salvific as well, but always through Christ, in ways that only He knows. The second meaning is the one adopted by some theological currents during the second half of the twentieth century. In the judgment of their adherents, non-Christian religions have their own salvific capacity, not a mediated one; all of them express the manifold experiences of the divine, in an independent and complementary way; and Christ is the symbol of these manifold ways rather than the one necessary way. The oscillation between these two meanings is not only a matter of theological dispute. It influences pastoral practice, the missions, and the public profile of the Church. The second of these meanings, in particular, took shape in a precise religious enterprise on the border between Christianity and Hinduism, created in India in the middle of the twentieth century by three spiritual adepts who came from Europe.

It is true that since Vatican II, which is in many ways a watershed in as much as it presents a more positive and optimistic view of non-Christian religions, indeed of the world, the attitude of the Church towards African culture and religion has changed diametrically from negative to positive. There is a very optimistic attitude towards the true and holy values that are present in African culture and tradition. This change of attitude is attributed to the strong Christian conviction that the action of the Spirit, indeed the *semina verbi* are present and operative everywhere and these seeds of the Word in the Holy Spirit embrace all cultures and peoples. The objective of this article is to relate the theology of *semina verbi* to the ongoing discussions among the theologians in Africa, particularly concerning the role of the African traditional religion in mediating salvation for its adherents.

## **1. The Wisdom of the Ancestors: The Logos Theology of the Early Greek Fathers**

Already in the early Church, some Fathers manifested greater openness towards other religions, especially within the Hellenistic culture in which they lived and moved, by acknowledging the presence of *semina verbi* in non-Christian religions and cultures and

as such perceiving the presence of a seedbed for the dispensation of truth in them. This theology, commonly known as the "logos theology" of the Church Fathers is a helpful stepping stone and great contribution to our discussion of recognizing the seeds of the word in the African Traditional culture and religion today.

Indeed in the Fathers of the Church we find the greatest support for any theological research; they are the real pillars of the articulation of the Christian faith; and, through them, we can shed light on our way of doing theology. Dupuis, however, alerts us to the dangers to which we can expose ourselves: we can lapse into anachronisms, unless we take into account that their context is different from ours.<sup>2</sup> Among all the Fathers of the Church, the ones who can be of more relevance to the task of elaborating a Christian theology of other religions are the Greek Fathers, especially Justin, Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria. They are particularly significant here, according to Saldanha, "because of their nearness to the beginning of Christianity in comparison with most of the Fathers; secondly, because of the greater similarity of the missionary milieu today and their own rather than the Christian environments of the later centuries; and thirdly, because of the greater openness they manifested towards other religions than did most other Fathers."<sup>3</sup>

How were these early Greek Fathers through their theology of the *Logos* able to perceive seeds for the dispensation of the Truth in other cultures, especially the Hellenistic culture in which they lived and moved?

### **1.1 Justin the Martyr and the *Logos Spermatikos***

Justin is the first Church Father who expresses the idea of seeds of the dispensation of the *Logos* in other religious dispensations in

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. J. DUPUIS, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, New York: Orbis Book, 2001, 57.

<sup>3</sup> C. SALDANHA, *Divine Pedagogy: A Patristic View of Non-Christian Religions*, Biblioteca di Scienze Religiose, 57, Rome: LAS 1994, 31. It is to be noted that when we speak of the *Logos*, we are speaking of precisely, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, who became flesh and dwelt among us. Hence the person of the *Logos* and the person of Jesus Christ are always one and the same person. (Editor's Note)

his discussion of the term *Logos Spermatikos*.<sup>4</sup> His expressions coincide with his understanding of the Greek concept of *Logos*.

Before his conversion to Christianity, Justin was a great admirer of philosophy; indeed, he was a philosopher passionate for the truth. The environment in which he lived helped him to make a synthesis of his Christian faith and to express it in philosophical categories so as to present Christianity as something not irrational. Justin's theology is, without doubt, influenced by his understanding of the concept of *Logos*, an understanding that coincides with that of the philosophical schools of his time. One, however, should not overemphasize the influence that these schools may have exerted on Justin as if Justin's notion of *Logos* was a mere holdover from the schools with which he was familiar.

Justin's concept has a deeper meaning than the Neo-platonic one. Danielou identifies an influence of Stoicism upon Justin's way of thinking, at least in the terminology used. The Stoics considered the *logos* as "the immanent fiery principle of all reason, of which the rational faculty in each man is a manifestation. It is the action of this *Logos* which gives to each man the capacity to form certain moral and religious concepts, which are found throughout the human race."<sup>5</sup> Justin also considers that the human mind participates in the truth through the action of the *Logos* which sows seeds of the truth in all humankind (*Second Apology*, 8).

Justin submitted his philosophical/ theological manner of thinking to the Biblical notion of the *Logos*. Indeed even if there was an influence of the philosophical concept of *Logos* on Justin's writings, this influence did not exhaust his profound understanding of this divine reality.

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<sup>4</sup> Like many Christians who carried Neo-Platonic convictions, St. Justin believed that human nature is tripartite, body (σῶμα), soul (ψυχή) and spirit (πνεῦμα). St. Justin conceived of the pneuma as a vital spirit (ζωτικὸν πνεῦμα), a divine principle in the human being, the distinguishing feature of his nature, a participation in the very life of the divine Logos. The term *spermatikos logos* (σπερματικός λογος; Latin: *ratio seminalis*) accentuated the fact that the divine Logos never became an integral part of the soul, but rather imparted life and true reason to it. Hence the vital spirit was a "seed of divine reason." (Editor's Note)

<sup>5</sup> J. DANIELOU, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, London: Westminster Press, 1973, 43.

Justin wrote primarily from a Christian perspective. Hence he was greatly influenced by the concept of *Logos* presented in the Gospel according to St. John. The prologue of John's gospel describes the *Logos* in this way:

In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things came into being, not one thing came into being except through him[...] the Word became flesh, he lived among us and we saw his glory, the glory he has from the Father as only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-3.14).

Contrary to what Greek philosophy was able to affirm, the *Logos* as described in the prologue of John is the One who became flesh (*sarx*). The dualistic mentality of the Greeks could not imagine how a spiritual being could become matter, which was primarily evil. This eternal *Logos* is also the Incarnate *Logos*, Jesus Christ. In his *First Apology*, 46, Justin affirms, "He is the Word of whom every race of men were partakers." In his *Second Apology*, 13, Justin says that "next to God, we worship and love the Word, who is from the unbegotten and ineffable God, since also he became man for our sakes."<sup>6</sup>

The idea that the *Logos* is the Truth is also from Jesus in the Johannine literature. There are two passages of the Gospel which show this: the first one is John 14:6 in which Jesus says, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." The second one is in the so-called priestly prayer of Jesus in chapter 17 in which Jesus declares, "[...] your word is truth" (v. 17).

According to Saldanha, who is against any interpretation of the *Logos* in Justin as having any philosophical influence, even the idea of the *Logos Spermatikos* emerges directly from the Gospel. Again in the prologue John affirms that "the Word was the true light that enlightens every man" (John 1:9). Another Gospel text that Saldanha perceives as an influential one for St. Justin is the parable of the sower in Matt 13:3-9.<sup>7</sup> Indeed in his *Second Apology*, 13, Justin makes the comment that "all the writers were able to see realities darkly through the sowing of the implanted word that was in them."

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<sup>6</sup> See also J. DANIELOU, *Gospel Message*, 42.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. C. SALDANHA, *Divine Pedagogy*, 62.

### 1.1.1 Justin Martyr and the Mediation of the Logos in Other Cultures and Religions

First of all it is important to give a thoughtful consideration to the concept of the *logos spermatikos* according to Justin. Justin tries to show how the Greek Philosophers – and all human beings – could have access to the truth and thus utilizes the term *Logos Spermatikos* (ratio seminalis) to explain it. Throughout his Apologies, he uses indistinctively four terms to express the same reality. The first one, which has been already mentioned is *Logos Spermatikos*, the second one is *meros tau Logou*, the third *spora tou Logou* and finally the word *metechein*.<sup>8</sup> All these expressions have in Justin the same meaning, i.e., the participation in the Truth of all human beings who speak rightly.<sup>9</sup> Yet, the intention of Justin in using the expression *Logos Spermatikos* goes beyond the participation in the Truth. According to Saldanha the expression means that the Logos, God himself, was already active in a seminal, inchoate manner in the Greeks before His Incarnation.<sup>10</sup>

According to Justin, the cosmic Logos-Christ's activity in the human being is the seed of the Father's life-giving revelation that is intended not only for Christians but indeed for all cultures and religions.<sup>11</sup> This cosmic Christ was already acting in the human race before the full revelation of the Logos in the Incarnate Son. Dupuis expresses it this way:

The cosmological function of the Logos is, in effect, the foundation for Justin's theology of revelation. The Father acts through the Son; all divine manifestation in the world takes place

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Justin sees a difference, however, between those who are truly Christian, and those who are acting reasonably by the seeds of the Logos within them. This is clear from his *Second Apology*, 13 where St. Justin refers to the non-Christian philosophers as those who act according to their own capacity but with the seed of the divine Logos within them; the Christians, on the other hand, are acting within the parameters of the fullness of what God has revealed in the Logos-Christ according to the measure of the divine grace that is within them. The author discusses this point below. (Editor's Note)

through him ... Such manifestation of God ... took place before the incarnation of the Word.<sup>12</sup>

### 1.1.2 Mediation in Greek Philosophy

According to D.C. Trakatellis, "Justin is the first Christian author to express in elaborate statements the belief that the pre-existing Christ had been at work within the pagan world."<sup>13</sup> In fact, Justin was very critical of the Greek cults and myths, and had his own unique perception of Philosophy, which he saw not so much as a mere intellectual work, but as a search for truth. "The seeds of truth are the formative principle of right knowledge and right living." (*First Apology*, 44) For him, "Philosophy is a very great possession and very precious in the eyes of God. Those who have applied their mind to philosophy are truly sacred." (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 11, 1-2)

Because the Logos has sown seeds of truth in the human race, all those who engage themselves in searching for the truth participate in the Logos. This idea of the *pneuma*, as Dupuis says, is very constitutive in Justin's theology of revelation. This cosmological function of the eternal Logos relates to the very nature of the human being and so was operative before the incarnation; and the seeds of his dispensation are present wherever people live in accordance with the Logos.<sup>14</sup>

We have already pointed out that it is in this context that Justin introduces the notion of *Logos Spermatikos*. This notion explains how the Greek philosophers – and all others – had seminal access to the truth. Justin perceives that the Logos acted as a sower of truth before his Incarnation. In the *Second Apology*, 13, referring to Greek writers, Justin says that "these writers were able to perceive the Truth obscurely thanks to the sowing of the word which had been implanted within them."

In another part of the *Second Apology* (10), Justin affirms again that "all the right principles that philosophers and lawgivers have

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<sup>12</sup> J. DUPUIS, *Toward a Christian Theology*, 57.

<sup>13</sup> D.C. TRAKATELLIS, *The Pre-existence of Christ in Justin Martyr: An Exegetical Study with Reference to the Humiliation and Exaltation Christology*, Harvard: Theological Review Scholars Press, 1976, 93.3

<sup>14</sup> Cf. J. DUPUIS, *Toward a Christian Theology*, 57.

discovered and expressed they owe to whatever of the Word they have found and contemplated in part (*karta meros*)”.

These seeds of the Logos are also present in the Stoics' formulations of moral principles. “In moral philosophy the Stoics have established right principles... and the poets too have expounded such, because of the seed of the Word (*sperma tou logou*) implanted (*emphuton*) in the whole human race.” (*Second Apology*, 8)

From the citations already noted, even though the cosmological action of the Logos was at work even before his Incarnation by the sowing of truth in the whole human race, the seminal character of this dispensation means that participation of human beings in the divine Logos remained inchoate, partial and obscure. In the *Second Apology*, 13, Justin affirms that “it is one thing to possess a seed (*sperma*) and a likeness proportioned to one's capacity and quite another to possess the reality itself.” The fact that they have only partial access to the Truth is what makes the philosophers contradict themselves.<sup>15</sup> But what is most surprising in Justin's thought is the fact that those who participate in the Truth/*Logos* and have lived according to Him, are also called Christians. “Those who have lived in accordance with the Logos (*meta logou*) are Christians, even though they were called godless, such as among the Greeks, Socrates and Heraclitus and others like them ... those who lived by the Logos and those who live so now, are Christians, fearless and unperturbed.” (*First Apology*, 46)

### 1.1.3 Mediation in Jewish Religion

The key to understand Justin's conception of the seeds of the dispensation of the *Logos* in the Jewish Religion is found in his *First Apology*, when he says that all men participate in the Logos. He goes on to say, “those who have lived in accordance with the Logos (*meta logou*) are Christians, even though they were called godless... among the barbarians, Abraham, Ananias, Azarias, Misael and Elijah.” (*First Apology*, 46)

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. J. DUPUIS, *Toward a Christian Theology*, 58.

For Justin this mediation comes to the Jews through the Mosaic Law and especially by means of its ethical dimension.<sup>16</sup> In continuity with the principle that the Logos has sown the seeds of reason and of truth in all people, Logos has indeed dispensed seeds of truth in the Jewish Religion. He says, "for he [the *Logos*] exhibits among every race of men the things that are righteous at all times and in all places... it was well said by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that all righteousness and piety are fulfilled in two commandments."<sup>17</sup> The commandment of love for God and neighbour constitutes, for Justin, all righteousness and, since it is present in the Mosaic Law, it participates, though in a partial way, in the eternal and universal principles. Nevertheless, according to Justin those who lived before Christ and observed the Law will obtain salvation not through the cultic practices contained in the Law, but in virtue of the eternal and universal principles that are present, even if partially in an inchoate manner, in the Law.

