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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.

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# Editorial

Dear Readers,

Soren Kierkegaard has communicated to us a very important lesson that he learned from Sacred Scripture, a lesson that he internalized not only for himself in his coming to maturity as a philosopher but for all who would read what he had to say with openness of mind. This is his affirmation:

“As a sinner man is separated from God by a yawning qualitative abyss. And obviously God is separated from man by the same yawning qualitative abyss when He forgives sins. In case it were possible by a converse kind of accommodation to transfer the divine attributes to a human being, in one respect man will never in all eternity come to resemble God, namely, in forgiving sins.”<sup>1</sup>

A number of articles in the present issue of *Africa Tomorrow* focus on the theme of forgiveness and reconciliation. When we, as human beings, grow in our interior awareness that eternal life is central to our personal desire for happiness, we also become painfully conscious of the fact that we do not deserve eternal life and that there is no human being who would dare to make a reasonable claim that he or she can give eternal life to another person. We are in need of the grace that only God can give according to the measure of his divine love and tender mercy. This is the grace of reconciliation.

A landmark event not only for the history of Africa but for the political history of the world was President Nelson Mandela's decision to choose a churchman, Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu to the president's chair of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in December, 1995. When Egil Aarvik presented Tutu with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 he represented a good number of international leaders and people of

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<sup>1</sup> S. KIERKEGAARD, *The Sickness unto Death*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1941, 141. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1441, harmonises with Kierkegaard's conviction when it states that “only God can forgive sins.”

influence when he stated: “We feel ourselves united with him in the belief in the creative power of love.”

Archbishop Tutu, for his part, realized that Mandela’s appointment signified a sharp separation from the secularist tendencies of governments all over the world. Archbishop Tutu and President Mandela shared the conviction that the wise leader does everything possible to keep God and religion within the political process.

Archbishop Tutu spoke as a Church leader who recognized fully the political implications of giving God first place in a judicial process:

It is interesting that the President [Nelson Mandela] appointed an Archbishop as chairperson of the commission and not, for instance, a judge... The President must have believed that our work would be profoundly spiritual. After all, forgiveness, reconciliation, reparation were not the normal currency in political discourse. There it was more normal to demand satisfaction, to pay back in the same coin, to give as good as you got, for it was more common to have the ethos of “dog eat dog” in the jungle world of politics.

Very few people objected to the heavy spiritual and indeed Christian religious emphasis of the commission. When I was challenged on it by the journalists, I told them I had been chosen as who I was, a religious leader. I could not pretend I was someone else.<sup>2</sup>

Nor could Africa pretend to be someone other than who she is – a continent wisely aware of her dependence on the Divine Reconciler.

The Archbishop proceeded in fidelity to who he was as a religious leader. Theological insights and religious perspectives informed much of what the commission did and their manner of doing it. The Archbishop gave two cardinal examples of how the commission worked: (a) in a spirit of prayer and (b) with a set of guidelines that reflected its true nature. First, the prayer:

And then I prayed: “O God of justice, mercy and peace. We long to put behind us all the pain and division of apartheid together with all the violence which ravaged our communities in its name. And so we ask You to bless this Truth and Reconciliation Commission with Your

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<sup>2</sup> This and all other citations concerning Archbishop Tutu and the TRC come from his book, *No Future without Forgiveness*. New York: Doubleday 1999.

wisdom and guidance as it commences its important work of redressing the many wrongs done both here and throughout our land.

“We pray that all those people who have been injured in either body or spirit may receive healing through the work of this commission and that it may be seen to be a body which seeks to redress the wounds inflicted in so harsh a manner on so many of our people, particularly here in the Eastern Cape. We pray, too, for those who may be found to have committed these crimes against their fellow human beings, that they may come to repentance and confess their guilt to almighty God and that they too might become the recipients of Your divine mercy and forgiveness. We ask that the Holy Spirit may pour out its gifts of justice, mercy, and compassion upon the commissioners and their colleagues in every sphere, that the truth may be recognized and brought to light during the hearings; and that the end may bring about that reconciliation and love for our neighbour which our Lord himself commanded. We ask this in the holy name of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.”

And now, the guidelines:

1. Truth is not relative: there is one supreme Truth that governs us all. Conscience is intended to perceive the truth, not fabricate it. All of us, therefore, inhabit a moral universe that receives its unambiguous definition from the one, true God: what is good and what is evil are objectively determinable; and judgment can be passed on whether individuals or groups have acted according to these determinations.
2. No matter how depraved the monstrous acts committed by the human beings who appear before the commission, the perpetrators continue to be moral agents and children of God; consequently, they remain capable of repentance and moral transformation.
3. The commission places even the most conspicuously guilty person within the Good Shepherd's supreme desire to find the lost sheep and restore to it its proper dignity.
4. Because God has loved each human person from all eternity, there is nothing we can do to make God love us more; but wonderfully there is nothing we can do to make God love us less.

Do you believe in the true God? Do you believe in his intention to reconcile you to Himself and to all of your brothers and sisters in humanity? Eternal life is a gift that wells up like a spring from within God's intention to forgive and reconcile. Eternal life, in other words, is the atmosphere that we breathe when we are fully

alive within God's tenderness and mercy. All who live by this breath of freedom and unity form an eternal "togetherness", the communion of saints, all united in their diversity because they have joyfully immersed themselves in the everlasting love of the divine Person-Gift, the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup>

Divine tenderness and mercy are the purifying streams that, to use the language of the Bible, "wash away" our sins.<sup>4</sup> His tenderness and mercy cradle us so that communion with God becomes the loving and trusting disposition of the child towards the parent. If we do not become as this little child we cannot enter into eternal life. St. Therese of Lisieux could not hide her joy when she explained communion to be a bond of full trust, the total surrender to God's tender mercy, and hence the eternal abiding, together as joyful children of God, within his loving Heart.

The grace of reconciliation that lies at the heart of the formation of the communion of saints is the focus of Fr. William Ngowi's article, "From Estrangement to Reconciliation: The Overarching Inclusion between Gen 3:23-24 and Rev 21:1-8." Fr. Ngowi presents key Scripture texts that illustrate the fact that reconciliation is a theme that weaves together quite significant moments in the history of God's love for the human person.

Fr. Leonce Rambau concentrates on the Book of Tobit and its protagonist. Tobit's history reveals who God is: He allows the innocent to suffer; He accepts the suffering as a plea not only for the individual sufferer but for all those who need reconciliation with God and are not seeking it; he restores the innocent sufferer to a life of bliss and incorporates the just man and his life of suffering into his promise and plan to redeem the world.

Fr. Marcel Mukadi uplifts the overall investigation into the divine choice to reconcile the world to himself by elucidating the charism of the Society of the Divine Saviour, known to the people as the Salvatorians. "I am your salvation" is a phrase dear to the heart of Fr. Mukadi; and he gives a very convincing suggestion that this phrase encapsulates very well the Salvatorian charism. Fr.

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<sup>3</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Encyclical Letter "Dominum et Vivificantem"* (18 May 1986), 10.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Psalm 51:7.



Francis Jordan, the founder of the Salvatorians, poured forth his heart and soul into the mission of proclaiming Jesus as the Saviour. A Salvatorian should identify himself with Jesus.

Jesus graces the Salvatorian with a special mission of bringing the Saviour to the world and bringing the world to the Saviour. Fr. Mukadi specifies the Salvatorian privilege of going to the street, to the forgotten, the unloved, the marginalized, the betrayed and the abandoned so that these beloved of God may come to know and befriend the Saviour, savour the grace of reconciliation, and so enter into eternal joy. Jesus wishes to say to them, and indeed to all of us: "Salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:9). The highways and the byways of the world are God's meeting places for the human race. That is where the Salvatorians ought to be.

Sadly, we are not living in the communion of saints. There is a world – a world that contradicts itself by energizing itself with that which leaves it exhausted – money and the things that money buys, the sensuality that reduces the human person to an object for pleasure and gratification, and the power that leaves the person of influence with the false belief that he can do whatever he wants with himself and with other people. This is the person who believes that he or she can create their own norms of truth independently of God.

In this issue of *Africa Tomorrow* Grzegorz Trela reminds us that there are philosophers who persistently doubt that we can know the truth that corresponds to an empirical reality that exists independently of the knowing subject. There are those who doubt that the human being is capable of including God – the data of divine revelation – in the many-sided discussion about the nature of truth. A melange of conflicting views about truth brings to the surface a need for philosophers to reconcile with each other.

Fr. Jacek Gorka brings to light the challenges that the Church faces when she accompanies the youth of today; and the challenges the youth face when they commit themselves to the Church.

Fr. Gibson brings into the public forum once again a crucial dilemma that Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere brought to Africa's attention. He asked: Is Africa a continent that balkanizes? Or does Africa grow in the responsible exercise of freedom so that

she may move forward as a unified family, a family that finds its own happiness by labouring for the happiness of others?

Fr. Gibson directs our attention to a severe wound in some African social settings, a wound that societies in the Balkans and indeed in all corners of the world have suffered – a wound that could be lethal for the family and for the continent that does not pay attention to it or diagnose it properly. The wound in question is that of relationships between men and women: those who should be loving each other tenderly, responsibly and joyfully, those who should be trusting each other and pledging their desire to stay united with each other are precisely the persons who balkanize each other: men and women who enter into sexual relationships without a true intention to love each other as a married couple with the potential to be parents and so use each other to satisfy their own egoistic impulses.

Whether it is the murder of the Missionaries of Charity in Sierra Leone or the continuing, mind boggling rate of femicide in South Africa – the killing of women precisely within intimate partner relationships – the issue has reached a point of ultimatum: put away your balkanizing attitude and stop humiliating the one you purport to love, accept the trust of your beloved with gratitude, and entrust yourself to your beloved with joy. If not, you are wounding Africa.

Is this idealistic? A consecrated woman from the Balkans sets the tone for us with her outstanding capacity to forgive her rapist. What she does exemplifies precisely the attitude and conduct that Mwl. Nyerere advocates for all of us if we are to live our freedom responsibly and accept the unity God offers us gratefully.

*The Editor*

# PHILOSOPHY & HUMAN SCIENCE

## The Parameters of a Realism that Confronts Anti-Realism

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### Abstract

We discuss a theoretical notion that confronts *anti-realism*. For the sake of semantics, we call it *anti-anti-realism*. We offer argumentation in favour of realism and developed against any forms of *anti-realism*. This argumentation has been inspired by Wittgenstein's philosophy of language expressed in his *Philosophical Investigations* and by the modern natural sciences. We demonstrate that if they were not to accept the postulate of realism, those who practice any science and particularly those who make scientific forecasts would find it impossible to proceed.

### 1. Realism, for our purposes, is anti-anti-realism<sup>1</sup>

Tanzania, The notion of *realism* has a distant historical origin. There are few human beings who have understood it explicitly. Those who have subscribed to the notion of realism have used the term in opposition to what is *ideal* or what is *unreal*. Realism finds its basis on the assumption of a mind-independent existence of not only the concrete specimens but also of universal beings. In the

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<sup>1</sup> The term "anti-realism" is related to the term "anti-irrationalism" given by K. Ajdukiewicz because our intentions are similar to his. In the case of realism, like that of rationalism, it is easier to show its negative designations than to give its comprehensive definition.

dispute about the universals, the realists acknowledged the real and independent existence of abstracts, i.e. of universal “entities”. In our day and age, discussions about realism take place in the context of a dispute realism vs. instrumentalism, and of realism vs. anti-realism.

In the context of the controversies that pit dispute realism vs. instrumentalism, the parties to the discussion focus on theoretical objects. There are appropriate theories that postulate the existence of these theoretical objects. This approach can be called scientific realism whose “natural” opponent is instrumentalism<sup>2</sup>. Typically there are those who formulate numerous moderate positions which occasion discussions at a variety of levels, in a maze of contexts, and with a number of refinements that all concentrate upon the debate between dispute realism vs. anti-realism (or instrumentalism). Consequently we find ourselves in a situation where the approach to the issue of the cognitive status of scientific knowledge is at one time qualified as realistic and another time as anti-realistic whereby some versions of realism differ more from each other than they do from some versions of anti-realism.

Instrumentalism – or as scientists refer to it, “anti-realism” – operates on the assumption that scientific theories are tools that serve as statements for observation that are to be associated with each other, systematized and readied for ensuing calculations that, in their turn, enable the forecasting of the occurrence of determinable events depicted by the observation statements. Those who use this approach do not consider the problem concerning the existence itself of theoretical entities that match the designata of theoretical notions or the problem of issues related to the description of truth or reality.

For the advocates of constructivism – another name for realism – the most important feature of science is its ability to create theoretical structures that enable the conceptualization of the available experimental data. The advocates of both the realistic and the anti-realistic approach to the philosophy of science may follow

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<sup>2</sup> In this paper instrumentalism will be perceived as an extreme version of an anti-realistic attitude. We will use the term “anti-realism” to comprehend all the attitudes that oppose realism.

the "constructive" option in regard to their approach to science. The adjective "constructive" implies that scientific activity consists in "constructing" rather than in "exploring". Since Karl Popper's time a number of realists have stressed the "creative" elements of scientific activity. The basic difference between the constructive realists and the advocates of constructive empiricism – the anti-realists – consists in the method for determining the cognitive status of the theoretical models that science constructs. Realists analyse the relationship between a theoretical model and the real system, whereas the advocates of constructive empiricism consider its empirical adequacy, that is to say, its conformity to phenomena.

An apt metaphor determining the function of anti-realism within science is the definition of constructivism presented by W.V.O. Quine:

The sense [of constructivism] ... can be ... defined as a practice, project or policy of mathematizing with one's hands tied (1987, 57).

The reproach of anti-realism formulated against classical scientific realism is that "the culprit," that is to say, scientific realism is responsible for an infeasible attempt to view the world from an external perspective. Some authors suppose that in view of the existence of a number of realisms that differ from one another in practically every detail there *only* exist various types of realism, whereby it should be kept in mind that such an expression is by no means non-problematic. The question remains whether there exist any common theses acknowledged by particular realisms. For example, John Newton-Smith asserts:

The word *realism* means a large number of approaches to the philosophy of science. All of them acknowledge a certain common minimum, i.e. that all the statements of science are either true or false whereby the truth is understood in terms of the classical theory of truth. (1981, 27-28)

The opposition of realism versus anti-realism appears when the conditions for truth are considered with regard to theorems – to statements or opinions – that describe reality. Unless they are associated with instrumentalism which, as mentioned above, is often perceived as a stronger attitude, the followers of the anti-

realistic approach assume the existence of a reality whose nature is determined somehow by a mental state of the cognitive subject, his knowledge, his language, his preferred notional system, and so forth. According to realists, the truth of a statement depends on the cognitive abilities of the knowing subject. These abilities are methods of statement verification. Consequently, according to this understanding, the truth is understood to be an epistemic notion that depends on the cognitive abilities of the subject, contrary to the classical truth concept whereby what is stated as truth does not depend on the fact that anybody confirms or recognizes this truth at any time.

## **2. Michael Dummett, one of the key theorists of the so-called semantic anti-realism ...**

... a position that avoids any declarations in favour of verification-transcendent truth conditions, presented his doctrine in the following manner:

I characterize realism as the belief that statements of the disputed class possess an objective truth-value, independently of our means of knowing it: they are true or false in virtue of a reality existing independently of us. The antirealist opposes to this the view that statements of the disputed class are to be understood only by reference to the sort of thing that we count as evidence for a statement of that class. (1978, 146)

For an anti-realist, the apprehension of a statement is based on knowledge, which is sufficient evidence for the statement to be acknowledged, whereas the truth of the statement may consist only in the existence of such as evidence. The anti-realistic attitude acknowledges a statement to be true without the need to assume that the statement refers to reality, which exists regardless of the cognitive ability of the knower. Dummett “cancels” the assumption of the objectively existing reality. Hence:

Dummett’s anti-realism is in accordance with idealism in the sense that it does not assume the reality described by a true statement, i.e., one which is in accordance with reality, to be independent of the mind that finds this conformity. (Van Frassen, 1980, 9)

### 3. When reconstructing the realistic approach, Bastian van Fraassen writes about the literally true description...

... and says that the anti-realistic approach can call into question: (i) the possibility of a literal description, or (ii) the possibility of a true description. The title of van Fraassen’s work, *The Scientific Image*, makes reference to the distinction between *the scientific* and *manifest image* introduced by W. Sellers, i.e. the scientific and the explicit image of the world. According to W. Sellers’ scientific realism, the reasons in favour of any scientific theory are also in favour of the existence of objects postulated by it and are to be acknowledged. Meanwhile, according to van Fraassen, realism means the view “that the goal of science is to provide the literal and true report on the world by means of its theories; and the acknowledgment of a scientific theory assumes the belief about its being true.” The concept of constructive empiricism that he presents offers the indication:

... that the goal of science is to provide us with empirically adequate theories; and the acceptance of a theory assumes the belief only of its empirical adequacy. ... A theory is empirically adequate if it is true in respect of the observable objects and events. (Van Fraassen, 1980, 17)

In van Fraassen’s opinion the acceptance of a theory does not require the belief that it is indeed true. Acceptance, rather, is connected with involvement in a determined research program, i.e., with the tendency to comprehend any future events by means of the notional tools that are appropriate for that theory.

In view of the above controversies that we are facing in contemporary disputes about realism it could be worthwhile to present the list of discrepancies:

Realism	Reality coincides with what we think of it
Anti-Realism	Reality does not coincide with what we think of it
Realism	Truth is not defined by means of epistemic terms

Anti-Realism	Truth is defined by epistemic terms
Realism	There is the risk of scepticism
Anti-Realism	There is no risk of scepticism
Realism	The principle of the excluded middle is accepted <sup>3</sup>
Anti-Realism	The principle of the excluded middle is not accepted
Realism	Truth conditions explain meaning
Anti-Realism	Verificationist conditions explain meaning

Cognition of reality is usually identified as realism's true description. A principal contemporary dispute between *realists* and *sceptics* is focused on the issue whether such a truthful description is possible. Even the notion of such a description brings a number of difficulties. Interfacing theory and reality for the purpose of determining the adequacy of the theory proves to have a number of traps hidden within it.

Finally, we have to do with two alternative theories of truth, i.e., coherence and correspondence theories of truth. None of the traditional, often called naïve, formulations can be regarded to be satisfactory. Most generally, it can be said that, according to coherence theory, the truth is everything that can be placed within a logically consistent system. According to correspondence theory, the truth is everything that accords with reality. The bold formula of coherence theory is based on a rather complex rational matrix according to which there exists only one logically consistent distribution of confirmations and negations in an indefinite set of possible conceptions. According to W.V.O. Quine:

... when we get rid of unnecessary details, the significant contrast between correspondence and coherence theories would consist in the fact that the first one stresses the relationship between a true statement

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<sup>3</sup> The principle of the excluded middle states that, for any proposition, either that proposition is true or its negation is true. There is no middle possibility. (Ed.)



and the entity it refers to, e.g. white snow, while the other stresses the relationships between true statements and other statements ... If we consider coherence and correspondence properly then it turns out that they are not rival theories of truth but they constitute its complementary aspects. The coherence aspect is related to the way of reaching the truth in an ideal case. The correspondence aspect is connected with the relationship between the truth and the entity to which it refers. (1987, 59)

#### **4. The approach recommended in this present paper can be called a radically realistic one**

It opposes both realism and anti-realism as each of them is based on the supposition of the existence of one world.

Science is unable to devise a thesis which is not true in a certain world. At most, it can be a truth that is useless for us. But it is not a reason to deprive such a thesis of the quality of being true. It is only a reason to refuse the will of fully disinterested cognition. (M. Levin, 1990, p. 115)

When defending realism – or for that matter anti-realism – it is necessary to keep in mind the linguistic principles in the field of semantics, i.e. not every sentence makes reference to a certain possible situation. For example, a sentence may happen not to denote anything when the semantic system of the given language is defective. Every language, including the language of scientific theories, is shaped in such a way that it matches the ontology assumed by its users and not necessarily to the ontology of the real world.

Let us point out that such an important anti-realistic category as that of the scientific activity of experimenting assumes more or less explicitly a kind of reference to an extra-subjective reality. It is similar with van Fraassen's postulate that replaces the truth – conceived as an exceedingly ambitious and unnecessary cognitive goal – with empirical adequacy.<sup>4</sup> Certainly, an anti-realist could

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<sup>4</sup> It is to be noted that God is not an interlocutor in this discussion about the truth. If one were to accept the data of divine revelation as necessary constituents of the discussion, the perspective on the question of truth would change radically. For the place of divine revelation in philosophy's quest for

protest saying that we can never know to what our theories are referring. The lack of such knowledge does not preclude the fact of the existence of such a relationship. You may not be able to determine the answer to one form of question, e.g., Is the wave theory of light true? But you may be able to ask another question that spotlights more or less the same objective and yet is more amenable to an answer: Which empirical situations are reflected adequately in the formulation of the wave theory of light?

In order to be a realist it is sufficient to demonstrate the following position: if we systematically observe the same events or situations in any given set of circumstances, then the “identity” of the observed things constitutes an objective feature of those situations.

Making reference to Plato’s allegory of the cave it can be said that the shadows seen by the prisoners are the objective representations of realities even if they gravely lack certainty.

From our personal vantage point as authors of the present essay, the postulate of realism in any of its versions is a necessary condition for science to exist. In other words, anti-realism cannot be defended as an antidote to realism when one considers theses already formulated that relate somehow to reality. In still other words: when we consider realism as a position that explains how it is possible for science to explain particular phenomena, and then on the basis of that explanation, proceed to forecast the occurrence of a future event or situation based on the explanations we have asserted, anti-realism’s position must be suspected. When the forecast is accurate, it becomes gravely doubtful that the explanation of this particular scientific achievement can find its ground in instrumentalism. In other words, it must be a conundrum for an anti-realist to answer the following question: how is it possible to forecast anything if the designata of the appropriate notions intrinsic to the theory of science do not comply with reality?

We know of no research program or project based on anti-realism that would result in "empirically adequate" discoveries in the field of nature studies. This is one of the key arguments against anti-realism.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, it is an argument formulated in order to persuade: hence it cannot be regarded as conclusive in its cognitive purity.

We become convinced that the position of realism is correct in respect to some pre-determined objects when checking the evidence and supporting arguments aimed at verifying particular statements about those objects. General sceptical arguments concerning theoretical subjects, on the other hand, are less convincing than, e.g., the evidence in favour of DNA actuality.

Evidence of actuality is derived from a strong conformity of interdisciplinary results; their strength results from their diversity and the fact that they have endured practical testing in different fields of science, which are often distant from each other. It is an exaggeration to expect any universally useful arguments in favour of scientific realism in general... Discovery and confirmation of the existence of chemical elements, chemical atoms or even subatomic particles provides, contrary to the opinions of notional anti-realists, the [realistic] example of ontological progress. (Burian, 1995, 198)

What exists in the world does not respect any disciplinary boundaries of particular sciences: this is one of the indicators that a thing really exists.

It is clear to me that what I have just presented is not comprehensively conclusive; however, it has some persuasive value and we personally share the opinion of R. Wójcicki, who suggests that there is not much more to be achieved in this matter.

Defence of realism (it is similar with relativism) may only consist in showing that this doctrine allows to create a consistent concept of knowledge and regularities occurring during its development.

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<sup>5</sup> This argument is called *success of science argument* in methodological literature.

Accordingly, it can be announced with becoming involved in discrepancies. (Wójcicki, 1991, 3)<sup>6</sup>

Realism, like everything beyond the boundaries of logic, can neither be proven nor rejected, because no event or experience can be found to be so all-embracing that it becomes a conclusive rejection of realism. It is similar with idealism, which nowadays takes the shape of anti-realism. Almost all physical, chemical, and biological theories imply realism in the sense that if they are true then the notion of realism upon which they are based must also be true. If we omit the arguments in favour of realism that are gleaned from science, there remain the arguments of language, which are often used by anti-realists who forget some of realism's important features. Each discussion about realism, especially all the arguments against it, must be formulated by means of a language. A language is descriptive in nature: an unambiguous description is always realistic. It speaks of something, about a certain state of events that is clearly distinguishable as real or imaginary. According to Tarski, if the thing or event is imaginary then its description is false and its negation must be a true description of reality. Certainly, it does not abolish idealism, solipsism or anti-realism but it at least neutralizes them. Rationality, descriptive language, evidence - all this is related to a certain actuality and to certain recipients. Rejection of realism "is a megalomania – the most frequent illness of professional philosophers" (Popper, 1972, 152).

Anti-realism should be regarded as a call for intellectual vigilance and not as a readily-established doctrine that one accepts or rejects.

Finally, a quotation that anchors the philosophical task in the fundamentals:

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<sup>6</sup> For a realism-based comprehensive analysis of schemes of recurrence, concrete judgments of fact, probable judgments and the link between common-sense judgments and empirical science, see B. LONERGAN, "Reflective Understanding", in *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, New York: Philosophical Library 1958, 279-318. (Ed.)

Accepting the principal value of truth, we do not have to assume any certain or full capability of its realization within created knowledge. **Truth underlies all cognitive values.** If a person is striving for certainty, then it means he is striving to reach the truth. If he strives for the accomplishment of any given program of rationality, then it means he wants to find an effective way to achieve the truth. When analytic philosophers consider clarity to be the main goal of their philosophical and logical analyses, they are striving to work out and refine some cognitive tools aimed at the achievement of the truth. When the advocates of coherence theory stress the cognitive role of the logical principle of non-contradiction, they are striving to put in order such a compact system of conceptions that falsity would be easy to recognize and to eliminate. Although the advocates of coherence theory do not undertake the task of defining the truth – indeed such a task is infeasible if one remains exclusively within the order of logic – they nevertheless strive to refine an effective tool in order to remove falsity, i.e., in order to remain exclusively within the truth. (Trela, 1997, 83-84)

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# **A Balkanized Africa? A Free and United Africa? Your Choice**

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*[Jesus] lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, "... Holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one...Sanctify them in the truth... And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth" (John 17:1, 11, 17).*

*Surely, one would have expected that if we have a chance to undo part of the harm that has already been done by this balkanization of our continent, we would not hesitate in taking that chance...*

*Peoples of East Africa, Unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!*

*"Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Mwl. Nyerere, 1964).<sup>1</sup>*

## **Introduction**

My experience with the constellation of hatreds and hostilities in two quite disparate regions of the world, Sierra Leone and the Balkans, together with my appreciation, respect, gratitude, and adoration for the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, who died that all may form a unity, that is to say, a communion, and who arose again from the dead to share the peace of that communion with us for all eternity – all of this opened my eyes to the prophetic foresight that the reliably thoughtful Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere manifested in his proposed schema for East African unity and his necessary warning against the balkanization of the region.

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<sup>1</sup> J. NYERERE, "Freedom and Unity," *Transition*, Vol. 0, Issue 14 (1964). Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 40-45. "The Articles of Union between the Republic of Tanganyika and the Peoples' Republic of Zanzibar" constitute an appendix to the article.

Anticipating Pope (St.) John Paul II's convictions about international solidarity, Mwl. Nyerere gave public voice to his convictions in the 1964 article just footnoted above, "Freedom and Unity," published by Duke University Press in the journal *Transition*. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of April in that same year, 1964, Mwl. Nyerere and Abeid Karume signed the Articles of Union between the Republic of Tanganyika and the People's Republic of Zanzibar.

With an oblique reference to what has happened from time to time in the region of the Balkan mountains among the ethnic groups living in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Greece, and the European part of Turkey, Mwl. Nyerere speaks of balkanizing. Balkanizing is a sustained effort to disrupt unity, to maintain one's own position and prowess as a member of a group of privilege by disdaining, humiliating, oppressing and rejecting those who do not belong to the group.<sup>2</sup> Balkanizing may occur on an individual level, on the level of an ethnic group, on a regional level or on a national level. Individuals or groups balkanize when they make an effort to align themselves with the forces of deception and division in order to attain their own ends.

Balkanizing is a particular form of aggravating disunity. Pope (St.) John Paul II used one of his General Audiences as a forum to remind the world that the very word devil signifies a fallen angel who does not want unity. The devil is, by definition, one who

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<sup>2</sup> See V. PESIC, *Serbian Nationalism and the Origins of the Yugoslav Crisis*. Volume 8 of *Peaceworks*. Washington, DC: The United States Institute of Peace 1996. The long-term social critic of authoritarian Serbian regimes, Vesna Pestic, cites V. Gligorov's definition in the notes that follow her text, no. 99: Balkanization is "a process and possibly a cycle of empire disruption, small countries creation, local instability, and a new (or old) empire moving in. ... The balkanization process was characterized particularly by the attempts of the Balkan nations at autonomous state creation and by wars erupting between them." V. GLIGOROV, *Why Do Countries Break Up?*, Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Uppsaliensis 1994, 18. My explanations of the term balkanizing are more or less syntheses of everything Pestic says in *Serbian Nationalism* about the resentment, hostility, division and destruction that ensue when ethnic groups subscribe to the dominate-or-be-dominated mindset. Especially informative is the summary that she offers as an introduction to *Serbian Nationalism and the Origins of the Yugoslav Crisis*.



strives to provoke mistrust: he calumniates, deceives, divides and destroys.<sup>3</sup>

It is not an exaggeration, then, to say that balkanizing is diabolical in scope.