In comparison with the general participation in the Logos proper to all human beings, the presence of the Logos is even more decisive in the Jewish Religion.<sup>18</sup> In the Old Testament, God chooses to reveal himself to Israel and through Israel to all humanity: what God discloses about himself to his Chosen People, therefore, is a more "sophisticated" revelation of the one, true God, who was preparing humanity for the complete revelation of himself in the Incarnate Logos. Justin sees the Old Testament as a theophany of the Incarnate Logos. He applies many passages of the Old Testament to the Incarnate *Logos* and sees in many people and situations (such as God speaking to Moses) a prefiguration of what is to come in the New Testament.<sup>19</sup>

#### **1.1.4 Mediation in Christianity**

While the dispensation of the *Logos* remains present only in an inchoate and seminal manner in Greek Philosophy and in a prefigurative, partial manner in the Jewish religion, the dispensation that the Paschal Mystery defines in its saving,

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. T. STYLIANOPOULOS, *Justin Martyr and the Mosaic Law*, Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1975, 56.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 58.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. J. DUPUIS, *Toward a Christian Theology*, 59.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. J. DANIELOU, *Gospel Message*, 201.

sanctifying power vis-à-vis Christianity is complete inasmuch as we acknowledge the full revelation of the *Logos* in his Incarnation. Justin sees in this the main difference between the seeds of the dispensation to the Greeks and the completeness of the dispensation to Christians. He affirms that “our doctrines, then, appear to be greater than all human teaching, because the complete truth became Christ, the one who appeared for our sake, both body and reason and soul.”<sup>20</sup> Justin affirms:

All that they have said [the Greek philosophers] belong to us, the Christians ... These writers were able to perceive the Truth obscurely (*amudrés*) thanks to the sowing (*spora*) of the Word which had been implanted within them. But one thing is to possess a seed (*sperma*), and a likeness proportioned to one’s capacity, and quite another to possess the reality itself. (*Second Apology*, 13)

The Greeks have only a partial knowledge of the truth due to the seed that the *Logos* has sown in them, whereas the Christians have received the *Logos* Himself. This full revelation of the Incarnate *Logos* is not a merit that Christians can claim; it is actually a gift, a grace.<sup>21</sup>

What is then the difference between a holy pagan and a holy Christian? Justin seems simply to answer that the latter has come to experience the personal love of God manifested in his Incarnate Son in a manner that is explicitly recognizable as part and parcel of the Paschal Mystery; and he or she has responded to that love in eminently noble fashion – in a way that is analogical to God’s own way of loving (cf. 1 John 3:16) – within the sacramental grace God has given him or her.<sup>22</sup> The holy pagan, on the other hand, is not conscious of this experience nor of his or her participation in the sacramental life that the *Logos* Himself gives.

Yet, according to Justin, these pagans who lived according to the *Logos* are Christians, even though they have not come to a clear profession of their faith in the full revelation of the *Logos*. Even though the seeds of the dispensation in Greek Philosophy are inchoate, obscure and partial, it is not something to be despised. On the contrary, it should be appreciated in as much as even that

<sup>20</sup> C. SALDANHA, *Divine Pedagogy*, 70

<sup>21</sup> Cf. J. DANIELOU, *Gospel Message*, 41.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. C. SALDANHA, *Divine Pedagogy*, 164.

fragmentary revelation of the Truth is a gift of God through the *Logos Spermatikos*. Human reason by itself could not have attained the conclusions to which Greek Philosophy arrived, if it were not by the action of God through his Logos.<sup>23</sup> Indeed it must be mentioned that even the Christian's capacity to experience the full revelation of the Truth in Jesus Christ is not something that human reason can do by itself. The Christian needs the grace that Jesus offers through the sacraments.

Since it is a special gift of grace that Christians receive, it is necessary that God open up our minds, so as to be able to perceive the Truth. Justin exhorts, "Pray then before all things... that the gates of light be open to you. For these things are not seen nor understood by all, but only by those to whom God and his Christ give understanding." (*Dialogue with Trypho*, VII. 1-3)

## 1.2 Irenaeus and the *Logos Emphutos* (λογος εμφυτος)

Like Justin the Martyr, Irenaeus deepens the Logos theology as presented in the prologue of St. John's Gospel. Irenaeus develops the aspect of what he calls the *Logos Emphutos*.

Dupuis considers Irenaeus the founder of the theology of history for two reasons.<sup>24</sup> The first one is that Irenaeus was able to underline the historical significance of both the Jewish and Christian dispensations. The second one is that, besides the historical significance of the Jewish and Christian dispensations, Irenaeus recognizes also a salvific value of the pre-biblical and extra-biblical religions, thus integrating them into the history of salvation.<sup>25</sup> This is a constellation of the seeds of the Christian dispensation that reaches all religions and cultures through the Logos whom Irenaeus calls the *Logos Emphutos* (Logos Implanted/ Logos Engrafted).

The *logos Emphutos* of Irenaeus served as an answer to the Gnostics of the time. The Gnostics' idea of the divinity was that there were two gods, i.e., one which is incomprehensible and invisible; the other one, who was the creator (demiurge). In this

<sup>23</sup> Cf. C. SALDANHA, *Divine Pedagogy*, 71.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. J. DUPUIS, *Toward a Christian Theology*, 60.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

fight against Gnosticism, Irenaeus affirms that the revelation of the Father takes place through the action of the *Logos Emphutos* who in his role as the Word implanted has revealed the Father in specifiable stages even by way of natural revelation in contradistinction to graced revelation.

Irenaeus saw it as his task here to defend the transcendence of God and the capability of the human being to know God as One and Omnipotent.<sup>26</sup> Once he accomplishes this task of guarding by way of an apologetic the transcendence and oneness of God, he proceeds to show how human beings can know the Almighty, Transcendent God. For him, human beings cannot attain to knowledge of God except through an act of God's love. The knowledge of God is made possible to man only through an act of love on the part of God himself; no man or woman has the natural capability to know God. The knowability of God is only possible through the mediation of the Logos. It is the Logos, the Incarnate One, who reveals Himself to be the eternal Son and reveals the Father with whom he has been in communion since before the creation of the world. The Logos makes God knowable to all people and presents all people to God. Consequently, Irenaeus states:

For since the invisible essence is mighty, it confers on all a profound mental intuition and perception of His most powerful, yes, omnipotent greatness. Wherefore, although "no one knows the Father, except the Son, nor the Son except the Father, and those to whom the Son will reveal Him," yet all do know this fact at least, because reason, implanted [*emphutos*] in their minds, moves them, and reveals to them that there is one God, the Lord of all. (*Adversus Haereses*, II, 6.1)

Irenaeus, in other words, was teaching that the Word, in his universal efficacy, manifests the Father according to his creative action on behalf of all human beings. By a way that is eminently wise, and hence rational, in harmony with his identity as the Logos, he makes the Creator known through creation: thus there is a universal knowledge of God that is accessible through the revelatory action of the Logos who implants *ratio* in creation and providence. When all is said and done, however, Irenaeus seems always to carry the conviction that the Word's special illumination is necessary for any revelation to be specific. In rather cryptic

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. C. SALDANHA, *Divine Pedagogy*, 81

fashion, he suggests that people who had never known Jesus, nevertheless, "desired to see Christ and to hear his voice". (*Adversus Haereses*, II, IV, 22.2) If it were not for the mysterious activity of the Holy Spirit who makes grace available to anyone in a manner that is known only to God, it would be difficult to understand how someone who has never heard of Christ might have this desire.

For Irenaeus, because the Maker of the world is truly the Word of God and in an invisible manner gives cohesion to all created things, he has imprinted himself in the form of a cross on the entire creation. (*Adversus Haereses*, V, 18.3) His principal observation that the crucified Word of God has chosen to recapitulate in himself the history of the entire human race leads him to conclude that the Word's incarnate task of recapitulation by means of the cross is by way of implication necessary for the salvation of anyone. The emphasis is on the objective dimension of redemption, on the necessity and efficacy of Jesus' redemptive, recapitulative suffering and death on the cross. Subjectively, how the human person responds to the grace of redemption when the Holy Spirit offers him or her that grace remains within the context of the person's freedom.

Salvific value for any religion is only possible through the activity of Jesus, the Father's eternal Son, who is always in union with his Holy Spirit and with the Church.

### 1.3 Clement of Alexandria

The other Church father I would like to mention here is Clement of Alexandria who contributed enormously to the presence-Logos theology of the early Christian centuries by developing a concept known as *Logos Protrepitkos*.

The word *protrepitkos* signifies exhortation.<sup>27</sup> Clement entertains the notion of the Logos as one who gives melody, harmony, balance, and beauty to the universe just as a song brings beauty, harmony and order into people's lives. This exhortative power of

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<sup>27</sup> For Clement's extensive explanation of God's Word as the new Song and the beautiful, breathing Instrument whose melody can be heard throughout the universe, see CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Protrepitkos [Exhortation] to the Heathen*, chapter one.

the Logos that spreads his song throughout the created universe extends to everyone regardless of his or her religion or culture. The new song has made men out of stones, men out of beasts, has brought the dead back to life. The deathless strain, the harmony of all, the Logos who is Jesus Christ has brought beauty, harmony and order to the universal frame of things. By the Holy Spirit, the Word of God has tuned the universe. The eternal Word is a beautiful, breathing instrument of music and as such has made the human being after His own image. He, the supramundane Wisdom, the Celestial Word, is the all-harmonious, melodious, holy instrument of God. Anyone who pays attention can hear the song of salvation coming forth from the Father. The Word is the *protreptikos* of God: anyone can pay attention to his saving melody.

The major argument of Clement, therefore, is that the range of God's Word is universal. The Christian dispensation is for all. He begins with a theory of a natural notion of God which is common to all people universally, according to which people can know God through the use of human reason, "for there was always a natural manifestation of the one Almighty God, among all right thinkers" (*Stromata*, V, 13). This is a kind of a natural attitude which allows the human mind to acquire knowledge of God and this is itself a gift from him and this is truly knowledge in the real sense of the word.

Then apart from the general and natural notion of God that all people have, Clement observes that there may be found a clearer knowledge of God, philosophical in nature, which may not yet be attuned to the fullness of divine revelation in the Judeo-Christian tradition. This is the knowledge of God provided by Greek Philosophy and the Indian sages which he calls "real masters of Philosophy"<sup>28</sup>. According to Clement, philosophy is a gift from God to the Greeks; and it constitutes an inchoate parallel to the divine economy. Even if it is not equal to that of the Jewish economy of the Law, both have as their purpose to bring people to Christ.<sup>29</sup> He writes: "For, having furnished the one with commandments, and the other with philosophy, He shut up unbelief to the Advent of the perfection which is by faith [...] But as the proclamation of the Gospel has come now at the fit time, so also at the fit time were the

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<sup>28</sup> J. DANIELOU, *Gospel Message*, 56.

<sup>29</sup> J. DUPUIS, *Toward a Christian Theology*, 64.

Law and the Prophets given to the Barbarians, and Philosophy to the Greeks, to fit their ears for the Gospel." (*Stromata*, VI, 6)

For him philosophy is a "covenant" as it is "a providential arrangement for salvation, or, more specifically, a God-given means to enable the Greeks to work towards their salvation". Hence it is propaedeutic because it is a means of salvation and a preparatory training, a stepping stone to the greater revelation that comes with the Incarnation of the Logos which would seal a new and everlasting covenant. "Accordingly, before the Advent of the Lord, Philosophy was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness. And now it becomes conducive to piety; being a kind of preparatory training [...] Perchance, too, philosophy was given to the Greeks primarily and directly, till the Lord should call the Greeks." (*Stromata*, I, 5)

According to Clement, there are many "paving ways", all directed to the same goal, i.e., the recognition of the Logos in Christ: "The way of Truth is therefore one. But into it, as into a perennial river, streams flow from all sides [...] the commandments and the modes of preparatory training are to be regarded as the way and the appliances of life." (*Stromata*, I, 5) However, these "paving ways" or rather streams, as he would call them, through which the *Logos* dispenses salvation, are valid until "the Lord should call the Greeks". The implication here is that although we believe that in Jesus the revelation of God has reached its fulfilment, Clement insists that the dispensation that the Logos has given to other religious traditions and cultures prior to the Incarnation retains its preparatory value even after the full accomplishment of the Paschal Mystery.

For Clement, Philosophy is not an end in itself, but plays a role of propaedeutic to the full manifestation of the *Logos Protreptikos* – the new divine harmony that resounds throughout the universe – in Jesus Christ. The Logos active in preparatory fashion among the Greeks through Greek Philosophy has served as a background, intellectual and moral, for receiving the fullness of that dispensation in the advent of Christ, the Logos Incarnate.

In a nutshell, the contribution of the *Logos* theology of the Greek fathers is indeed of great importance in our effort to articulate a Christian theology of religious pluralism in an African

context. From what we have seen, there is a positive and inclusivist approach to other religions, since God the Word did not neglect them. Hence we can perceive a clearer way how the Logos, Jesus Christ, exercises a mediating presence in African traditional religions. At the same time, it helps us to recognize the fact that this mediation remains inchoate and obscure since these religions may contain anti-Logos elements due to beliefs and practices that do not cohere with what God, in Jesus, has revealed.

## **2. The Voice of a Contemporary Theologian: Karl Rahner's Theology of Grace as "Supernatural Existential"**

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century Theologian Karl Rahner becomes relevant in our discussions especially in reference to his theory of the "anonymous Christian" which is based on what the early Greek Fathers had already speculated about the presence of God's revelation and saving Grace outside Christian tradition, but also, and essentially, on the new insights in the understanding of grace and human nature from a perspective of Christian anthropology. Indeed if Justin talks of "the seed of the Logos" to explain how the Greeks could feel such a deep passion for the truth, Rahner talks of the "supernatural existential" to explain the inner tendency of human beings to their Creator. What does Rahner mean by "Supernatural existential"?

In Rahner's anthropology, supernatural existential means "graced from the moment of existence." This grace that God implants when he creates the human soul is an inner determination towards God. Hence this determination also may be called the supernatural existential. Even after the fall of Adam and Eve, human beings are by nature "good," and hence are conditionally yet constitutively oriented towards God, for human beings possess unlimited transcendence of knowledge and freedom, accruing from the transcendental relation between God and man. According to Rahner, human existence from its very beginning has had one single goal, i.e. eternal life in the immediate possession of God.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> K. RAHNER, "Original Justice", in K. RAHNER – H. VORGRIMLER, eds., *Theological Dictionary*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1965, 328.

Men and women are always and everywhere oriented, by nature, to definitive communion and intimacy with God; and God has rendered human nature capable of receiving such an orientation. The inner determination of the human being towards God has been posited by God Himself, so that His free self-communication to man and woman can be accepted in a dialogical partnership, to the point that this posited condition of the human spirit appears as a condition for this self-communication of God to take place.<sup>31</sup> That is, because God wanted to communicate himself to human beings, He must have created them in such a way that they could respond to that invitation of sharing in God's divine life. This inner determination is of a permanent character and not something that appears sporadically in the human person. According to Rahner, "In virtue of this self-communication, the transcendence of man is permanently and necessarily ordered to the direct presence of God."<sup>32</sup> Even prior to the justification that becomes possible by means of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, the human person stands under God's universal plan of salvation, to the point of finding himself and understanding his very nature only in reference to this supernatural call.<sup>33</sup>

It is from this perspective of the hidden and inner condition and human orientation towards God, that Karl Rahner considers incorporating even non-Christians into the Christian dispensation by calling them anonymous Christians.<sup>34</sup>

According to this theory, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus is present and active in a hidden, unknown manner even outside the

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<sup>31</sup> E. RAHNER, ed., *Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, London: Burns & Oates, 1975, 590.

<sup>32</sup> K. RAHNER, *Theological Investigations*, XVI, London: Darton, Longman & Todd 1969, 40.

<sup>33</sup> K. K. RAHNER, "Original Justice", 328.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, chapter 2, n. 16. This paragraph elucidates the fact that because God's plan of salvation is universal, those who have had no exposure to the Gospel, those who sincerely seek the God they do not yet know, and those who try to live a good life by following the dictates of their conscience are related not only to Jesus but to his Bride, the Catholic Church whom Jesus has instituted as a universal agent of his own divine plan of salvation. The Council, however, did not speak of these as anonymous Christians. (Editor's Note)

boundaries of the Christian dispensation, in nature, in other religious traditions and cultures, indeed in each and every human being. All non-Christians who attain salvation must have received the grace of Christ, just as Christians do, without realizing it; and this is exactly the anonymous character of their condition. Even though these anonymous Christians stand outside the visible, social body of the Church, they nevertheless stand in a salvific relationship with God, and so are related to the Church; this is because in their freedom they have accepted God's call to supernatural communion with Him. Vatican two reiterates this in its optimistic approach towards salvation outside the visible boundaries of the Church. Vatican II sees salvation as an offer open to everybody, even to non-Christians, and in ways known only to God. The only two conditions to receive this salvation are faithfulness and obedience to one's conscience.<sup>35</sup>

By way of summarizing, we can glean from Rahner's theory of "anonymous Christian" three principles that are of vital importance in a Christian reflection on religious pluralism: 1) God has a salvific plan that is universal for all humanity. 2) All peoples are invited to be partakers in this plan. 3) Finally, all human beings stand in need of Christ from whom all, explicit Christians and anonymous Christians, obtain salvation.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> K. RAHNER, *Theological Investigations*, XVI, London: Darton, Longman & Todd 1976, 284.

<sup>36</sup> We do not subscribe to the doubts that Rahner raised about such creedal statements as "Jesus Christ is God." On more than one occasion, Rahner wondered out loud if the expression of Christian faith, "Jesus is God," is not liable to a monophysite, mythological interpretation when the word "is" is understood in its everyday meaning. See, for example, K. RAHNER, *Corso fondamentale sulla fede*, Paoline, 1977, 374-375; this, in turn, is a translation of the original *Grundkurs des Glaubens. Einführung in den Begriff des Christentums*, Herder, 1976. English translations manifest the same doubt. For us, on the other hand, the incarnation and the language the Church uses to speak of the incarnation do not arouse perplexing doubts about the faith but rather point to the reality of Jesus Christ, God, fully divine and fully human, and hence the divine Logos incarnate. When an African prays, he or she is entering into a friendship that God is offering to him in Jesus Christ. No one needs to dim the light on this fundamental truth: in Jesus, it is God who is seeking friendship with the African – and indeed with all of us. We need Jesus, our Lord and our God, who offers all of us the grace of salvation.

This theology of Rahner provides a useful orientation to our reflection on the significance of the African Traditional Religions in the salvation of the Africans today.

### 3. African Theologians' Advocacy for an Authentic African Christian Identity

Because there was an unfortunate series of events that affected European society, such as the Muslim threat, the haphazard and sometimes ill-intentioned organization of the Crusaders, the disappearance or rather weakening of Christian communities in the eastern part of the continent and the establishment of a strong Church in its western sector, Europeans arrived unwittingly at a point of identifying Christianity with their own culture. This line of thinking made the European missionaries of the XIX century "treat everything pre-Christian as either harmful or at best valueless, and to consider the African once converted from paganism as a sort of *tabula rasa* on which a wholly new religious psychology was somehow to be imprinted."<sup>37</sup>

As a result, the European missionary enterprise was not only oriented towards the evangelization of the African peoples, but also seemed to become a way of "civilizing" (i.e., Europeanizing) Africans: "The Christian religion, the school, technical and industrial training, new agricultural skills and commercial enterprises, a whole package which, in the new missionary encounter with Africa, was sincerely believed would cause the dark continent to advance."<sup>38</sup>

In the religious sense, African traditional Religions were classified in the group of animist religions, which were considered to be practiced by people of low category in the scale of humanity and whose practitioners lacked a sense of moral life. As a result Christianity in Africa succumbed to a pattern of alienating. In the process of evangelization, there was no serious theological reflection and encounter between Christianity and African religions and

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<sup>37</sup> A. HASTINGS, *Church and Mission in Modern Africa*, New York: Fordham University Press 1967, 60.

<sup>38</sup> K. BEDIAKO, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa*, Oxford: Regnum, 1992, 227.

world view. This explains the kind of dichotomy of beliefs that exists among many Christians on the continent. Christian beliefs have not transformed the totality of the African mind and as a result, many Christians continue to practice African traditional religions *vis-à-vis* Christianity. According to the African theologian Bediako, “The theological problem which has arisen from the missionary tie-up between Christianity and ‘civilization’ (that is, European culture), consists therefore in this, that it has threatened to deny African Christians their own past and sought instead to give them a past which could not in any real sense become fully theirs.”<sup>39</sup>

What Bediako is saying is precisely that African theology and African Christianity lack an identity. In order to be authentic, African Christianity has to emerge as a Christianity which is able to reconcile the newness of Christianity with the long standing religious and cultural traditions of Africa. It must be able to remove the dichotomy that exists in African Christians, who identify themselves as absolutely African and at the same time absolutely Christian without compromising the Gospel message.

### 3.1 Bolaji Idowu and Call for an Indigenous African Church

One of the African theologians who has worked commendably in order to articulate Christian identity in Africa is Bolaji Idowu. Appreciating Bolaji Idowu’s contributions, Bediako says that he is “probably the one who has made particularly his own the plea for an authentic theology and churchmanship”<sup>40</sup>.

For Bolaji Idowu, the main problem of African Christianity is a lack of identity, or rather a lack of “loyalty” of Christians who, on the one hand, are active members of a Christianity embodied in European categories and practices; on the other hand, these very Christians consider African traditional religions as the ultimate answer to their existential problems.<sup>41</sup> The cause of this is – according to Idowu – the fact that the Church of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 237.

<sup>40</sup> K. BEDIAKO, *Theology*, 267.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. E.B. IDOWU, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 1973. 205-206.

lacked that awareness that the divine Logos is present and operative within the African traditional milieu. He observes that missionaries from the very beginning ignored the presence of Jesus Christ, the *Logos*, in African traditional religions. His argument is that Jesus, the Logos, has been active and present all along in the African religions dispensations. African traditional religions enjoy just like all other traditions the gift of divine revelation. Indeed:

We find that in every age and generation, there is a direct contact of God with the human soul, the personal awareness of God on the part of man through God's initiative. What man knows about God what he discovers about God, comes as a result of this self-disclosure [...] if revelation indeed means God's self-disclosure, if he has left his mark upon the created order and his witness within man – every man – then it follows that revelation cannot be limited in scope and that it is meant for all mankind, all rational beings [...] for Africans as part of human race, the self-disclosure of God is evident.<sup>42</sup>

It is evident from the foregoing assertion that God's self-revelation is offered to all humanity as to a family; and, hence, He reveals Himself to Africans, who are a vital part of the human family. The visible manifestation of God's self-revelation to Africans has to be found in the way in which Africans live their religious experience and in the way they express it. The fact that Africans express their awareness and their faith in one God, who is always a "personal" God, who is present and operative among them can be confirmed from the names Africans give to Him. The various names that people from diverse African cultures give to God are "descriptive of his character and emphatic of the fact that he is a reality and that he is not an abstract concept".<sup>43</sup>

It is quite clear that there has been a failure within some Church circles to recognize the reality of the *semina Verbi*, the presence of the eternal Logos, who is Jesus Christ, among Africans even prior to the coming of European missionaries.<sup>44</sup> Missionaries presented to the African peoples an "alien" God who, apart from being

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, 57.

<sup>43</sup> E.B. IDOWU, *African Traditional Religion*, 150.

<sup>44</sup> It is noteworthy that the Logos, Jesus Christ, who is the Word made flesh was indeed the first Christian to grace African soil. The Africans gave him hospitality at a time when his own country, Israel, was a lethal threat to him. See Matt 2:13-21. (Editor's Note)

a stranger, was demanding them to abandon their African identity. There was a failure to make a bridge of continuity between the dispensation of the *Christ-Logos* present in the African context and the Christian dispensation. According to Bolaji Idowu,

It was a serious mistake that missionaries took no account of the indigenous beliefs and customs of Africa when they began their work of evangelization. It is now obvious that by a misguided purpose, a completely new face of God that had nothing to do with the past of Africa was introduced to her peoples. Thus there was no proper foundation laid for the Gospel message in the hearts of the people.<sup>45</sup>

The God of the Africans is the true God, the omnipresent God, who is the creator and sustainer of all that exists. He is both transcendent, the absolute other and immanent because he is neither far from us nor disinterested in his creation. In fact, African traditional religions acknowledge that God is in absolute control of the universe because all beings find their source of existence in him. The conception of God as an “absent” God is completely foreign to the African mind, and also far from the truth. “In African thought, Deity is absolute power and cannot be disregarded; the notion of God as so transcendent that he is not immanent is alien to African belief.”<sup>46</sup> This concept resonates with the Christian faith in the God who has revealed himself in the Old Testament, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as well as the God who is Jesus Christ, one with the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega for all times and places.<sup>47</sup>

Since the revelation of God is already present in the traditional beliefs of the Africans then it should not be difficult to see African traditional religions as a primary avenue for an authentic evangelization that makes Africans feel the authentic integration that Jesus intends to accomplish between Christianity and their own religious experience. It is imperative that the Church in Africa accept the arduous task of understanding how the eternal Word

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<sup>45</sup> J. MBITI, “The Ways and Means of Communicating the Gospel”, in C.G. BAËETA, ed., *Christianity in Tropical Africa*, London: Oxford University Press 1968, 433.

<sup>46</sup> E.B. IDOWU, *African Traditional Religion*, 160.

<sup>47</sup> Hebrews 13:8. Jesus is God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Word made flesh.

rendered himself and the grace of the Paschal Mystery present in the pre-Christian era and at the same time how he renders himself sacramentally present within the perennial newness of Christianity. The Church in Africa must begin from the seeds of the Logos already present in the African religions and cultures. According to Idowu, she must keep continuity with the African identity and what God has revealed about himself by means of the African identity.

Whatever theological construction becomes necessary in Africa in the light of Christian revelation, it cannot be done by neglecting this African religio-cultural heritage from the past [...] the material gathered from the study of the indigenous beliefs [...], in order to ascertain what God has done, in what way He has been known and approached in the past and present history [...] is what will form the basic raw material for Christian theology.<sup>48</sup>

It is important, however, that this be a true reconciling, a true integration. As the Church in Africa becomes indigenous by recognizing the presence of Jesus Christ, the eternal Logos, in the African religious traditions and cultures she must also remain faithful to the long standing tradition of the universal Church. She must live in the "watchful consciousness that she is part as well as 'presence' of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church."<sup>49</sup> The Church in Africa is called to be locally incarnated in the life of a given culture but at the same time keeping the unity with the whole body, the Body of Christ.

### **3.2 John Mbiti on African Traditional Religions as *Preparatio Evangelica***

John Mbiti shares Idowu's conviction and, indeed, that of all African theologians that African traditional religions are places that have served as a pre-eminent medium of divine revelation: the eternal Son of God has always been present and operative in African traditional religions. The effort of the Church and any missionary for that matter should be "to discover and set forth the most effective and appropriate ways in which the Gospel of Jesus Christ may find deeper roots in African religious and cultural

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<sup>48</sup> E.B. IDOWU, *Towards an Indigenous Church*, London, Oxford University Press, 1965, 25.

<sup>49</sup> E.B. IDOWU, *Towards an Indigenous Church*, 11.

consciousness.”<sup>50</sup> The Church has the role of becoming the primordial bearer of the Gospel of which it is the embodiment. It is in the Church that all the deeper aspirations of the African peoples must find their fulfilment, not by way of annihilating them, but by showing how all their hopes come to be realized in the message of Jesus Christ. Indeed, “The Church will become for them a community in which the corporate aspirations are not destroyed but fulfilled and intensified, in which tribal foundations are not simply shaken and replaced with a vacuum but are made more secure in Christ.”<sup>51</sup>

For John Mbiti, the Logos, God’s eternal Son, was there even prior to any contact with Christianity and that the dispensation through which he revealed Himself as the divine presence of truth in love is the foundation for any authentic encounter of the Gospel with the African reality. For him “without African religiosity, whatever its defect might be, Christianity would have taken much longer to be understood and accommodated by African peoples.” The question is what is it in African traditional religions and culture that embodies this particular form of the revelation of the Gospel and how can it be identified in order for it to become a foundation for the encounter with the Gospel? The first thing John Mbiti identifies is that deep rooted religiosity of the Africans. For him, “religion is part of the cultural heritage [...]. It is by far the richest part of the African heritage. Religion is found in all areas of human life.”<sup>52</sup> Africans have a profound conception of God: “Expressed ontologically, God is the origin and sustenance of all things. He is “older” than the *zamani* period; He is outside and beyond His creation. On the other hand, He is personally involved in his creation, so that it is not outside of Him or His reach.”<sup>53</sup>

Like Iwodu, Mbiti sees a very close affinity between the African concept of God and the Christian notion. The God the Africans worship is the same God “of our Lord Jesus Christ [...] who for

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<sup>50</sup> K. BEDIAKO, *Theology*, 308.