The present essay integrates ethical insights that Mwl. Nyerere and Pope St. John Paul II have introduced into the public forum in order to harmonize the human race with the intention of the One who created it: God. God has intended the human race to live in unity as a human family. It is God's intention that, regardless of our age, ethnic group, nationality, skin colour, or religious affiliation that we all relate to each other as if we were living under the same roof. We are to be a human family destined to live eternally within the purity of its origins and within the eternal love that redeems and sanctifies. Pope John Paul's successor puts it this way:

The first form of communion between persons is that born of the love of a man and a woman who decide to enter a stable union in order to build together a new family. But the peoples of the earth, too, are called to build relationships of solidarity and cooperation among themselves, as befits members of the one human family: "All peoples" – as the Second Vatican Council declared – "are one community and have one origin, because God caused the whole human race to dwell on the face of the earth (cf. Acts 17:26); they also have one final end, God."<sup>4</sup>

No matter where we are in the world, we are to be as a single family. In this way we strive to be who we are: an image and likeness of the one God. Mwl. Nyerere's convictions and insights about the need to obviate balkanizing and to exercise freedom responsibly in the manner of a family for the cause of unity interlock quite meaningfully with Pope John Paul II's articulations about God's call to human persons to discover their identity, their irreplaceability, and their dignity through the experience of togetherness, through their joint commitment to solidarity. How

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<sup>3</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *General Audience*, "The Fall of the Rebellious Angels" (13 Aug 1986), 7.

<sup>4</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace* (1 Jan 2008), 1. The citation is from the Vatican II Declaration *Nostra Aetate* 1.

may we synthesize concisely and convincingly the principles that guided these two major figures from the 20<sup>th</sup> century? We may simply state without hesitation: all are responsible for all.

Drawing from John Paul II's insistence on fidelity to the truth in love, the present paper specifies the requirements that the spirit of unity/solidarity must meet in order to fulfil what Mwl. Nyerere envisioned and hence to immunize this unity from all species of human degradation, insult, humiliation, indifference, contempt, betrayal, jealousy, resentment, and treachery.

The essay then proceeds to rely on divine revelation to substantiate the truth of two dimensions to the reality within which we live: (1) only with the help of God's grace can humanity achieve the solidarity anticipated by Mwl. Nyerere; (2) God makes this grace available to the human family when he loves us to the point of redeeming us by means of an unfathomably painful death on the cross. God pours forth the love capable of unity and freedom into our hearts by giving us the Holy Spirit.

But what is divine love? It is the love that moves the eternal Word of God to accept onto himself the contempt and disdain of those who prefer themselves over God and hence collaborate with the devil. When God, the Word, unites hypostatically to himself a full human nature, He – the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity – makes it possible for the human suffering occasioned by alliances with diabolical deception and division to become inseparably united to his divine love. This suffering-motivated-by-absolute-love enables us to become a “family” in the sense that Mwl. Nyerere conceived.

In the course of this essay, the reader makes his or her acquaintance with Sister Lucy, whose personal suffering in the coercive grasp of a sexually aroused Serbian gives definition to the term “to balkanize,” namely, to perpetuate division and to exalt one's status as a member of a group of privilege by degrading those who do not belong to the group. Sr. Lucy's response to the Serbian's attempt to balkanize sheds light on the place of God's suffering and redeeming grace within the human pursuit of freedom and unity.

The present essay forthrightly considers the shocking developments between men and women in the Republic of South

Africa – every 8 hours a woman succumbs to the number one cause of death for young females in South Africa, namely, intimate partner violence (IPV). The men seem to balkanize the very women they have purported to love. Those who should be finding their happiness in a unifying, creative love with each other are suffering the betrayal, the treachery and the violence that can only lead to division, to the collapse of the family. This essay suggests that Mwl. Nyerere's convictions about responsibility, unity and freedom can help to safeguard male-female relationships in Tanzania. Finally the essay plants its gaze on a horizon of heavenly peace and joy with an explanation of how God removes the human race from the clutches of balkanizing opportunists and establishes humanity within the grace of freedom and solidarity by his manner of creating the family.

## **1. Who Balkanizes?**

It was the 29<sup>th</sup> of January, 1999. During many months leading up to this day, Archbishop Joseph Ganda of Freetown, Sierra Leone, and I had shared many a meal together in a multi-ethnic parish on the east side of Manhattan in New York City. The Archbishop's country was immersed in a balkanizing process provoked by those who had lost their foothold in basic human ethics. Sierra Leonean rebels and their powerful associates from Liberia were trying to muscle their way into the corridors of power by showing everyone that they could do whatever their greed, lust and disdain invited them to do: kill innocent people, frighten families and drain the children of any hope for a peaceful, prosperous future.

During those meals, the Archbishop manifested a keen interest in my activities of peace, justice, faith and compassion within the war-torn Balkan region, specifically, in the part of Albania that bordered Kosovo. Hence it was not a surprise for me when he issued his invitation: "Gibson, come to Freetown... come to Sierra Leone."

So, now it was the 29<sup>th</sup> of January, 1999. I was supposed to be in Sierra Leone. I was to learn a bit later from the lips of Francis Freeman, the driver for the Missionaries of Charity in Freetown, how the events of the 29<sup>th</sup> would leave an indelible imprint on the

lives of those who aspire to show everyone that they can do whatever their compassion, purity and humility inspire them to do: forgive the guilty, give courage to families, and open the hearts of children to a new hope for a peaceful, prosperous future.

The rebels had already cut down in cold blood Sr. Maria Aloise Ansama Antony, M.C., an Indian by nationality, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January.<sup>5</sup> Freeman was present at the National Stadium where the rebels held the Sisters hostage on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Freeman was present when the rebels accosted the Sisters and said to them, “You are women; we are men. You are going to permit us to do what men do to women.” The Superior of the community reminded the rebels what the rebels would have known from the religious clothing the Sisters were wearing, “We are consecrated to Jesus, heart, soul and body. God has a purpose for you: to respect us because God has given you to us to be our brothers. We are your sisters. You are not going to touch us.” The rebels did not appreciate this uncompromising refusal in the face of their desire for sexual sin. Freeman was on hand as a witness when the rebels sprayed the Sisters with machine gun fire. Amazingly the bullets whizzed by the Sister Superior without touching her.

Her two Sisters, however, Sr. Maria Carmeline Nzemi, MC, from Kenya, and Sr. Maria Sueva Sujila Asakra, MC, from Bangladesh, succumbed immediately to the lethal impact of the gunfire. Sr. Maria Indu Anastasia Xalxo, MC, from India suffered grievous wounds that occasioned her birth into heaven in a Conakry Hospital eight days later.

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<sup>5</sup> In many countries, the Missionaries of Charity do not drive their own vehicles; they accept the volunteer service of local altruists who have proven themselves to be reliable. These drivers accompany the Sisters everywhere they go. All of my information about the Sisters’ courageous, outspoken witness to Jesus to whom they were espoused by the vow of chastity comes from Francis Freeman, the driver of the Sisters in Freetown, who lived in the Sisters’ compound, was always at their disposition, and at the time of their capture followed them – in a somewhat stealthy manner – to the National Stadium, a five-minute walk from St. Anthony Parish on the West Side of Freetown. (Francis was also my driver when I arrived in Sierra Leone.) I add that during these events of January, 1999, I had daily access to detailed information about what was happening in Freetown through a BBC hotline: Freeman’s descriptions cohered perfectly with what BBC reported.

The Sierra Leonean rebels (the Revolutionary United Front, RUF) could not have accomplished their insidious purposes without the help of powerful Liberian government officials. Under the auspices of ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States), Nigerians and other ECOMOG forces were lending their military capability to the anti-RUF effort.<sup>6</sup> The RUF, however, were slow to capitulate. During the 1990's continuing into the new millennium, both in Liberia and Sierra Leone, even teenagers and children were engaged in acts of brutality that only intensified ethnic antipathies. Control of the diamond mines seemed to be only a trigger issue. West Africans were balkanizing each other.

I myself was supposed to be in Freetown in that fateful month of January. The rebel takeover of Freetown's international airport precluded my ability to land there. In an ironic twist of events, Archbishop Ganda, captured by the rebels at more or less the same time as the Sisters, was able to escape with the help of the Spiritan Fathers. The Archbishop then proceeded to come to the United States and live with me and the Albanian Catholic community of Hartsdale, New York, until his return to Sierra Leone in October, 1999.

Archbishop Ganda and I were soon to learn that Sierra Leone did not hold exclusive rights to rape, atrocity, and treachery. In March, 1999, I squeezed into a New York restaurant booth with four friends. Having come in from the cold, I was considering with a respectful and appreciative glance these four women. There were Julie and Esther from the Philippines. Charlene was an immigrant from Puerto Rico. And the fourth was from... the restaurant owner, a man from the Balkans, interrupted my moment of loving appreciation for my friends when he said, in Albanian, with a tone of excitement and exhilaration in his voice, "Atë Gibson, the Americans have really helped the Albanians – they bombed the hell today out of the Serbians in Kosovo." The man was happy at the violence taking place on that very day in the Balkans. He believed it was a day of glory for the Albanians at the expense of an ethnic

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<sup>6</sup> ECOMOG is the acronym for the Economic Community Cease-Fire Monitoring Group.

group that he considered ruthless, namely the Serbians. In his thinking, he was a balkanizer.

His remark left me feeling very awkward and ashamed. The man had spoken as someone who intended to be loyal to his ethnic group, it is true; but he also said it to me at the very moment when I was feeling appreciation, gratitude and friendship for the fourth woman who was sitting at my side, nestled up against me in the cool of the evening: her name was Milanka, and she was Serbian. I turned to her and said, "Milanka, I had no way of foreseeing what the Albanian man was going to say: please forgive me."

Milanka consoled me: "I understand perfectly what happened... and I know your convictions only too well... you have nothing to be sorry for."

Then the five of us, the four women and myself, proceeded to do what motivated us to come to this restaurant in the first place: prepare a pilgrimage involving a sizable group of people from the Philippines, a good number of people from Albania, and a noteworthy number from other ethnic groups. All intended to visit Jerusalem and the Holy Land in preparation for the year 2000.

Yes, Albanians would be in the group; and their facilitator and guide would be Milanka, an intelligent, practical, warm-hearted Serbian, who would be doing everything necessary to make the pilgrimage memorably joyful and meaningful for the Albanians. Milanka was entirely free of balkanizing attitudes. Do I need to add the very sad note that the parish priest of these very Albanians, the priest who was hosting Archbishop Ganda, did not enjoy Milanka's freedom? In a characteristically balkanizing fashion, the priest had joined his signature to that of prominent Albanian leaders endorsing a solemn request to Pope (St.) John Paul II that the Catholic Church voice herself in favour of the bombing and so crush Milanka's family and the other Serbs. Needless to say, the Pope absolutely refused their request.

Milanka was deliberately oblivious to the balkanizing attitude of Albanian leaders, Serbian leaders, and North Atlantic Treaty Organization bombing spree organizers. She and I, with the help of our three friends who were coming from cultures that were dramatically different from ours and from the Balkanizers, concentrated our planning on a number of sites in Judea and

Galilee; but there were two that riveted our attention more than the others: (1) the Garden of Olives, where consumed by a deeply interior suffering provoked by the malice, treachery, pride, lust, greed, anger, gluttony, laziness, and jealousy that give rise to a culture of sin, Jesus chose to surrender himself to the Father's divine plan to pour forth his forgiving, redeeming love into the hearts and souls of all, especially the most treacherous and the most self-centred; and (2) Calvary, where after an excruciating day of relentless torture and humiliation, Jesus uttered an ineffably painful, human cry from within the limitless compassion of his divine Personhood, a cry of thirst that concealed within itself the relentlessly unflagging search on the part of God for each prodigal son and daughter – in other words, for all of us – and with that cry, having accomplished our redemption, he died. Nearby was the empty tomb where by the power of that same redeeming love, Jesus arose from the dead on the third day and began a new phase of his mission: together with the heavenly Father, he began to pour forth his Holy Spirit as a gift of love into the Church and into the hearts of human beings and so render himself wondrously present, always and everywhere, as a Eucharistic gift of peace.<sup>7</sup>

Archbishop Ganda returned in October to Sierra Leone. One month later, I accompanied the pilgrimage as planned to the Holy Land; and then I accepted the gifts that Julie, Esther, Charlene, the Serbian Milanka, and a number of Albanians and others were giving me to build small chapels of adoration in Sierra Leone, specifically, at the sites of Freetown's Sacred Heart cathedral, St. Anthony parish, Holy Cross parish, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary Cathedral in Bo. In Sierra Leone, Archbishop Joseph Ganda from the Mende tribe was providing sanctuaries for people from 16 ethnic groups so that God's eternal Word could draw all to Himself in a spirit of thoughtful love, ardent adoration, and a solidarity without frontiers. In the adoration chapels of Sierra Leone, Jesus manifested himself as the Eucharistic gift of peace that transforms every human person and family into the eternal Family of God, the

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Romans 5:5. The epiclesis of each Eucharistic prayer highlights the Trinitarian involvement in the transubstantiation of bread and wine into Jesus' Body and Blood.

communion of saints. Unity would replace the tendency to balkanize.

I myself finally arrived in Sierra Leone after completing my work with pilgrimages: I took special notice that one of these sanctuaries, St. Anthony, was a very short walk away from the grounds where Mother Teresa's Sisters had defended their chastity and their honour as consecrated women. These Sisters had died with the name of their closest friend, Jesus, on their lips.

It did not take me long to discover that what Francis Freeman had related to me about atrocities was barbarically true. It was my duty and the duty of the youth of Holy Cross parish to take care of the poorest of the poor that the Missionaries of Charity had left in their house. The people who prayed in the Holy Cross adoration chapel zealously participated in this daily and nightly work of love. The poorest among us were little street children whose parents had uttered their last sigh in surrender to the cruelty of the rebels. My guests at my house during my first days on the east side of Freetown were young women who came with either their own children or street children they had adopted.

The children were all missing hands or feet or both. At our parish of the Holy Cross in Kissy Mess-Mess, the rebels had assembled all the women of the neighbourhood with their children and then treacherously teased them to voice their wish for their children: would they want long-sleeve or short-sleeve? Each mother was soon to find out that long-sleeve meant the amputation of her baby's hand; short-sleeve meant the hacking off of her child's arm at the elbow. The rebels did not wince at slicing off the feet and legs of little children. Because I am not a medical doctor, I could not do anything to directly alleviate their pain: I left that to my colleague and friend, Dr. Lwanga Williams, the local physician and the president of the Holy Cross parish council.

## **2. Unity Not Possible Without Solidarity**

Whatever the atrocity may happen to be, a mass bombing, a fire set to a church filled with people who have no exit because the doors are locked, a shooting spree, an abortion or a rape, the tragedy involved is not calculable by numerical statistics. It is not the number of cases that constitute the tragedy. An RUF rebel



severs a baby's hand from her little body: this is the tragedy. In Sierra Leone, this particular tragedy was repeated tens of thousands of times. A man from Rwanda knows that the woman who is trembling with panic in her eyes is not from his tribe: he takes up his machete and cuts apart the body of the woman. This is the tragedy. In Rwanda and Burundi, this tragedy was repeated tens of thousands – hundreds of thousands – of times. Each particular instance of the tragedy is a form of balkanizing and pulls individuals, groups, tribes and nations towards the diabolically divisive.

Mwalimu Julius Nyerere wished to foreclose all possibilities of such a tragedy. He foresaw the intricate psychological and ethical link that must join together two principles that are fundamental to human development: one is freedom; the other is unity. Freedom and unity are necessary for individuals, families, villages, regions, countries, and even continents so that they may stabilize themselves as continuing sources of encouragement for every brother and sister within their purview. Freedom and unity are the atmosphere that today's human beings must breathe in order to engage in the universal pursuit of the authentic happiness for which God created them.

Mwl. Nyerere was convinced that people are free when they are able to accept the responsibility of choosing/electing who is going to govern them.<sup>8</sup> He believed that this freedom and this responsibility cohere with the human pursuit of happiness when all exercise their freedom for the purpose of seeking and constructing unity with their neighbours. When freedom and responsibility coalesce with concrete efforts to unify, the consequence is what Pope (St.) John Paul II called "solidarity". The consequence of solidarity is peace.

Mwalimu Julius Nyerere's argument for a Federation of East African countries highlights the principle of solidarity, i.e., that all are responsible for all.<sup>9</sup> Mwl. Nyerere expressed it this way:

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<sup>8</sup> J. NYERERE, "Freedom and Unity", 40.

<sup>9</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Encyclical Letter "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis"* (30 Dec 1987), 38.

The balkanization of Africa is a source of weakness to our continent. The forces of imperialism and of neo-imperialism will find their own strength in this basic weakness of our continent. Surely, one would have expected that if we have a chance to undo part of the harm that has already been done by this balkanization of our continent, we would not hesitate in taking that chance. My contention is that our best chance of removing this balkanization of East Africa is a few months from now, after all countries have got elected governments.

... We have always been advocates of unity. In our Nationalist Organisations we have constantly warned ourselves against the snares of the imperialists whose policy is "divide and rule." Whenever we have asked for our right to govern ourselves it has been the imperialist who has told us that we are not ready because we still have tribal, religious, communal and other differences. At the same time it has been the imperialist who has encouraged these divisions in order to continue to rule a weak and divided people. It is the fellow who fell into this snare of the "divide and rule" apostles whom we rightly regarded as a stooge of the imperialists.

When did this rule change? Are we now going to regard as true African Nationalists those who say we are not ready to unite? Are we now to regard them as our true heroes those who join the imperialists and the neo-imperialists in perpetuating the balkanization of East Africa? Are we going to regard as stooges those who are now carrying the battle for unity beyond those artificial boundaries created by the imperialists to more natural boundaries of our own creation?

The answers to these questions are obvious... Those of us who want to see a united East Africa as soon as a free choice can be made are being absolutely consistent. We have nothing to explain or apologize for ...

If we have a chance to bequeath to our children a free and united East Africa, should we treat that chance lightly, or take it seriously as all true patriots should?<sup>10</sup>

Mwl. Nyerere, therefore, looked forward with prophetic vision at an Africa that could live within the matrix of the family. As I have already indicated, he published this article in 1964; but the content of the article gives a prominent place to his noble-hearted plea to make 1961 the Year of Independence in Unity. This suggests that he crafted the article well before 1964.

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<sup>10</sup> J. NYERERE, *Freedom and Unity*, 41-42.

### 3. St. John Paul II and Mwl. Nyerere: Unity of Conviction

Even if 35 or 37 years separate the publication of his convictions from Pope St. John Paul II's incisive pleas for solidarity in his 1987 encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, it is not difficult to see that the Pope was enunciating ideas necessary for the implementation of the unity that Mwl. Nyerere envisioned. It had only been two years that Mwl. Nyerere put aside the reins of government, but his heart still burned zealously not only for Tanzania, but for Africa and for the world at the moment that the Pope published this encyclical. We may surmise that Mwl. Nyerere perceived with brotherly affection the Pope's staunch support of his desires for freedom and unity; and perhaps the Mwalimu's eyes even sparkled with profound joy when he acquainted himself with the Pope's elucidations concerning the marvellous array of grace and blessing that God infuses into the hearts and minds of those who take solidarity seriously, that is to say, as a top priority in their lives.

Throughout his pontificate, the Pope manifested to the world by his spoken and written words, by his decisions and by his daily actions, that there was one all-embracing conviction that anchored him in everything God revealed about the human person. He expressed this conviction when he was a bishop in his 1960 publication *Love and Responsibility*. He first stated it in a negative way: "The person is the kind of good which does not admit of use and cannot be treated as an object of use and as such the means to an end."<sup>11</sup> In positive terms, he formulated his conviction as follows: "The person is a good towards which the only proper and adequate attitude is love."<sup>12</sup> He consistently referred to this conviction throughout his life, both in its negative and positive expressions, as the "personalistic norm."

In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, then, the Pope made some observations about actions and attitudes that are hostile to the will

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<sup>11</sup> K. WOJTYLA, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. by H.T. Willetts. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1981 (originally published in Polish in 1960), 41.

<sup>12</sup> K. WOJTYLA, *Love and Responsibility*, 41.

of God, violate the personalistic norm and hence can become both absolutist and imperialist. Here is what the Pope said:

... Among the actions and attitudes opposed to the will of God, the good of neighbour and the “structures” created by them, two are very typical: on the one hand, the all-consuming desire for profit, and on the other, the thirst for power, with the intention of imposing one’s will upon others. In order to characterize better each of these attitudes, one can add the expression: “at any price.” In other words, we are faced with the absolutizing of human attitudes with all its possible consequences...

Obviously, not only individuals fall victim to this double attitude of sin; nations and blocs can do so too... If certain forms of modern “imperialism” were considered in the light of these moral criteria, we would see that hidden behind certain decisions, apparently inspired only by economics or politics, are real forms of idolatry: of money, ideology, class, technology.<sup>13</sup>

Having specified the problem, the Pope hastens to point out that there is only one true foundation of an absolutely binding ethic: God’s will. Even if people, regions, or nations were not to live with an explicit faith, it would be hoped that they could understand the urgent need for responsibility in securing a more human life for their fellow human beings, in other words, in ensuring a full development of each individual and of all people. The Pope bears witness to a growing awareness of the interdependence among individuals and nations: it is this growing awareness of interdependence that stirs within the hearts of many people emotions, convictions, and a readiness to act upon hearing the news of injustices and violations of human rights committed in distant countries, countries which perhaps they will never visit and will always lie outside the range of their immediate experience.

It is above all a question of interdependence, sensed as a system determining relationships in the contemporary world, in its economic, cultural, political and religious elements, and accepted as a moral category. When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a “virtue,” is **solidarity**. This then is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit

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<sup>13</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 37.

oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all. This determination is based on the solid conviction that what is hindering full development is that desire for profit and that thirst for power already mentioned. These attitudes and "structures of sin" are only conquered – presupposing the help of divine grace – by a diametrically opposed attitude: a commitment to the good of one's neighbour with the readiness, in the Gospel sense, to "lose oneself" for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him, and to "serve him" instead of oppressing him for one's own advantage (cf. Mt. 10:40-42; 20:25; Mk. 10:42-45; Lk. 22: 25-27) ...

Solidarity helps us to see the "other" – whether a person, people, or nation – not just as some kind of instrument, with a work capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then discarded when no longer useful, but as our "neighbour," a "helper" (cf. Gen. 2:18-20), to be made a sharer, on a par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God. Hence the importance of reawakening the religious awareness of individuals and peoples. Thus the exploitation, oppression and annihilation of others are excluded. These facts, in the present division of the world into opposing blocs, combine to produce the danger of war and an excessive preoccupation with personal security, often to the detriment of the autonomy, freedom of decision, and even the territorial integrity of the weaker nations situated within the so-called "areas of influence" or "safety belts" ...

The goal of peace, so desired by everyone, will certainly be achieved through the putting into effect of social and international justice, but also through the practice of the virtues which favor togetherness, and which teach us to live in unity, by giving and receiving, a new society and a better world.<sup>14</sup>

Both Pope John Paul II and Mwalimu Julius Nyerere were quite aware that individuals, peoples, and nations were going to have to change habits deeply imbedded in their cultural and religious mindsets if Africa and the world were to move towards the freedom and unity – the togetherness in peace – that both envisioned.

The alert reader will notice that among the words the Pope chose to explain his notion of solidarity are "neighbour," "helper," and "sharer... in the banquet of life." At the time of the writing of *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, the Pope had already explained to the

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<sup>14</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38-39.

Church and to the world that the word “helper” designates the gift that God had in mind when he created the woman to be a companion for the man. Having made the decision, “I will create for him a helper,” God gave a most precious gift to Adam: that of a woman, Eve, and through her the sacred opportunity of uniting in a love that, full of procreative possibility, could bring forth a new human being, a child, also recognizable as a gift, as one who would grow and develop as a “helper” and a future “sharer” in the heavenly communion, identifiable as a “neighbour” to all his or her fellow human beings. True unity – authentic solidarity – is possible if each human being sees the “other” as a “helper” precisely with the purity of vision that Adam and Eve enjoyed when they discovered each other as a gift.

#### **4. We are to be Helpers and Sharers for Each Other**

In very concise fashion, the Pope cites the very verses of Genesis (2:18-20), that he placed at the centre of the analysis of what a man and a woman should be for each other not only in the state of marriage, but in the state of chaste friendship.<sup>15</sup> Each discovers oneself in the other within the freedom of the sacrificial gift of self. By their mutual self-giving, each becomes a “helper” for the other. When a husband and wife give themselves to each other with the intention of living for each other’s true good, for each other’s eternal happiness, anchoring their family within God’s gracious will, the unifying love that they express in marital intercourse leaves its imprint even physically on the child born of that mutual self-gift. As Pope St. John Paul explained in his General Audiences on the Original Unity of Man and Woman, the nuptial meaning of the human body reveals the person to be a gift for the other, and through union with the other, to be a creative source of life and goodness for the human family.

Pope St. John Paul does not fail to mention another issue that must be studied and resolved if solidarity is to be real rather than

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, “Original Unity of Man and Woman”, in *Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media 1997, 25-102.

feigned. That issue was also dear to the heart of Mwl. Nyerere. About what issue are we speaking? That of *work*.

Pope John Paul broaches the topic of working conditions that degrade the human person who is the subject of work. Solidarity among workers becomes imperative when the circumstances of employment degrade human subjects rather than affirming them in their dignity as persons. Solidarity is necessary to offset the tendency of the rich, powerful and influential to impoverish their employees not only through substandard wages but even more through long working hours and working conditions that are intolerable to physical and mental health. For some families and societies, unemployment seems to be an unavoidable prospect; and the human person feels his or her unemployment as a scourge to self-worth.

Whatever the condition or circumstance of the worker, there remains the inevitability of toil:

Toil is something that is universally known, for it is universally experienced. It is familiar not only to agricultural workers, who spend long days working the land, which sometimes "bears thorns and thistles", but also to those who work in mines and quarries, to steelworkers at their blast-furnaces, to those who work in builders' yards and in construction work, often in danger of injury or death. It is likewise familiar to those at an intellectual workbench; to scientists; to those who bear the burden of grave responsibility for decisions that will have a vast impact on society. It is familiar to doctors and nurses, who spend days and nights at their patients' bedside. It is familiar to women, who, sometimes without proper recognition on the part of society and even of their own families, bear the daily burden and responsibility for their homes and the upbringing of their children. *It is familiar to all workers* and, since work is a universal calling, it is familiar to everyone.

And yet, in spite of all this toil – perhaps, in a sense, because of it – work is a good thing for the human person... because through work he or she *not only transforms nature*, adapting it to his/her own needs, but he/she also *achieves fulfilment* as a human being and indeed, in a sense, becomes "more a human being."

... It is well known that it is possible to use work in various ways *against the human being*, that it is possible to punish the human person with the system of forced labour in concentration camps, that work can be made into a means for oppressing the person, and that in various ways it is possible to exploit human labour, that is to say the

worker. All this pleads in favour of the moral obligation to link industriousness as a virtue with the social order of work, which will enable the person to become, in work, “more a human being” and not be degraded by it not only because of the wearing out of his physical strength (which, at least up to a certain point, is inevitable), but especially through damage to the dignity and subjectivity that are proper to him or her.<sup>16</sup>

It is at this point that the Pope introduces the necessary center of concentration for all who are concerned about the rights and dignities of workers: the human family. It comes as no surprise that the Pope and Mwl. Nyerere fully harmonize with each other when it comes to the place of work in the family. The Pope expresses his convictions this way:

... Work constitutes a foundation for the formation of *family life*, which is a natural right and something that the human being is called to. These two spheres of values – one linked to work and the other consequent on the family nature of human life – must be properly united and must properly permeate each other. In a way, work is a condition for making it possible to found a family, since the family requires the means of subsistence which man normally gains through work. Work and industriousness also influence the whole *process of education* in the family, for the very reason that everyone “becomes a human being” through, among other things, work, and becoming a human being is precisely the main purpose of the whole process of education.

... In fact, the family is simultaneously *a community made possible by work* and the *first school of work*, within the home, for every person.<sup>17</sup>

## 5. The Family: The First School of Freedom and Unity

Mwl. Nyerere’s understanding of the family weaves together in exquisite fashion three fundamental values of human life: love (the personalistic norm), sharing, and work. It is to be noted that these are precisely the values that define who human beings are for each other within the contours of God’s design: they are “helpers” for

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<sup>16</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Encyclical Letter “Laborem Exercens”* (14 Sep 1981), 9.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*, 10.



each other, "gifts" for each other, and sharers both in the common burdens that they suffer together and in the material, educational, intellectual, and moral benefits that accrue from their shared labour.

Mwl. Nyerere espoused precisely the family values that seem to harmonize quite graciously with the lifestyle patterns required by the virtue of solidarity.