<sup>51</sup> J. MBITI, “The Ways and Means”, 341.

<sup>52</sup> J. MBITI, *Introduction to African Traditional Religion*, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1975, 10.

<sup>53</sup> J. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Nairobi: Heinemann 1969, 29.

thousands of years has been known and worshipped in various ways within the religious life of African peoples and who was not a stranger in Africa prior to the coming of missionaries."<sup>54</sup> Indeed for Mbiti, it is in Jesus Christ that all the expectations of African traditional religions reach fulfilment. "The Gospel enabled people to utter the name of Jesus Christ [...] that final and completing element that crowns their traditional religiosity and brings its flickering light to full brilliance."<sup>55</sup>

### 3.3 Mulago Gwa Cikala on African Traditional Religions as "Stepping Stones" to Christianity

Arguing in the same line as the theologians we have treated so far, Mulago shows that in the African traditional religions we find rudimentary elements that are in harmony with the Christian dispensation and as such create the basis for understanding how the *Logos*, Jesus Christ, renders himself present and operative in the African reality. Because of this harmony, he regards African traditional religions as "stepping stones" for the Gospel. The task of the missionary work is to purify the *semina verbi* already present so as to present to the African peoples "a Christianity that has been comprehended and lived through, an incarnated and involved Christianity which has become more deeply rooted than the old ancestral beliefs."<sup>56</sup>

Highlighting some of those elements present among the Bantu peoples of Africa, Mulago mentions the concept of 'unity of Life' as the integrating principle. This principle of unity which is drawn from the Bantu world view refers to a "dynamic concept, arising from life-resources (*moyens vitaux*) – ultimately derived from God, *NyamuzindaImana* – and with tremendous implications for relationships and participation within the universe of the living, the deceased, creatures animate and inanimate."<sup>57</sup> Mulago sees in this concept the primordial keyword in which African traditional

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<sup>54</sup> J. MBITI, "On the Article by John W. Kinney: A Comment", *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* 3/2 (1979) 68.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> V. MULAGO, *Un Visage Africain du Christianisme: L'Union Vitale Bantu Face is a l'unité lirale Ecclésiale*, Paris: Presence Africaine, 1993, 17.

<sup>57</sup> K. BEDIAKO, *Theology*, 358.

religions become a “stepping stone” to Christianity. In fact, he sees in this concept a reflection of the concept of “unity of the Church” or the more biblical and more theologically elaborated term “Body of Christ”.

The “unity of life” as such flows from God himself who brings about unity in the community. The individual can attain this life by means of participation in the life of the community. Hence, the unity of life is manifested in the community of the Body of Christ, although the life that is shared in this community has a more transcendental character since that life is a sacramental participation in the life of the Trinity. “Since Jesus is in the Trinity, those who are united to Jesus are also in the Trinity, and through the divine grace imparted by the Son believers are brought into the presence of the Father as adopted children.”<sup>58</sup>

It is clear that African theologians would like to see and understand the presence of the divine Logos, Jesus Christ, and his dispensation in African traditional religions and as such consider them as “stepping stones” and as *preparatio evangelica*. As indicated above, the theologians are very positive about the African culture and tradition and their effort to reconstruct a theology that respect these traditions with the conviction that they contain “rays of truth” in themselves and should be considered a valid approach that is to be cherished and celebrated. I see it as an urgent task of the theologians to continue discerning the presence of Jesus Christ, the Logos, who has walked for years with the African peoples in order to lead them to Himself. I would agree with John Mbiti that were it not for this presence of God’s eternal Son in the Pre-Christian heritage of Africa, the Gospel would have taken much longer to be accepted and to take root in African soil.

It should, however, be noted that there is an evident weakness: these theologians seem to put so much stress on the continuity that they blur the discontinuity of the same. The is the impression one gets, that these theologians do not remember that all the “seeds of the Logos” present in other religious dispensations, are hidden within the condition of the unredeemed humanity. Another way of saying this is that in African Traditional religions there is also the

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 364.

presence of evil which obscures the truth hidden within them. The attitude of the African theologians is positive; it challenges the derogatory European evaluation of African tradition by seeking to achieve a genuinely sympathetic interpretation of the religious past.

This critique notwithstanding, the effort of the African theologians is a valid one and represents a more authentically positive attitude towards the pre-Christian heritage of Africa. It is the task of theologians to continue discerning the presence of God's eternal Son, the Logos, who has always remained close to the African peoples in order to lead them to Himself. We are in great debt to these African theologians for making us aware of the presence of God's eternal Son among the African traditional religions. It is God himself, whom Africans know and relate with, that has been leading them to Himself and preparing them for the fullness of divine revelation through the Paschal Mystery in a sacramental encounter with His Son, Jesus Christ, at the time that He Himself had appointed. I agree with Mbiti's affirmation that, without this presence of the Logos within the African religious heritage, Christianity would have taken longer to be accepted and to take root in African soil. It is our responsibility to open the door with wholehearted graciousness to Jesus, the incarnate *Logos*, so that he may continue the saving, sanctifying work of the Paschal Mystery in Africa, not by destroying the seeds of truth in love, but by showing that all the aspirations of the African heart find their fulfilment in him, who is the incarnate Son of God. All the positive elements of divine truth that we find in African Traditional religions have one and only one purpose: to serve as a background both intellectually and morally for the full manifestation of God the Father in his divine Son, Jesus Christ.

## Conclusion

In African Traditional Religion, we find an authentic presence of God's eternal Son, the *Logos*, who sheds forth revelatory rays of divine truth in all that is noble in African traditional religions. What God has done inchoately serves as a *preparatio evangelica*. These resonant harmonies of divine truth represent both a preparation for the sacramental indwelling of the divine *Logos* in the vast religious

and cultural African heritage, and at the same time represent a means of opening the hearts and souls of Africans to the grace of salvation, i.e., to that same redeeming love that Jesus pours forth into the heart with the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf., Rom 5:5). This is the gift that brings forth the personal encounter between the individual followers of the African traditional Religion and the incarnate Logos. It is the task of the Church in Africa, assisted by theologians and by all people of good will, to discern this mysterious presence of the Son of God in the African heritage, to purify this heritage from the stains of human sin, which might have contaminated it, and then incorporate this heritage into our Christian faith, so that we may give witness to the universal character of the Catholic Church of Christ that embraces all peoples and cultures. The Church in Africa will always remain exemplary in her humble profession of faith in the Logos-God who has chosen to save people in ways that no theologian, no pastor, indeed no human being is able to discern because as the Second Vatican Council insisted God does indeed save some in ways that are known only to Himself (cf., *Ad Gentes*, 7).

In his Post-Synodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* Pope (St.) John Paul II marvelled at this rich patrimony when he said that Africa “is endowed with a wealth of cultural values and priceless human qualities which it can offer to the Churches and to humanity as a whole. The Synod Fathers highlighted some of these cultural values, which are truly a providential preparation for the transmission of the Gospel.”<sup>59</sup>

Without doubt, the African traditional culture has much to contribute to Christianity. She offers her singular insight into the Christian faith and expresses it with a beauty, power and grace that are wonderfully and uniquely African. Subsequent to the insight and the cultural expressions that give life to the insight, Africa’s wholehearted commitment to the mission of the Church becomes ever more transparently a sign that the Kingdom of God is at hand.

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<sup>59</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Ecclesia in Africa” on the Church in Africa and its Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000* (14 Sep 1995), Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa 1995, 42.

# Liturgy: God's Own Work

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## 1. What is Theology?

What are we doing when we “do” theology? Saint Anselm answers: *Fides quaerens intellectum*. Faith seeks understanding. He does not say, *Intellectus quaerens fidem*. He does not opine that understanding precedes faith. Saint Augustine makes the lucid remark: *Intellege ut Credas; Crede ut Intellegas*. “Understand in order that you may believe; believe in order that you may understand.”

Pope Paul VI regretfully noted that “the world is in trouble because of the lack of thinking”.<sup>1</sup> Therefore we have to think about our faith which is actually a human response to God’s self-communication. John Paul II is precise in his observation: “Faith and reason,” he says, “are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself.”<sup>2</sup>

Theology helps us to think about God who is at the same time the Revealer and the Revealed. God is the object of Theology. By the sole fact that God is the object, it is not an easy task. It behooves us to let ourselves be led by Him who is Light, Way, Truth and Life. Our God in whom we believe is the One who becomes flesh and dwells among us, God-with-us, Emmanuel. Though without sin, He took our human condition and context so that whenever one engages oneself to know Him, one should not put a distance between God and his or her own milieu where God unceasingly

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<sup>1</sup> PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, 85. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, 53.

<sup>2</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio* 1.

reveals Himself. We can only understand God from within the framework of our environment in all its states.

Human beings understand reality within the framework of their language, their social situation, and their cultural context. The principle that Thomas Aquinas lays down relative to personal appropriation of knowledge can be rephrased in social terms: whatever is learned or known is appreciated initially according to the social historical form of the community who learns it. Bearing this principle in mind, it comes as no surprise to learn that in its initial stages Christological reflection was able to take a variety of forms, depending on who was engaged in the reflection and the circumstances in which they were finding themselves.

In his book, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, Gerald O'Collins distinguishes three types or styles characteristic of post-Vatican II Catholic and indeed all Christian theology. O'Collins distinguishes these according to the parameters of their nature (object), their method (style), their origins, the authorities they invoke and the locus within which they are practiced.<sup>3</sup>

## **2. *Fides quaerens intellectum scientificum***

The first style is described variously as *North Atlantic theology* or *academic theology*. In traditional terms this style can be described as *fides quaerens intellectum scientificum*, faith seeking scientific knowledge or understanding. Here, the law of faith (*lex credendi*) has primacy. This style of theology has as its predominant *object*, the pursuit of the “meaning and truth of Christian revelation”. Its concern is to uncover “fresh knowledge and new insights”. The focus here is on truth, “understood more theoretically.” What is aimed at is greater “knowledge and understanding”. The *authorities* invoked are generally the “normative voices and texts” that form the core of Church doctrine. These include the Bible, the works of the Greek, Latin and Syrian Fathers, Church documents, the books of medieval and Reformed theologians, and other traditional texts which bear witness to the

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<sup>3</sup> G. O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology: The Three Styles of Contemporary Theology*, New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1993, 9-11.

Church's understanding and interpretation of revelation. Of course, these sources possess varying degrees of authority.

The *method* employed in academic theology is, above all, the "cultivated use of reason", "research, hard thinking and serious dialogue with academic colleagues in other disciplines" and with intellectual contemporaries. The locus for such theology is not necessarily North Atlantic. It primarily refers to the universities, colleges and faculties that reflect an overriding respect for the authority vested in the Apostolic Tradition and the Scriptures: the Philippines, Korea, Europe, North America, Japan, and India. As far as its origins are concerned, this type of theology embraces a tradition which stretches back to the medieval universities and even to the intellectual glories of Greece.<sup>4</sup> Its *practitioners* are typically well-educated persons or at least those who aspire to be well educated who adopt a critical attitude towards the Enlightenment and philosophical positions that claim the Enlightenment as their inspiration. Learned experts, both believers and non-believers, are the desirable dialogue-partners. Typically the style of this theology is largely a matter of consulting the "experts" in matters theological. The experience which is at the centre of this way of theologizing is primarily the experience of others, "above all the apostolic experience of God's definitive self-revelation in Christ."

### **3. *Fides quaerens iustitiam sociale***

The second style of theology is what O' Collins calls *practical theology*. In traditional terms this style can be described as *fides quaerens iustitiam sociale*, faith seeking social justice. Here, love (*lex vivendi*) has primacy. This style of theology has as its *objective*, above all, the desire to promote justice and the common good. It is a practical way of doing theology, concerned to struggle against the massive injustice found in our world. The *focus* is on justice and the common good, achieved through service for and with others. The method that is typical of this theology is best

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<sup>4</sup> For the academic style that one finds in the Far East, the Confucian respect for authority interweaves with the intellectual emphasis on the Bible and Tradition. (Editor's Note).

exemplified by liberation theology. It is, of course, a practical way of doing theology, which characteristically questions itself: What does our theology lead us to do or leave undone in the world?

It aims to stimulate, interpret and critique action in the present. It thrives on contact with the poor and with youth: the poor and young Christians in Latin America, the poor non-Christians in India, the poor and young Filipinos who scatter themselves throughout the world and the disintegrating victims of global consumer societies. This theology has its origins in a Jewish-Christian tradition that reaches back to the Old Testament and the prophetic denunciation of social evil and oppression and has been reiterated time and time again by particular Catholic Popes. It draws inspiration from Jesus' solidarity with the oppressed, the marginalized of his society, and with children.

Typically, the style of this theology is largely a matter of consulting the poor, the suffering and the youth in matters of faith, doctrine and morality. The *experience* which is at the centre of this way of theologizing is primarily our present experience of physical suffering and other evils. While this theological style demonstrates respect for the normative voices of Church doctrine, the scriptures and official Church teaching, it nevertheless regards its *leading authority* to be the voiceless in the contemporary world: in particular, the millions of victim "non-persons" of our world. We all recall precious words that Pope (St.) John Paul II repeated often to the youth of the world: "What I am going to say to you is not as important as what you are going to say to me" (*Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 124). The primary theological locus is found in the suffering people of today and in the young. The locus for this way of theologizing is generally the places where the poor and the young gather.<sup>5</sup> We may also call it liberation or contextual theology.