Every household in Tanzania is, or should be, well acquainted with Mwl. Nyerere's social ethics for the family:

... African family life was everywhere based on certain practices and attitudes which together meant basic equality, freedom and unity. It was these principles which virtually excluded the idea that one member of the extended family could kill another, or steal from another – it was not any special African virtue. And there were three vital factors to it. There was an attitude of mutual respect and obligation which bound the members together – an attitude which might be described as love, provided it is understood that this word does not imply romance, or even necessarily close personal affection. The property which is important to the family, and thus to the individual members of it, is held in common. And every member of the family accepts the obligation to work.

These three principles weld the family into a unit which is so obviously important to the individual members that each individual thinks of himself, and of others, in the framework of their membership of the unit. A man or woman knows that he or she is a unique person with private desires. But he also knows that his actions must, for his own good, be restricted to those which are consistent with the good of his social unit – his family. The institution of the family, and its procedures, then encourage that attitude of respect and mutual obligation, and through these means there is created a society which can be harmonious and beneficial for all members equally.<sup>18</sup>

Sharing is paramount:

It is, and must be, 'our' house, 'our' food, 'our' land, for only under these conditions can equality exist among the members. Personal property does, of course, exist and is accepted. But it takes second place in the order of things. Certainly no member of the family goes short of food or shelter in order that personal property may be acquired by another member. It is family property which matters, both

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<sup>18</sup> J. NYERERE, *Freedom and Unity: Uhuru na Umoja*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1966, 10-11.

to the family as such and to the individuals in the family. And because it is family property all members have an equal right to a share in its use, and all have a right to participate in the process of sharing – in so far as time has not created its own acceptable divisions. Indeed, so strong is this concept of ‘sharing’ that even in relation to private property there develops an expectation of use in case of need; the distinction, however, remains. In the case of family property each individual has a right; in the case of private property there may be an expectation but there is no automatic right.

... Yet, as it was the right of sharing which served to maintain and strengthen the social unit and make it worth-while to all its members, so there was a corresponding common duty. Every member of the social unity had the obligation to contribute to the pool of things which were to be shared – in other words, every member of the family was expected to work and accepted the responsibility of working... the obligation to work is a recognized part of society, as unquestioned as the right of sharing. If one member appears to be doing less than is warranted by his size and strength, it will be made clear to him in no uncertain fashion that he is not doing enough. He may not agree or he may be discontented with the type of work demanded of him; but he will not question the right of his family to demand work... His equality with other members of the society, his interest in them and their interest in him – all these things he recognizes. And he will accept, at least in theory, that without this universal acceptance of an obligation to work the social unit itself, and he as a member of it, will suffer.<sup>19</sup>

Mirroring Mwl. Nyerere’s conviction about sharing, Archbishop Desmond Tutu offers a concise synthesis of what a human person is from the African point of view – a synthesis that dovetails meaningfully with precious insights that pour forth from the soul of Pope St. John Paul II as he ponders solidarity and its necessity for a person to become human.

This is what Archbishop Tutu has to say:

[Ubuntu] speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, “Yu, u nobuntu,” “Hey, so-and-so has Ubuntu.” Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, “My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.” We belong in a bundle of life. We say, “A person is a person through other persons.” It is not, “I think therefore I am.” It

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<sup>19</sup> J. NYERERE, *Uhuru na Umoja*, 11-14.

says rather: "I am human because I belong. I participate, I share." A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are.<sup>20</sup>

In *The Acting Person*, Pope St. John Paul expresses precisely the same conviction when he discusses solidarity and the notion of "neighbour". I live by the virtue of solidarity when I remain constantly ready to accept and realize my share in the community because I am a member of that particular community. It must be emphasized, however, that when I accept the attitude of solidarity, I do what I am supposed to do not only because of my membership in the group, not only because I belong to the family, but because I have the benefit of all in view: I am doing it for the common good. My awareness of the common good leads me to look beyond my particular share in the community. The Pope explains:

That acute sense of the needs of the community which distinguishes the attitude of solidarity brings out over and above any particularism or divisions its trait of complementarity: this consists in the readiness of every member of a community to "complement" by his or her action what is done by other members of the community. The trait of complementarity is in a way an intrinsic element in the very nature of participation... Complementarity helps explain why we see in the attitude of solidarity an intrinsic manifestation of participation as a property of the person. It is this attitude that allows the human being to find self-fulfilment in complementing others.

...The human person is capable not only of partaking in the life of a community, of being and acting together with others, but he or she is also capable of participating in the humanity of others. It is on this ability to participate in the humanity of every human being that all participation in a community is based and it is there that it receives its personal meaning. This is what is ultimately contained in the notion of **neighbour**.

... Participation is closely associated with both the community and the personalistic value. This is precisely why it cannot be manifested solely by membership in some community but through membership

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<sup>20</sup> D. TUTU, *No Future without Forgiveness*, New York: Doubleday 1999, 31.

must reach to the humanity of every man, woman and child. Only because of the share in humanity itself, which is indicated in the notion of neighbour, does the dynamic property of participation attain its personal depth as well as universal dimension. Only then can we claim that participation serves not just the fulfilment of some individual person, but that it also serves the fulfilment of every person in the community, indeed, *because* of his membership in the community. We may also say that this participation serves the fulfilment of persons in any community in which human beings act and exist. The ability to share in the humanity itself of every person is the very core of all participation and the condition of the personalistic value of all acting and existing “together with others.”<sup>21</sup>

Pope St. John Paul II emphasizes the fact that participation involves the efficacious act that a human being chooses to perform according to the norms of truth while integrating his or her own somatic and emotional experience into the choice. The choice involves integrating: the choice, in other words, governs determinations concerning physical activity including eating, drinking, sleeping, manual work, and marital acts of love; and the choice governs the intensity and type of emotions that pull at the person’s heart and nerves. The choice to act, then, fulfils the person. But at the same time this choice and the ensuing action is an “acting together with others.”

Each person is free in his or her choice: the person exists for his/her own sake. Each person is self-determining in the choice: the choice corresponds to his or her vocation and state of life. Yet the choice is also cohering with the aspirations and choices of others to fulfil themselves according to the norms of truth. I am myself when I am with others.

I am fulfilling myself as a free, good human being when I contribute to the group’s fulfilment as a community – a family –

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<sup>21</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *The Acting Person*, with unpublished corrections by the author. Steubenville, OH: Franciscan University of Steubenville. Because I was using this unpublished manuscript with the Pope’s handwritten corrections, my wording is a bit different from the published version translated by A. Potocki. (New York: Reidel 1979). The Pope actually changed the page numbering but since this corrected manuscript is rather inaccessible to the general public, I kept the numbering of the Potocki translation. This particular citation is from pages 342, 350-351.

of human beings. I find my personal fulfilment precisely in the progress that others in the community are making to fulfil themselves as free human beings worthy of dignity and respect. The consequent harmony of all those who participate in the pursuit of the common good is a harmony that corresponds to the conviction: *I am truly myself when you are truly yourself. I am freely myself when I am indeed 'for you' – i.e., when I freely make of myself a gift for you. When you develop, I develop. When you anchor your life in a thoughtful hope for the future, I live my togetherness with you by anchoring my life in that very same hope.* What the Pope means by solidarity with the one who is a “helper,” a “sharer,” and a “neighbour” harmonizes symphonically with Archbishop Tutu’s explanation of Ubuntu and with Mwl. Nyerere’s transparent emphasis on sharing as a focal fundamental family value.

On the fortieth anniversary of the World Day of Peace, the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, 2008, Pope Benedict XVI punctuated in a manner that is wonderfully creative the insights of these leaders who preceded him:

The first form of communion between persons is that born of the love of a man and a woman who decide to enter a stable union in order to build together a new family. But the peoples of the earth, too, are called to build relationships of solidarity and cooperation among themselves, as befits members of the one human family...

The social community, if it is to live in peace, is also called to draw inspiration from the values on which the family community is based. This is as true for local communities as it is for national communities; it is also true for the international community itself, for the human family which dwells *in that common house which is the earth*. Here, however, we cannot forget that the family comes into being from the responsible and definitive “yes” of a man and a woman, and it continues to live from the conscious “yes” of the children who gradually join it. The family community, in order to prosper, needs the generous consent of all its members. This realization also needs to become a shared conviction on the part of all those called to form the *common human family*. We need to say our own “yes” to this vocation which God has inscribed in our very nature.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace* (1 Jan 2008), 1, 6.

It must be said at this point that Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Pope St. John Paul II are not the only voices that speak of these fundamental values that weave human beings together into a family. There is another voice that offers the criterion for deciding what is human or what is not human, what holds the family together in unity and solidarity and what divides the family. Indeed it is the voice of the One who defines, creates, sustains and fulfils the human family in the full variety of its dimensions. Who is this voice? It is God.

It is the nature of love to give. When a person receives a beautiful gift, a gift that the giver has obviously measured with thoughtfulness and grace, the receiver has no qualms about concluding: I am loved. When the receiver responds with gratitude – whether it is by word, gesture, or a gift in return – the giver may dispel all doubts from his or her mind and conclude: I am appreciated. I, too, am loved. Now let us consider what God has to say about gift-giving.

In the state of original innocence, the human person recognizes himself to be in partnership with God.<sup>23</sup> When God wishes him to seek and choose a being who is “fit for him” – “a helper” – he already understands that God intends to give him a gift that he would be able to appreciate and cherish. He expresses this partnership with God when he accepts as a gift the woman who is “bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh.” It is obviously a joyful moment for Adam when he sees Eve within the truth, the beauty and the goodness of the God who gave her existence. In their togetherness, the first man and the first woman complete the image and likeness of the Triune God. Just as the Father and the Son live their unity in the Holy Spirit, the first man and the first woman live their unity in the mutual love and joy that they experience in each other’s company.

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, “Original Unity of Man and Woman”, 57-72. Within these pages, John Paul explains not only that fact that the first human beings are living within a milieu that is totally gift, but also that they understand each other to be a gift from God, a gift for each other. They are most themselves when they are in unity with each other. It is this unity that makes them an image and likeness of God.

Adam and Eve live their union not only on the level of physicality but even more so on the level of their interiority. From within their interior life they recognize each other to be truly created "for each other." To think of his existence independently of this "for each other" is not an option that Adam considers. Similarly to think of her existence independently of this "for each other" is not an option that Eve considers. They behold each other in the self-revelation inscribed in their bodies and they recognize each other to be persons.

They recognize each other by means of the nuptial meaning of the body. What does this expression, "the nuptial meaning of the body," mean? The nuptial meaning of the body is precisely this: the body expresses by its very constitution the fact that this is a person "for" the other meant to enjoy a unity of love with the other in the freedom of self-gift to each other. By its nuptial meaning, the body also expresses the fact that the freedom of the mutual self-gift is a creative freedom: the body expresses the maternal potential of the mother and the paternal potential of the father. Genesis 2:24 seems to punctuate a reality where the man leaves his family to cling to his wife – a free decision to give himself so completely to the woman that they both become one flesh. The dynamic of the verse seems to indicate, too, that Eve makes a fully free gift of herself when she clings to her husband in loving unity.

God intends this loving unity to be a creative unity: just as God created them in his image and likeness, they are to procreate a child in their image and likeness. The child not only bears a physical resemblance to each parent; the child also bears an imprint on his or her soul of the love – or lack of it – that the parents expressed towards each other at the moment of marital intercourse. If the parents give themselves to each other as a gift, the child will feel that he or she has entered the world as a gift. The child will feel his or her uniqueness, irreplaceability and irreducibility. The child will feel himself or herself to be a fully living person, intended by God for his or her own sake.

This is the reality that the Neo-Thomist Edith Stein expressed so succinctly:

The child is the fruit of mutual self-giving and, more than that: it is the very embodiment of the 'gift.' Each of the two spouses receives in the child an 'image' of his or her own being as well as the gift of the other spouse's being. The gift (i.e., the child) is a third person, an independent creature and, as a 'creature' in the full sense of the word, a gift of God. Is there a further possibility of knowing what this creature receives, at the moment of conception, immediately from God, and what it receives mediately from its parents? Does the new structure, which owes its corporeal existence to the common generative will of the parents, receive from them also the form of its soul, a form that corresponds to the particular individuality that is alive in the generative act and to the particular nature of the parents' oneness [*Einssein*]? Or with the soul of the child, does God *give* to the parents a gift proportionate to their nature, in the manner he gave to the first male a proportionate female companion?

... Like Mary, every human mother is called to be mother with her whole soul, so as to pour the abundant riches of her soul into the soul of her child. And the more of the nature of the spouse she has in loving self-surrender received into her own self, the more the individuality of the child through her mediatorship, will be co-determined by the individuality of the father.<sup>24</sup>

If the parents were not expecting or wanting a child, the child can feel unwanted even years later. If the parents were using each other and not giving themselves to each other in the free, mutual gift of self, the child may grow with the utilitarian attitude that the

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<sup>24</sup> E. STEIN, *Finite and Eternal Being, An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*. Washington, DC: ICS Publications 2002, 515-517. This particular citation finds its way into many articles that discuss the human person as a gift proceeding from love – God's love and the parents' love. See, for example, J. GIBSON, "Philosophy's Point of Closure: Kadiatu and Mama Princess as African Progenitors of Hope", *Africa Tomorrow* 17/1 (2015) 23-54. The citation derives its impact from the growing awareness that the attitudes of love and self-gift that motivate the unitive dimension of marital intercourse exercise a mysterious but real influence on the soul of the child even from the moment of conception. Similarly, and tragically, a utilitarian attitude on the part of the man or the woman that seeks to enjoy the other person as a sexual object and so disgrace the other person (usually the woman) can exercise an impact on the child who may feel that he or she is an unwanted side effect of an act of sexual intercourse. This observation becomes extraordinarily meaningful for the case of Sister Lucy that I will discuss shortly.



human person, if apparently an obstruction to one's longing for self-satisfaction, is dispensable.

## **6. Are We Living Within God's Vision of the Human Family?**

In the state of original innocence, Adam and Eve were not utilitarians. The fact that they were living entirely within the ethos of mutual self-gift, a self-gift that was complete in its transparent love and trust... the fact that they were a mutual self-gift for each other justified the peace that they enjoyed within the hidden recesses of their hearts. When they saw each other in their nakedness, they knew they were destined to be a free, lifelong gift of creative love for each other. They were to become one flesh within the freedom and the creativity of the gift, and so they were feeling no shame (cf. Genesis 2:25). They were living within a state of holiness that placed them within God's vision: God beheld them in their nakedness, and he was not ashamed that he created them. They were very good.

Is he ashamed that he created us? That depends upon our fidelity to the personalistic norm in everything that we are sensing, feeling, thinking, understanding, willing, deciding, and doing. The love that Adam and Eve manifested fully in their communion with each other – the love and the grace that came forth from God – is the same love that acts in a supremely redemptive manner to free us from our reluctance to entrust ourselves to God and to each other with freedom, peace and joy.

The human person cannot give God strict justice because everything that the human person has received – the existence of the universe, the existence of the natural order, his or her own existence – remains in the nature of gift. To give God "his due" is impossible for the human person. Justice, however, is not the foundation upon which God relates to the human person. God's justice proceeds from his love: he is the eternally creative Being, whose goodness is diffusive of itself. His very essence is to be active love. The very notion of "gift" alerts the human person to the fundamental reality that his or her relationship to God is a love that is always in act. The personalistic norm does not originate with Pope St. John Paul II but rather originates with God. Love is the

only appropriate attitude towards a person; and, as a Trinity of Persons eternally in communion with each other, God is the absolutely perfect Personal Being.

The person who is really human loves God; his or her very existence as a gift requires the human person to give himself in love to God the Creator by living the vocation appropriate to him or her in the order of persons. Living one's vocation is to participate in God's vision of what the human person is supposed to look like: someone who participates in God's own creative power. To love is to create: and to love creatively is to accept the natural order, including and especially the order of persons, as God's precious gift. To be in solidarity with every person, i.e., with the wholehearted conviction that each and every person is someone whom God has given to me to be my brother, my sister – to engage myself fully in a lifestyle of solidarity is to become a truly human person.

The originator/designer of the order of persons is God. If we were to probe the word of God that reveals to us our origins, our beginnings, we would not fail to notice that God places a particular emphasis on spousal love. Adam and Eve are an image and likeness of the triune God in their fidelity to each other as spouses.

Spouses participate in God's creative activity by making of themselves a reciprocal, total self-gift to each other. The "self" that the man gives to his wife is one whom God has created as a potential father. Similarly the "self" that the woman gives to her husband is one whom God has created as a potential mother. God exercises his love by creating, redeeming and sanctifying human persons. Spouses understand by the very nature of their love in its masculine and feminine dimensions that they truly help each other to be who they are when they remain open to their procreative potential and then help to develop the interiority of the children they have created by continuing to love each other in the manner of self-sacrificing self-donation.<sup>25</sup> Through the parents' love for each other, the child begins to see what God's redeeming and sanctifying love looks like.

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. K. WOJTYLA, *Love and Responsibility*, 224-228.

The parents' very being as a "we," as a united co-subject, becomes a "yes" to the Creator-God when their love expresses itself according to their identity as lovers with the will to create. God does not only give them the will to maintain each other as goods already in existence: they can creatively and freely bestow upon each other new goods. The one who mirrors their mutual love and their mutual self-gift is the one who proceeds precisely from their "we" – from their "one-fleshness", namely, their child.

Whatever the vocation may be, one gives justice to the Creator when one recognizes that fidelity to the natural order as God has intended it, is at the very same time, a continuing act of one's fidelity to oneself and to his fellow human beings as participants in the vision of God, who always beholds that the order he has created is very good. To intentionally obstruct this order – for example, by defiling the procreative potential of marital love through the use of contraceptives – would be an insult to the Love that created it. Because it is a defiance of the Creator's sovereignty, such obstruction probably deserves to be called a sacrilege. Pope Benedict XVI emphasized the respect we need to have for the Creator, i.e., the attitude of responsibility we must have before God:

We do not live alongside one another purely by chance; all of us are progressing along a common path as men and women, and thus as brothers and sisters. Consequently, it is essential that we should all be committed to living our lives in an attitude of responsibility before God, acknowledging him as the deepest source of our own existence and that of others. By going back to this supreme principle we are able to perceive the unconditional worth of each human being, and thus to lay the premises for building a humanity at peace. Without this transcendent foundation society is a mere aggregation of neighbours, not a community of brothers and sisters called to form one great family.<sup>26</sup>

You, dear reader, may have been asking yourself, "What is the link between the creative love that a man and a woman share with each other as spouses, on the one hand, and, on the other, the pursuit of freedom, unity, solidarity, and the formation of one

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<sup>26</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace* (1 Jan 2008), 6.

global human family that motivates the social ethics of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, Pope St. John Paul II and Archbishop Desmond Tutu?”

One link is this: by the descriptions that the word of God offers us in the Book of Genesis, we may open our eyes to the fact that the social values at play are not unreachable ideals. Quite to the contrary they are the fundamental reality of human society *before* human beings make the choice to mistrust God and each other. This is why Mwl. Nyerere was simply giving a forthright response to those who were inclined to accuse his manner of thinking as “idealistic”. Those who were doing the accusing pointed out that it is quite difficult to be a family if you do not even know the people in your own social groups. How can one expect a realistic fidelity on the part of all men, women and children to perennially traditional African family values if the social groups are so large that people fail to consider themselves to be a family? Mwl. Nyerere’s response:

This criticism is nonsensical. Social principles are, by definition, ideals at which to strive and by which to exercise self-criticism. The question to ask is not whether they are capable of achievement, which is absurd, but whether a society of free men can do without them. Like democracy, they are easier to approximate to in smaller societies than in large ones. But like democracy, they remain equally valid for both small and large societies – for both traditional and modern Africa.

It was not innate goodness which promoted and maintained these principles in traditional Africa. They continued because the whole system of education taught them and supported them. They were, and mostly still are in relation to the family, the basic values which a child absorbs from his parents, his elder relations and the whole social organization. The child is indoctrinated with these concepts in practical terms; he is told ‘that is your share’, ‘go to your brother’ ... And he is criticized and punished if he disregards the courtesies due to other members of the social group, or fails to share the remaining food with a late-comer, or ignores the small duties entrusted to him. The young man and the young woman are taught these principles again in their tribal initiation. The principles, without being analysed, permeate and form the purpose of the whole educational system of the tribal society.

... The ideal has never yet been attained; it may never be. But the fact that murders continue in every society does not prevent every

society trying to eliminate them, to reduce their causes and discourage the expression of man's violent instincts. Similarly, in regard to the wider purposes of society; we have to organize our institutions and build attitudes which promote universal human dignity and social equality. In other words we have to promote the growth, and encourage the expression, of the attitude which asks a particular kind of question when considering decisions. The question "What profit would I myself get?" must be socially discouraged; it must be replaced by the question 'What benefit, and what loss, will be obtained by the people who make up this society?'

... We have to work towards a position where each person realizes that his rights in society – above the basic needs of every human being – must come second to the overriding need of human dignity for all; and we have to establish the kind of social organization which reduces personal temptations above that level to a minimum.

The spreading of such attitudes and the introduction of such institutions must be an important purpose of the policies of the Government of Tanzania.

Mwl. Nyerere's overriding concern that the self-centred desire for profit and the insistence on services for oneself may eclipse the traditional African respect for human dignity enrooted in the three family principles of love, sharing and work – i.e., his concern that a brash individualist utilitarianism might outshine and even eclipse the personalistic norm – carries us to a juncture that requires a realistic assessment, on axiological grounds, of the current social trends. In short, in the Africa of today, is balkanizing a threat not to be taken lightly? Or may we face the future with the conviction that balkanizing tendencies are not really intruding upon the depths of the African soul?

It is to be remembered that the tragedy of violating social principles of love, sharing and work – a tragedy that breeds sadness and frustration with direct acts of balkanization – is not to be calculated in terms of numbers. How often? How widespread? These points of interrogation do not measure the tragedy. The tragedy is that one human being has violated the value of love, has scorned the value of sharing, has avoided his or her duty to serve others by working. The tragedy is that the choice to disdain these principles has pushed one African youth into a perverse lifestyle. This tragedy multiplies when many African young people follow the same perverse pattern.

In *The 2<sup>nd</sup> South African National Youth Risk Behaviour Survey 2008* South Africa's Medical Research Council (MRC), in collaboration with the Departments of Health and Education in South Africa, issued statistics for a number of youth risk-related behaviours including sexual behaviour outside of marriage.<sup>27</sup> Learners from grades 8, 9, 10, and 11 constituted the study sample; all learners were selected from public schools in the nine provinces of South Africa. The total number of schools sampled were 251, which amounts to about 28 schools per province. All in all, 10,270 learners participated.

The Survey reports that 39.5 percent of 16-year-old teenagers already had united with each other in at least one act of sexual intercourse. Those who were 18 or 19 years old who had already experienced an act of sexual intercourse outnumbered those who did not (50.7 percent for 18-year-old teenagers and 57.9 percent for 19-year-old teenagers). If you belonged to the 13-year-old age group, there was an 18.8 percent chance that you had already united yourself with a partner of the opposite sex in an act of sexual intercourse. In all cases the males who reported having an experience of sexual intercourse outnumbered the females. This would seem to mean that the females involved in this kind of sexual activity were giving themselves to more than one male partner. It could also mean that females felt too much shame to disclose that they were sexually active.

How many teenagers had already introduced violence into their intimate relationships? This same survey reports that among 14-year-old teenagers who had experienced sexual intercourse, 11.9% had procured an abortion or had a partner who procured an abortion.

When we put the survey to one side for the moment and probe with more rigour into what is happening between men and women in South Africa, we reach the sad conclusion: there is indeed a severe Balkanizing happening precisely within male-female relationships. The sexual misconduct outside of marriage is not

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<sup>27</sup> S.P. REDDY – *al.*, *Umhente Uhlaba Usamila – The South African Youth Risk Behaviour Survey 2008*. Cape Town: South African Medical Research Council, 2010, especially pp. 30-33. All the data reported here are from this document.

leading to a lifelong commitment of mutual trust and loving fidelity. It is anti-love, anti-sharing, anti-work – a true laziness of the will that does not want to make the moral effort to fulfill one's duty towards precisely the person God has given as a gift.

A man and a woman who may be married, may be cohabiting, may be associating themselves sexually with each other as they meet from time to time, may be saying to each other that they will marry in the future... individuals who are manifesting in their behaviour that for one reason or another they are attracted to each other and want to be with each other... it is precisely this relationship that society calls "intimate" that has become the occasion of violent death for one of the partners, usually the woman.

The most thought-provoking reports are coming from South Africa's experts. I am referring to the reports that concerned, intelligent and forthright forensic and medical experts are promulgating after extremely cautious and rigorous analysis. Shanaaz Matthews, Naeemah Abrahams and Rachel Jewkes of the Gender and Health Research Group in the Medical Research Council (MRC) of Tygerberg Hospital, the second largest hospital of South Africa; Lorna Martin of the Division of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology at the University of Cape Town; Lisa Vetten of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation; and Lize van der Merwe of the Biostatistics Unit of the Medical Research Council at Tygerberg Hospital reported in a 2004 MRC Policy Brief that in 1999, 1,349 women were killed by an intimate partner: this is approximately four women per day, one woman every six hours. They defined intimate femicide as the killing of a female person by an intimate partner, i.e., her current or ex-husband or boyfriend, same sex partner, or a rejected would-be lover.

With a new biostatistician, Carl Lombard, on board and without the services of Lisa Vetten, the same researchers reported in a 2012 Research Brief that in 2009 the number of female deaths from intimate partner violence had decreased to 1024, one death per every six hours, but this decrease did not reach statistical significance. In other words, because the decrease was not sizable, it could have been due to factors unrelated to an actual moral improvement within intimate relationships.

In a 2014 article, Lisa Vetten, who had become the Director of the Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre, the specialist adviser on gender-based violence to the Commission for Gender Equality, and an honorary Research Associate at the University of Witwatersrand indicated that the 1999 statistic meant that the rate of killings of female intimate partners was six times the global average. The 2009 statistic indicates a rate that is five times the global average.

The provocative conclusion: the spousal love for which God had given the woman to the man, the love by which the man and the woman were to entrust themselves to each other as a mutual self-gift, a love that would not fade even if amorous feelings or physical vigor declined with the years, a love replete with the desire to be responsible for the other's happiness, the love that was to be the source of the family, its growth not only physically, but in freedom, wisdom, grace, peace, and harmony, this love had turned into disdain, contempt, resentment, jealousy, rejection, and murder. How can a nation breathe the sweet, life-giving breath of freedom and unity, if precisely those relationships that should enjoy unity and trust – the bride and groom relationship, the relationship between parents, the relationship between two people who promise to love and honor each other for the whole of their life span, the relationship between two teenagers who promise to remain friends – become the milieu for sexual exploitation and coercion, physical and emotional manipulation, lust, sensuality, fornication, betrayal, mistrust, disillusionment, deception, discouragement, and death?

## **7. Balkanizing the Woman**

I offer you a startling example from the Balkans – startling because one human being chose to treat another human being as a throwaway rather than respect her and care for her with kindness.

I am Lucy, one of the young nuns raped by the Serbian soldiers. I am writing to you, Mother, after what happened to my sisters Tatiana, Sandria, and me.

Allow me not to go into the details of the act. There are some experiences in life so atrocious that you cannot tell them to anyone but God, in whose service I had consecrated my life nearly a year ago.

My drama is not so much the humiliation that I suffered as a woman, not the incurable offense committed against my vocation as



a religious, but the difficulty of having to incorporate into my faith an event that certainly forms part of the mysterious will of [Jesus Christ] whom I have always considered my Divine Spouse.

Only a few days before, I had read "Dialogues of Carmelites" and spontaneously I asked our Lord to grant me the grace of joining the ranks of those who died a martyr for Him. God took me at my word, but in such a horrid way! Now I find myself lost in the anguish of internal darkness. He has destroyed the plans of my life, which I considered definitive and uplifting for me, and He has set me all of a sudden in this design of His that I feel incapable of grasping.

Someone... grabbed me one night, a night I wish never to remember, tore me off from myself, and tried to make me his own...

It was already daytime when I awoke and my first thought was the agony of Christ in the Garden. Inside of me a terrible battle unleashed. I asked myself why God had permitted me to be rent, destroyed precisely in what had been the meaning of my life, but also I asked to what new vocation he was calling me.

I strained to get up, and helped by Sister Josefina, I managed to straighten myself out. Then the sound of the bell of the Augustinian convent, which was right next to ours, reached my ears. It was time for nine o'clock Morning Prayer.

I made the Sign of the Cross and began reciting in my head the liturgical hymn. *At this hour upon Golgotha's heights/ Christ, the true Paschal Lamb/ paid the price of our salvation.*

What is my suffering, Mother, and the offense I received compared to the suffering and the offense of the one for whom I had a thousand times sworn to give my life? I spoke these words slowly, very slowly: *May your will be done, above all now that I have nowhere to go and that I can only be sure of one thing: You are with me.*

Mother, I am writing not in search of consolation, but so that you can help me give thanks to God for having associated me with the thousands of my fellow compatriots whose honour has been violated, and who are compelled to accept a maternity not wanted. My humiliation is added to theirs, and since I have nothing else to offer in expiation for the sin committed by those unnamed violators and for the reconciliation of the two embittered peoples, I accept this dishonor that I suffered and I entrust it to the mercy of God.