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<sup>5</sup> G. O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, 10. See, in this regard, A. PIERIS, "Interreligious Dialogue and Theology of Religious: An Asian Paradigm", *Horizons* 20 (1993) 106-114, where Piereis identifies the poor as the third source for understanding Church doctrine alongside the academic efforts of the theologians and the magisterial authority of the bishops in union with and under the authority of the Pope. See also A. PIERIS,

#### 4. *Fides quaerens adorationem*

The third style is described by O' Collins as *contemplative theology*. In traditional terms, this style can be described as *fides quaerens adorationem*, faith seeking adoration. Here, hope (*lex orandi*) has primacy. This style of theology has as its *object*, above all, the concern to bear witness to the Triune God, revealed and reflected in liturgical celebration. It focuses on divine beauty, and sees its task, above all, in the service of prayer. This theological style has its *origins in eastern Christianity, the classic home of contemplation. Typically, the style of this theology is largely a matter of consulting worshippers in matters of faith and doctrine. The experience which serves as the point of departure for this way of theologizing is our experience (both liturgical and extra-liturgical) of the beautiful and the mystical and our yearning for complete fulfilment. The authorities invoked are traditions inherited from the past. This way of theologizing is characterized by its eschatological orientation and its concern for religious practice. The focus is on the exhibition of the exalted and heavenly Christ and our eschatological future. The locus for such theology is the Church at public prayer and persons immersed in prayer. This locus is, therefore, not only solemn, official worship but also expressions of popular religiosity in feasts, pilgrimages, images and other things that mirror underlying beliefs, attitudes and experiences of God.*<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, in our present essay, we have a concern that does not involve all styles of theology at once but rather concentrates upon one of them. The issue at hand is that of contemplative theology, *fides quaerens adorationem* or faith seeking adoration. In other words, it is about Liturgy.

According to the Second Vatican Council, "liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the source from which all its power flows".<sup>7</sup> The document continues by saying, "From the liturgy, and especially from the

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"Doing Christology in the Context of the Religions and the Poor", *Louvain Studies* 25 (2000) 187-231, especially 207-211.

<sup>6</sup> G. O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, 10.

<sup>7</sup> SC 10.

Eucharist, grace is poured forth upon us from a fountain, and our sanctification in Christ and the glorification of God to which all other activities of the Church are directed, as toward their end, are achieved with maximum effectiveness”.<sup>8</sup>

Elsewhere, we find the same weight given to the Eucharist as the source and summit of the Christian life.<sup>9</sup> “The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch.”<sup>10</sup> Therefore, “the Eucharistic celebration is the centre of the assembly of the faithful”.<sup>11</sup> In the words of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “The Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith: Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the *Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking*”.<sup>12</sup>

## 5. *Fides quaerens sacramentum*

In order to grasp the depth of what has been previously said, there is a need of proposing another type of theology, *lex celebrandi*, in order to complement the three styles that O’Collins has proposed, *lex credendi*, *lex vivendi* and *lex orandi*. In our present study, we shall suggest that the law of prayer should coincide with the rubric of celebration. Without this *lex celebrandi*, theology would suffer a serious lacuna. The law of our faith, the law of our life, the law of our prayer should be at the same time the law of our celebration. We do not think, on the other hand, in willy-nilly fashion of just any type of celebration. The particular law or rubric that we have in mind seems to correspond handsomely to the catchphrase *fides quaerens sacramentum*, faith seeking sacrament.

The sacraments belong to the Church in the double sense that they are “by her” and “for her”. They are “by the Church”, for she is the sacrament of Christ’s saving action at work in her through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. They are “for the Church”

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<sup>8</sup> SC 10; 47.

<sup>9</sup> LG 11.

<sup>10</sup> PO 5.

<sup>11</sup> PO 5.

<sup>12</sup> CCC 1327.

in the sense that the sacraments render the Church present as the Bride of Christ, since they manifest and communicate to human beings, above all in the Eucharist, the mystery of communion with the God who by nature is a communion of love, One in Three Persons.<sup>13</sup> Even though we add this fourth style, we hold fast to our ecclesiological principle of interdependence of images, metaphors, paradigms and styles.

A comprehensive ecclesiology ought to incorporate elements from each of these styles. On this, we totally agree with O'Collins when he says: "Christian theology will happily survive and serve the people of God to the extent that it can combine (no longer the three but the four) styles".<sup>14</sup> We need David Tracy (style one), Jon Sobrino (style two), Hans Urs von Balthasar (styles one, two, and three), Kabasele Lumbala (style four), and Pope John Paul II (styles one, two, three, and four). It is obvious that we cannot enclose theologians just in one style. Christianity needs an inclusive way of doing theology which encourages the four styles to "complement and mutually enrich each other"<sup>15</sup>. Jesus Christ should remain the point of departure and the point of arrival, the alpha and the omega of our theological endeavours.

By proposing the *Lex Celebrandi* as the fourth style of doing theology, we would like, actually, to point out our great admiration of the theological plan of *the Catechism of the Catholic Church* which builds its theology on four pillars: the baptismal profession of faith (*lex credendi*); the sacraments of faith (*lex celebrandi*); the life of faith (*lex vivendi*) and the prayer of the believer (*lex orandi*). Being inspired by the way the Catechism has been presented, we presumed that the types of theology proposed by O'Collins, will not be fully complete, unless we add *lex celebrandi* to the other three, *lex orandi*, *lex credendi*, *lex vivendi*. In fact, the theology of *lex celebrandi* aims at explaining how God's salvation, accomplished once for all through Christ Jesus in union with the Holy Spirit, is made present in the sacred actions of the Church's liturgy, especially in the seven sacraments.

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<sup>13</sup> St AUGUSTINE, *De civ. Dei*, 22, 17: PL 41, 779; St THOMAS AQUINAS, *S. Th.* III, 64, 2, ad 33; CCC 1118.

<sup>14</sup> G. O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, 15.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

“The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men, to build up the Body of Christ and, finally, to give worship to God. Because they are signs they also instruct. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and actions they also nourish, strengthen, and express it. That is why they are called ‘sacraments of faith’”.<sup>16</sup> In such a case, “the Church’s faith precedes the faith of the believer who is invited to adhere to it. When the Church celebrates the sacraments, she confesses the faith received from the apostles – whence the ancient saying: “*lex orandi, lex credendi; lex orandi, lex celebrandi*: the Church believes as she prays; the Church celebrates as she prays. Liturgy is a constitutive element of the holy and living Tradition”.<sup>17</sup> For this inner reason no sacramental rite may be modified or manipulated at the will of the minister or the community. Even the supreme authority in the Church may not change the liturgy arbitrarily, but only in the obedience of faith and with religious respect for the mystery of the liturgy.<sup>18</sup>

Liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed.<sup>19</sup> Paramount among the Church’s celebration of the sacramental liturgy is that of the Eucharist, the source and summit of the Christian life.<sup>20</sup> It is obvious, therefore, that liturgy itself becomes the main *locus* of sacramental theology.

The liturgical celebration of the sacraments takes place during the Eucharist. This can easily be explained by the fact that other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself<sup>21</sup>. For this reason, “the Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith: Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the *Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking.*”<sup>22</sup>

The Church of Christ is the Church of the Eucharist. That means the Eucharist makes the Church and the Church makes the

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<sup>16</sup> SC 59.

<sup>17</sup> DV 8; CCC 1124.

<sup>18</sup> CCC 1125.

<sup>19</sup> SC 10.

<sup>20</sup> LG 11.

<sup>21</sup> PO 5.

<sup>22</sup> CCC 1327.

Eucharist. All the sacraments have their full meaning while they are being celebrated during the Eucharist. Typically, *the style* of this theology is largely a matter of celebrating properly the sacraments because each sacrament bears its theological richness. The experience which serves as the point of departure for this way of theologizing is our liturgical experience of a divine action, an action that God accomplishes in the truth of love. This way of theologizing is characterized by God's self-Revelation and the human response to that revelation: Sacraments are truly God addressing the ecclesial assembly and the human, ecclesial answer to God's call. The *focus* is on the sanctification of the human race because the purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men, to build up the Body of Christ and, finally to give worship to God.<sup>23</sup>

Taking into account what we have just said, let us affirm that *liturgy is an action of the Body of Christ in its entirety, i.e., the whole Christ (Christus totus)*. Liturgical services are not private functions but are celebrations of the Church, "the sacrament of unity", the Family of God united and organized under the authority of the bishops.

Therefore, liturgical services pertain to the whole Body of the Church. They touch individual members of the Church in various ways, depending on their state of life, their place within the sacramental order, their role in the liturgical services, and their actual participation in them. For this reason, "rites which are meant to be celebrated in common, with the faithful present and actively participating should as far possible be celebrated in that way rather than by an individual and quasi-privately."<sup>24</sup>

Liturgy is very important for the life of the Church. It makes alive the Church. "It is in the liturgy that the Spirit and the Church enable us to participate whenever we celebrate the mystery of salvation in the sacraments".<sup>25</sup> Therefore, it is the great wish of the Church that all the faithful should be led to take that full, conscious, and active part in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy.<sup>26</sup> Seeing the central role of the Eucharist

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<sup>23</sup> CCC 1123.

<sup>24</sup> CCC 1140.

<sup>25</sup> CCC 1139.

<sup>26</sup> SC 14.

in the life of the Church, Vatican II underlines with force that it is absolutely essential, first of all, that steps be taken to ensure the liturgical training of the clergy.

This point of emphasis is at the backbone of the present essay: the proper formation for the clergy in liturgical services. This should start in the formation houses. That is why Vatican II underlines once more: “The spiritual formation of clerical students in seminaries and religious houses should be given a liturgical orientation. For this they will need a proper initiation, enabling them to understand the sacred rites and participate in them wholeheartedly. They will also need to celebrate the sacred mysteries and popular devotions which are imbued with the spirit of the sacred liturgy. Likewise, they must learn to observe the liturgical laws so that life in seminaries and religious institutes may be thoroughly influenced by the liturgical spirit”<sup>27</sup> Neither personal devotions nor personal feelings will ever take over the place of liturgical services of the Church.

## **6. Fidelity to the Liturgy of the Church<sup>28</sup>**

It is compulsory to entrust the proper liturgical formation to the formators. Communities and their formators should never mix personal devotions with official liturgical services. Students have to know the full and proper meaning of the signs and symbols which compose the liturgical world of the Church. Nothing has to be taken for granted. They have to be taught everything from the easiest to the most difficult signs; from the habitual and ordinary to the more complicated signs and symbols. Whenever one arrives at a certain understanding of the meaning of a sign, one is more prepared to express it properly and respectfully. Nevertheless, liturgy remains a mystery which will one will never completely understand.

The liturgical signs communicate power and grace.<sup>29</sup> For this reason, sacred liturgy is to be ranked among the compulsory and

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<sup>27</sup> SC 17.

<sup>28</sup> J. RATZINGER, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press 2000.

<sup>29</sup> BENOIT XVI, *Le pouvoir des signes*, Paris : Parole et Silence, 2012; Arnauld Join-Lambert, *Guide pour comprendre la Messe*, Paris : Mame, 2002.

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significant courses in seminaries and religious houses of studies. In theological faculties it is to be one of the principal courses. It is to be taught with a conscious concern for its theological, historical, spiritual, priestly, and juridical dimensions. It is to be remembered that those who teach other subjects, especially dogmatic theology, sacred scripture, spiritual and sacerdotal theology, should – while accepting the intrinsic demands of their own disciplines – expound the mystery of Christ and the history of salvation in a manner that will make clear the connection between their subjects and the liturgy, and the unity of all training.<sup>30</sup>

Formators at all levels have to be aware of their delicate task of both giving students the necessary information about the liturgy and then forming students to participate properly in the liturgical services. Being formators or professors has always two dimensions: formative and informative. The two cannot be separated. There is a growing desire in our University to open a dialogue centre for theological and liturgical conferences. Since theology is *fides quaerens intellectum*, we are aware of the positive tension such a centre might create: *Intellege ut credas. Crede ut intellegas*. Whenever this tension ceases, we can no longer talk about theology as science.

As theologians, we have a twofold task. Our first task is to raise challenging questions so that people may enter into themselves and think about the essence of their beliefs, the meaning of the signs, symbols, rites and gestures they are making, the importance of sacraments in their lives and the moral implications of everything they do or decide to do. Meanwhile, our second task is to try to give answers to those who seek understanding as Saint Paul urges us to do: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15).

Theology can only be done in living community with the Church. The Church's faith precedes one's personal faith. While developing their discipline critically and systematically, theologians should do so starting from their faith, guided by their faith and with the aim to enhance their faith. In short, thinks St. Athanasius, one cannot do theology without a pure heart and a morally upright lifestyle (*De Incarnatione*, Conclusion). Borrowing

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<sup>30</sup> SC 15.

from Athanasius, Gerald O'Collins expresses the same idea by affirming that theology needs to be faithful as well as rational.<sup>31</sup>

There is no greater school of liturgy than the Eucharist. The real presence of Jesus, the Word of God, in the Eucharist is the greatest text for theology. Therefore, every liturgical service originates from this great mystery and returns to it. In this sense, every single sign, symbol, rite, and gesture – as small as it may be – has its theological meaning and import. Each exists for and by the Church because each originates from her. The following statement from Vatican II should be the guideline of all involved in the formation of seminarians, formators, professors and educators: “No sacramental rite may be modified or manipulated at the will of the minister or the community. Even the supreme authority in the Church may not change the liturgy arbitrarily, but only in the obedience of faith and with religious respect for the mystery of the liturgy”.<sup>32</sup>

People who have dared to change the liturgical services used to say, for instance, these are just small things of no great importance and hence do not interfere with the mainstream current of the liturgy. They forget that the Eucharist liturgy is at all moments an intricate fabric of words and actions. Each single thread has its importance in the fabric; thus the other threads depend on it.

All the liturgical services are developed on the principle of inclusivity and not of exclusivity. Whatever changes we make on our own harm the whole fabric of the liturgy. One has to realize that the liturgy is not our personal possession; rather it is the liturgy of Christ, who has entrusted it to his Bride, the Church.

In liturgy, it is important to recall the principle of Saint Augustine: “Small things are small, but being faithful in these small things is a great thing”. Liturgy requires from us strict respect and uncompromising fidelity. Otherwise, we are destroying the essential of the essentials. It is in the liturgy that the true encounter between God and the human being occurs.

Let us just consider some examples: How does one make the Sign of the Cross properly? How many times do we strike our

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<sup>31</sup> G. O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology*, New York/Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1981, 6.

<sup>32</sup> CCC 1125.

breast during the Eucharist? At the "Agnus Dei", do we strike our breast – is this optional or mandatory?

Regarding the topic of this present essay: can a deacon bless? Yes. Can a deacon bless an assembly where either the bishop or the priest is present? No. In fact, the celebration of the liturgy is a world of signs and symbols. "As a being at once body and spirit, man expresses and perceives spiritual realities through physical signs and symbols. As a social being, man needs signs and symbols to communicate with others, through language, gestures, and actions. The same holds true for his relationships. That is why God speaks to man also through the visible creation".<sup>33</sup> Liturgy is a world of signs and symbols and thus a world of beauty. Beauty leads us to contemplate its origins. For this reason, we dream of the purity of the liturgy.