... In these last months I have been crying a stream of tears for my two brothers who were assassinated by the same aggressors who go around terrorizing our towns, and I was thinking that it was not possible for me to suffer anything worse, so far from my imagination had been what was about to take place.

Every day hundreds of hungry people used to knock at the door of our convent, shivering from the cold, with despair in their eyes. Some weeks ago, a young boy about eighteen years old said to me: *How lucky you are to have chosen a refuge where no evil can reach you.* The boy carried in his hands the Islamic beads for praying the Ninety-Nine Divine Titles. Then he added: *You will never know what it means to be disgraced.*

I pondered his words at length and convinced myself that there had been a hidden element to the sufferings of my people that had escaped me – I was almost ashamed to be so excluded. Now I am one of them, one of the many unknown women of my people, whose bodies have been devastated and hearts seared. The Lord had admitted me into his mystery of shame. What is more, for me, a religious, He has accorded me the privilege of being acquainted with evil in the depths of its diabolical force.

I know that from now on the words of encouragement and consolation that I can offer from my poor heart will be all the more credible, because my story is their story, and my resignation, sustained in faith, at least a reference, if not example for their moral and emotional responses...

That night, when the Serbs terrorized me for hours and hours...

Everything has passed, Mother, but everything begins. In your telephone call... you posed me a very direct question: *What will you do with the life that has been forced into your womb?* ... I had already decided: *I will be a mother.* The child will be mine and no one else's. I know that I could entrust him to other people, but he – though I neither asked for him nor expected him – he has a right to my love as his mother. A plant should never be torn from its roots. The grain of wheat fallen in the furrow has to grow there, where the mysterious, though sinful, sower threw it...

I will go with my child. I do not know where, but God, who dispelled all of a sudden my greatest joy, will *indicate the path* I must tread in order to do *His Will*...

Someone has to begin to break the chain of hatred that has always destroyed our countries. And so, *I will teach my child only one thing: love. This child, born of violence, will be a witness along with me that the only greatness that gives honour to a human being is forgiveness.*<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> I received the transmission of the letter in New York in the year 1999 from Fr. Peter Hopkins, L.C. I am citing the letter from a book I published:

A woman ruthlessly severed from her self-identity? Yes. A woman who plots and schemes within her heart to get revenge and so continue the balkanizing of her region and ultimately of the entire human family on the face of the globe? No.

She accepts the gift God has given her: the gift of a child. She does not mince words when she describes how she is going to raise the child whose face probably bears a resemblance to the sexual predator who could have murdered her and yet bears a resemblance to her own face who at the moment of the child's beginning was writhing in agony, resisting with all her might the sexual thrusts of the enemy. She and her child will be God's message to the world that freedom and unity are only possible through a lifestyle of forgiveness.

From where does the power of forgiveness come? It may be remembered that in a recent issue of *Africa Tomorrow*, an article about hope cited a conviction emanating from the heart of Søren Kierkegaard, a conviction reflected not only in the Christian Scriptures but in the ecclesial practice of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches in the sacrament of reconciliation. The conviction is this: the quality that most distinguishes God from human beings is his power and desire to eliminate our sins through forgiveness: "As a sinner man is separated from God by a yawning qualitative abyss. And obviously God is separated from man by the same yawning qualitative abyss when He forgives sins. In case it were possible by a converse kind of accommodation to transfer the divine attributes to a human being, in one respect man will never in all eternity come to resemble God, namely, in forgiving sins."<sup>29</sup>

God unleashes this power by accepting on to himself all the suffering that we have occasioned by our sins, not only our sexual sins and sins of violence, but also our sins of arrogance, greed, sloth, envy, lust in all its forms, anger, and the frantic search for quick consolation (e.g., gluttony) at the expense of the neighbour deprived of dignity.

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J. GIBSON – *al.*, *Compassion in the Heart of the World*. New York: Xlibris 2005, 145-149.

<sup>29</sup> S. KIERKEGAARD, *The Sickness unto Death*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1941, 141. Kierkegaard published this book originally in 1849 under the pseudonym Anti-Climacus.

Who is your neighbour? Who is the one who has deliberately chosen to be deprived of dignity, that you may inhale the breath of freedom and unity, the breath that forgiveness restores to the human race? It is Jesus Christ, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God. History flows solemnly and gratefully with scholars and saints who have assured us of the truth that in Jesus Christ, God has become our neighbour and has really suffered in his human body and human soul, and that in Jesus Christ, God has really arisen from the dead in his human body in order to restore to us freedom, unity and peace. These saints and scholars wrote with the awareness of what Mwl. Nyerere had been exhorting his people to do: live responsibly by loving with the love that is capable of suffering.

True love does not abide in feelings. Love abides in the will, specifically, in the will that is ready to suffer everything necessary to usher the beloved into the interior peace engendered by a truly intimate, mutually self-giving communion of persons; and a will that is ready to persist in its love until the beloved enters the vestibules of eternal joy.

In order to open the door of the human heart to this responsible, suffering love, Pope St. John Paul II integrated the norms of creative drama and meditative truth in his production, *The Jeweller's Shop*. Within the drama-meditation, there lives a married couple, Stefan and Anna, who suffer estrangement from each other. Anna knows that she cannot find shelter in Stefan's heart; Stefan cannot find a home in her heart. They are in intimate partnership without the intimacy.

Love, however, beckons to Anna from the Truth, Jesus Christ, who has chosen to be the Bridegroom that comes in the lonely, forbidding darkness of the night (Mt. 25:6-13). Just as the virgins in the parable await the Bridegroom's arrival, in the depth of the night of her personal disappointment and loneliness, Anna hears the call, "The Bridegroom has arrived!" Anna is feeling the fresh breeze, full of promise, a night breeze that carries a mysterious joy. She wants to see the face of the Bridegroom. She wants to behold Jesus Christ. A witness to the Truth, Adam by name, reminds Anna that those who really love are the ones who suffer. She is no exception. Ready to suffer but nevertheless quite buoyant in her

expectations, Anna does what she can to catch a glimpse of the Bridegroom's face. *The Bridegroom is the very person who has provoked her painful plight: it is her husband Stefan. Jesus, the Bridegroom, has chosen to visit Anna by opening her eyes to her own husband.*

You do not know how deeply you are mine, how much you belong to my love and my suffering – because to love means to give life through death – because to love means to let gush a spring of the water of life into the depths of the soul, which burns or smoulders, and cannot burn out. Ah, the flame and the spring. You don't feel the spring but are consumed by the flame. Is that not so?<sup>30</sup>

Anna, in other words, experiences Jesus' Final Judgment: "Whatever you did to the least one, to the one who is my brother, you did it to me."<sup>31</sup> When the Bridegroom comes at last, in the dead of night, Anna discovers that the Bridegroom who has come, Jesus, is at the same time the husband, Stefan, who will meet her at the Last Judgment.

Stefan is the one who is hungry for her love, thirsty for her forgiveness, naked from lack of dignity before her eyes, and without a home in the confines of her soul. Jesus, her Redeemer, is the Bridegroom who has chosen to unite to himself Stefan in his hunger and thirst for a new love. "In the Bridegroom's face each of us finds a similarity to the faces of those with whom love has entangled us on this side of life."<sup>32</sup>

What kind of a future lies in store for the men who have balkanized the very women with whom they should have been in mutual love and trust? In *The Jeweller's Shop*, Adam understands the Holy Spirit's power to invigorate within Anna's soul the love that is capable of suffering, and therefore worthy of Jesus.

It is quite noticeable in Matthew's Gospel that Jesus spoke in chapter 25 of the Bridegroom's coming and the Bridegroom's

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<sup>30</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *The Jeweller's Shop*, 48.

<sup>31</sup> Matthew 25:40. See J. RATZINGER (Pope Benedict XVI), *The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood*, San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press 1993, 28, for an explanation of the fact that Jesus does not seem to identify himself with the "least ones" as a subset of his brethren; rather he identifies himself with the least ones who comprise the totality of his brothers and sisters.

<sup>32</sup> *The Jeweller's Shop*, 49. Cf. Matthew 25:31-46.

compassionate identification with the least brother and sister from within his anticipation that three days later he would suffer a most painful love on the cross (Matt 26:2). Pope St. John Paul speaks of the love at work in the Passion:

Thus there is a paradoxical mystery of love: in Christ there suffers a God who has been rejected by his own creature: “They do not believe in me!”; but at the same time, from the depth of this suffering – and indirectly from the depth of the very sin “of not having believed” – the Spirit draws a new measure of the gift made to man and to creation from the beginning. In the depth of the mystery of the Cross, love is at work, that love which brings man back again to share in the life that is in God himself.

The Holy Spirit as Love and Gift comes down, in a certain sense, into the very heart of the sacrifice which is offered on the Cross. Referring here to the biblical tradition, we can say: He consumes this sacrifice with the fire of the love which unites the Son with the Father in the Trinitarian communion. And since the sacrifice of the Cross is an act proper to Christ, also in this sacrifice he “receives” the Holy Spirit. He receives the Holy Spirit in such a way that afterwards – and he alone with God the Father – can “give him” to the Apostles, to the Church, to humanity.<sup>33</sup>

In *The Jeweller’s Shop*, the voice of Truth seems to invite everyone to entrust themselves to the Love that is capable of suffering with the sure conviction that this is the love of the Holy Spirit, the love that drives out all fear, and thus plants its roots in grace and freedom. Hans Urs von Balthasar spoke of this entrustment in a memorably dramatic moment of literary history when he described the mystery of love’s suffering in all its redemptive ramifications:

“Father!”, cries the Heart in its vertiginous plunge, “into your hands – which I do not feel, which opened to let me fall, which will catch me at the bottom of the abyss – into your hands I entrust my Spirit. Into your hands I breathe out my Spirit. My Holy Spirit.”

The Heart became Spirit, and from the travails of the Spirit the New World was born. A great roar filled the house, windows and doors flew open, and eyes and ears as well. The heavy armour was burst open from within and the cover removed from the face. This Heart’s love loved even to annihilation, and since it had become invisible in itself, it now emerged in the hearts of the redeemed. Once

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<sup>33</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 41.

it had been one sun, alone in the cold night of the world; now the light is scattered in a firmament of stars. It had seemed to struggle with the darkness, had seemed to sink down into the mire, overcome by the chaos; but no enemy is mightier and no night more night-filled than the radiant darkness of love.<sup>34</sup>

In *The Jeweller's Shop*, Anna professedly has found love to be a struggle that is both frightening and discouraging; she is afraid of the love that all too often suffers alone in the cold night of the world. Her daughter, Monica, is feeling the disruptive forces provoked by her parents' failure to love each other and so she allows fear to blanket her soul, too. Anna and Monica are afraid of the heart's darkness: they are slow to believe in the radiant darkness of love. Anna and Stefan have not made their home in each other's interior life with the love that rejoices in the complete sacrificial gift of self and hence they have not reflected absolute Existence and Love.<sup>35</sup>

At Adam's beckoning, however, Anna enters into Jesus' darkness, into his agony, into his original solitude with the Father. In her aloneness with God, she confesses the recent years of her withdrawal into self. Adam, the witness to the Truth that suffers and saves, floods her soul with the desire to continue her struggle within the gift of divine courage and ensuing peace.<sup>36</sup>

Anna, in a word, is a woman who has invited God into her interior life. The Holy Spirit that burns as a painful love within the heart of Jesus on the cross is the same Holy Spirit that floods Anna's soul as a refreshing stream of living water (John 7:35-37).

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<sup>34</sup> H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Heart of the World*, trans. by E.S. Leiva, San Francisco, CA: Ignatius 1979, 72. In this passage, Von Balthasar refers both to the events of Good Friday and those of Pentecost Sunday.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *The Jeweler's Shop*, 75.

<sup>36</sup> For an explanation of confession as an "aloneness with God," see St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Homilies on Penance*, PG 49, 277-350. It is to be noted that what Stefan says about Anna's confession on p. 75 of *The Jeweler's Shop* does not necessarily imply a sacramental moment where Anna receives absolution especially since Stefan, her husband, seems to have been present during the confession. It does, however, mean that Anna's self-revelation to Adam, the Witness to the Truth, introduces her to an experience of a new freedom in her choice to love Stefan with "discreet suffering." See Revelation 1:5; 3:14.

It is the love that forgives, the love that frees, the love that unifies, the love that embraces, and the love that draws Anna into the heart of God's own joy.

Dear Reader, live in God's love, be a woman that forgives, be a man who persists in fidelity, be a child that learns how to love tenderly, share generously and work diligently – and you will be precisely the African that teaches the world what it needs in order to be human again.



# **THEOLOGY & CULTURE**

## **From Estrangement to Reconciliation: The Overarching Inclusion between Gen 3:23-24 and Rev 21:1-8**

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### **Introduction**

The opening words of the last part of the book of Revelation describe the new heaven and the new earth (21:1–22:5), “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away” (21:1). One could regard this description as forming an over-arching inclusion with Gen 1–3, a narrative account of the first divine act of creation. The seer of visions in Revelation saw that the first heaven and the first earth of Gen 1–3 had passed away (ἀπῆλθαν) and had given way to a new heaven and a new earth (Rev 21:1, 4).

The reason for the fading away of the first creation is because it failed its purpose when the human being disobeyed God’s order and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17ff). The consequences were disastrous because disharmony and separation irreparably disturbed the universal order: the human being suffered dissociation from himself/herself, being afraid and ashamed and succumbing to the impulse to hide away from God (Gen 3:10). The serpent and the human being are now set in a state of enmity with each other; and the man has to eat from the sweat of his brow since the rebellious land no longer yields its produce without toil.

Eventually God exposes manifestly the alienation that human beings have occasioned by their disobedience when he shuts them

out from the Garden of Eden. The stationing of the cherubim with the fiery sword to guard the way to the Garden indicates the aggressive character of the separation (Gen 3:23-24).<sup>1</sup> The severity of the separation seems to be devastating and complete, though God gives a glimpse of hope in the promise he makes that the offspring of the woman will eventually crush the head of the serpent, "... he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Gen 3:15b).

This so called *proto-evangelium* is what Rev 12–20 is narrating: the victory of the Lamb over the ancient serpent, the Dragon, the Devil, the Beast who has harassed the people of God (cf. 12:10). Having defeated the arch-enemy, those who follow the Lamb are reconciled to their God in a new heaven and a new earth. Through Jesus Christ complete reconciliation has been accomplished and now God will dwell with human beings in the new heaven and the new earth (21:1-8) having his headquarters in the new Holy City, the heavenly Jerusalem (21:10). The seer of visions in the Book of Revelation, then, has combined two biblical traditions: the Yahwist creation story (Gen 2:4–3:24) and the Jerusalem/ Zion (City of God) tradition which had become the core of Israel's identity.<sup>2</sup>

In the same intentional stream of thought as that of Revelation, Paul told the Colossians, "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Col 1:19-20). In between the two texts that form the inclusion, from total separation in Gen 3:23-24 and complete reconciliation in Rev 21:1-8, is the biblical story of attempts to realize the promised removal of the

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<sup>1</sup> This article is a developed version of a paper that was presented to a Symposium on Reconciliation at St. Gaspar's College on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2013 as part of a preparation for the Golden Jubilee of the foundation of the Congregation of the Precious Blood. Biblical quotations are taken from the NIV. Unfortunately I couldn't access the new book J.R. MIDDLETON, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2014 as I was preparing this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ps 48; 87; Isa 54:11-12; 65:17; 66:22; Ezek 40-48; Tobit 13:16-17; Zech 8:3; Heb 12:22-23; 1 Enoch 90:29; 2 Baruch 4:4-5; 5Q15. Cf. M.G. REDDISH, ed., *Apocalyptic Literature: A Reader*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson 1995, 237.

impediment of Gen 3:15b and coming of true reconciliation through Jesus Christ the seed of the woman (Rev 12:10). It is henceforth obvious that the history of salvation is about God who always sought to reconcile humankind to himself even though the human person kept straying away from Him (cf. 2 Cor 5:18-19).

The magnitude of the task of tracing this reconciliation theme in the Scriptures makes it difficult to determine the proper method to be followed. However, since the present paper is a simple contribution to an ongoing reflection on the biblical theme of reconciliation, it will suffice to peruse the Bible with rigor and alertness in order to identify major pertinent texts. Some texts are explicitly dealing with reconciliation, whereas others either imply reconciliation or merely allude to it. Moreover, some biblical books that purportedly deal with the theme of reconciliation shall be examined in their entirety. By means of this procedure, we aim to understand how a narrative theology of reconciliation is developed in the OT and reaches its realization and accomplishment in the NT.

## 1. Texts

Gen 3:23-24 and Rev 21:1-8 are antithetically parallel and form a great inclusion of the Bible, an inclusion that opens the history of salvation and closes it.

### 1.1 The Demarcation of the Texts

The basis for identifying the texts is principally the fact that from the literary point of view they share with each other the milieu of creation and corresponding content:

#### Gen 1:1–3:24

#### Rev 21:1–22:5

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|----------------------------------|---|
| 1 Heaven(s) and earth (1:1; 2:1) | New heaven (οὐρανὸν) and new earth (21:1)                   |
| 2 Light (1:3-18)                 | God gives light, and the Lamb is the lamp (21:23, 24; 22:5) |
| 3 Sun and moon (1:3)             | No need of the sun (22:5)                                   |
| 4 Sea (1:21-28)                  | The sea is no longer (21:1)                                 |

5	Place: Garden of Eden (2:8, 10, 15; 3:24, 25)	Place: Holy City (21:2); cf. Paradise (2:7)
6	Tree of life and of knowledge (2:9), tree of good and evil (2:17), tree in the middle of the garden (3:3)	Tree of life (22:2, 19, 14, 19)
7	A river watering the garden flowed from Eden (2:10)	River of the water of life flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city (22:1, 2)
8	Fruit(s) of the tree (Gen 3:2, 6, 12)	Twelve kinds of fruits from the tree of life (22:2)

It is commonly understood that the background of the language of “a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away” (21:1), was a combination of Isa 65:17 and Isa 66:22.

- Isa 65:17: “For behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth (כִּי־הֵנִי בּוֹרֵא הַשָּׁמַיִם הַחֲדָשִׁים וְהָאָרֶץ הַחֲדָשָׁה). The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”
- Isa 66:22: “As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me, declares the LORD, so will your name and descendants endure.”

It is also suggested that the author used the LXX and not the Masoretic Text (MT) since he does not use the verb to create “*bara*’ – בָּרָא” (Gen 1:1; Isa 65:17); rather he uses the term “*make* – ποιῶ” (21:5); and instead of the plural “heavens” in Hebrew הַשָּׁמַיִם, he uses the LXX translation for the singular “heaven – οὐρανός” (cf. LXX Gen 1:1; Isa 65:17; 66:22).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> As for the background of the idea of recreation and transformation, of a “new heaven and new earth”, D.E. AUNE, *Revelation 17–22*, WBC 52C, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson 1998, 1116, suggests other Jewish Apocalyptic Literature such as *1 Enoch* 91:16 (Apocalypse of Weeks), “And the first heaven will vanish and pass away, and a new heaven will appear, and all the powers of heaven will shine for ever (with) sevenfold (light)”.

## 1.2 The Antithetic Parallelism between Gen 3:23-24 and Rev 21:1-8

These two passages are found in a literary context of the beginning of things in Gen 1–3 and Rev 21:1–22:5. Paul develops a similar antithetical or polar parallelism between Adam and Christ in Rom 5:12-21 and 1Cor 15:45-49. Gen 3:23-24 concludes the divine verdict on the serpent, Adam and Eve that began in Gen 3:14. In contrast, Rev 21:1-8 begins John's vision of the passing away of the old creation and the dawn of a new beginning.

	<b>Gen 3:23-24</b>	<b>Rev 21:1-8</b>
1	God	Separated from man
2	Man	Dwelling with man
	Expelled from the garden – special emphasis is indicated by the repetition: v. 23 – sent him forth (וַיִּשְׁלַחֵהוּ) and v. 24 – he drove the man out (וַיִּגְרֹשׁ אֶת־הָאָדָם)	Invited to live with God as his people; the ban is lifted. The radical turn of events is also heavily emphasized by repeating the same vocabulary and prepositions: 1) tabernacle of God (σκηνη τοῦ θεοῦ) is with men (μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων); 2) ...and he will dwell (σκηνώσει) with them (μετ' αὐτῶν); 3) [they] will be his people 4) God himself will be with them (μετ' αὐτῶν); he will be their God
3	Heaven and Earth	Heaven as divine dwelling, and the earth as the milieu for man's toil. The temptation and fall resulted in the
		New heaven and new earth (not re-creating the old order), to last forever

		earth becoming man's place of toil and death.	– heaven and earth are bound together
4	Garden of Eden	Place of the man and woman's temptation and failure. Only God remained there after banishing man from it	New Jerusalem adorned by God himself, from heaven
5	Tree of life	The way to it is guarded, to eat its fruit is prohibited	Accessible to man and allowed to eat its fruit
6	Ground	Place of toil, pain, and death	No pain, no mourning, no death

### 1.3 Compositional Structure of Rev 21:1-8

The pericope from Revelation is composed of four distinct parts marked by the description of the main characters and their activities: God, the Seer of the Visions, the Content, and the Addressee.<sup>4</sup> Parts II and III are declared to all, while Part IV is addressed specifically to John.

	Subject	John's Activity	Direct Object
Part I: vv.1-2	John	Saw (εἶδον)	New heaven and a new earth, without the sea, because the first heaven and earth had passed away (v. 1) The Holy City, the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God (v. 2)
Part II: vv. 3-4	John	Heard (ἤκουσα)	Loud voice from the throne – God dwells among his people (v. 3) He will wipe away every tear... (v. 4)

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<sup>4</sup> D.E. AUNE, *Revelation 17–22*, 1113, proposes two parts: (1) Angelic speech from the throne (21:1-4) and (2) God's speech seated on the throne (21:5-8). However, the proposal does not put into consideration the part played by the seer of the visions.

Part III: v. 5a	Divine voice	Received declaration and directive (ἐἰπέν μοι)	The one sitting on the throne said: "I make all things new" Directive to write (γράφων) the words, for they are trustworthy and true (v. 5a)
Part IV: vv. 5b-8	Divine voice	Received declarations (ἐἰπέν μοι)	It is done; self-identification of God (v. 5b-6a) Beneficiaries of the new order and their status... (v. 6b-7) Non-beneficiaries are the unrepentant and unbelievers who face the second death (v. 8)

The textual analysis of the two texts results in the following contrasting parallels: the gravely disrupted creation of the Yahwist narrative (Gen 2:4b-3:24) is referred to by the author of Revelation as "first heaven and first earth" (Rev 21:1b); whereas the reconciled creation is declared to be "the new heaven and new earth" (21:1a). The "first heaven and first earth" has no sea and passes away (21:1b). The absence of the sea, which was conceived in mythical terms as the dwelling place of the serpent or the dragon/beast (cf. Isa 27:1; Amos 9:3; Rev 13:1ff; 20:2), indicates the end of that which caused the separation between creatures and the Creator.<sup>5</sup>

In the new creation, the first creation's Garden of Eden (Gen 2:8, 10, 15; 3:24, 25) gives way to the Holy City, the New Jerusalem beckoning from heaven, entirely transcendent to what is earthly (Rev 21:2). The New Jerusalem corresponds to the Garden of Eden that consisted only of a part of the land established by God who placed man there to work on it and guard it (cf. Gen 2:8-9, 15). The description indicates that the garden specifically belongs to God, and not to the human being, as God walked around in it (*mithallek baggan* – מִתְהַלֵּךְ בַּגֶּן) as if inspecting his property (Gen 3:8).

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<sup>5</sup> C.C. ROWLAND, "The Book of Revelation: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections", in *New Interpreter's Bible*, XII, Nashville, TN: Abingdon 1998, 720.

In other words, the place is holy. The prophetic condemnation of Ezekiel 28:11-19 – a text that highlights this sanctity of the Garden of Eden – is the closest parallel to Gen 2-3 that one can find in the prophetic literature. When the human being opts to be corrupt, he/she is banned from the Garden because the Garden belongs to God himself who is the All-Holy One.

It was believed, then, that only the pure can stay with God, and that the human being will die if he/she sees God (cf. Gen 32:30; Exod 3:5-6) for the all-holy God cannot cohabit with evil (cf. Lev 15:31; 19:2; 20:7, 26).<sup>6</sup> This is why when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden tree, they were banished from the Garden (Gen 3:23-24).

The antithetical parallelism is explicit between the first and the second creation. Negativity characterizes the conclusion of the first creation since the head of creation, the first couple, suffer expulsion from the Garden of Eden, an expulsion that seems quite definitive when God assigns cherubim to guard the way to the tree of life with a flaming sword. Hence the separation from God is total (Gen 3:23-24). The new creation is wonderfully positive. God will dwell with his people (Rev 21:3), and the throne of God and of the Lamb will reside in the Holy City (22:3). A second element of the antithetical parallelism enters the picture: the first couple was expelled from the Garden of Eden with no possibility for re-entry; now not only the pure and undefiled but even those who were expelled are promised access to it provided that they wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb (7:14-15). Thirdly, as a consequence of their disobedience when they succumb to the serpent's insinuation and eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3:6), Adam and Eve suffer punishment. In the new creation human beings will be allowed to eat of the tree of life (Rev 22:14) and so delight in God's gift.

In short, the central point is the reversal of fortunes, in particular, the dwelling of God among people at the other pole of a history that began with a sharp and bitter separation from this same God. Having culminated with the punitive expulsion of the first couple from Eden because of their disobedience to the

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<sup>6</sup> D.P. WRIGHT, "Holiness, Sex, and Death in the Garden of Eden", *Biblica* 77 (1996) 306-312.



Creator's command, the first creation story finds a complete reversal in the new creation and the joyful reconciliation between the Creator and the human being.

The eschatological reconciliation between the Creator and the human being has a bearing on the other creatures as well. The river brings life and prosperity to all creatures who dwell in its precincts. Of importance is that God did not only restore the order of the first creation; but rather He brought forth a new heaven and a new earth. This is in fulfilment of Isa 65:17 and 66:22. The absence of the sea which was the mythical dwelling place of the underworld beast (cf. Rev 13:1), i.e., of the beast who was the agent of evil and death, denotes a new order that has foreclosed all threats to the human person. Similarly, there no longer exist the shadows or darkness that were associated with sin and evil in the Holy City of Jerusalem since the light of that city will no longer be that of the shadow-evoking sun or moon; rather, God will be its light. Of paramount importance is the fact that unlike the old creation, the new creation comes into existence through obedience unto death and the consequential victory of the Lamb; and not by mere divine utterance.

## 2. Semantics of Reconciliation

Lexically the term "reconciliation" is a corollary of the theme of "relationship". This relationship is threefold: between God and the human person (vertical dimension), among human beings (ad intra horizontal dimension), and among other creatures (ad extra horizontal dimension). Reconciliation presupposes a disrupted or broken friendly relationship. Friendship means personal attachment to another by feelings of affection or personal regard with the firm, persevering will to do what is necessary for the good of the other person. Friends remain on good terms with each other, assist each other and share similar principles and values. Reconciliation is the act of going back or returning (in Hebrew, *shûb* – שׁוּב) to the original state of a harmonious, friendly relationship.

The most important Greek vocabulary for reconciliation is found in the Pauline Corpus, especially in the so-called reconciliation passages of Col 1:20-22 and Eph 2:16. The word

*katallage* (καταλλαγῇ) which derives from the verb *katallasso* (ἀποκαταλλάσσω) is used particularly in a religious sense, with the meaning of giving up anger against another person; thus, to reconcile with another person.<sup>7</sup> It is used for the reconciliation of human beings with one another (cf. Matt 5:24; 1 Cor 7:11) and for reconciliation between human beings and God which is effected in, through, and by Christ (cf. Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:18-20; Col 1:20, 22; and Eph 2:16). Reconciliation means to be restored to friendship with God, and to lead others to enter into friendship with God.

Paul coined another new word for reconciliation *apokatastasso* (ἀποκαταλλάσσω) by adding the preposition ἀπό to the root καταλλάσσω,<sup>8</sup> which means restoring or bringing back something to its original, former state (Col 1:20). At first, the word was used in non-religious affairs in the sense of the restoration of the sick to good health or the reinstatement of a ruler whose authority had been usurped or who was deposed. In the religious sphere, the prophets used *apokatastasis* for the return from exile. Later in the exilic and post-exilic period they used the word with special theological significance in the announcement of eschatological salvation (cf. Amos 5:15; Hos 2:3; 11:11; Jer 16:15; 23:8; 24:6; Ezek 16:55; Mal 4:6 [3:24]). In the New Testament the word *apokatastasis* is used in both senses: in its original non-religious sense of the restoration of the sick to good health (cf. Mark 3:5 par. Matt 12:13; Luke 6:10) as well as for religious meaning of the fulfillment of the Messianic hope in which Israel expected a restoration to divine favour through the Messiah's personal

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<sup>7</sup> H. VORLANDER – C. BROWN, “καταλλάσσω”, *NIDNT* III, 166-174. The noun “καταλλαγῇ” (reconciliation) is used by Paul in Rom 5:11; 11:15; 2 Cor 5:18, 19). Cf. I.H. MARSHALL, “The Meaning of ‘Reconciliation’”, in R.A. Guelich, ed., *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978, 117-132; S.E. PORTER – K.D. CLARKE, “Canonical-Critical Perspective and the Relationship of Colossians and Ephesians”, *Biblica* 78 (1997) 78-83.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. H.-G. LINK, “ἀποκατάστασις”, in C. Brown, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, III, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 1986, 146-148. As from here the Dictionary is abbreviated as *NIDNT*.

fulfillment of his destiny (cf. Mark 9:12 par.; Matt 17:11) or the restoration of the kingdom of Israel (cf. Acts 1:6ff).