We believe in the central role of liturgy for the life of the Church. Liturgy indeed is a constitutive element of the holy and living Tradition.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, it bears repeating that no sacramental rite may be modified or manipulated at the will of the minister or the community.<sup>35</sup>

Having offered some general remarks on the liturgy that anchors the liturgy in the heart of the Church, the present study focuses more specifically on the question: what can a deacon do? Can a deacon bless? The first question invites us to investigate the Code of Canon Law (*Codex Iuris Canonici* [CIC]).<sup>36</sup>

## 7. What May a Deacon Do or Not Do?

First and foremost, it is important to realize that a deacon is a cleric.<sup>37</sup> This is true whether he is a permanent deacon, or

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<sup>33</sup> CCC 1145-1148.

<sup>34</sup> DV 8; CCC 1124.

<sup>35</sup> CCC 1124.

<sup>36</sup> *Code of Canon Law*

<sup>37</sup> CIC 266§1. By the reception of the diaconate a person becomes a cleric, and is incardinated in the particular Church or personal Prelature for whose service he is ordained. §2. A member who is perpetually professed in a religious institute, or who is definitively incorporated into a clerical society of apostolic life, is by the reception of the diaconate incardinated as a cleric in that institute or society unless, in the case of a society, the constitutions determine otherwise. §3. A member of a secular institute is by the reception of the diaconate incardinated into the particular Church for whose service he

a transitional deacon, i.e., a seminarian who is preparing eventually to be ordained a priest. It is worth mentioning that the word “transitional” may be misleading because even if one is a priest, a bishop, or the Pope he remains a deacon forever.

Becoming a deacon is not comparable to becoming an altar-server or a lector. People who agree to assume these latter two roles may sometimes be “commissioned” in some sort of ceremony in church, but a deacon must actually be ordained by a bishop! An altar-server or lector might later relinquish his responsibilities, but once a man becomes a deacon, there is no going back to the lay state. Ordination brings with it an ontological change in the person, which cannot be undone.

If he is a transitional deacon, who will ultimately be ordained a priest, he normally returns to his studies at the seminary after his diaconal ordination. If he is a permanent deacon, he is bound to minister where the diocesan bishop assigns him, most commonly in a parish, assisting the priest in ministering to the parishioners.

On a purely practical level, the average lay Catholic will notice that a deacon does many—but not all!—of the same things a priest can do. This is because some sacramental/ministerial actions are within the purview of all clerics, while others specifically require priestly ordination. Let’s look at the sacraments one by one, in the order in which they are addressed in the Code of Canon Law, and see which actions a deacon has the ability to perform:

1. **Baptism.** Anybody can baptize, as ordination is not required for the valid conferral of this sacrament. It goes without saying, then, that a deacon can baptize, too!

In a non-emergency situation, however, a deacon is not simply an extraordinary minister of a sacrament administered validly:<sup>38</sup> The pertinent canon notes that he is indeed an ordinary minister of baptism, just as is a priest or bishop. What does the term *ordinary minister* mean here? Since a deacon is a cleric, administering the sacrament of baptism is an action that is proper to him. In other words, a lay-person should only be administering baptism in extraordinary situations (when an anabaptized person is dying, or

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was ordained, unless by virtue of a concession of the Apostolic See he is incarnated into the institute itself.

<sup>38</sup> CIC 861§1.

perhaps in some war-torn region where there are no clergy available to do it); but a deacon lawfully baptizes in ordinary, non-emergency circumstances, just like any other member of the clergy. Thus if (for example) a permanent deacon baptizes a baby in his parish, with the knowledge and approval of the priest, he does so both validly and licitly.

2. **Holy Eucharist.** The average Catholic understands that a deacon cannot celebrate Mass because he is unable to consecrate the bread and wine and hence transubstantiate them into the Body and Blood of Christ. In fact there is a canon<sup>39</sup> that states lucidly that the only minister who can do this is a validly ordained priest. This is reinforced by canon 907, which notes that at Mass, neither deacons nor the laity are permitted either to say those prayers (particularly the Eucharistic prayer) or to perform those actions which are proper to the celebrating priest. Deacons read the Gospel and invite the faithful to offer each other the sign of peace. They may perform the rite of dismissal. Besides the two moments, he may read the prayer of the faithful introduced by the priest. In other words, if the priest is present, he is the one to say the opening and the closing prayer of the faithful.

But with regard to the distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful, canon 910§1 states that the ordinary minister of this sacrament is a bishop, priest, or deacon. As we just saw above with regard to baptism, the term *ordinary minister* means that this person may confer this sacrament under typical, non-emergency circumstances. The laity are allowed to distribute the Eucharist too, but only in situations that are outside the norm—which is why such persons are properly termed *extraordinary ministers* of the Eucharist.<sup>40</sup>

3. **Confirmation.** Once again, the term *ordinary minister* is used with regard to the one who confers this sacrament. Canon 882 asserts that the ordinary minister of confirmation is a bishop. But a priest can also administer confirmation by law, when he baptizes an adult, or receives an already baptized adult into the Catholic Church, when a baptized Catholic is in danger of death, and in extraordinary circumstances where the Bishop may give him the

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<sup>39</sup> CIC 900§1.

<sup>40</sup> CIC 910§2.

general faculty to confirm (for example, in a country with very few bishops).<sup>41</sup> A deacon, however, cannot administer the sacrament of confirmation under any circumstance—if he were to attempt to do so, the confirmation would be invalid.

4. **Penance.** The law regarding this sacrament is unequivocal: only a priest can administer the sacrament of penance.<sup>42</sup> There are no circumstances under which a deacon can hear a confession! Note that it is quite possible for a deacon to counsel a person pastorally; but if, in the course of that counselling, that person decides that he wants to confess his sins, the deacon will have to get a priest to do this.

5. **Holy Orders.** There is no surprise here: only a bishop can confer the sacrament of ordination.<sup>43</sup> Since even a priest isn't able to ordain, it follows logically that a deacon cannot do so either.

6. **Anointing of the Sick.** The Code specifically notes that only a priest can validly administer the anointing of the sick. If a person is gravely ill, a deacon might very well pay a pastoral visit to him and his family; but a deacon cannot actually anoint anyone.<sup>44</sup>

7. **Marriage.** Catholics who wish to marry are bound to observe the *canonical form* for marriage. Among other things, this means that the wedding must be celebrated in the presence of either the bishop, or the priest of the parish, or a priest or deacon delegated by either of them.<sup>45</sup> It follows, then, that a deacon can validly officiate at a Catholic marriage ceremony, so long as he has been delegated to do so by the parish priest.

## 8. Can a Deacon Bless?

### 8.1 Theology of the Blessing<sup>46</sup>

Before going in depth on this question, we find it essential to talk briefly on the theology of the blessing. We shall do so by

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<sup>41</sup> *CIC* 883§2&§3.

<sup>42</sup> *CIC* 965.

<sup>43</sup> *CIC* 1012.

<sup>44</sup> *CIC* 1003§1.

<sup>45</sup> *CIC* 1108§1.

<sup>46</sup> The celebration of blessings holds a privileged place among all the sacramentals created by the Church for the pastoral benefit of the people of God. By celebrating a blessing the faithful can also sanctify various situations and events in their lives.

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referring to the first reading of the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January.

The Lord spoke to Moses and said, "Say this to Aaron and his sons: "This is how you are to bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them: "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord let his face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord uncover his face to you and bring you peace". This is how they are to call down my name on the sons of Israel, and I will bless them" (Num 6:22-27).

The General Introduction to the *Book of Blessings*<sup>47</sup> provides us with a beautiful commentary: "The source from whom every good gift comes is God, who is above all, blessed forever. He who is all good has made all things good, so that he might fill his creatures with blessings and even after the Fall he has continued his blessings as a sign of his merciful love".

It continues:

Christ, the Father's supreme blessing upon us, is portrayed in the gospel as blessing those he encountered, especially the children, and as offering to his Father prayers of blessing". That means "in Christ the blessing of God upon Abraham has reached its complete fulfilment".<sup>48</sup> Whether God blessed the people himself or through the ministry of those who acted in his name (patriarchs, kings, priests, Levites, and parents), his blessing was always a promise of divine help, a proclamation of his favor, a reassurance of his faithfulness to the covenant he had made with his people.<sup>49</sup> In a word, God bestows his blessing by communicating or declaring his own goodness; his ministers bless God by praising him and thanking him and by offering him their referent worship and service". Therefore, "whoever blesses others in God's name invokes the divine help upon individuals or upon an assembled people."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *Book of Blessings*, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press Collegeville, 1989. This is the English translation of the Latin *De Benedictionibus* (1984). In this book, there is a *General Introduction (GI)* on the theology of Blessings to which we are going to refer (for instance: *GI 1*). *Shorter Book of Blessings*, New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1990.

<sup>48</sup> *GI 4*.

<sup>49</sup> *GI 6*.

<sup>50</sup> *GI 6*.

As the universal sacrament of salvation, the Church continues the work of sanctifying and in the Holy Spirit joins herself to Christ her Spouse in giving glory to the Father.<sup>51</sup> The Church profoundly exhorts the faithful to ensure that the celebration of blessings truly contribute to God's praise and glory and serve to better God's people. In order that this intent of the Church might stand out more clearly, blessing formularies have, from age-old tradition, centred above all on glorifying God for his gifts, on imploring favours from him, and on restraining the power of evil in this world.<sup>52</sup>

The celebration of a blessing prepares us to receive the chief effects of the sacraments and makes holy the various situations of human life.<sup>53</sup> When through the Church we ask for God's blessing, we should intensify our personal dispositions through faith, for which all things are possible. Then seeking what is pleasing to God, we will fully appreciate his blessing and will surely receive it.<sup>54</sup> In a word, blessings refer first and foremost to God, whose majesty and goodness they extol, and since they indicate the communication of God's favour, they also involve human beings, whom he governs, in his providence protects, and in his love sanctifies. Further, blessings may engage other creatures through which, in their abundance and variety, God blesses human beings.<sup>55</sup>

## 8.2 Offices and Ministries

Having said this, let us bring into our perspective the offices and ministries pertaining to blessings as the official document of the Church states: "Blessings are a part of the liturgy of the Church. Therefore their communal celebration is in some cases obligatory but in all cases more in accord with the character of liturgical prayer."<sup>56</sup>

For the more important blessings that concern the local church, it is fitting that the diocesan or parish community assemble, with the bishop or priest (parish priest) presiding, to celebrate the

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<sup>51</sup> *GI* 8.

<sup>52</sup> *GI* 11.

<sup>53</sup> *GI* 14.

<sup>54</sup> *GI* 15.

<sup>55</sup> *GI* 7.

<sup>56</sup> *GI* 16.

blessing.<sup>57</sup> The ministry of blessing involves a particular exercise of the priesthood of Christ and, in keeping with the place and office within the people of God belonging to each person, the exercise of this ministry is determined in the following manner:<sup>58</sup>

- It belongs to the ministry of the bishop to preside at celebrations that involve the entire diocesan community and that are carried out with special solemnity and with a large attendance of the faithful. The bishop, accordingly, may reserve certain celebrations to himself, particularly those celebrated with special solemnity.<sup>59</sup>
- It belongs to the ministry of a presbyter or priest, in keeping with the nature of his service to the people of God, to preside at those blessings especially that involve the community he is appointed to serve.<sup>60</sup> Priests therefore may preside at the celebration of all the blessings in this book,<sup>61</sup> unless a bishop is present as presider.
- It belongs to the ministry of a deacon to preside at those blessings that are so indicated in place in this book, because, as the minister of the altar, of the word, and of charity, the deacon is the assistant of the bishop and the college of presbyters. But whenever a priest is present, it is more fitting that the office of presiding be assigned to him and that of the deacon to assist by carrying out those functions proper to the diaconate.<sup>62</sup>

At this level, one may cite *Lumen Gentium* and take note that blessings given by the deacon have been extended by the Second Vatican Council: "It pertains to the office of a deacon, in so far as it may be assigned to him by competent authority, to administer Baptism solemnly, to be custodian and distributor of the Eucharist, in the name of the Church to assist and to bless marriages, to bring

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<sup>57</sup> *GI* 16.

<sup>58</sup> *GI* 18.

<sup>59</sup> *SC* 79.

<sup>60</sup> *CIC* 530.

<sup>61</sup> *Book of Blessings*, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press Collegeville, 1989. This is the English translation book of the Latin *De Benedictionibus* (1984). *Shorter Book of Blessings*, New York: Catholic Book Publishing, 1990.

<sup>62</sup> Let us have a look to Vatican II: "It pertains to the office of a deacon, in so far as it may be assigned to him by competent authority

Viaticum to the dying ... to administer sacramentals, and to officiate at funeral and burial services".<sup>63</sup> It is true that they have been extended; but the underlined words are mostly important. Whatever a deacon does should have permission from a competent authority. He cannot do anything on his own especially when bishops and priests are present.<sup>64</sup>

Taking in mind this clarification, some distinctions should be made. Although the deacon is an ordained minister, he is of a lower grade than a priest<sup>65</sup> and therefore he should not preside over the community if a priest is present.

Therefore in normal cases if a priest is present and available, a deacon may not give a blessing, and even less so Benediction.

He may do so if the priest is legitimately impeded, for example, if the priest were hearing confessions during exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and could not leave the confessional to impart Benediction. "And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. He blessed Abraham" (Gen 14:18).

In those cases where the deacon legitimately imparts Benediction, either because there is no priest or the priest is impeded, he may also recite or sing the same prayers as the priest.

During Mass, the deacon's work is to assist the priest. He reads the Gospel after having received a blessing from the bishop or the priest. He may also preach if the main celebrant allows him! Then he invites the faithful before the *Agnus Dei* to offer each other the sign of peace. Finally, he sends away the assembly at the end of the Eucharistic Celebration: *Ite, Missa est* or Go forth, the Mass is ended". It is only during these moments that a deacon is allowed to speak out or to acclaim or to proclaim. He may also read, but not lead, the prayers of the faithful. The opening and closing prayers of the prayers of the faithful are recited by the priest, i.e., the main celebrant, and not by the deacon. It is the priest and only the priest who is the main celebrant that is acting in *persona Christi* at that

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<sup>63</sup> LG 29.