This divine self-reconciliation with creation (universal reconciliation) is expressed in various terms in Paul: to reconcile all things into himself – ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν (Col 1:20) or make friendship with/reconcile us to himself – καταλλάξαντος ἡμᾶς ἑαυτῷ (2 Cor 5:18). The initiative is always from God, not from human beings (cf. Rom 5:8). God reconciles creation to Himself for his own glory (cf. Rom 9:23-24; Eph 1:10-12; Phil 2:11) since it is human beings who break their relationship with Him in the first place. God cannot break that relationship for He is always faithful and cannot deny Himself (cf. 2 Tim 2:12-13). The ultimate act of divine reconciliation finds its fulfilment in Jesus Christ's ignominious death on the Cross (cf. Mark 14:24 par; Rom 5:10; Heb 9:14). The opening quotation from Col 1:19-20 is the eschatological conclusion of Paul's treatment of the theme of reconciliation (cf. Heb 9:26).

## 2.1 Reconciliation Postulates Forgiveness

In Christian tradition reconciliation is often equated with forgiveness; however, reconciliation is only one outcome of forgiveness. Closely related to reconciliation is forgiveness of sins (in Hebrew, *selikhah* – סְלִיחָה from the verb *salakh* – סָלַח [Ps 130:4] and *nasa'* – נָשָׂא).<sup>9</sup> Reconciliation is the consequence of forgiveness. The NT uses the Greek word *aphesis* (ἄφεσις) (Mark 1:4; Luke 1:77; 3:3) from the verb ἀφίημι, which means "to forgive, to release, to remit, to let go, to cancel sins or debt". It is mostly used in terms of the consequence of conversion (*metanoia* – μετάνοια) through or in the blood (*haima* – αἷμα) of Jesus Christ (Matt 26:28; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; Heb 9:22); or through him/ through

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<sup>9</sup> The OT uses the Hebrew verbal form "*nasa'* – נָשָׂא" with literal meaning of "carrying, lifting up", which connotes the relief which is brought about by being pardoned. This implies that sin is regarded as a burden that weighs down the sinner's soul wherever he/she goes (cf. Gen 50:17; Exod 10:17; 23:21; 32:32; Josh 24:19; 1 Sam 15:25; 25:28; Hos 14:2). Another Hebrew verbal form is "*salakh* – סָלַח - to pardon, forgive" (cf. Exod 34:9; Num 14:19; Deut 29:20; by the Deuteronomistic historian in the books of Kings, Chronicles, and Jeremiah).

his name (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18).<sup>10</sup> Divine forgiveness is related to human forgiveness in so far as God will forgive human beings only if they forgive their fellow human beings (cf. Matt 6:12, 14, 15; Luke 17:3, 4); and indeed human beings forgive because God has forgiven them in the first place (cf. Matt 18:21,35). In a nutshell, human forgiveness mirrors divine forgiveness.

Forgiveness is the inner personal disposition to reach out for reconciliation which gives peace to both protagonists. Therefore reconciliation is a corollary of forgiveness, even though there has been protracted discussion as to what comes first. Indeed, forgiveness renders the person more amenable to the prospect of changing his/her attitude toward the other, a process of metanoia or conversion.

Metanoia is inner repentance, i.e., a reorientation of the person's attitude in life, with the intention to change from a bad to a good relationship. Making reference to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Wabantu Emmanuel sees forgiveness as essentially restorative.<sup>11</sup> He also offers a reasonably good summary of the relationship between forgiveness, reconciliation and peace by saying, "True forgiveness is the outcome of the victim's willingness and readiness to abandon his/her rights to revenge and to look forward – with the help of the prevenient grace of God – to repairing broken or damaged relationships and ultimately restoring peace and justice. There can be no forgiveness, reconciliation and thus no peace without the abandonment of one's right, desire and intention to revenge."<sup>12</sup> In other words, one has to imitate Christ in

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<sup>10</sup> The Greek verbal noun ἄφεσις and its verb ἀφίημι are used in the NT in connection with forgiveness of sins or metaphorically "debts" and blasphemy (Matt 6:12<sup>2</sup>, 14<sup>2</sup>, 15<sup>2</sup>, 9:2, 5, 6; 12:31<sup>2</sup>, 32<sup>2</sup>; 18:21, 27, 32, 35; Mark 2:5, 7, 9, 10; 3:28; 4:12; 11:25<sup>2</sup>; Luke 5:20, 21, 23, 24; 7:47<sup>2</sup>, 48, 49; 11:4<sup>2</sup>; 12:10<sup>2</sup>; 17:3, 4; 23:34; John 20:23; Acts 8:22; Rom 4:7; Jas 5:15; 1 John 1:9; 2:12).

<sup>11</sup> E. WABANHU, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Personal, Interpersonal and Socio-political Perspectives", *AFFER* 50 (2008) 297. Cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, rev. ed., Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa 2008, 1468-1469.

<sup>12</sup> E. WABANHU, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation", 285. The author is not clear about the precedence of forgiveness as he sometimes considers forgiveness as the *conditio sine qua non* for reconciliation, but at the same

dying to oneself (*kenosis*) first before reaching out for the other (cf. Phil 2:7-9). Forgiveness renders the person free to accept the other without preconditions (cf. Matt 18:15-17).

Conversely, forgiveness that leads to reconciliation is not one-sided; rather, it should be reciprocal. Not only should one reach out to the wrong-doer, but also the wrong-doer is expected to accept to be forgiven. If one refuses to be forgiven, no true reconciliation takes place. A. De Smet points out that forgiveness is a process: there is a period of grief in which the offender admits his/her guilt – sometimes with an outpouring of emotion – and accepts the truth, an acceptance that at times carries with it a sense of shame and the need to be accepted.<sup>13</sup> Both parties regret what happened and hence what occasioned the need for forgiveness and repentance. In this process both parties experience empowerment in which they are able to make choices. With the experience of empowerment comes the freedom to offer and accept forgiveness (cf. Luke 17:3). Therefore, the act of forgiving is often the end, not the beginning, of that process. Forgiveness restores a right relationship with God; and forgiveness, healing, truth and reconciliation, freedom and justice are all signs of the kingdom, i.e., that God's forgiveness has brought forth powerfully revitalizing effects.

Both parties need divine grace to effect true reconciliation. Suffice it to cite two notorious people who estranged themselves from Jesus Christ: one was Judas Iscariot who actively betrayed him to his enemies, the Jewish religious authorities (Mark 14:10ff par.); and the other was Simon Peter who denied him before the high priest's housemaids (Mark 14:66ff par.). Both of them committed grave evil towards Jesus Christ, but the aftermath to what they did differed greatly. Judas Iscariot did not accept himself, nor did he even accept Jesus' forgiveness: rather, he

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time maintains that forgiveness is the result of reconciliation. Compare his position on page 285 and page 297 where he concludes, "It (*reconciliation*) must lead to forgiveness and ultimately to justice and peace in society".

<sup>13</sup> A. DE SMET, "Forgiveness: Making Some Connections between Theology and Psychology, Preaching and Pastoral Practice", *The Expository Times* 119/3 (2007) 116-119; cf. F. WATTS, "Shame, Sin and Guilt", in A. McFadyen – M. Sarot, eds., *Forgiveness and Truth: Explorations in Contemporary Theology*, Edinburgh: Clark 2001.

committed suicide (Matt 27:3-5). Simon Peter in contrast cried with remorse but did not succumb to despair; instead, he still placed his hope in Jesus' merciful heart. He knew Jesus would forgive his cowardly betrayal; and indeed the Gospel of John demonstrated this when the risen Lord came back to Simon Peter and asked him three times before the other six apostles whether he loved him more than the others. Simon Peter repeatedly replied, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you". Finally Jesus called him again, "Follow me", indicating total forgiveness and reconciliation (John 21:15-19).

## **2.2 Kinds of Divisions or Broken Human Relationships**

As stated above, the need for reconciliation arises in a milieu of broken human relationships or divisions at the individual level as well as at the group level. Division at the individual or personal level occurs when there is a break in the relationship between two people. Division at the group level occurs when there is a break in the relationship between two groups of people. Denis J. Woods<sup>14</sup> is one of many who explain that not all group divisions are the same and that the chance for reconciliation varies according to the kind of separation that has occurred.

Sociologically speaking, there are three kinds of group divisions: one may label the first *distributive division* whereby people compete for something, such as power, wealth, position, or love. The second one may call *ideological division* whereby people disagree on certain values, for example, cultural, religious, intellectual, political, or moral. The third is what one may refer to as *structural division* whereby social, cultural, religious, political, or economic systems occasion divisions among people. Distributive division is the easiest to dissolve by an effective effort at reconciliation because individual, face-to-face encounter is possible, whereas the second and third are very difficult, for people can be manipulated by those with whom they have no real direct contact and hence they can suffer the various types of

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<sup>14</sup> D.J. WOODS, "Reconciliation of Groups", in B.J. Lee – *al.*, *Alternative Futures for Worship, IV: Reconciliation*, Collegeville, MI: The Liturgical Press 1987, 33-39.

discriminations that have plagued the world for centuries: apartheid, the caste system, tribalism, radical violent religious groups, such as Al Qaida, Boko Haram, and Al Shabab – just to mention some.

### 2.3 The Process of Reconciliation

Reconciliation is essentially returning to or repairing the previous friendly and harmonious relationship that the individuals or groups in question enjoyed before the disruption. The action of going back or restoring relationships involves several conditions. First, the parties involved must recognize and appreciate the importance of good and healthy relationships. Second, the parties involved need to understand the benefits that flow forth from upright relationships, such as love, assistance, strength, health, hope and fullness of life. Third, the parties must have an intelligent awareness of the repercussions that ensue when relationships suffer rupture: loneliness, discouragement, disappointment, hopelessness, despondency, enmity, and death. Finally, the parties involved must live with the abiding conviction that the only healthy relationships are the ones based on faith and trust in each other.<sup>15</sup>

The most important step toward reconciliation is the act of forgiving. As already highlighted above, forgiveness is part and parcel of the reconciliation process for it is fundamentally an act of love, truth and trust. John S. Kselman defines forgiveness as “the wiping out of an offense from memory; it can be effected only by the one affronted. Once eradicated, the offense no longer conditions the relationship between the offender and the one affronted, and harmony is restored between the two” (cf. Isa 43:25; Jer 31:34; Ps 25:7).<sup>16</sup>

Surely, dissolving an offense from memory is not humanly easy, for memory is not purely a voluntary act. There is need for divine intervention or for the grace that is God’s response to the person’s willingness to forgive and to the person’s act of forthright,

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<sup>15</sup> P.J. ROY, “Psychological Dimensions of Reconciliation,” in B.J. Lee – *al.*, *Alternative Futures for Worship, IV: Reconciliation*, Collegeville, MI: The Liturgical Press 1987, 17-31.

<sup>16</sup> J.S. KSELMAN, “Forgiveness,” in D.N. Freedman, ed. – *al.*, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, II, New York: Doubleday 1992, 831-832.

thoughtful prayer. God empowers one to forgive: to err is human, to forgive is divine, and for the human being to be able to forgive, he or she needs divine assistance.<sup>17</sup>

Reconciliation is brought about when two parties mutually accept the need to forgive each other and to re-establish the former harmonious relationship. One has to extend his/her hand to give and accept reconciliation. It is not covering up or blanketing the rotten condition beneath the surface; rather, it is to face the truth, render justice (set things right), and exercise willingness to rectify the situation.<sup>18</sup> In other words, forgiveness is not mere indulgence; rather, it should be founded on truth and righteousness. Even the biblical story of Joseph offers a clear example: his guilt-ridden brothers could taste true reconciliation with him, and hence live together confidently and trustfully, only after hearing the word of forgiveness from him (Gen 50:15-21). The narrative about Joseph tells us that forgiveness is giving up the desire for revenge and letting God be the decisive judge. It is the capacity to find God's will even in injury incurred by the victim.

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<sup>17</sup> At this juncture E. WABANHU, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation", 298 gives a very good explanation, "From the Christian faith perspective, the work of real forgiveness and lasting reconciliation needs both human effort and above all, God's grace. Any genuine forgiveness is impossible without the grace of God since the act of forgiving the one who wronged us will always remain only to be a human possibility, capacity and necessity." Cf. J. KNOX, *Chapters in a Life of Paul*, rev. ed., London: SCM 1987, 123.

<sup>18</sup> There are two Hebrew words for the act of forgiving: *nasah* (נָסָה) - to lift up, to take away, usually the subject is human beings; the idea of "lifting up" implies that in forgiving a burden is lifted from the sinner or aggressor. The Hebrew expression "to lift somebody's face" means "to restore his/her dignity and integrity, to restore to honour (cf. Ezra 9:6; Job 22:26). The obligation to forgive one's neighbour is emphasized in Lev 19:17, "You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbour, and not bear sin because of him." Cf. D. N. FREEDMAN – B. WILLOUGHBY, "נָסָה", *TDOT* X, 27-28. The second word is more spiritual: *salakh* (סָלַח) – pardon, normally having God as the subject; and the absolute noun "forgiveness" is *selikhah* "סְלִיחָה" (cf. Ps 130:4). The verb is mostly used in Jer 5:1; 31:34; 38:8; 36:3; 50:20. In fact the root of the Hebrew word is from Akkadian "*salakhu*", which could also be the root of the late Arabic and Kiswahili word "*suluhu*". Cf. J. HAUSMANN, "סָלַח", *TDOT* X, 258-265.



The rupture or broken relationship between two parties is tantamount to sickness, especially the breaking away from God. The side effects of this rupture are always negative: estrangement, sadness, bitterness, remorse, uncertainty, a guilty conscience, and eventually spiritual death. It paralyzes mutual personal development and the effort towards fulfilment among human beings. For this reason forgiveness has also been known as "healing" (*raphah* – רפא), especially because Israel linked sin with sickness (cf. Ps 41:4). Therefore, as the Psalmist wrote, reconciliation is achieved when "mercy (steadfast love) and truth *meet* together; righteousness and peace *kiss*" (cf. Ps 85:10). Relationships recover the health that proceeds from the unity of truth and love.

### 3. Old Testament: Reconciliation Promised

The biblical history of salvation is a story of a threefold dimensional relationship: vertically, between God and mankind; horizontally, among human beings themselves (*ad intra*); and, horizontally, between human beings and the rest of creation (*ad extra*). Because the vertical relationship was broken from the very beginning, human beings today do not have the opportunity to experience the pristine, forthright relationship that existed between God and the human person in the state of original innocence, the purity and completeness of the communion that existed between the two human persons, and the uprightness of relationships with other creatures.

The harmonious relationships that marked the beginning of human existence are succinctly but dramatically narrated by the Yahwist in Gen 2:4b–3:24. This narrative, in turn, presumes the Priestly account of Gen 1:1–2:4a. The remaining biblical content concerns the reconciling or repairing of the relationships that Adam and Eve, our first parents, ruptured (Gen 3).<sup>19</sup> Therefore the theme of reconciliation is fundamental to comprehending what God reveals.

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<sup>19</sup> Consult the exposition of Gen 2–3 on the Original Sin in W. NGOWI, *Introduction to the Pentateuch and Historical Books*, Morogoro: Salvatorianum 2012, 72-83.

### 3.1 The Original State of Innocence versus the Fallen Sinful State (Gen 1–3)

The creation narrative is a product of Israel's reflection on the human condition which they experienced among themselves and during the Babylonian captivity. They became aware of the common human condition of instability and infidelity, of envy and violence, of lust for power and oppression, of search for prosperity versus the lapse into poverty, of the cruelty of sin and death, of the search for peace and the embrace of eternal life. They recognized that something must have distorted the primitive condition of man which was essentially good (cf. Gen 1:31). This evil condition was not from God for by nature God cannot be associated with evil, as God himself declared repeatedly to Israel, "You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy" (Lev 11:45; 19:2; 20:26; 21:8; cf. Isa 6:3-4; 3 John 1:11).

Thus, evil would have its source from creation itself (cf. Jas 1:13). Such a situation would involve the human person (Adam) who was ordained to be the head of creation (Gen 1:26-28). But how could this evil come from a creature which was not created evil? The Yahwist, the author of the second creation narrative (Gen 2-3), gave the indication that evil would spring forth from some other creature who managed to entice the human being into this perverse condition. The Yahwist identified this creature as "Serpent, *nakhash* – נָחָשׁ", who according to the Mesopotamian Gilgamesh Epic, and now according to the Yahwist narrative in the Book of Genesis, was considered to be the most cunning and discreet creature (Gen 3:1; cf. Prov 12:16, 23; 13:16; 14:9, 15; 22:3; 27:12).<sup>20</sup> This clever creature manipulated Eve's finite knowledge and her desire for eternal life and led her and her partner to break God's commandment (cf. Gen 3:1-5). The serpent was

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<sup>20</sup> It was the belief of the Ancient Near East people (Mesopotamians, Hittites, Sumerians, Egyptians, Canaanites), that the "Serpent" was the most clever and cunning creature (Hebrew, '*arum* – עָרוּם) who could manipulate human beings. The Egyptian even worshipped it as a god. Cf. H.-J., FABRY, "נָחָשׁ", *TDOT* IX, 361-66, esp. 364; L.K. HANDY, "Serpent," *ADB* V, 1113-1116; See the Epic of Gilgamesh in J.B. PRITCHARD, *Ancient Near East Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1969, 258-289.

presented as the instigator to evil and the perpetrator of chaos who seeks to pervert the order of creation.

When one analyses the narrative one notes that the shrewd serpent did not repeat the exact words of God; rather it twisted them, and even Eve seemed to have forgotten them as the following parallelism demonstrates:

God's exact command to Adam was:

"You are *free to eat from any tree* in the garden except the tree of knowledge of good and evil. From that tree you shall not eat; when you eat from it you shall die." (Gen 2:16-17)

But the Serpent distorted the command by saying:

"Did God really say, 'You must *not eat from any tree* in the garden'?" (Gen 3:1).

It is clear that the adjective "*any*" is used positively in the divine command (*free to eat*) whereas the Serpent misplaced it negatively (*not eat*) in order to provoke a negative reaction from the woman.

*And in reaction Eve removed the adjective "any" completely, thus soothing the force of the prohibition of not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil:*

"We may eat fruit *from the trees* in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" (Gen 3:2)

It has been said that reconciliation is only possible in remembrance and truth. When the truth is deliberately distorted, it is impossible to arrive at authentic reconciliation.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.2 The Nephilim or the Sons of God (Gen 6:1-4)

Another attempt to explain the presence of evil among human beings is found in the story of the sons of God (Hebrew, *benê-ha'elohîm* – בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים), who invaded the human world and married their daughters, consequently reproducing corrupt offspring known as Nephilim (נְפִלִים) or giants (Gen 6:4; cf. Numb 13:33). The intermarriage between the sons of God (eternal) and

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. J. LOPRESTI, "The Church as Sinful Reconciler", in R.J. Kennedy, ed., *Reconciliation: The Continuing Agenda*, Collegeville, MI: The Liturgical Press, 1987, 2-3.

human beings (finite) tries to explain man's desire for eternal life. This infuriated God because it was not according to his divine plan.

### 3.3 Divine Response

The concept of reconciliation begins after the fall of Adam, for the amicable situation of Adam and Eve in Eden suffered interruption with the allurement of the Serpent and consequent contravening of the divine commandment. Adam and Eve became aware of their nakedness, something they were not previously ashamed of (cf. Gen 2:25). Out of shame they hid themselves from God in the bushes (cf. 3:8, 10), signifying that they realized their frail condition of sin, the folly of breaking the divine commandment, and the disturbance they occasioned in their relationship with God. They tried to cover themselves with fig leaves (3:7), indicating the human effort to cover up failure. But it didn't work because they still felt naked, for their shame could only be removed by God himself who dignified them by making garments of skin for them (cf. 3:21).

The story underscores the following points:<sup>22</sup> The first act of reconciliation comes from the part of God who searched for and called Adam and Eve from the bush (Gen 3:9). Out of divine steadfast love, out of compassion (*hesed* – חֶסֶד), God reached out to the miserable couple. The second act of reconciliation was enshrined in the divine promise of Gen 3:15, that the offspring of Eve would crush the Serpent's head (*Proto Evangelium*). The serpent could not block God's eternal plan; nor could human disobedience and infidelity unsettle the divine plan in any way. God's choice to make garments of skin for Adam and Eve was the first divine act of reconciliation (3:21). He did not abandon them to their wretchedness.

### 3.4 Consequences of Original Sin

Reconciliation cannot be obtained by distorting or covering up the truth; rather, both parties must recognize and accept the consequences. God exposed the act of disobedience for what it was and punished the three perpetrators: the serpent, the woman and the

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. W. NGOWI, *Introduction to the Pentateuch*, 76-81.

man. The short-term effect of their disobedience was the series of radical changes in relationships, changes that took the form of punishments: God punished the Serpent by relegating to him the humiliating fate of moving principally on its belly and eating dust; for the woman she was to suffer cravings for her husband who would dominate her, she would bear children in pain, and she would struggle as one fated to a permanent *enmity* between her and the serpent, between her offspring and the serpent. The man was to endure the punishment of continual labour with sweat for his food and the land was to rebel against him by producing thistles.

The long-term negative effect was the *rupture in relationships*, a rupture that would become contagious and widespread among the offspring of Adam and Eve. Family relationships shattered as Cain proceeded to act on his envy of his young brother Abel by killing him (Gen 4:1-16). Human society at large became corrupt (6:5ff) and even wanted to challenge God's glory and power by building the tower of Babel. Failing to accept the identity God gave them, they wished to make a name for themselves (11:4). God responded by confusing them with linguistic differences and scattering them over all the earth (11:8-8).

The multiplication of languages and the scattering of the people who subjected themselves to hubris denoted separation among human beings, which was the opposite of the divine plan that intended that human beings should live together as His people (cf. Gen 11:1). Even after this division human beings continued with their rebellious, evil ways to the extent that God regretted to have created them (6:7). Consequently, God decided to subject to destruction all creatures on the surface of the earth by the Flood. All creatures suffered punishment on account of the evil deeds of their ruler, the human being (cf. 1:26, 28). Nevertheless, at the end God repented for having punished them thus and made reconciliation through Noah by the Covenant (*Noahic Covenant*) by which he promised not to destroy the world again. The rainbow symbolized the grace and beauty of the covenant (cf. 6:18; 8:21-9:17).

### 3.5 The Story of Reconciliation in the Patriarchal Promise

It is well known that Gen 1–11 is the meta-historical part of the Bible expressed in a figurative, mythical language that seeks to explain the divine origin of the universe and attempts to defy the God who sustains it: (a) the world, (b) animate and inanimate creatures among whom human beings are primary, (c) the presence of evil in the world, and (d) death as a consequence of defiance. Within this theological narrative we get fundamental truths of revelation: quite significant among these is the nature of the relationship between God and creation.

From Gen 12 onwards the biblical narrative enters into the historical world. Subsequent to the delusions of a humanity that was corrupted by evil and the perversion of relationships occasioned by that corruption, God took the initiative to restore the ruptured relationships. In doing this, God called an unknown man by the name of Abraham from Ur of Chaldea to go to Canaan (12:1). This is the beginning of a long road to reconciliation that would reach its completion in the person of Jesus Christ in the NT.

The biblical story of Abraham underscores several dimensions to the reconciliation that would take place. God takes the first step by calling Abraham and promising him that he would become a great nation and a blessing to all peoples on the earth. Abraham indeed had been seeking God without asking for anything in particular for himself (Gen 12:1-3). Hence Abraham was detached and attentive to the divine call; and in obedience he followed the command without hesitation. He even convinced his household to join him in the enterprise with all its risks (12:4).

God reciprocated Abraham's trust by reiterating his promise (cf. Gen 15:18-21), a promise ratified by the circumcision of all males (cf. 17:10-14). Abraham's trust in God received affirmation when he obeyed God's command to offer his only son Isaac as a sacrifice (the *Aqedah*) in Gen 22:16-18 (cf. Jas 2:21-23). It is this kind of trust that is necessary for true reconciliation. Through the blessing that God showered upon Abraham humanity's estrangement from the Creator begins to be removed; the hope of definitive reconciliation with Him began to blossom and to be eventually

fulfilled in Christ, just as the Blessed Virgin Mary declared in her Magnificat (Luke 1:55-56; cf. Matt 1:1; John 8:56).

### 3.6 Reconciliation in the Form of Covenant

This reconciliatory process in the OT is guaranteed by a series of *Covenants*. Covenant (in Hebrew, *berît* – בְּרִית) is the affirmation of reconciliation (a relationship of mutual fidelity) between God and his people Israel.

A covenant is an agreement or alliance between two parties (who are superior and inferior to each other, or are equal to each other). It is thought that the Sinaitic covenant (cf. Exod 19-24) somehow imitated the ancient Hittite form of treaties that concluded with elaborate public ceremonies. The covenant normally concluded with sanctions and sacrificial rites, and the sealed scrolls were preserved in shrines in order to be publicly read annually by kings or high priests.<sup>23</sup> Such events were intended to ensure wholehearted fidelity to the reconciliation.

### 3.7 Experience of Life with God: "Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy" (cf. Lev 11:44, 45; 20:7, 26)

The covenantal relationship between God and Israel required that they be holy people. To be reconciled to God is to be like him. The call to be holy was accompanied by a divine means of establishing this holiness, i.e., *God set them apart for himself*. The Pentateuch manifests a development of what this *separation* entailed: it rendered the *defiled* clean so as to enable Israel to encounter the most holy God for it was believed that one would die

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<sup>23</sup> There are various covenants in the OT:

Noahic Covenant	Unilateral/Unconditional	Gen 8:21-9:17
Abrahamic Covenant	Unilateral/Unconditional	Gen 12:1-3
Mosaic Covenant	Bilateral/Conditional	Exod 19–24
Davidic Covenant	Unilateral/Unconditional	2 Sam 7:12-16

Cf. J.H. WALTON, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context: A Survey of Parallels Between Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 1989, 95-107; W. NGOWI, *Introduction to the Pentateuch*, 50-52.

if he/she approached the Lord in an unclean state (cf. Exod 20:19; 28:35; Lev 8:35; *et al.*). These separations led to the *concept of sacrifice as a means of reconciliation*:<sup>24</sup>

- **Human separation:** Human race – the choice of the Hebrews – the choice of the Levites – the choice of the Family of Aaron – the choice of the High Priest – the designation of the sacrificial animal – the specification of the animal's blood – the author of the separations/consecrations: God.
- **Geographical separations:** World – Canaan – Promised Land – Judea – Jerusalem – Temple Mount (Zion) – Temple (three separations) – the Altar – Debir (Holy of Holies) – Ark of the Covenant – God as Lord.
- **Temporal separations:** Seasons – Annual Feasts – Weekly Feasts – Daily Feasts (prayers) – Hours of prayer – God as adored.

### 3.8 The Deuteronomist: Theologian/ Historian in the Historical Books

The Sinaitic covenant became the cornerstone of Israel's relationship with God in the Promised Land. Though Israel remained continually unfaithful and walked away from this covenant with God, God did not unconditionally abandon them. If Israel did not adhere to the covenant, she suffered punishment. But the punishment was not an end-in-itself as if it were an act of vengeance; rather, it was meant to bring them to their senses, awaken them to a desire to repent and return to their God. Out of his *hesed* (steadfast compassion/ love) for Israel God always took the first step to reconcile himself to them by sending *judges and prophets* who reminded them of their sin and urged them to repent. The Deuteronomist *historical cycle* is demonstrated in the historical books as follows:

- Keeping the Covenant brings *shalom*, i.e., peace and prosperity (cf. 1 Kgs 3:14).

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<sup>24</sup> For a more detailed understanding of the holiness dynamism based on separations in the OT see, A. VANHOYE, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest According to the New Testament*, Petersham, MA: St. Bede's Publications 1980, 26-36.



- Breaking the Covenant brings *punishment*: famine, oppression, war, deportation.
- The Davidic Covenant is of special note: Because the king was responsible for the maintenance of the covenant, King David became the benchmark for all kings who followed him – if they did not live like David they were considered as failures and disgraced (cf. 1 Kgs 11:33). Rehoboam exemplifies this (14:22). So do Jeroboam (15:3); Ahab (16:30); and Ahaziah (22:52). Asa, on the other hand, manifests the goodness of a king faithful to the God of Israel (15:11).