<sup>64</sup> GI 18.

<sup>65</sup> LG 29.

particular moment.<sup>66</sup> He is the one allowed to collect the prayers of the faithful and offer them to God. The Eucharist is not a kind of drama wherein roles can be interchanged between the main celebrant and the deacon.

The deacon is not allowed, after the Institution Narrative and Consecration, to introduce the Memorial Acclamation: "The Mystery of Faith". It is the duty of the main celebrant to act in *persona Christi* who must solemnly acclaim it. This role is clearly indicated in the rubrics.

The deacon should usually kneel for the consecration, silently hold up the chalice (not the paten) for the doxology, and should always receive Communion from the priest and not self-communicate after the main celebrant has consumed both the Body and the Blood of Christ. In a word, the clergy have moral and spiritual responsibilities to explicate and defend the mysteries of the Church. They have to know that their personal devotions have no authoritative clout over the liturgical services. On this matter, it is important to remind the clergy that "no sacramental rite may be modified or manipulated at the will of the minister or the community. Even the supreme authority in the Church may not change the liturgy arbitrarily, but only in the obedience of faith and with religious respect for the mystery of the liturgy".<sup>67</sup>

Special permission or dispensation from the bishop (who is unlikely to dispense from basic liturgical law for no reason) is usually not what occasions liturgical errors. Many errors are more often due to bad habits and imperfect liturgical formation on the part of the liturgical ministers. The person responsible for correcting them is the priest, the priest celebrant, or even the bishop if the local priest is unwilling.

When a deacon is ordained he promises the bishop and the Church that he is willing to carry out the diaconal service with humility and love as a co-operator of the priestly order and for the

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<sup>66</sup> As for the opening and closing prayers, the main celebrant invites the faithful to pray by saying: "Let us pray". And all pray in silence with the priest for a moment. Then the Priest says the Collect prayer. The same theology is at work here: the priest acts *persona Christi*.

<sup>67</sup> CCC 1125.

good of the Christian people. If he lives up to his promise, then he will gladly correct any errors that might have crept in.

### 8.3 Benediction with Monstrance

The deacon, whether permanent or transitional, may give the blessings contained in the sacramental rites or the Book of Blessings. For instance, deacons have the power to impart many (but not all) types of blessings, in accord with the liturgical books.<sup>68</sup> When a deacon is an ordinary minister for the exposition of the Eucharist, he may bless the people with the Sacrament. He may also preside at the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours and bestow its concluding blessing.<sup>69</sup> But whenever a priest is present, it is more fitting that the office of presiding be assigned to him and that of the deacon would then be to assist by carrying out those functions proper to the diaconate.<sup>70</sup>

### Conclusion

At this point, it is our mission to recall the sense of theology according to Saint Anselm: *Fides quaerens intellectum*. Faith seeking understanding could be done in the library; but for us the best locus of this exercise is during the liturgy because liturgy is the summit of the whole Christian life, especially during the Eucharist, which is actually for us the sacrament of the sacraments, the essential of the essentials. In a word, the real presence of Jesus, the Word of God, in the Eucharist is the bestseller book of theology. That is why we need to open up both our external and internal hearts if we do not want to miss the core of our faith who is Christ. We are convinced that the present crisis in the Church is not so much either ethical or theological; rather it is liturgical. Show me your liturgy, I will tell you the kind of theology you are dealing with. In other words, “like liturgy, like theology”.

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<sup>68</sup> CIC 1169§1.

<sup>69</sup> CIC 943.

<sup>70</sup> *Blessings in the Bible*, in *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Second Edition) vol. 2, Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 2002, 437-440.

# **The Patent Protection Regime as an Impediment to Protecting Traditional Knowledge**

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## **Abstract**

This paper presents the impediments posed by the patent protection regime against protecting traditional knowledge. It argues that the failure of traditional knowledge-based medicine to meet the requirements of patentability subject it to non-protection. The denial of protection opens the gate for bio-piracy by third parties who steal the traditional knowledge and readily utilize it without any intention of giving fair and adequate compensation or equal benefits to the traditional knowledge holders. The paper suggests an effective mechanism to protect traditional knowledge and thus enable traditional knowledge holders to receive just treatment in terms of compensation or equal benefits from those who utilize the knowledge they have stolen.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Patent as an Intellectual Property Right**

A patent is an intellectual property right granted to the owner of an invention. The patent protection regime gives a person an absolute right to exploit the invention for a specified period. The provision of this right encourages individuals by recognizing their creativity and offering the possibility of material reward for their marketable inventions.<sup>1</sup> Such recognition encourages innovation

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<sup>1</sup> WIPO, “What is Intellectual Property?” available at [http://www.wipo.int/export/sites/www/freepublications/en/intproperty/450/wipo\\_pub\\_450.pdf](http://www.wipo.int/export/sites/www/freepublications/en/intproperty/450/wipo_pub_450.pdf), accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

and promotes competition which in turn enhances the quality of human life.<sup>2</sup> The patented invention can either be a product or process which gives a solution to a specific problem in the field of technology.

The owner of the patented invention is vested with the exclusive right of restricting third parties from selling, making, using or offering for sale his or her invention without his or her consent for a protected period of twenty years.<sup>3</sup> Subject to the renewal fees, the owner's exclusive right comes to an end once the protected period of twenty years is over. This means that the owner's invention will be legally available to the public domain for commercial exploitation by third parties.

The patent protection regime is available for all new inventions in all fields of technology. They involve an inventive step not yet reported as a discovery or invention in the public forum and are capable of industrial application.<sup>4</sup> Such protection is available without any discrimination in terms of the place of the produced invention. Patent rights are usually granted by a national patent office or by the regional office after examining the invention to determine whether it qualifies for a patent in a relevant jurisdiction.

The applicant is obliged to file the patent application and to disclose the technical information of the invention in question and the best modes in which such information may be used by a person skilled in the art to which the invention relates.<sup>5</sup> Such technical information and the modes to be used are disclosed by the inventor at the filing date in the place where the priority is claimed.<sup>6</sup> The inventor's information may be accompanied by visual materials, drawings, plans or diagrams that describe the invention in greater detail.<sup>7</sup> An inventor is required to disclose technical information to the public. Such information intends to enable other inventors to make improvements on the existing invention and thereby promote

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<sup>2</sup> WIPO, "What is Intellectual Property?" *loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> See article 28 and 33 of the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPS Agreement)

<sup>4</sup> See TRIPS Agreement, article 27.1.

<sup>5</sup> See article 29 of the TRIPS Agreement.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. article 29 of the TRIPS Agreement

<sup>7</sup> WIPO, "What is Intellectual Property?", fn. 1.

the progress of science and technology.<sup>8</sup> The information disclosed will also help to determine whether the claimed invention is in fact new.<sup>9</sup>

## 1.2 Patent Protection Regime and Traditional Knowledge

Traditional knowledge (TK) refers to tradition-based literary, artistic or scientific works that include performances, inventions, scientific discoveries, designs, marks, names and symbols, undisclosed information, and all other tradition-based innovations and creations resulting from intellectual activity in the industrial, scientific, literary or artistic fields.<sup>10</sup> This knowledge may be created, developed, or practiced in a traditional setting or it may originate in the traditional milieu under the auspices of the indigenous communities. Therefore, these indigenous communities are the holders of the knowledge in tandem with the nature of their environment.

Various scholars regard TK as the knowledge of indigenous people thus using the terms TK holders and indigenous people interchangeably. This implies that indigenous knowledge is traditional knowledge, but traditional knowledge is not necessarily indigenous.<sup>11</sup> Indigenous people are defined by the International Labour Organization Convention 169 Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, article 1.1b, to mean those people in Independent Countries who may be regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or lived in a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time

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<sup>8</sup> M. Ruiz, *The International Debate on Traditional Knowledge as Prior Art in the Patent System: Issues and Options for Developing Countries*, Center for International Environmental Law, South Centre, 2002, 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> WIPO *Report on Fact-Finding Mission of Intellectual Property and Traditional Knowledge (1998-9), Intellectual Property Needs and Expectation of Traditional Knowledge Holders*, WIPO Publication No. 768, Geneva, April 2001, 27.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. J. Mugabe, *Intellectual Property Protection and Traditional Knowledge: An Exploration and International Policy Discourse*, African Centre for Technology Studies, Nairobi, Kenya, 1998

of conquest or colonization or at the time of the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.

Ragavan views indigenous people, their traditional knowledge and their particular traits in what they do with that knowledge as follows:

- a) People who live in small societies and may not have access to formal education may be indigenous people who are unaware of the worth of the knowledge they possess and are found more often in developing and underdeveloped countries where there is a concentration of ethnocentric societies.
- b) Indigenous people may be people whose knowledge is presumed to be known to the entire community and remains exclusively within it.
- c) Occasionally, indigenous people constitute a community of people whose knowledge of a special skill or art is limited to only a few members of the community.
- d) Indigenous people may be those whose knowledge and its components are normally required for a regular lifestyle within the society. It is passed down through generations while still retaining its original specificity.
- e) Indigenous people may be those whose knowledge is accessible in a certain art or literary form, such as pictorial art, music, or folklore, and can be developed into other forms more understandable to the rest of the world. However, these informal innovations do not get formal recognition.
- f) Indigenous people often believe that intellectual property law is neither a necessary, nor a desirable, means of encouraging innovation within their communities. As a consequence, they are sometimes easily willing to share this knowledge without acquisition of benefit in return. Their mindset about intellectual property law easily leads to exploitation.<sup>12</sup>

The issue of patentability arises with respect to the body of knowledge corresponding to traditional medicine.<sup>13</sup> Traditional

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<sup>12</sup> See S. Ragavan, "Protection of Traditional Knowledge", *Minnesota Intellectual Property Review* 2/2 (2001) 4-5.

<sup>13</sup> See S. Ragavan, "Protection of Traditional Knowledge", 8.

medicine refers to the knowledge, skills and practices that are based on the theories, beliefs and experiences of indigenous culture. Such knowledge is used in the maintenance of health, prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illnesses.<sup>14</sup> The knowledge, skills, practices and beliefs that are used to prevent the illness or maintain the health of individuals incorporates plants, animals, mineral-based medicine, spiritual therapies and manual techniques.<sup>15</sup>

An example of plant materials that are used for curing illness are leaves, flowers, fruits, seeds, wood, bark and roots.<sup>16</sup> The said plants, which are either fresh or dry, are required to be entirely fragmented or powdered by brewing, boiling, grinding or heating in beverages, honey, tea, water, oil or other materials for them to be applied as medicaments upon a particular condition.<sup>17</sup> The practice and application of such medicament is presumed to be inherited from generation to generation. It is unique and known to the relevant community and cannot be found elsewhere.

Traditional medicines reinvigorate the health of people in various countries. Due to their affordability, traditional medicines have regained popularity in developing countries as well as in industrialized countries. They can be used for treating various infectious and chronic illnesses. Countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America use traditional medicines to help meet some of their primary health care needs. In Africa, up to 80% of the population uses traditional medicines for primary health care.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See WIPO, “Intellectual Property and Traditional Medical knowledge”, Background brief No. 6, available at [http://www.wipo.int/export/sites/www/tk/en/resources/pdf/tk\\_brief6.pdf](http://www.wipo.int/export/sites/www/tk/en/resources/pdf/tk_brief6.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> M.E. Hossein, “Traditional Medicines and the Requirement of Patentability: Do they have a Technical Character? The European Approach”, *IPEDR* 17 (2011) 305-309.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> See C.M. Correa, “Protection and Promotion of Traditional Medicine: Implications for Public Health in Developing Countries”, Switzerland: South Centre, 2002; available at [apps.who.int/medicinedocs/pdf/s4917e/s4917e.pdf](http://apps.who.int/medicinedocs/pdf/s4917e/s4917e.pdf), accessed on 19<sup>th</sup> July, 2014 and World Health Organization, Traditional Medicine, WHO Fact Sheet No. 134. Geneva: WHO, revised 2003, available

Traditional medicines are presumed to be the product of nature. Therefore they are excluded from patentability.<sup>19</sup> Traditional medicines are medicines derived from natural forms of plants, animals or mineral-based medicines. They are made manually without any involvement of chemical process for their production. Because they are the products of nature, traditional medicines are not invented by any one. They exist naturally; hence they are accessible so that everyone in that particular community may freely use them. These features impede the patentability of traditional medicines because in themselves they are not the product of human inventiveness; rather, they are products of nature.

## **2. How the Patent Protection Regime Impedes the Protection of Traditional Medicine**

For a product or process to qualify for patentability, it must meet the requirements of novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability. Traditional medicines as the product of nature do not possess the patentability requirement. The reasons for this are as follows:

### **2.1 Novelty**

An invention is required to be new, i.e., novel, to qualify for patentability. An invention is presumed to be new if it is not publicly known anywhere in the world or has not been accessed by any one at any time before the filing of patent application. It must not be known or used by other inventors wherever they may be. Upon comparison with an existing invention, a new invention must be capable of contributing new technical information to the existing one in a unique and distinguishable manner. The new invention must not resemble the prior art or earlier invention; nor

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at [http://www.who.int/media\\_centre/factsheets/2003/fs134/en/](http://www.who.int/media_centre/factsheets/2003/fs134/en/), accessed on 21st April, 2014.

<sup>19</sup> Article 27.3(b) of the TRIPS Agreement.

must it be an attempt to make improvements that are publically already known.<sup>20</sup> It must go beyond all pre-existing knowledge.<sup>21</sup>

The novelty requirement of the patent protection regime hinders all attempts to protect traditional medicines. This is due to the fact that traditional medicines are medicines that indeed are publically known, freely accessible to all people and used within the community. They are presumed to be quite old since they have been within the society for centuries. Everything that has been part and parcel of the public domain either by written or oral disclosure is considered to be prior art, and therefore presumed not to be a new invention.