The Davidic covenant represented a kind of narrowing of the Sinaitic covenant between God and the whole of Israel since, strictly speaking, it was between David's family and God. It is not that the Sinaitic covenant was abrogated; rather, God reinforced the covenant of Sinai by choosing one family who would accomplish what God had in mind at Sinai. These two covenants would go hand in hand from the OT to the NT. The Davidic covenant represented a development of the idea of an eschatological Messianic (in Hebrew, *mashiha* – מָשִׁיחַ) King figure who would definitively reconcile God with Israel and the whole world (cf. Ps 2:2; Isa 61:1-3; Luke 4:18-19).

### 3.9 The Prophetic Literature

The prophets were always commissioned by God to bring back his people, i.e., to inspire within their hearts the will to reconcile. They geared their message essentially to a revival of the people's conscience and an awakening of a sense of contrition and repentance. With repentance came the hope of salvation, a hope that becomes more and more explicit in the Deportation / Exile experience (cf. Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel).

For example, God intends Hosea's *marriage* to become an analogy of Israel's covenantal relationship with God. Within this analogy, Israel comports herself as the unfaithful wife who falls into idolatry (cf. Hos 1:2-3; 2:1ff). Hosea's reunion with his unfaithful wife represents the divine mercy, the steadfast love (*hesed*) which grounds an unconditional reconciliation with his people (cf. 3:1ff). The message is expressed in 3:5, "Afterward the

children of Israel shall return (שוב) and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days.”

The Prophetic description of God’s steadfast love for Israel unmistakably affirms a love that is so great that, moved by the dynamism of his very own love, God promises the following:

- He will be the liberating king and Israel will be his own possession: “You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (cf. Exod 19:5-6).
- Although, he, God, is as a farmer who laments over his vineyard that produces wild grapes (cf. Isa 5:1-7), the fruitlessness of the vineyard will not have the final say.
- He will continue to be the husband even if Israel is an unfaithful wife (cf. Hos 1-3).
- He will always be the Shepherd and Israel will be his flock (cf. Pss 23; 28:9; Isa 40:11; Ezek 34:10-24). The intriguing message in Ezek 34:23-24 indicates that God will tend his sheep in the person of a Davidic shepherd, a foreshadowing of Jesus Christ the Messiah (cf. Matt 2:6; John 10:11; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25; 5:4; Rev 7:17).
- He will engender total reconciliation with Judah. This promise finds historical expression through the prophet Isaiah, the tenth verse of the seventh chapter, in a form of the sign of a virgin who will conceive and bear a son whose name will be “Immanuel – עִמָּנוּאֵל – God with us”.
- He will be ready to allow His Servant (‘*ebed* YHWH – יְהוָה עֶבֶד) to suffer and die for his people Israel, a people who have strayed (cf. Isa 52:13-53:12). This will be a foreshadowing of Jesus Christ’s redemptive death in the NT (cf. Mark 10:45; Phil 2:6-11).
- There will be a new heaven and new earth, foreshadowed by the radical promise of Trito-Isaiah and reiterated in Isa 66:22, to replace the disrupted, fallen creation (65:17). The author of the Book of Revelation (21:1-5) elucidates this new order. The former division between God and humankind will dissolve; God will dwell among his people forever (Rev 21:3). God declares that it will be an age of newness: “I am

making everything new!" (21:5). The age-old separation will be eliminated; and the human person will be readmitted into the presence of God. In a word, God will have effected full reconciliation.

- He will make a *new covenant* with his people (cf. Jer 31:31-34) and put his commandments in their hearts: "I will give you a new heart and put *a new spirit* in you; *I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh*. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws" (cf. Ezek 36:26-2). God wants to be reconciled with his people forever.

### 3.10 Examples of Interpersonal, Horizontal Reconciliation in the OT

***Abraham and Lot (Gen 13):*** the reconciliation between *Abraham and his cousin Lot* is a classic example. They managed to meet and talk about the matter. Since they wished each other prosperity and all that is good, they agreed on a common solution. Reconciliation must be founded upon truth and benevolence.

***Joseph and his brothers:*** the story of Joseph whom his brothers sold to the Midianites / Ishmaelites (Gen 37) demonstrates that human beings may reconcile with each other. Joseph later told them the truth, forgave them and entered into reconciliation with them, including with his old father, Jacob/Israel (Gen 45). The story highlights the gradual stages required for lasting reconciliation.

***Moses and Miriam and Aaron (Num 12):*** Miriam and Aaron were complaining that Moses was the only prophet! God told them the truth about the uniqueness of Moses, and punished Miriam with leprosy (v. 10). Aaron confessed their guilt before his brother Moses (vv. 11-12); and out of compassion Moses expressed a fully conciliatory attitude and pleaded with God to forgive them and heal his sister (vv. 13-15).

***David and Saul:*** After the disgrace of Saul after failing to abide by the command that was given through the prophet Samuel (1 Sam 15), in depression and jealousy he wanted to kill David (18:9ff). While on the run, David had the opportunity to kill Saul, but he didn't because of the sacrality of the anointed king (24:3-

22). Rather, he sought to forgive him and spared his life, saying, "From evildoers come evil deeds" (24:13). Unfortunately, Saul did not consider seriously David's desire for reconciliation.

***Human beings and creation reconciled:*** The famous passage from Isaiah 11:1-16 that prophecies the return of Israel from the Babylonian exile depicts a new world in which the rift between human beings and the land, between human beings and other creatures evaporates. As mentioned above, one of the consequences of Adam and Eve's disobedience to God's commandment was the cursing of the land and other creatures. The former harmonious relationship between human beings and other creatures had suffered rupture (cf. Gen 3:17-19; 4:12). Isaiah draws a picture of the restoration of the harmonious relationship that had disappeared with the expulsion from Paradise, a relationship that the Messiah, who would be from the stump of Jesse, would now reinstate: "*The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.*" (Isa 11:6-8). The agent of this definitive reconciliation between God and his creatures would be the Messiah who would appear in the person of Jesus Christ in the New Testament (cf. Luke 4:18-21). Paul envisioned creation itself waiting for definitive reconciliation with human beings and with their Creator in the Parousia, the glorious return of the risen Christ (cf. Rom 8:19-23).

***Reconciliation in the Psalms and Sapiential Books:*** The Psalms are the outpouring of the human heart in response to God and his revelation, a revelation that extends to almost the whole history of the salvation of Israel. Similarly, the Sapiential books contain a long tradition of Israel's reflection upon the experience of life before the mystery of God who reveals himself. Therefore, as one would expect, in the Psalms and Sapiential books we find texts rich in the theme of reconciliation. Of great significance in this regard are the Psalms of Reconciliation (Pss 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; and 143). Some scholars hypothesize that these psalms were used on the *Yom Kippur* or the Day of Atonement (cf. Lev 23:27,

28; 25:9ff). The similarity of the structure of these psalms tells all; good examples are Psalms 32 and 51:

<b>Psalm 51</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Psalm 32</b>
vv. 1-2	Invocation; request for forgiveness	vv. 1-2
vv. 3-5	Repentance of sin: recognition of sin (v. 3); contrition for sin committed	vv. 3-5
vv. 5-6	Priest's prayer for the sinner Admittance of sinful condition	v. 6
vv. 7-9	Penitential prayer, forgiveness and re-admittance to the Praying Assembly in the Temple	vv. 7-10
vv. 10-12	Personal prayer asking for divine grace to persevere in keeping God's commandments	
vv. 13-17	Act of thanksgiving	
vv. 18-19	Prayer for the Temple of City of God (Zion), including the mention of sin sacrifices	v. 11

## Summary

As stated above, reconciliation is the main leitmotif in the OT since the whole economy of salvation is geared to restoration of the primitive condition of the human being and much more. The OT contains divine promises that point to their future fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

## 4. The New Testament: Reconciliation Accomplished

In the opening verses of the Gospel of Matthew we meet the genealogy of Jesus Christ, a genealogy that goes back to David and Abraham (1:1-17) and thus serves as an implicit reminder to the reader of the major OT promises that were yet to be fulfilled (cf. Gen 17:6f; 2 Sam 7:12-16). Now with the coming of Jesus Christ,

their son and the unique Son of God, the fulfilment of these promises is imminent. He will be called *Immanuel* (God with us – עִמָּנוּ אֵל) because now God is going to be with his people (Matt 1:23; cf. Isa 7:14; 8:8). Luke, for his part, begins his genealogy with Jesus and goes backward in history down to Adam and to God himself (3:23-38). This reminds the reader of the Proto-Evangelium to Adam and Eve in Gen 3:15. Adam and Eve's offspring will defeat the great serpent and bring to full reconciliation the original relationship between humanity and its Creator.

#### 4.1 The Gospels

According to the *Benedictus* of Zachariah (cf. Luke 1:69, 71, 77), the *Nunc Dimittis* of Simeon (2:30), and the declaration of John the Baptist in the Jordan region (3:6), the fulfilment of reconciliation or making peace between God and his people in the NT is synonymous to *Salvation* (*Yeshû'â* – יִשְׁעָה). It is physically described in terms of the Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew and as the Kingdom of God in Mark and Luke. The agent of this process is Jesus Christ or *Yeshû'â* (cf. Matt 1:21, 25). Jesus fulfils his mission of reconciliation by his life and his teachings.

#### In his Life

- Jesus was born in poor, humble, human circumstances in order to reconcile all people with God (John 1:12-13; Phil 2:8).
- His birth is the Father's gesture of peace to the world as the heavenly Angels sang during his birth in Bethlehem: "Glory to God in the highest, and on *earth peace to men* on whom his favor rests" (Luke 2:14).
- He offered himself as a sacrifice for all (Mark 10:45; Heb 7:27; 9:14; 10:12); through his suffering, death and resurrection (Col 1:20-22), he reconciled the world to himself.
- The prologue of John 1:1-18 reminds the reader of the creation narrative in Gen 1–3 by revealing that God created all things through the Word (ὁ Λόγος). It is by means of the Logos, who took flesh and pitched his tent (ἐσκήνωσεν)

among human beings, that those who believe in him may become sons and daughters of God (cf. Rev 21:3, 7). It is the Logos who subsequently reconciles the world with God. John the Baptist affirmatively testifies that Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God who brings reconciliation by taking away the sin of the world (John 1:29). The same Johannine tradition links to the narrative of creation to elucidate the reconciliation accomplished in Rev 21:1-8. The initiative is emphatically God's who comes down to the estranged human being and not vice versa.

During the *Last Supper* Jesus uttered words for the second cup which were a surprise to the apostles, "This is my *blood of the covenant*, which is poured out for many," with some minor differences in the synoptic parallels (Matt 26:28; Luke 22:20). These words are reminiscent of the words of Moses to the Israelites when he ratified the Sinaitic Covenant with the blood of bulls, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words" (Exod 24:8).

Now it is the blood of Jesus himself; it is the blood of him who acts as the high priest and at the same time offers himself as the sacrifice. Unlike the blood of the bulls which was sprinkled on the people, the blood of Christ is to be drunk by his apostles (disciples). It is no longer reserved to a special ethnic group, the Israelites; rather, it is for the many, i.e., for all people. This new covenant is therefore greater; indeed, it is universal. Jesus not only reconciles Israel to YHWH their God; rather, he reconciles all people to God. In other words, he definitively restores the primitive harmonious relationship that existed between God and creation before the fall of Adam and Eve. He is the promised offspring of Adam and Eve (the *Proto-Evangelium*) who would crush the head of the serpent (cf. Gen 3:15b). This is what the celebrant and concelebrants pray in the third Eucharistic Prayer of the Holy Mass, "Look, we pray, upon the oblation of your Church and, recognizing the sacrificial Victim by whose death you willed *to reconcile us to yourself*, grant that we, who are nourished by the Body and Blood of your Son and filled with his Holy Spirit, may become one body, one spirit in

Christ.” Indeed he himself Jesus, the one who is our Reconciler, is himself our Lord and our God (cf., John 20:28).

Jesus acted as the divine agent of reconciliation even during his passion: Pontius Pilate, for instance, reconciled with Herod Antipas during the trial (cf. Luke 23:12). Luke tells us that Herod and Pilate had been in enmity before that moment.

It seems the rift between the two was provoked by Pilate’s arrogant hostile acts against Jews: he had killed Galileans in Jerusalem (cf. Luke 13:1). According to Philo (*Ad Gaium*, 38, # 300), Pilate required Herod to put images of Caesar in his palace, a directive that incited an angry demonstration led by the Herodian princes in Jerusalem. At this juncture Pilate’s act of sending Jesus to Herod was a sign of recognition, which indicated a measure of cooperation. Both of them agreed on the political innocence of Jesus (cf. Acts 4:26-28). It is true that some, for example, Raymond E. Brown, have doubted the historicity of this event. Brown hypothesized that it was a Lucan invention to express his theology of Jesus’ passion as a continuing act of forgiveness and healing. What happened between Pilate and Herod is also a reflection of the LXX Prov 15:38 (MT 16:7), which says, “When a man’s ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him.”<sup>25</sup> However, a number of scholars have rejected this hypothesis as untenable: they consider the incident as historical.<sup>26</sup>

### **In his Teaching**

***Matt 5:22-26 Reconciliation before offering:*** Before offering sacrifice at the altar, one is required to reconcile himself

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<sup>25</sup> R.E. BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, I, New York: Doubleday 1994, 773-786, especially 781.

<sup>26</sup> D.E. BOCK, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker 2000, 1821-1822. He sees no sufficient reason to deny the historicity of the rift between Herod Antipas and Pilate, for there were some reported historical events that favored such enmity. (The editor notes that there is no indication in the text that would indicate that what happened between Pilate and Herod should be accepted as non-historical; the flow of the narrative, on the other hand, suggests that the evangelist considered it to be historical.)



(διαλλάγηθι) with his neighbour. It does not matter who wronged whom; what matters is to settle matters before approaching God. The importance of fraternal reconciliation before approaching God is universal in scope, beyond the particularity of historical periods and geographical location.

**Matt 5:44 Love of enemies and praying for persecutors:** this is one of the most exacting teachings of Jesus. In order to call God our Father one has to be reconciled even to his/her enemies. Praying for persecutors means to bring them before God as brothers and sisters! Jesus models this during his crucifixion when he forgives his crucifiers as he hangs on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). In this way he reconciles himself with the crucifiers and with his heavenly Father. And Stephen imitated his master by praying for those who were stoning him, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (cf. Acts 7:60).

**Matt 6:12-15 Forgive (ἄφεσις) us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors:** The fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer underscores the importance of fraternal forgiveness if the Father is to forgive us. For this reason it is the only petition that is reiterated in vv. 14-15.

**Matt 18:15-10 Fraternal correction:** Jesus taught his disciples how to bring reconciliation within the community of believers. It was a process of three stages: the ones as yet unreconciled could simply reconcile with each other; if that were not enough, the two could invite a witness into their act of mutual reconciliation; lastly, if they still remained unreconciled, the two could submit themselves to the community authorities. If one chose not to accept correction he should be treated as a pagan. When the community lives as a truly reconciled one, Jesus is among them (Matt 18:20).

**Matt 18:22-35 Fraternal forgiveness:** This is a necessary condition for divine forgiveness and reconciliation with God. One has to forgive from the bottom of his/her heart (v. 35).

**Luke 15:11-32 The Prodigal Son:** this is the most celebrated and dramatic parable on reconciliation in the NT. The parable contains the following aspects about reconciliation that may be highlighted:

- The *compassionate love of the father* occasions his forgiveness for his son who has strayed.
- But also the prodigal son was able to seek and accept reconciliation with his father by *confronting the truth*.
- He realized (*remembered*) what he had done was wrong, and he held himself accountable for the misery of his present life in comparison with the comfortable circumstances of love and reconciliation at home (v. 17).
- In *humility he repented* and decided to return home to his father, “I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men’” (vv. 18-19).

Unfortunately the *elder son* responded with anger and jealousy to the father’s desire to celebrate the reconciliation with his younger brother; the older son refused to accept his young brother: he wanted a type of reconciliation that exacts justice in a way that is merciless. True reconciliation, on the other hand, requires a forgiveness that allows justice to give way to mercy. *We may not seek justice at the expense of mercy! Selfishness* blocks reconciliation; but merciful love prevails over justice (the father’s gracious disposition).

Something worth considering: It is important to see how human psychological development interfaces with the process of reconciliation.<sup>27</sup>

**John 3:13-18 The Son of Man is the mediator of reconciliation:** In his dialogue with Nicodemus, Jesus reminded him that “No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven, the Son of Man” (v. 13). The meaning of these words is that only Jesus, the Son of Man who comes from heaven as the eternal Son of God, can be the ladder (cf. Gen 28:12) between the Eternal God in heaven and human beings on earth. He combined this leitmotif of the ladder with the image of the serpent in the OT: the tempter of Eve in Gen 3:1-14, the punishing

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<sup>27</sup> It is interesting to see how the Parable of the Prodigal Son mirrors the analysis of P.J. ROY, “Psychological Dimensions of Reconciliation”, 17-30.

venomous serpents in the desert and the healing bronze snake (Num 21:6-9).<sup>28</sup> The healing was not brought about by the bronze snake, but by faith in the word of God. Similarly, it is not the pain-provoking wooden cross which gives life but faith in Jesus who was lifted on it, "that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3:15; cf. Wis 16:5-13, esp. 7, 12).

***And in his high priestly prayer (John 17):*** Jesus indicated that his mission in the world was to bring people back to God the Father, so that they be *one* with him and the Father: "that they also may be one in us – ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ὦσιν" (v. 21). In other words, total reconciliation is accomplished in Jesus Christ (cf. 17:2, 11, 21-23, 26).

## 4.2 Acts

***Acts 6:1-7 The Question of Fair Treatment of Widows:*** There were complaints that some Hellenistic Jewish Christians widows were overlooked in the distribution of food. Reconciliation was reached after the apostles discussed the matter with the whole congregation and came up with the solution of selecting seven men as deacons who would serve them while they – the apostles – engaged in prayer and the ministry of the word.

***Acts 15:1-29 The Ecumenical Council of Jerusalem:*** The most important passage in the Book of Acts concerning reconciliation is that of chapter fifteen in which the apostles had to overcome the most serious hurdle in the primitive Church: the acceptance of Gentiles without binding them to Jewish traditions of circumcision and dietary laws. Even Paul had opposed and scolded *Peter for his hypocrisy* on this issue (cf. Gal 2:11-21). By confronting and speaking the truth they reconciled themselves to each other and came up with a common position that the Jewish traditions were not necessary for salvation in Jesus Christ.

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<sup>28</sup> Note the Hebrew word play between snake "*nakhash* – נָחָשׁ" and bronze "*nekhoshet* – נְחֹשֶׁת" (Num 21:9).

### 4.3 Pauline Literature

It is known that Paul seldom uses the aforementioned technical terms for reconciliation (καταλλαγή / ἀποκατάστασις) and forgiveness (ἄφεσις);<sup>29</sup> rather, he uses the verb χαρίζομαι which means to give freely or to freely remit somebody what he or she owes. From this emerges the noun χάρις – “grace” (cf. 2 Cor 2:7, 10; 12:13; Eph 4:32; Col 2:13; 3:13). Explaining this surprising shift in terminology, J. Knox says that due to his experience of utter divine forgiveness for his former violent repression of the Way, Paul understood that forgiveness and reconciliation are more an issue of free divine grace, and are not the consequences of what someone has earned by way of merit from some good he or she has done or even by way of sincere repentance or atonement.<sup>30</sup> It is still more interesting to note that Paul does not develop much the theme of repentance which is so central to the Gospels.<sup>31</sup> Instead he wrote, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8; cf. 2 Cor 5:15, 19). Jesus’ gratuitous removal of the barrier of sin through his death has enabled access to genuine reconciliation (cf. Ps 32:2).

One of the most celebrated expositions of Pauline teaching on the issue of reconciliation is found in 2 Cor 5:17-21. The pericope contains most of the vocabulary on both transient and definitive reconciliation in the coming of the new creation. He specifically teaches the Corinthians that the initiative is from God who has

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<sup>29</sup> Paul mostly uses the term reconciliation (καταλλαγή / ἀποκατάστασις) in the cosmic dimension (Rom 5:11; 2 Cor 5:18; Col 1:22), with the exception of 1 Cor 7:11 and 2 Cor 5:20 where he speaks at the personal level. And interestingly he does not use the words ἀφίημι (to forgive) or ἄφεσις (forgiveness); rather he mostly uses the verb χαρίζομαι “to favor, pardon, to remit” (cf. 2 Cor 2:7, 10; 12:13; Eph 4:32; Col 2:13; 3:13).

<sup>30</sup> See J. KNOX, *Chapters in a Life of Paul*, 118-122. He defines grace as “God’s favor toward those who do not deserve it, a favor, indeed, whose reality can be known and whose benefits can be received only by those who know that they do not deserve it...it is God’s grace alone that makes possible our justification as well as our reconciliation”, especially page 120, 122.

<sup>31</sup> The noun “repentance” (μετάνοια) occurs only three times in Rom 2:4; 2 Cor 7:9, 10 and once in the Deutero-Pauline letter of 2 Tim 2:25; and the verb “repent” (μετανοέω) in 2 Cor 12:21.

always sought to reconcile himself with his people (v. 18a); the vicarious death of Jesus Christ (v. 19a, 21) is what ushers in the definitive reconciliation that brings a new creation (v. 17); and now believers engage in the ministry of reconciliation as ambassadors for Christ (v. 20).<sup>32</sup>

Paul expresses the concept of forgiveness by means of two terms: reconciliation, which is essentially a personal term and means the restoration of community or fellowship (κοινωνία),<sup>33</sup> and justification (δικαίωσις), which is essentially a legal term that means acquittal. Reconciliation is to be in Christ Jesus (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ); and life on earth is a thanksgiving to God for the redemption that has occurred through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Even sufferings are to be understood as an opportunity for communion with Christ rather than simply an occasion for repentance (cf. Phil 3:7-11; Gal 6:14).

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<sup>32</sup> For a detailed study of 2 Cor 5:17-21 see W.H. GLOER, "Ambassadors of Reconciliation: Paul's Genius in Applying the Gospel in a Multi-Cultural World: 2Corinthians 5:14-21", *Review and Expositor* 104 (2007) 589-601.

<sup>33</sup> Paul uses the term communion or fellowship (κοινωνία) among Christians as a consequence of reconciliation through faith or sharing in the life of Jesus Christ (cf. Rom 15:26; 1 Cor 1:9; 10:16; 2 Cor 8:4; Gal 2:9; Phil 2:1-2; 3:10) or in the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14) or in the Gospel (Phil 1:5; 2Cor 9:13). W.H. GLOER, "Ambassadors of Reconciliation", 594 makes a reflective distinction between Paul's soteriological language in relation to its background and proposes "reconciliation" as the most appropriate and meaningful term that expresses the significance of Christ's death today. The first one is "redemption" (ἡ ἀπολύτρωσις) which is a term that comes from the slave market of the first century and implies a release from bondage; yet many in our world have no particular sense of bondage. The second is "justification" (ἡ δικαιοσύνη) that comes from the world of the courtroom, and its juridical emphasis may have little impact where the sense of sin and any sort of accountability before God have vanished. The third is "sacrifice or expiation" (τὸ ἱλαστήριον) that evokes images of cultic ritual which have little meaning for moderns who are no longer plagued by a dread of the numinous. Finally, the fourth is "reconciliation," (ἡ καταλλαγή) which belongs to the sphere of personal relationships: ours is an age which is acutely aware of the alienation between people which exists at every level. Ours is an age hungry for the healing of broken relationships.

It is because of his experience of being forgiven and reconciled with the Christian community that reconciliation becomes the overarching theme of Paul's theology. R.P. Martin hypothesizes that reconciliation provides a suitable umbrella under which the main features of Paul's kerygma and the working out of its practical implications may be set.<sup>34</sup> There are many passages in his letters that speak about reconciliation in its horizontal and vertical dimensions as already referred to above. Paul creates a parallel between Jesus Christ and Adam: the first Adam brought sin and death, while the second Adam brought grace and life; thus forgiveness and reconciliation (cf. Rom 5:14; 1Cor 15:22, 45).

There are indeed some concrete examples of reconciliation in the letters of Paul:

**One of the unique teachings of Paul was his opposition to the sending of fellow believers to pagan law courts (1 Cor 6:1-11).** He exhorted the Corinthians to solve their disputes and reconcile themselves with each other within the Christian assembly and not to seek solutions in the law courts of unbelievers. They should achieve reconciliation with the acknowledgement that they were sinners before they were forgiven and have now found reconciliation through Christ Jesus, "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor 6:11; cf. Matt 6:12, 14-15; 18:33-35).

**1 Cor 7:12-16. The context of the Pauline Privilege:** Those Christians who were married to Gentiles should not divorce their partners, for a spouse could bring salvation to the unbelieving partner. His rationale is "God has called us to live in peace" (v. 15). To live in peace is nothing other than reconciliation as opposed to divorce that separates.

**In Eph 2:11-22,** we find a scenario of apparently serious division and disharmony among the Ephesians. It seems they were

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. R.P. MARTIN, *Reconciliation: A Study of Paul's Theology*, rev. ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990; R.P. MARTIN, "Center of Paul's Theology", in G.F. Hawthorne, ed. – al., *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, Downers Grove, IL InterVarsity 1993, 94-95.

divided between the circumcised (Diaspora Jewish Christians) and the uncircumcised (Hellenistic Christians). Some thought that the circumcised were the rightful members of the Kingdom of God whereas the uncircumcised were aliens in God's household. This was a serious division because it was an ideological and structural division, which could have become very difficult to heal.

Paul, however, called upon the Ephesians to reconcile themselves with each other because in Christ God had brought them together and was forming them into one building, into one temple of the Lord. Jesus had created one new man out of the two. In this new body of Christ, Jesus was reconciling (ἀποκαταλλάξῃ) both of them to the Father through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. Christ came to preach peace to bring all to the same household of God (vv. 16-17).

**The letter to the Colossians** which is hypothesized to be a counterpart of Ephesians,<sup>35</sup> contains similar teaching, "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile (ἀποκαταλλάξει) to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Col 1:19-20). Paul exhorts the Colossians to live with moral uprightness according to their new status as children of God, as people who are reconciled with God and with one another.

**Philemon and Onesimus:** The most celebrated example of reconciliation is found in the letter to *Philemon*. *Onesimus* who was a slave escaped from his master Philemon and went to serve Paul in prison. He was baptized and became very faithful to Paul. In order to clear the problem, Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon

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<sup>35</sup> Many scholars have hypothesized that, because the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians have so many similarities with some nuances (e.g. Col 1:23-29 and Eph 3:1-13; the *Haustafel* teaching in Col 3:18-4:1 and Eph 5:21-6:9; Col 4:7-8 and Eph 6:21-22), they must derive from the same Pauline school, a school hypothesized to be at Ephesus where Paul was imprisoned for three years. However, this hypothesis that they are literarily interdependent is not unanimously accepted. Cf. C. E. ARNOLD, "Ephesians, Letter to", in G.F. Hawthorne, ed. – *al.*, *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity 1993, 242-243.

asking him to accept him without punishment. He appealed to the new status of Onesimus as a *true son of Paul in Jesus*, just as Philemon himself was. Their relationship in Christ was no longer between a master and a slave; rather, *they were now reconciled in Christ as brothers* (v. 16).

Aware of his sinful past and how the Risen Lord mercifully called him to his apostolic ministry (Gal 1:11-24; cf. Acts 9; 22; 26), Paul considers the Church and her members as forgiven reconciler(s) or ambassador(s), “We are therefore Christ's ambassadors (πρεσβεύομεν), as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled (καταλλάγητε) to God” (cf. 2 Cor 5:18-21), for it was the risen Christ, their Lord and their God, who forgave them in the first place, and now intended to send them to be ambassadors of forgiveness and reconciliation: “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you” (cf. John 20:19, 21). James Lopresti has suggested two important principles about the ambassadorial ministry of Christians: the first is that remembering is at the heart of being ambassadors of reconciliation. Remembering means both “*not forgetting* and being made a member once again”. It means reconciliation has to do both with not forgetting who we are and with becoming who we are once again. The second principle, on the contrary, is *alienation* whereby we forget who we are and refuse to become who we are once again... or perhaps are unable to become who we are once again.<sup>36</sup>

#### 4.4 Hebrews

The main message of the Epistle to the Hebrews is to establish and declare once and for all the new “name” that Jesus Christ has inherited, that of “High Priest” of the People of God (Heb 1:4; 2:12, 17; 5:5-6).<sup>37</sup> Whereas in the OT, the dynamic of holiness was based on separations, in Jesus the situation is reversed.

The function of the OT priest was to reconcile God's people with the holy God, “Every high priest is selected from among men

<sup>36</sup> See J. LOPRESTI, “The Church as Sinful Reconciler”, 1-13.

<sup>37</sup> A. VANHOYE, *The Old Testament Priests and the New Priest*, 78.



and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people." (Heb 5:1-4; cf. 10:11).