## 2.2 Inventive Steps

The patent protection regime grants a monopoly to an inventor who has used his or her knowledge and skills to produce a product or process which is new and involves an inventive step.<sup>22</sup> An invention is presumed to involve an inventive step if it is not obvious to a person skilled in the pertinent art on the date of filing the application or if priority is claimed. That is why, at the time when she or he submits the application, the inventor is obliged to disclose the technical information of his or her invention which is presumed to be new. The technical information is disclosed in order to be used by a person skilled in the art to which the invention relates to test its obviousness. If the invention in question is obvious to the person skilled in that art, it will not qualify for patenting. Therefore an invention must involve an inventive step in making an improvement which is regarded as non-obvious. Again, an inventive step in an invention must identify the particular problem in a field of technology that it intends to address and offer a precise solution for it.

The requirement of inventive step impedes the patentability of traditional medicine from the viewpoint of the existing patent protection regime. The traditional medicines do not qualify to be

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<sup>20</sup> See the case of *General Tire and Rubber Company v. Firestone Tire and Rubber Company* (1972) RPC457

<sup>21</sup> See the case of *Wind Surfing International Inc. v. Tabur Marine* (GB) Ltd (1985) RPC 59.

<sup>22</sup> M. Ruiz, *The International Debate*, 4.

protected because they are presumed to be obvious within the society that has used it for a long time as their inheritance from one generation to the next. Their inventions are regarded as coherent with already existing knowledge that is obvious within a particular community.

### **2.3 Industrial Applicability**

The absence of applicability to industry disqualifies an invention from patentability. An invention is disqualified when it fails to meet the market demand, and thereby hurts the public interest.<sup>23</sup> An invention is capable of industrial applicability if it is capable of being made or used in a technological sense in any kind of industry. That being the case, an inventor is obliged to disclose any useful purpose that his or her invention serves. An inventor is required to show how his or her invention will facilitate the development of science and technology in correspondence to the objectives of the patent protection regime.

Traditional medicines fail to meet the industrial applicability requirement and, thus, do not qualify for patentability. It is worth repeating that traditional medicines are regarded to be the product of nature. They are neither technological nor produced through a technological process.<sup>24</sup> Traditional medicines are nature's creations; no chemical process has been used for their production. This means that they do not meet the standard of human intervention and thus fail to become inventions that qualify for patentability. Traditional knowledge holders use their traditional medicines such as plants in their natural state. They produce their medicines through simple and conventional methods that do not add anything to the natural product, such as drying, boiling, powdering or brewing<sup>25</sup> without involvement of any technological process. The simple and conventional methods that are used to produce traditional medicines do not change the essential nature of the plant and hence cannot be construed to be inventions.

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<sup>23</sup> See *Association for Molecular Pathology et al v. Myriad Genetics Inc.* et al, US 12-398, 13.

<sup>24</sup> See M.E. Hossein, "Traditional Medicines", 305.

<sup>25</sup> Traditional Methods and the Requirement of Patentability, p. 307.

Apart from the above requirements, patent protection is only available for private property.<sup>26</sup> An intellectual property right recognizes private property as an exclusive right granted to an identified person, be it a natural or juridical person. The identified person must come up with a new invention. The traditional knowledge holders own communally their traditional knowledge-based medicines as the symbol of their culture. Communal ownership of the knowledge signifies communal identity and survivorship. The traditional knowledge-based medicines are inherited from one generation to the next. That being the case, it is difficult to identify individual ownership for protection qualification.

### **3. The Absence of Protection as a Stimulus to Bio-Piracy<sup>27</sup>**

The failure of meeting the requirement of patentability exposes the traditional medicines to the perils of non-protection. The denial of protection has opened up space for pharmaceutical companies in technologically advanced countries to misappropriate the traditional knowledge-based medicine by isolating, purifying and then altering the plants’ active substances in a way that does not occur in nature.<sup>28</sup> The pharmaceutical companies use their modern

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<sup>26</sup> The preamble of TRIPS Agreement recognizes all intellectual property rights as a private right.

<sup>27</sup> Bio-piracy can be described as a grant of false patents to inventions that are neither novel nor inventive having regard to TK already in public domain. Such patents may be granted due to lack of documentation or recognition of TK as a prior art. It is a misappropriation of genetic resources or related traditional knowledge by means of a fraudulent patent system. It is the exploitation of resources of a community which lacks development. Such misappropriation allows the theft of creativity and innovation and hence establishing exclusive rights on stolen knowledge. This situation leads to the continuity of stealing economic options of everyday survival of indigenous communities on the basis of their common knowledge. This is due to the fact; indigenous people never get the equal benefit resulting from the utilization of their knowledge. See M. Hirwade – A. Hirwade, “Traditional Knowledge Protection: An Indian Prospective”, *DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology*, 32/3 (2012) 240-248.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

technology to transform traditional medicines into modern medicines. Later they patent their inventions despite the fact that the invention created is not novel. The misappropriation<sup>29</sup> of traditional knowledge by these pharmaceutical companies is done without the provision of fair and adequate compensation or equal benefits to the traditional knowledge holders who have been maintaining their traditional knowledge for centuries.

Once the third parties have established the exclusive rights on stolen knowledge, they bar the traditional knowledge holders from using their biological resources and associated traditional knowledge,<sup>30</sup> despite the fact that they have developed, maintained and preserved as their cultural heritage for centuries. The daily misappropriation of traditional knowledge-based creativity and innovation is nothing other than the stealing of economic capabilities and options from the indigenous people, and thereby prevents them from making any economic progress based on their knowledge. No one makes the offer or the suggestion that the traditional knowledge holders receive fair and adequate compensation and equal benefits from those who are utilizing the traditional knowledge. Meanwhile they lose access to their biological resources and traditional knowledge since their usage is forbidden. Both the resources and the knowledge are liable to be destroyed or lost forever.

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<sup>29</sup> TK will be presumed to be misappropriated not only when the knowledge is obtained by the third party through theft, coercion or fraud. It also involves the provision of misleading information when trying to acquire prior informed consent, unjust enrichment or provision of unfair compensation to TK holders for utilization of their knowledge. See WIPO (2004) "Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore, Protection of Traditional Knowledge: Overview of Policy Objectives and Core Principles, at 5, 7<sup>th</sup> Session", WIPO/GRTKF/IC/7/5 available at [http://www.wipo.int/edocs/mdocs/tk/en/wipo\\_grtkf\\_ic\\_7/wipo\\_grtkf\\_ic\\_7\\_5.pdf](http://www.wipo.int/edocs/mdocs/tk/en/wipo_grtkf_ic_7/wipo_grtkf_ic_7_5.pdf), accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2014.

<sup>30</sup> Suvarna Pandey Patent Attorney S Majundar & Co. Bio piracy Related to Traditional Knowledge and Patenting Issues, available at <http://www.birac.nic.in/webcontent/dib.pdf>, accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2014.

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Various cases concerning bio-piracy have been reported.<sup>31</sup> Examples of these cases are as explained below.

### 3.1 Neem Patent

Indian people used Neem seed trees for centuries to treat fungal diseases that attack agricultural crops. In 1994, the European Patent Office granted a patent to the United State Corporation W. R. Grace Company and United State Department of Agriculture for a method to prevent the growth of fungi on plants by the aid of hydrophobic Neem oil.<sup>32</sup> The Indians objected to the granting of the patent on the ground that the fungicidal properties of Neem seed trees were publicly known and used for centuries to protect crops from being attacked by fungal disease before even the patent application. Therefore, there were no grounds for granting a patent to the method because it was neither novel nor inventive. After approving the evidence that was presented to them, the officials in the European Patent Office revoked the patent.

### 3.2 Turmeric Patent

Indian people have used turmeric powder for many centuries as traditional medicine to heal wounds and rashes. However, in 1995 the United States granted patent No. 5,401,504 to Suman, K. Das and Hari Har, P. Cohly, expatriates from India, at the University of Mississippi Medical Centre for using turmeric for wound healing. The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research in India objected to the granting of the patent on the ground that turmeric powder has been used for centuries for the healing of wounds and rashes in India. Therefore its prior existence before the patent application meant that the turmeric medicine was neither novel nor inventive. Considering the truth of this argument, the United State Patent and Trade Office revoked the patent as it failed to meet the established requirements for patent protection.

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<sup>31</sup> These patent cases are cited from a power-point presentation now available in a pdf format, Suvarna Pandey Patent Attorney S Majundar & Co., Bio-piracy Related to Traditional Knowledge and Patenting Issues, available at <http://www.birac.nic.in/webcontent/dib.pdf>, 17-18, 23-24. Accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2014.

<sup>32</sup> Bio-piracy Related to Traditional Knowledge, 17.

### **3.3 Ayahuasca Patent**

The natives of the Amazon rain forest used Ayahuasca, a “wine for the soul” in religious and healing ceremonies to diagnose and treat illness, contact with spirits and divine the future of the Amazonians in generations to come. In 1986, an American scientist and entrepreneur known as Loren Miller obtained a United State patent on an Ayahuasca variety collected from Amazon Rain Forest which he analysed for potential medicinal properties. The Coordinating Body of Indigenous Organization of the Amazon Rain Forest objected the granted patent on the ground that Ayahuasca had been public known by the natives of Amazon Rain Forest and was used it for centuries as their traditional medicine and divine the future of Amazon generations. Failure of meeting the qualification grounds for patent protection made the United State Patent and Trade Office to revoke the patent on 1999.

### **3.4 Colgate Case**

Indian activists are accusing Colgate for bio-piracy of a recipe for toothpaste that Indian people have been using for thousands of years. Colgate obtained the United State patent for the tooth powder composition comprised of a rust-like red iron oxide, clove oil camphor, black pepper and spearmint ingredients. Indian activists objected to this patent on the ground that the ingredients that constituted the patented tooth powder are publicly known and used by dozens of generations of Indians. Therefore the invention is not novel. India is now in the process of preparing the documentary evidence to prove that the ingredients were common knowledge.

### **Conclusion**

The denial of traditional protection on the ground of failure to meet the requirements of patentability leads to all-too-frequent bio-piracy actions by the multinational companies and the pharmaceutical companies. Such bio-piracy leads to a loss of biodiversity in the lands of the indigenous people: this loss is irreversible. This implies that TK holders’ rights are not recognized; and their valuable knowledge fades into the past and so is lost to present and future generations. Patent holders unfairly

receive profits from patents which are illegally and unethically granted and continue to militate against the economic progress of indigenous people. To stop bio-piracy activity, effective mechanisms to grant protection to traditional knowledge holders should be devised. The establishment of that mechanism should also take into consideration the issue of fair and adequate compensation and equal benefits that should be allocated to the traditional knowledge holders when their knowledge has been proven to be utilized by the third parties.

#### **4. Recommendations for Protection of Traditional Knowledge**

The Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement is an international legal binding instrument. Those who are authorized to amend it should make the necessary changes in order to grant effective protection to all forms of traditional knowledge as intellectual property. Such amendments will serve to remove the injustices perpetrated by third parties, such as the use of modern technology to transform the stolen traditional knowledge-based products into modern products and later patent them. The amendments should include a provision that requires disclosure of the origin of the genetic resources and the associated traditional knowledge used to develop the product for which entrepreneurs are seeking protection. It should also include the proof of free prior informed consent from the indigenous people who are either the traditional knowledge holders or the traditional cultivators of the relevant products before using the designated traditional knowledge-based materials. The entrepreneurs seeking to use traditional resources of indigenous people must furnish the proof that they are adhering to a method that is fair and equitable in the sharing of benefits derived from the utilization of traditional knowledge. The inclusion of these requirements in the mandatory rules of the TRIPS Agreement will empower state parties to refuse patents to entrepreneurs who seek protection of their products when these entrepreneurs utilise the genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge already in use among indigenous peoples in one or a number of countries and at the same time

neglect to seek permission from those countries where these resources and knowledge have originated.

On the other hand, upon amendment to the TRIPS Agreement, state parties should include the contractual agreement clauses which will regulate negotiation matters on access and equal benefit-sharing deriving from the use of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge. These clauses will assist in the effort to remove the unfair exploitation of traditional knowledge.

As a practical implication of the conditions just summarized above, countries should adopt the *sui generis* system which obliges the third party users of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge to disclose their origin, the proof of free prior informed consent as well as the proof of the method of fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from the utilization of TK.<sup>33</sup> The adaptation of a *sui generis* protection regime should be in conformity with the customs, laws and cultural practices of traditional knowledge holders in order to protect their knowledge nationally and internationally. The failure of observing the stipulated requirements should empower the concerned country to prevent or seek invalidation of any granted intellectual property protection to entrepreneurs who made use of the genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge in the course of developing their products contrary to the laws where the resources and knowledge originated and contrary to international law.

Countries should also develop the traditional knowledge prior art database. The traditional knowledge prior art database is a compilation of information concerning traditional knowledge as a prior art, and thereafter, submit it to the public domain. The

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<sup>33</sup> See article 8j, 15, and 19 of the Convention on Biological Diversity and article 13(d) of The FAO International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, 2004. The enactment of domestic regulation to protect TK grants to nations the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts as per article 31 of The United Nations Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, 2007.

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compilation of traditional knowledge information would assist the prevention of misappropriation of traditional knowledge since such a database would immediately expose offenders who would attempt to use the traditional knowledge of other societies, cultures or nations without their permission. Hence countries and governments would be very slow to grant patents to those who are obviously engaged in bio-piracy.

The development of a traditional knowledge prior art database would enable the transmission of traditional knowledge from one generation to the next. It would identify the traditional knowledge holders' community or nation whose TK is incorporated into databases. At the same time if others were to utilize the compiled knowledge, the originators of the knowledge that others would try to utilise would become immediately public so that these indigenous originators of the traditional knowledge would now have the right to equal benefit sharing.<sup>34</sup>

Governments should provide the traditional knowledge holders with a thorough education concerning their rights to genetic resources, to traditional knowledge, and to the value that such knowledge generates on a global scale. The provision of such education will help them to negotiate economic issues effectively in order to enjoy their right to accessing the pertinent resources and to equal benefit sharing. These rights arise from the fact that there are people somewhere in the world who are making valuable use of their knowledge.

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<sup>34</sup> See M. Alexander et al, “The Role of Registers and Databases in the Protection of Traditional Knowledge A Comparative Analysis”, Institute of Advanced Studies, United Nations University, 2004, available at [http://archive.ias.unu.edu/binaries/UNUIAS\\_TKRegistersReport.pdf](http://archive.ias.unu.edu/binaries/UNUIAS_TKRegistersReport.pdf), accessed on 4<sup>th</sup> June, 2014.

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