Now in Jesus Christ who is *Immanuel*, "עִמָּנוּ אֵל – God with us" (Matt 1:23; cf. Isa 7:14; 8:8) there is no longer separation between God and his people, for in the incarnation God has decided to live among his people (cf. John 1:1-3, 14). The author of Hebrews explicates that Jesus Christ becomes the rightful High Priest because he is both divine Son of God (Heb 1:1-14) and the Son of Man who shares in everything with human beings except sin (2:5-18). The priesthood of Jesus Christ is superior to that of the OT because of his status as Son of God who cannot sin, whereas the Jewish priests were sinful and had to offer sacrifices for themselves and for the people over and over again. Jesus Christ's priesthood is perfect and eternal, after the example of Melchizedek (cf. 4:14-7:28), and he has offered himself as an expiatory sacrifice once and for all. This is enough, therefore, for our salvation (cf. 2:14-18; 10:12).

As stated above, a covenant is a legal form of reconciliation that guarantees continuity and trust. In Jesus Christ, the High Priest, God has established a covenant in his own blood (cf. Heb 8:1-13), a covenant that is superior to that of Sinai, which was sealed by animals' blood (9:12-28; 12:24; cf. Exod 24:6-8).<sup>38</sup> The New Covenant in Christ is the guarantee of reconciliation with God; henceforth Jesus commanded his disciples to celebrate it in remembrance of him (cf. Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24-25).

In celebrating the Lord's Supper, Christians understand the liturgical act as "Eucharist", an act of thanksgiving and praise (in Hebrew, *tôdah* - תּוֹדָה), to God the Father (cf. Heb 13:15) who has given us his own Son as atoning and vicarious sacrifice (*hilasmos* - ἱλασμός also *hilasterios* - ἱλαστήριος) (cf. Rom 3:25; Eph 5:2;

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<sup>38</sup> T.D. LEA – D.A. BLACK, *The New Testament: Its Background and Message*, Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman 2003, 502-506; cf. D.A. HAGNER, *Encountering the Book of Hebrews*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker 2002.

Heb 10:10; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). Now believers in Christ are enabled to approach God with confidence, particularly because God has forgiven them (cf. Heb 10:22); and the divine commandments remain engraved in their hearts (cf. 10:16). This conciliatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ, a sacrifice that has brought complete reconciliation between human beings and God and with each other was offered once and for all (cf. 9:26; 10:10, 12). It is an eternal sacrifice.

## **4.5 Catholic Epistles**

### ***James 2:1-11 Reconciliation between the Rich and the Poor:***

St. James offers us one of the most important teachings on reconciliation in the Christian assembly. He repeatedly warned his faithful to avoid discrimination, particularly on the basis of economic status (chap. 2). Discrimination cannot bring reconciliation. The world will continue to have the rich and the poor (cf. John 12:8), but this should not separate the disciples. He gives an enigmatic teaching on the kind of attitudes the poor and the rich must have toward each other: “The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower” (Jas 2:9-10).

Another powerful teaching on reconciliation comes from James 5:16, 19-20. In verse 16 James advises the faithful to confess their sins to one another, and pray for one another, that they may be healed. Confessing sins involves remembrance of former harmony in the community and the harmful effect sins bring to that harmony. The choice to confess sins invites an attitude of repentance and the recognition of the need for reconciliation and peace.

Certainly this is not the sacrament of reconciliation as it is known to the Catholic Church since no ordained minister is involved; rather it is an exercise of spiritual brotherly reconciliation. This is reminiscent of Jesus’ teaching about fraternal correction in Matt 18:15-17 where the community member is encouraged to accept his/her guilt and be reconciled to his fellow brother/sister. In this context Jesus teaches about the process of reconciliation in three stages, whereas in James 5:16 it

is corporate confession and not auricular confession.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, in verses 19-20 James encourages the members of his community to help each other to know the truth of their faith. Some of them were misled by false teachings that brought division among them. It was important to bring those in error back to the fold. Even now, most serious divisions in a community are caused by ignorance and misinformation. Knowledge and acceptance of the truth brings freedom, harmony and peace among people.

#### 4.6 Revelation

It is known that the Book of Revelation is a prophecy in visions about the definitive victory of Christ over evil, sin and death (cf. 1:3; 22:7). The book depicts two opposite spheres of influence: the heavenly sphere where God reigns on his throne surrounded by a throng of angels and saints in glory (4-5); and the earthly sphere inhabited by a suffering Church (cf. 1:9) that is seemingly ravaged by the evil one (the dragon, the beast, the harlot). The seven letters (2:1-3:22) contain exhortations to the faithful to be reconciled with God.<sup>40</sup>

The book concludes with the defeat of the evil one and his agents by Almighty God (ὁ παντοκράτωρ) who re-establishes his rule (cf. Rev 17:1-20:15). A new city of Jerusalem descends from heaven, and God lives among his chosen ones, those who have won the battle. In short, the Book of Revelation demonstrates that at the consummation of time, God will reconcile Himself with the redeemed world through the victorious Lamb (cf. 21:1-22:5).

Indeed, the author of Revelation ultimately presents a corrupt human world which is separated from its Creator (cf. Gen 3:23-24) and hence seems to be controlled by the evil one who bears the image of the Serpent, the Dragon or the Beast (cf. Rev 12-20) – an image that evokes the same creature who succeeded in deceiving Adam and Eve in Gen 3:1ff. But the Book of Revelation also reminds the reader of the *Proto-Evangelium* (Gen 3:15b) and the

<sup>39</sup> Cf. R.P. MARTIN, *James*, WBC 48, Waco, TX: Word Books 1988, 216.

<sup>40</sup> The faithful must "remember" where they have faltered and then repent and return to the former love relationship. Cf. D.E. AUNE, *Revelation 1-5*, WBC 52C, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson 1997, lxxxvii - lxxxviii.

future offspring of the woman who will crush the head of the serpent. The OT promise comes to fulfillment in the Book of Revelation for Jesus Christ, who is the offspring of the Woman, i.e., of the Blessed Virgin Mary (cf. Rev 12) defeats the serpent, and God readmits human beings into the new city of Jerusalem and allows them to eat of the fruit of the tree of life. It is interesting that in order to attain the universalistic vision of the new heavenly Jerusalem, the author has fused the image of old Jerusalem and that of Eden.

God reconciles redeemed human beings to himself and to the whole of creation and lives together with them in the new Eden (cf. Rev 2:7; 22:2). Therefore, the eschatological reconciliation is not only a justification or restoration of the created order, but a new creation. In the vicarious death of Jesus Christ, the old order has ceased; and in his resurrection the whole creation is invited to share in his transformed new life (cf. 2 Cor 5:17).<sup>41</sup>

## Conclusion

There are many texts in the Bible that develop the theme of reconciliation either explicitly or implicitly and often by way of narratives. It can rightfully be concluded that the Bible as a whole deals with reconciliation between God and human beings and with all of creation. At the same time, it concerns reconciliation between human beings themselves, and between human beings and the rest of creation. The process of reconciliation is a return to the original state of harmony and demands remembrance and forgiveness. Definitive reconciliation is achieved in Jesus Christ. In him the OT promises are fulfilled. The ruptured relationship caused by the sin of Adam and Eve has been repaired (cf. Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:22, 45; Rev 2:7; 22:2); and human beings are now friends of God (cf.

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<sup>41</sup> The present world and heaven itself would be transformed into a new existence, the New Jerusalem, whereby God and victorious people would live together. Cf. G.K. BEALE – M.S. McDONOUGH, "Revelation", in G.K. Beale – D.A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, Michigan, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic – Apollsos 2007, 1081, 1155-1156; D.E. AUNE, *Revelation 1–5*, lxxxvii; Ibid, *Revelation 17–22*, 1132-1133; W.H. GLOER, "Ambassadors of Reconciliation", 599.

John 15:15; 21:5). Indeed, God adopts them as his sons and daughters through Christ: "He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son" (Rev 21:7; cf. Matt 23:9; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). Human beings are now brothers and sisters (Matt 5:47; 23:8). Even the rest of creation, reconciled to God through Christ, is anxiously awaiting its total liberation from the curse of decay (cf. Rom 8:19-22), the decay that was the consequence of the sin of Adam, its head (cf. Gen 3:17-19).

Reconciliation, therefore, shines in the eternal light of grace with the same characteristic brilliance and beauty as salvation – as eternal life. Separation from God, from fellow human beings, from other creatures and from oneself leads to darkness, enslavement, sorrow and death. The forgiveness that leads to reconciliation is the path to freedom, happiness and the fullness of life. This is what Paul expresses in his hymn in his Letter to the Philippians: Jesus Christ emptied himself, showed himself to be fully human by his obedience, suffered the ignominious death of crucifixion, and rose from death so that he may reconcile creation with its Creator (Col 1:15-20; Phil 2:6-11). Ultimately, reconciliation demands the same process of recognizing the other's value, emptying oneself (*kenosis*), and raising the other from the shackles of sorrow and death. Similar to the exaltation of Jesus Christ to whom the heavenly Father gave a name above every other name (Phil 2:9-11), the person who forgives and reconciles others becomes a true victor and ultimately shines in the light of eternal glory.

At this juncture, it is important to recognize the inclusion that encapsulates the whole biblical story: the disordered universe occasioned by the disruption of the harmonious relationship between the Creator and his creation by the tragic fall of our first parents in the old creation in Gen 1–3 vanishes and gives way to a new heaven and new earth through the victory of Jesus Christ, the second Adam. This is the work of God at the end of the book of Revelation 21 (cf. Rom 5; 1 Cor 15:22, 45). True reconciliation is, therefore, preceded by death, by the fading away of the old order, and by the introduction of a new order that gives freedom and life. This is the eschatological kingdom of God, a new life with God where the corrupt world will have no place (cf. Rev 21:8).

Reconciliation is nothing other than a rebirth in the Holy Spirit, for no one can enter the kingdom of God, the Holy City of God, the New Jerusalem, and eat of the tree of life without being born again (cf. John 3:3-7). The Church, therefore, continues perseveringly with Jesus' mission of reconciliation until he comes again. At that juncture, God will be all in all (1 Cor 15:28). Amen.

# **Tobit 13: Restoration of Tobit as a Basis for the Hope of Resurrection and Restoration of Israel**

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In this essay, we shall argue that Tobit 13 offers a summary of Tobit's experience of suffering and restoration as an experience that coalesces in solidarity with the nation's suffering and the hope for restoration. Using Jon Levenson's understanding of death and resurrection in the Hebrew Scriptures, we shall argue that Tobit's experience is that of death and resurrection, and that his experience forms the basis for the hope of resurrection and restoration of the nation.

In the first part of this essay, we will discuss the Redaction Criticism of this hymn. We shall highlight some textual problems that bring to the surface the question of the unity of the hymn with the rest of the narrative. As an attempt to address these textual problems, we shall argue that the hymn reflects the themes that run throughout the narrative of Tobit: this hymn fits well within the narrative. Moreover, basing ourselves on Tobit's prayer in chapter 3, we shall show that Tobit's attitude towards his suffering accounts for some of the peculiarities of this hymn. Then we shall proceed to examine Levenson's understanding of death, *Sheol*, and resurrection, and how this understanding can be applied to Tobit's experience.

## **1. Tobit 13 and Redaction Criticism**

In the book of Tobit, various characters pray at important moments in their lives. Tobit prays in times of great duress (3:1-6), and prays immediately after being healed from his blindness when he is able to see his son Tobiah (11:14-15). Sarah prays in a time of extreme duress (3:11-15). Tobiah, too, prays immediately after he marries Sarah (8:5-7); and Raguel prays when in the morning hours he discovers that Tobiah is alive (8:15-18). Tobit's prayer in

chapter 13 is the longest prayer, which differentiates it from other prayers in this book. It is the climax of the whole narrative, whereby, after his healing and after hearing the angel Raphael's revelation of what has transpired, Tobit prays with gratitude and anticipation.

The hymn is found in most of the ancient MSS. *Vaticanus* and *Alexandrinus* contain a shorter text, while *Sinaiticus* contains the longer text, with lacunae in 13:6b.<sup>1</sup> According to the consensus of scholars, the longer version "represents more accurately the original form of the (text)."<sup>2</sup> The hymn is also found in the *DSS*, and in the Aramaic and Hebrew fragments (4Q196-1999 and 4Q 200), but they preserve only a portion of the hymn of Tobit. These fragments "agree in general with the long recension of the book [of Tobit] found in the fourth-century text of the *Codex Sinaiticus*."<sup>3</sup>

In terms of its form, the hymn resembles a psalm, with some prophetic elements. According to Moore, this hymn is the earliest witness to a new genre of the psalms of the Second Temple Judaism, namely, the eschatological psalms.<sup>4</sup> These hymns originated from Israel's longing for deliverance from foreign occupation and oppression, and from the eschatological hopes for the glorious Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup> Other hymns belonging to this genre are the Psalm of Solomon 11, Sirach 35:17-20; 36:1-17, and the Qumran Psalm Scroll (Column 22:1-15).<sup>6</sup> According to Westerman, allusions to Deutero-Isaiah characterize these psalms (49:6, 13, 17-18, 54:3; 7-8, 11-14); and they appear as a conclusion to a more extended text. Joy is a keynote to these psalms. It is clear that Tobit is the earliest witness to this genre.<sup>7</sup>

The hymns can be divided into two distinct units, as follows:

**I. Tobit 13:1-18:** Tobit praises God. The central theme in this section is that God punishes and shows mercy. Tobit praises God

<sup>1</sup> A. MOORE, *Tobit*, Anchor Bible 40A, New York: Doubleday 1996, 77.

<sup>2</sup> A. DI LELLA, "Two Major Prayers on the book of Tobit", in *Prayer from Tobit to Qumran*, New York: 2004, 96.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>4</sup> A. MOORE, *Tobit*. 282.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>7</sup> Cited by A. MOORE, *Tobit*, 283.



for his justice and mercy, which are manifested in his will to punish and to forgive sins. Tobit has experienced both (cf. 11:15 – “Although he scourges me, he has also has had mercy on me”). The second part of the hymn also reflects this theme. Thus, Tobit exhorts his fellow exiles to praise God in the midst of the nations where, due to their sins, they have been scattered because God is going to show mercy and gather them together (v. 7).

**II. Tobit 13:9-18:** Tobit praises Jerusalem. The undercurrents of this section are the same as his praise of God: justice and mercy, effected by the divine will to punish and to forgive, thematically give texture to the praise. Tobit prophesies that Jerusalem will suffer destruction on account of her sins, but God will restore her once more with full splendor and glory: “He begs that Jerusalem will be rebuilt into splendor and even describe the precious stones, wood and gold with which he hopes it will be reconstructed.”<sup>8</sup> The section has prophetic and eschatological elements.

Many scholars have noted various peculiarities in this hymn. Firstly, the hymn does not mention anything concerning the characters and events that give substance to the narratives of Tobit.<sup>9</sup> Tobit does not refer to himself and his experience directly in the hymn: rather, the hymn is a general acknowledgment of God’s justice and mercy, and a call to the people of Israel to confess their sins and repent. F. Zimmerman observed this and noted that instead of focusing on Tobit’s personal tragedy and recovery, the hymn focuses on the plight of the nation. Zimmerman suggests that the hymn “is not an ode of thanksgiving for one’s personal salvation, or rescue from the trial Tobit endured, or release from blindness and the like...[rather,]... it is a portrayal of a nation in captivity, urged to confess its sins before God and to repent, to pray for a golden era to come and a Jerusalem rebuilt.”<sup>10</sup>

Another scholar, J.J. Collins, has observed that the core of Tobit’s story consists of the misadventures that Tobit and his family endure. Only the opening and closing chapters (chapters 1,

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<sup>8</sup> J.A. FITZMYER, *Tobit*, Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature, New York: Walter de Gruyter 2003, 305.

<sup>9</sup> A. MOORE, *Tobit*, 282

<sup>10</sup> F. ZIMMERMAN, *The Book of Tobit*, New York: Harper 1958, 24.

and 13-14) find their place in the context of the history of Israel. Therefore, “the concern for Jerusalem and for the reunification of Israel in these passages is extraneous to the core story, and not required for its completion.”<sup>11</sup> This shows that “the beginning and the ending of the story of Tobit have been expanded to provide a theological and historical frame from a Judean, Jerusalemite perspective that was not integral to original story of Tobit.”<sup>12</sup> For Collins, the eschatological themes at the end of the book, namely, the vision of the end of Israel’s exile and Judah’s exile are not required for the core story to make sense. On the contrary, these chapters put the whole story into a broader perspective, by introducing a Judean, Deuteronomistic theology into the story of Tobit.<sup>13</sup>

These features, namely, the hymn’s silence about the misadventures of Tobit and his family, its eschatological themes which are not present in other parts of the book, together with the fact that parts of the hymn or the hymn in its entirety are lacking in some versions and MSS<sup>14</sup> have led some scholars to view this hymn as a later addition to the story of Tobit. According to this view, the author of Tobit incorporates into the book a pre-existing psalm of praise – indeed this is a common biblical feature, such as in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 (the song of Hanna), 2 Samuel 22:8-51, Isaiah 38:1-20, and Jonah 2:3-16.<sup>15</sup> Another scholar, Deselaers, joins those who argue for the independent pre-existence of the hymn. He suggests that the core of the hymn, what he calls “a song of Jerusalem,” has been repeatedly revised in the course of Tobit’s redactional development, and thus, he claims, it is not integral to the narrative of Tobit.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> J.J. COLLINS, “The Judaism of the Book of Tobit”, in G. G. Xeravists and J. Zsengeller, eds., *The Book of Tobit: Text, Tradition, Theology*, Boston: Brill 2005, 25.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>14</sup> E.g., Syriac and Medieval Aramaic of Neubauer versions. Cf. J.A. FITZMYER, *Tobit*, 305.

<sup>15</sup> A. MOORE, *Tobit*, 25.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted by S. WEITZMAN, “Allusion, Artifice, and Sacrifice in the Hymn of Tobit”, *JBL* 115/1 (1996) 51, footnote 5.

Zimmerman once suggested a very late date for the incorporation of this hymn, a view that became very popular. He argued that the hymn portrays a context in which Jerusalem and the Temple have been destroyed and the people have been scattered into exile; they have been reduced to a state of mourning. So he concludes that "the date of the psalm suggests itself: sometime after the destruction of the Temple, 70 CE."<sup>17</sup> This view could no longer hold, however, after the discovery of the Qumran fragments that contained Tobit 13, together with its narrative introduction (4Q Tob<sup>ac</sup>):<sup>18</sup> "While these fragments indicate that the hymn was part of Tobit at a relatively early stage in its transmission history, they cannot foreclose the possibility that the hymn was interpolated into the narrative at an even earlier stage in its history."<sup>19</sup>

There obviously, then, are issues that bring out into the open the question concerning the unity of the whole book of Tobit and its textual history. While these questions are beyond the scope of this essay, we argue that this hymn fits in well within the overall unfolding of the narrative, and thus, it serves as a recapitulation of the whole narrative. The hymn sums up the themes that run throughout the narrative, which revolve around the experience of exile. We shall demonstrate how Tobit's total solidarity with the sins and sufferings of his fellow Israelites, a solidarity reflected in his prayer in chapter 3, accounts for these peculiarities. Thus, we shall suggest that this hymn acts as a summary of the theology of the whole narrative; it fits in the overall narrative scheme of the story of Tobit. The hymn may have pre-existed, and may have been added later to the narrative, but the author succeeded brilliantly in his effort to integrate the hymn thematically into the narrative.

## 2. The Relationship of Tobit 13 with the Rest of the Narrative

There are those that have argued that the exile is the root cause of all the misfortunes suffered in the story of Tobit. Behind Tobit's personal tragedy is a deeper crisis, a greater misfortune, namely,

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<sup>17</sup> F. ZIMMERMAN, *The Book of Tobit*, 25.

<sup>18</sup> A. MOORE, *Tobit*. 283.

<sup>19</sup> S. WEITZMAN, "Allusion, Artifice", 51

the nation's exile to Nineveh in Assyria. For the Israelites, exile means loss of place, respect, prosperity, and communal relationship.<sup>20</sup> One scholar goes so far as to assert that the story of Tobit is a "parable" of the national history and destiny, that is, it is a personal story through the lens of which one comes to understand the national story.<sup>21</sup>

The central theme in Tobit 13 is that God punishes the sins of Israel, but nevertheless shows mercy whenever Israel turns to God in repentance. This theme runs throughout the story of Tobit, intertwined with the whole experience of the exile. Moreover, Tobit applies the nation's experience to himself, as we shall explain later. Tobit's story commences when he is still in his home country in Naphtali (chapter 1). There Tobit stands out for his exemplary piety and righteousness. Even when the rest of his fellow Israelites, led by their king Jeroboam, apostatize, Tobit faithfully goes to Jerusalem at regular intervals to offer sacrifices, always in accord with God's commandments (1:4-8). However, since the Israelites have apostatized, God punishes them; the Assyrians carry the nation, including Tobit and his family, into exile, specifically, to Nineveh (v. 10). In exile, the rest of his fellow Israelites follow the ways of the Gentiles, but Tobit keeps himself pure (1:10-12). Since he is in exile, Tobit can no longer observe the commandments of the Torah requiring sacrifices and the payment of tithes. Tobit

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<sup>20</sup> W. SOLL, "Misfortune and Exile in Tobit: The Juncture of Fairy Tale Source and Deuteronomic Theology", *CBQ* 51 (1989) 224. The editor notes that Soll's use of the term "fairy tale source" exemplifies what Fr. Bernard Lonergan, S.J., calls the *fallacy of subjectivist projection*. Concisely speaking, one evaluates the speech, writing, or behaviour of another not through the other's cultural lenses but through one's own: "Subjective projection results when we interpret the words and deeds of other men by reconstructing in ourselves their experience and uncritically adding our intellectual viewpoints which they do not share" (B. LONERGAN, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, New York: Philosophical Library 1957, 540). The genre of the fairy tale belongs to that of Europe and applies only to the fanciful. To apply it to the cultural milieu of the Book of Tobit, or to its sources, authors and redactors seems itself to be a fanciful application.

<sup>21</sup> R. BAUCKHAM, "Tobit as a Parable for the Exiles of Northern Israel", in *Studies in the Book of Tobit: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, London: Clark 2006, 141.

substitutes almsgiving and other works of charity for the Temple sacrifices. "[Tobit] replaces his obedience to the Temple in Jerusalem with the practice of various acts of charity (1:16-17), of which pride of place goes to the giving of alms and the burying of the dead (1:18)... in the Second Temple Judaism, the giving of alms becomes a suitable substitution for animal sacrifice."<sup>22</sup>

The situation in exile is grim; having returned from a failed expedition to conquer Jerusalem (v. 18), King Sennacherib punishes the Jews by killing many of them and casting their bodies out onto the street unburied, as if they were common criminals.<sup>23</sup> In defiance of the king's wishes, Tobit buries them. Consequently, when the king finds out, Tobit is forced to flee for his life and go into hiding. All his property is confiscated (vv. 19-20).

Through the intervention of his cousin Ahiah, Tobit is restored to his family and property, but he cannot enjoy his prosperity in the midst of the adversities and killings that his fellow Israelites are suffering (2:2-6). Nevertheless, Tobit continues to practice acts of mercy by burying the dead. As he does this, however, he suffers another misfortune: blindness (2:9-10). Thus, "the book of Tobit represents the exile as a devastating disruption of Jewish existence, a 'root misfortune' ultimately responsible for all of the individual misfortunes that beset Tobit and Sarah."<sup>24</sup> These calamities are presented within the scope of God's justice, manifested through punishment, and at the same time of God's mercy. Divine justice and mercy are the central themes of Tobit's hymn.

Towards the end of the narrative, Tobit receives his sight, his property is restored and his son is married to Sarah who is now healed. This is the moment when Tobit sings the song of praise from within the milieu of the nation's misfortune (Tobit 12:22–13:17). In this song, "Tobit foresees the end of the exile for his descendants and his nation...the national story of misfortune and its reversal thus forms a kind of a broad inclusion around Tobit's

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<sup>22</sup> G.A. ANDERSON, "Tobit as Righteous Sufferer" (2008; unpublished Article), 3. Recently published as Gary ANDERSON, "Tobit as a Righteous Sufferer", in *A Teacher for All Nations*. Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, Leiden: Brill 2011, 491-507.

<sup>23</sup> W. SOLL, "Misfortunes and Exile in Tobit", *CBQ* 51 (1989) 224.

<sup>24</sup> S. WEITZMAN, "Allusion, Artifice", 60.

individual story of misfortunes and its reversal.”<sup>25</sup> Moreover Tobit attributes both his hardships and their reversal to God. When his eyes are opened, he says, “Though he has afflicted me, he has had mercy upon me.”<sup>26</sup>

This reflects the theology of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic historian, namely, that of the manifestation of God’s justice through his punishment of sins, and the manifestation of God’s mercy through restoration. In the narrative of Tobit, the misfortunes of the nation are the consequences of God’s judgment on the sins of the nation; repentance and righteousness draw forth God’s mercy, and hence, deliverance from misfortunes. Tobit’s hymn reflects this understanding.<sup>27</sup>

Since the operative principle in the hymn is that God afflicts and shows mercy, and since in chapter 13, Tobit has experienced both, he gives thanks to God, and invites the nation to do likewise.<sup>28</sup> Tobit 13 hints that Israel is going to enjoy a reversal of their situation in exile. The exile is going to come to an end; the land will be returned to them (cf. a partial fulfilment of restoration in chapter 14).

In the second part of Tobit’s hymn (vv. 9-18), the general principle stated in 13:2 is applied to Israel: “For he afflicts, and he shows mercy; he leads down to Hades, and brings up again, and there is no one who can escape his hand.” Israel suffers punishment for her iniquities, but God will show mercy and gather Israel from among the nations where they have been scattered. Tobit’s vision of the future, therefore, is both Deuteronomistic and Jerusalem-centered. Tobit’s vision of the future restoration of the whole nation gives a place of prominence to the glorious Jerusalem of the future. This is significant because the restoration of Israel cannot be complete unless it includes all the twelve tribes. This restoration will include the resolution of the religious schism occasioned by Jeroboam’s sin, a schism that brought forth God’s punishment by means of exile. Hence the hymn seems to capsulize the concerns

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<sup>25</sup> R. BAUCKHAM, “Tobit as a Parable for the Exiles”, 141.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 141

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 141

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

of the whole narrative by locating Tobit's experience within the context of the national experience.

Tobit's attitude towards his misfortunes gives backbone to this understanding. His attitude towards his suffering shows that, although the hymn in chapter 13 does not make mention of his personal misfortunes, he is indeed taking upon himself the sins and the sufferings of his people.

G. Anderson suggests that the book presents Tobit as a righteous sufferer, who suffers the fate of his nation despite the fact that he is innocent of their crime.<sup>29</sup> In the first chapters of Tobit, Tobit's exemplary righteousness poses a sharp contrast with the sinfulness of his fellow Israelites. While the rest of the nation apostatizes by worshipping and sacrificing to the calf that Jeroboam made, Tobit keeps the commandments. Ever obedient to the Law of Israel, he goes to Jerusalem yearly to worship there and offer sacrifices, just as the Torah has commanded (1:5-6).

Tobit is innocent, but he suffers the consequence of the nation's apostasy, i.e., the exile. It is to be reiterated that while the book presents Israel's misfortunes as a consequence of their sin, the book expresses at the same time with pristine clarity Tobit's innocence.<sup>30</sup> In the exile, the rest of the Israelites go after the ways of the Gentiles. Tobit, however, keeps the Torah: he remains faithful to the commandments by keeping himself clean, by avoiding the Gentiles' food, and by doing acts of mercy (1:16-17). Tobit is a morally upright person. Nevertheless he suffers calamity after calamity: he loses his property and his eyesight. Regardless of what the trial may be, Tobit never complains to God, nor does he settle himself into the option of pleading his innocence before God.

Bauckham explains the significance of Tobit's attitude. In 2:1-4, while Tobit is celebrating the feast of Pentecost, he learns that one of his fellow Israelites is lying dead on the street unburied. He goes to bury him, and on coming back to eat, he remembers with sorrow the prophecy of Amos. "Your festivals will be turned into mourning and all your songs lamentation" (Amos 8:10). Tobit reacts by weeping, for he sees that this prophecy has come to

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<sup>29</sup> G. ANDERSON, "Tobit as Righteous Sufferer", 3.

<sup>30</sup> R. BAUCKHAM, "Tobit as a Parable for the Exiles", 144.

fulfilment in his person: the Pentecost celebration has turned into an occasion for lamentation. Tobit interprets this circumstance as an instance of God's judgment on the nation: Amos declared this prophecy within the milieu of the idolatrous festivals that were taking place at the sanctuary in Bethel (Amos 5:5; 7:10-13; 8:3); now in the story of Tobit, the apostasy at Dan and Bethel has drawn forth from God a punishment for Israel through the exile (cf. 1:15).<sup>31</sup> Tobit, as I have said, is innocent of his crime.<sup>32</sup> Bauckham:

The fact that, by virtue of his exile, Tobit had to celebrate [Pentecost] away from home in Nineveh may serve to associate his worship with the apostate worship that had brought the exile on his people. ... Tobit's inability to fulfil the requirements of the Torah highlights the way he, despite his innocence, had had to suffer the full consequence of the sins of the rest of his people.<sup>33</sup>

It is from within the persistent theme that as an innocent man, Tobit identifies himself with the plight of his people in their sins that he applies to himself the prophecy of Amos (8:10). He is not defending his own innocence as if he were to put a distance between himself and the sins of his people. On the contrary, he accepts the way God is treating him "because of his solidarity with his people."<sup>34</sup>

His prayer in chapter 3 reflects his solidarity with his people in their state of sin. Having suffered grievously, Tobit confesses 'his sins,' and prays to God that he may die, so that he may be relieved from his grievous suffering. The prayer reads as follows (3:2-6):

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<sup>31</sup> R. BAUCKHAM, "Tobit as a Parable for the Exiles", 144.

<sup>32</sup> Surprisingly Bauckham argues that Tobit is guilty of not keeping the pilgrimage. His inability to make the pilgrimage, however, is due to the fact that he is in exile. Tobit fully identifies himself with Israel's sin: he knows that the exile is a punishment that God is inflicting upon his people. The failure to celebrate Pentecost is merely one of many consequences rendered inevitable by the exile. One could argue that Tobit's sin consists of his remonstrance with his wife (2:11-14). This incident, however, does not present Tobit as a man who degrades his wife; rather it presents Tobit as utterly helpless and frustrated because he cannot serve God by acts of charity. Indeed, he can no longer guarantee that the Law is kept even in his household.

<sup>33</sup> R. BAUCKHAM, "Tobit as a Parable for the Exiles", 145.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.



<sup>2</sup> Righteous art thou, oh Lord; all thy deeds and all the ways are mercy and truth, and thou dost render true and righteous judgment forever.

<sup>3</sup> Remember me and look favourably upon me; do not punish me for my sins and for my unwitting offences and those which my fathers committed before thee.

<sup>4</sup> For they disobeyed thy commandments, and thou gavest us over to plunder, captivity, and death; thou madest us a byword of reproach in all nations among which we have been dispersed.

<sup>5</sup> And now thy many judgments are true in exacting penalty from me for my sins and those of my fathers, because we did not keep thy commandments. For we did not walk in truth before thee.

<sup>6</sup> And now deal with me according to thy pleasure; command my spirit to be taken up, that I may depart and become dust. For it is better for me to die than to live, because I have heard false reproaches, and great is the sorrow within me. Command that I now be released from my distress to go to eternal abode; do not turn thy face away from me.<sup>35</sup>

According to Anderson, the most striking features of this prayer are, first, Tobit's open acknowledgement of God's righteousness and justice; and, second, Tobit's acknowledgement of his sinfulness in solidarity with his people in their iniquities despite the fact that he is innocent:<sup>36</sup>

Though [Tobit] has ample opportunity to trumpet his own innocence in the face of great apostasy... he does not march down that path. Instead, when he catalogues the sins of Israel that have led the nation to its current predicament, he does not distinguish his own behaviour from that of his peers... for Tobit, the present predicament of Israel is not simply the results of others' sins; he identifies himself among the guilty.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, in his prayer, Tobit "portrays himself as being caught up in the judgment of exile";<sup>38</sup> this reflects Deuteronomic theology:

Tobit does not challenge the justice of God as Job does; on the contrary, one finds in this prayer an explicit and detailed affirmation of the deuteronomic theology of God's just judgment on Israel. It is for Israel's sin that the harshest language is reserved. Tobit not only affirms this theology but identifies himself with the wayward Israel to

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<sup>35</sup> Biblical text is from The Revised Standard Version, Catholic edition.

<sup>36</sup> G. ANDERSON, "Tobit as a Righteous Sufferer", 7.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>38</sup> W. SOLL, "Misfortunes and Exile", 224.

a striking degree...even while his personal innocence makes him conspicuously innocent.<sup>39</sup>

Tobit's identification with his people in their sins accounts for the lack of reference in his hymn in chapter 13 to his personal misfortunes and restoration. Tobit understands his personal trials in terms of his nation's suffering; and since his suffering cannot be separated from the national tragedy, in his hymn Tobit does not put his personal trials and the nation's suffering in two separate categories. In other words, Tobit does not refer to his personal suffering and deliverance in the hymn because he fully identifies with the people in their sin and suffering.

The underlying theme in the incident that invited the anamnesis of the prophecy of Amos in chapter 2, his prayer in chapter 3, and the hymn in chapter 13 is the Deuteronomistic understanding of sin, punishment and God's mercy. In all three texts, (a) God's righteousness and justice in dealing with sin is acknowledged; (b) Israel's sin is seen as the root cause of exile; and (c) there is a firm acknowledgement of God's mercy. This thematic pattern makes it clear, therefore, that the hymn of Tobit is integrally related to the whole narrative of Tobit, and that it sums up the whole story of Tobit's experience as a basis for the eschatological hope of the restoration of the nation. This is what we shall discuss next.

### **3. Tobit's Experience as an Instance of Death and Resurrection**

It has been argued that Tobit's subjection to misfortune and his ensuing restoration are an instance of death and resurrection.<sup>40</sup> Through the calamities that afflict him, namely, the exile, the loss of property, blindness, and his desire to die without seeing his descendants, Tobit suffers a kind of interior "death." God's restoration of his property and his sight, the marriage of his son Tobiah, and his ability to witness his many descendants, his fulfilled old age, and his peaceful death... all these constitute Tobit's experience of "resurrection."<sup>41</sup> Since in his hymn, Tobit's

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<sup>39</sup> W. SOLL, "Misfortunes and Exile", 224.

<sup>40</sup> G. ANDERSON, "Tobit as a Righteous Sufferer", 8.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

interior death is intricately connected to the "death" of his nation, Tobit celebrates his resurrection as a sure basis for the hope of the resurrection of his nation. Tobit prophesies the resurrection of his people.

We wish to explore, then, how Tobit's hymn gives us ground for making these thematic assertions.

According to J. Levinson, the concept of resurrection is present in the Hebrew Bible. This concept can be understood in the context of the notions of death and *Sheol*, which is considered to be the destination of the dead. In the Hebrew Scriptures, *Sheol* is presented as a place where "the dead have existence without life — an existence of unqualified and interminable unhappiness."<sup>42</sup> It is a mode of existence characterized by hopelessness and gloom.

In texts that express the theme of lamentation and in the Psalms of Lament, however, individuals who are suffering distress describe themselves as being already in *Sheol* (e.g., Num 16:32-34; 2 Sam 22:8-19; Pss 9:14-15; 30; 40:3; 107:10-22). This is because for the ancient Israelites, death was not understood as a radical discontinuation with life. Rather, a "radical discontinuity lay between a healthy and successful life and one marked by adversity, in physical health or otherwise."<sup>43</sup> Thus, a gravely ill person was considered on the brinks of *Sheol* (Ps 30). In such situations, there was hope for God's miraculous intervention, a hope of reversal; and it was this hope that moved the suffering person to pray for God to act. A gravely ill person had two possibilities: either death as an irreversible state of misery, which meant going to the grave of the godless, the God-forsaken, namely, *Sheol*; or God's intervention and rescue from death through restoration to life and good health (cf. Ps 40:3).<sup>44</sup>

Various images that the Hebrew Bible uses to describe *Sheol* reinforce this understanding. "Grave, pit, utmost bounds of the earth, engulfing waters, subterranean city, prison — all these metaphors communicate a mode of existence that, in fact, characterizes people who have not "died" in our sense of the term

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<sup>42</sup> J.D. LEVENSON, *Resurrection and Restoration of Israel. The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life*, New Haven: Yale University Press 2006, 37.

<sup>43</sup> J.D. LEVENSON, *Resurrection*, 38.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

at all...those endangered feel that they are in *Sheol* already; because they live lives of weakness, defeat, depression, vulnerability, and the like.”<sup>45</sup>

The Hebrew Scripture, however, does not present *Sheol* as a universal destination of all those who die. On the one hand, there are those who die an evil, tragic, untimely and unnatural death, without descendants; and on the other hand, there are those who die in a content state, those who “sleep,” who are “gathered to their people.” These are not described as going to *Sheol*: “*Sheol* in sum, very often has to do with punishment; and those who die in God’s good graces, their lives fulfilled through his blessings, therefore, have no reason to think that they will be dispatched to [*Sheol*]... [*Sheol* is a] wholly undesirable existence in the dark and dank of the netherworld.”<sup>46</sup>

Those who are on the brink of *Sheol* may experience God’s intervention, a reversal of their condition, “a replacement of despair with hope, of gloom with shining light.”<sup>47</sup> Thus, Abraham, Jacob and Job are prime examples of people who experienced God’s miraculous intervention while they were on the brinks of *Sheol*. The deaths of these exemplary righteous people did not lead to a wholly undesirable existence, the condition of those who go to *Sheol*. Abraham died old and in a state of contentment (cf. Gen 25:8). Jacob died old, fulfilled, surrounded by his many descendants (Gen 49:29-33). At the end of his life, Job’s life and his children were restored; and he died old and in a state of bliss (Job 42:17).<sup>48</sup> The deaths of God’s holy ones were not a negation of God’s abundant blessings; and so, they had no fear of *Sheol*: “They die with life fulfilled and certainly seem to face no future terrors or miseries whatsoever.”<sup>49</sup>

A common element characterizes their deaths: they die old and fulfilled; they witness the realization of the divine promises at the end of their lives; and their lives, formerly characterized by either infertility or misery, are now the stage for a beautiful, hopeful,

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<sup>45</sup> J.D. LEVENSON, *Resurrection*, 45.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

invigorating reversal. They leave behind many descendants; their fulfilled lives survive them, and continue to testify to their final felicity. Their fulfilled lives are prolonged through descendants, and their name/memory survives in their descendants.<sup>50</sup> According to Levenson, these are instances of a kind of resurrection in the Hebrew Bible. G. Anderson puts it this way: "If there an equivalent to beatific vision in the [Hebrew Scripture] it is the opportunity to live to a ripe old age and to be given the privilege of seeing one's extended family gathered around one at the point of death."<sup>51</sup> Thus, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and Job experienced a kind of resurrection according to one collage of meanings that scholars have unearthed in the Old Testament.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> J.D. LEVENSON, *Resurrection*, 77.

<sup>51</sup> G. ANDERSON, "Tobit as Righteous Sufferer", 9.

<sup>52</sup> The editor notes that this particular interpretation of resurrection does not preclude an Old Testament understanding that God may destine a human being to a resurrection of the body after physical death. A canonical exegesis that focuses on resurrection in the OT alerts us precisely to this conviction about bodily resurrection and the beatific life that follows it. Just to cite three examples: (A) On the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:24-31, St. Peter – acting according to his new identity as the Vicar of Jesus Christ – cites Psalm 16:8-11 *not* as a verse that is now subject to a New Testament re-interpretation in the light of Jesus' resurrection but rather as a verse that indicates that King David anticipated his descendant's bodily resurrection. In other words, an Old Testament figure already foresaw a resurrection of those who have died physically. (B) The same Old Testament conviction of a bodily resurrection seems to have been present in the mind and heart of Abraham – just as the Letter to the Hebrews attests in 11:17-19. The reading of Genesis 22 certainly indicates that Abraham understood God's directive in terms of an actual sacrificial death on the part of his son Isaac. The chapters leading up to Genesis 22 certainly indicate that Abraham understood himself to be the father of many descendants precisely through Isaac – something that had not happened yet at the time of the sacrifice. Hence Hebrews seems to be giving an accurate perception that Abraham must have believed in a bodily resurrection, even if "by way of parable" Isaac did not need to endure physical death but rather was restored to Abraham as someone who was living a new lease on life. (C) An Old Testament Scripture, 2 Kings 2:1-13, depicts the prophet Elijah as someone who never died. While this phenomenon differs from that of a bodily resurrection it does indicate an Old Testament understanding that the body can live in an incorruptible state within a heavenly realm that does not correspond to the state of the human being as we experience it in our earthly existence. Elijah, in other words, entered into

Tobit's experience reflects this understanding. Tobit's misfortunes can be understood as a gradual death, namely, a gradual descent into *Sheol*, stage by stage. In the first stage, Tobit's exile, together with that of his fellow Israelites implies that he is separated from the promised Land, from the Temple, and from the due observance of the Torah (cf. 1:10). Moreover, Tobit's 'exile within the exile' separates him from his family; he is deprived of material property, and his very life is in danger (1:19-20). Thus Tobit sinks deeper into miseries, coming closer and closer to the brinks of *Sheol*. When he is restored to his family and property, he can no longer enjoy them; for he recognizes the magnitude of the misery that had overtaken him personally and on a larger scale, the entire nation (2:5-6). Tobit interprets this as an experience of God's judgment. As we have seen, this is precisely the condition of those in *Sheol*: they are understood to be experiencing God's judgment.<sup>53</sup>

The next stage of this descent towards *Sheol* is Tobit's blindness, a calamity that incapacitates him to an even more severe degree because he can no longer practice acts of charity and almsgiving. He endures the taunts of his neighbours and of his wife; he suffers ridicule and shame (2:14, 3:6). This seems to be the nadir of his misery. Tobit is on the brinks of *Sheol*. He prays for death, that is, he prays that God send him to *Sheol* as his final destination where he will rest from the taunts of his neighbours. For Tobit, these taunts are more painful to bear than his blindness, for he understands that his misfortune comes from God. When Tobit prays to God that he may die (3:1-6), he thinks that his present condition is worse than *Sheol* – he has become a very discouraged man. He cannot take it any longer. In very touching fashion, Tobit implores God (v. 6):

Command my spirit to be broken up, that I may depart and become dust. For it is better to die than to live, because I have heard false

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a beatific vision, a beatific life, that transcends any form of life that we experience while still in the body before physical death. Throughout all this discussion, one cannot fail to forget the Old Testament conviction that physical death did not have a foothold in God's original plan for the human being: the human person would have been immune from bodily death had he not sinned (see *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 18; Wis 1:13; 2:23-24).

<sup>53</sup> Cf. J.D. LEVENSON, *Resurrection*, 72.

reproaches, and great is the sorrow within me. Command that I now be released from my distress to go to the eternal abode; do not turn thy face away from me.

Tobit is ready to die without seeing his descendants and indeed without the assurance that his son Tobiah will ever marry. His situation becomes even more ambiguous when he sends his son away to the unknown. Just as Levenson has suggested, if Tobit were to die in these dark and uncertain circumstances, he would fit the picture of those who go down to *Sheol* and suffer the fate of a pre-mature death, of an unfulfilled life, of a death without seeing one's own descendants.<sup>54</sup> However, hidden within this picture, there is a glimmer of hope: the hope that emanates from this prayer harbours within itself a deep faith and persevering loyalty to God. Tobit is confident that God is going to grant him his prayer, and that is why he makes his final arrangement for his son (chapter 4). God indeed does answer his prayer, but in a manner that Tobit may not expect.

God intervenes through a dramatic reversal of Tobit's misfortunes. God acts by rescuing him who is on the brink of *Sheol* (cf. 2:16 ff). Tobit's descent towards his death now becomes a transforming movement of a gradual ascent from the pit to life, an experience of resurrection occasioned by God's miraculous and unexpected intervention through the instrumentality of the angel Rafael, disguised as Azariah.

This intervention take place in stages. First, the angel Raphael, disguised as Azariah, accompanies Tobiah on his journey and thus ensures his safety (chapter 6). Next, Sarah is healed. Tobiah marries her and at the same time inherits a fortune (chapter 8). Azariah/Raphael recovers Tobit's property from Gabael in Rages (chapter 9). The climax of this series of miraculous events is the restoration of Tobit's sight. Not only can he see his family again, but he can also lay his eyes upon his daughter-in-law, Sarah. Tobit immediately recognizes this as an act of God; hence he praises the all-powerful, all-merciful Lord: "Blessed art thou, O God, and blessed is thy name for ever, and blessed are all thy holy Angels. For you have afflicted me, but you have had mercy upon me; here I see my son Tobias" (11:14-15)

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<sup>54</sup> J.D. LEVENSON, *Resurrection*, 77.

As the angel reveals to Tobit what has transpired, Tobit celebrates his resurrection – his new lease on life – in his hymn of praise (Tobit 12; 13). His resurrection experience continues as he sees his many descendants, seven of them, which may be symbolic of his full restoration (14:3ff). Tobit enjoys a beatific life (according to one of the OT nuances of the word “beatific”) at the summit of his earthly existence. He lives a long life, he sees his many descendants and he dies fulfilled, content, assured of the endurance of his name and memory through his many descendants. His death is presented as that of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and Job and thus Tobit experiences a certain form of a beatific life that one may ascribe to the Old Testament patriarchs.

Since what Tobit experiences throughout the narrative is inextricably intertwined with the experience of the nation, Tobit’s experience of resurrection has implications for the nation’s restoration. The theological principle is that God never exercises his justice independently of his mercy: if according to his divine justice, God exacts punishment, he nevertheless manifests his tender love and mercy as “greater” than justice, greater in the sense that it is primary and fundamental. In God love conditions justice; justice is always in the service of love. In the OT – and also in the NT – God reveals the primacy and superiority of his love vis-à-vis justice precisely through mercy.<sup>55</sup> If God’s justice does at times seem stern, Tobit, the patriarchs and the people of Israel anchor themselves in the conviction that God reveals his justice from within the milieu of his original choice to link himself as Creator to his creatures with a unique, irreplaceable, irreducible love. God reveals himself as love and mercy to Tobit; and God will reveal himself as love and mercy to the nation (14:5, cf. 13:6). According to Anderson,

Tobit’s life runs parallel to that of the nation Israel. The book of Tobit, it turns out, is really a pairing of two stories: at one level we see the suffering of Tobit and his eventual resurrection, but at another level the suffering of the nation and its hope of restoration. The key

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<sup>55</sup> The author is enunciating a cardinal principle that is operative throughout the entire OT. See, for example, Wisdom 11:23–12:2. St. John Paul II’s Encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* highlights this principle (Editor’s note).



difference between the two stories is also the point of tension that probably led to the composition of the book itself: while the 'resurrection' of Tobit was an accomplished fact, the restoration of Israel remained a living but fragile hope.<sup>56</sup>

Tobit foresees the restoration of his people in their return from exile, the rebuilding of the Temple and Jerusalem, and God's intention to give Israel an even greater splendour and glory. This constitutes the resurrection of the nation (14:5). It includes all Israel, with Jerusalem as the centre of worship, clothed in extraordinary elegance and honour (13:16-17). This restoration will be the occasion for an overflow of joy and happiness, a superabundance of God's blessings for the whole nation (13:18).

Indeed the restoration of Israel and Jerusalem will have universal significance, for "many nations will come from afar to the name of the Lord God, bearing gifts in their hands, gifts for the King of heaven" (13:11; cf. Isa 60:6). The basis of this hope is Tobit's own experience, i.e., the experience of what God has done in his life: "Tobit's certainty in chapter 13 that Jerusalem would have a glorious recovery was dependent upon the restoration of his sight and Tobiah's newly acquired wealth. If God has done all that for Tobit and his family, how much more, concludes Tobit, will GOD do for his people and holy city? A partial answer for the question will be provided in chapter 14."<sup>57</sup>

Tobit firmly grounds this hope in the conviction that God intends to remain faithful by fulfilling what he has promised through the prophets. This is Tobit's disposition when he declares: "Everything that was spoken by the prophets of Israel, whom God sent, will occur. None of all their words will fail, but all will come true at their appointed times for I know and believe that whatever God has said will be fulfilled and will come true; not a single word of the prophecies will fall" (14:4G).

Tobit prophesies the commencement of the fulfilment of God's promise – the resurrection of the nation. This resurrection involves all the Twelve Tribes of Israel, a re-uniting of Israel (14:4, 7, 15): this is why he warns his son Tobiah to flee from Nineveh. Tobiah bears witness to the fact that this hope has come to partial

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<sup>56</sup> G. ANDERSON, "Tobit as Righteous Sufferer," 11.

<sup>57</sup> A. MOORE, *Tobit*, 284.

fulfilment: he hears of the destruction of Nineveh, and he interprets it as the beginning of God's restoration of the nation (14:15).

This understanding explains the significance of the eschatological tone of the second part of the hymn of Tobit. God's restoration of an individual has implications, for indeed it blossoms forth into a new and certain hope for the national restoration.

## Conclusion

We commenced our essay with a redaction criticism of Tobit 13 by pointing out some peculiarities of the text of Tobit's hymn. These features seem to raise the question of the relationship of this hymn with the rest of Tobit's narrative, which, in turn, provokes an issue concerning the unity of the Book of Tobit.

Although the question about the unity of the text has been beyond the scope and limit of this essay, we have attempted nevertheless to address some of these concerns by examining how the hymn is related to the rest of the narrative: we have explained that Tobit's experience is inextricably intertwined with the nation's tragedy, that of the exile. The themes, therefore, that course their way through the narrative coalesce neatly, as a kind of summary, in the hymn of Tobit: God is righteous and merciful.

We have elaborated upon the fact that Tobit understands his own distress in terms of the nation's suffering. Hence Tobit takes upon himself the sin and the punishment of his people and in the hymn expresses his wholehearted gratitude in general terms, i.e., in terms that do not apply exclusively to himself. Tobit understands his own upsetting misfortunes and his ensuing restoration in terms of his nation's distress and hope for a restoration. Realizing this, we have read Tobit's experience within one particular attempt – that of Levenson – for grasping the meaning of death and resurrection in the Hebrew Bible. From this point of view, Tobit's experience is an instance of death and resurrection that resembles the experience of death and resurrection on the part of exemplary righteous patriarchs: Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and Job. Tobit's experience grounds the hope for a national restoration, which includes all of Israel's twelve tribes. This national restoration has universal implications.

# **Towards a Salvatorian Theology of Salvation in the African Perspective**

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## **Introduction**

The world of today seems to be in trouble. Peace seems to have evaporated; and a cluster of national and international tension-provoking incidents, together with the masters of suspicion who roam the vestibules of power and influence – not to mention the everyday common sense of the masses – all seem to converge on the significance of the terrorist attack in New York known as “9/11” as an event that no one dare to forget. The world lives with the fear that the forces of terrorism can hit and harm in any place and at any time. Terrorists hit Paris recently by killing journalists; and very recently in Kenya terrorists massacred 150 students who were all innocent. The aim of the killers is to destroy life. No one knows who or what will be the next target. Life itself is a target to be threatened, endangered, despoiled, and destroyed. In a word, we live in a global atmosphere where life is totally devalued and desacralized.

Looking at all these challenges which seem to put our world on its knees, sink our world into a pool of blood, immerse our world in a fire that does not want to go out, one has to ask himself / herself, why is this happening? What is really our final destination?

Whatever the answer may be, we can be certain that our differences, which ought to be a source of mutual enrichment, have become a threat to our togetherness. The mindset that seems to be prevailing more and more is not, “Let diversity invigorate your love for your sister, your love for your brother. Rather the byword seems to be, “Diversity suffocates.” You do not have a right to live

unless you become “me”, unless you become my race, my culture, my gender, my ideology and my religion.

In the face of all these challenges what is one to do? From my perspective we are on solid footing if we give our full attention to our families. The family seems no longer to be an oasis of togetherness, an occasion for “being with”. Instead the family seems to have become a swamp of selfishness and a bed of weeds for nourishing egocentric desires. We have to find out new ways to reach our families and accompany them on the path to salvation.

Where are we as *Salvatorians* within this world of ours, a world that is becoming a jungle fraught with disaster and chaos? What is our stand vis-à-vis the threats and suspicions that infect the human family’s capacity to love and trust? We are called to remove the screen from our small, enclosed world, our so-called comfort zone, and go to the oft-forgotten peripheries of our world – to those without a voice and without a face – and thus accompany them in their discovery of the true life in Jesus Christ, who dwells within the interior of their milieu.

Salvatorians are called to come out from their hiding places and shake themselves free from their “clubs” in order to go boldly into the public places to plant the seeds of salvation. Salvation should be always in movement, on the road, where ordinary people live their lives and face life’s concrete challenges.

Salvation is not an empty word; rather it bears a human face and a concrete context. It is within this context of the unthinkable violence that destroys innocent lives that Salvatorians are to be the voice of the voiceless and the face of the faceless. Blind violence spreads misery and sickness, poverty, resentment and hatred. When we as Salvatorians contextualize our charism within today’s milieu, in solidarity with each other and with the neglected, the marginalized, and the oppressed, we represent the struggle against the tendency to secularize and privatize the salvific economy. Secularizing and privatizing the grace of salvation defy God’s intention to make of us one human family destined to be a communion of saints.

The world has lost the sense of togetherness. The world seems to have ceased to be one that yearns to become one family of God

destined to be in communion with Him for all eternity. Pope Francis rightly said: "The privatization of salvation is the wrong path".<sup>1</sup> The Lord always saves from within the people's destiny to find justice, peace and happiness together, i.e., within their wholehearted conviction that the grace of God is a being-for-others and a being-with-others. From the moment He calls Abraham, God promises to make of him a people. For this reason, the Pope declares: "We must consider how to rouse one another". Salvation always has a social dimension: it is never confined to the solitary. If I understand salvation in that way, I am mistaken; I am on the wrong path. The Pope wants to remind us that while God has saved us individually, it has always been within the context of his choice to create us as gifts for each other, as a people destined to be people-for-others throughout the history of salvation.

It is for this reason that I voice my conviction that the Salvatorian theology of salvation has to engage in dialogue with families. We have located within ourselves in the world, not as private individuals but as a Church, as the Family of God destined to be eternally in communion with Him. The Church continues to harbour a preferential love for the family, a love to which she gives witness through the Synods of Bishops and through a rich diversity of the means for evangelization. As a "family within a Family," we Salvatorians are called to contribute effectively to the spiritual health of the Church and of humanity by encouraging the globalization of life against precisely the culture that apparently overwhelms our contemporary world, namely, the culture of death.

## **1. View of Fr. Francis Jordan and His Understanding of the Foundation**

Among the many oral discourses of our Venerable Founder, Father Francis Jordan, something he said on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January, 1899, concerning *Unity* strikes a powerful note in me because of its clear and specific explanation of the originality of his Foundation. He said: *Each Institute has its own spirit. As soon as one deviates from it, he finds himself on the wrong road. An apple*

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<sup>1</sup> [www.Zenit.org](http://www.Zenit.org), Rome, January 29, 2015 at 20:43.

*tree is not a pear tree.*<sup>2</sup> Or, transposed into our African context, we might say, “A mango tree is not an orange tree”. To give emphasis, he continues: *A Franciscan is not a Dominican, a Jesuit is not a Trappist. A Salvatorian, I add, is not a Salesian.*

In other words, the Venerable Father gives accent to the originality of his Foundation. He refuses to confuse his Foundation and its charism with any copy and paste version of orders, congregations, or institutes already present in the Church. The new Foundation bears his trademark even if it carries the same authenticating signature as all other institutes, that of God. He offers a wonderful expansion on this theme in the same talk:

You know that both St. Ignatius and St. Cajetan were founders of religious orders. Both were founders of Societies and yet they differed so much in point of view! St. Cajetan forbids begging; he expects everything from divine Providence. St. Ignatius expressly ordains that all houses of study be well financed, have foundations. The venerable founder Cottolengo built everything on Providence. Don Bosco begs throughout the whole world with his writings. And yet both are guided by one and the same God.<sup>3</sup>

For Father Francis Jordan, God is the common Author of all the existing foundations; yet every foundation is unique in its spirit and in its mission. The essence of Father Jordan’s Foundation resides in its mission, which is to bring **salvation** to all creatures.

## **1.1 The Spirit of the Founder: Jesus is the Saviour**

### **1.1.1 In the Spiritual Diary**

What is the spirit of Fr. Jordan for his new Foundation? On the very first page of his *Spiritual Diary*, we come across the spirit that permeates this Mission-Programme-Word of our Venerable Founder etched in the acronym: *O.A.M.D.G.E.A.S.A.*, i.e., *Omnes ad Majorem Dei Gloriam et ad Salutem Animarum*. This acronym stands for: “All for the greater glory of God and for the salvation

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<sup>2</sup> Talks of Father Francis Jordan, 1899/01/13, 265.

<sup>3</sup> Talks of Father Francis Jordan, 1899/01/13, 265-266.

of souls." As one easily notices in his *Spiritual Diary*, our Founder used this fundamental formula as a kind of signature or seal.<sup>4</sup>

The word "Salvation" appears 66 times in the *Spiritual Diary*; the word "Saviour" appears 31 times. Jesus Christ as Saviour and the grace of salvation that flows forth from Him must have had a very powerful impact on Fr. Jordan's life. Our vision of the Salvatorian identity emanates from the all-embracing influence that the Saviour and his saving grace exercised on our Founder.

### **1.1.2 In the SDS Constitutions**

The same observation can be drawn from the Salvatorian Constitutions when we read article 101 on *Our Salvation Call and Mission*, we read:

The kindness and love of God for humanity have appeared in Jesus Christ. In him, the one true Saviour of the world, all people are called to union with God and one another to form the People of God. Inspired by the Holy Spirit and out of concern for the salvation of all, Father Francis Maris of the Cross Jordan founded the Society of the Divine Saviour and gave it the apostolic purpose to announce to all people that Jesus is the Saviour.

Article 109 states succinctly: The Society is dedicated to the divine Saviour.

This article underscores Jesus as the source, i.e., the origin and author of Salvation. His personal identity is that of Saviour; and by means of his Incarnation, he is the Primordial Presence of the Father's unconditional love and mercy. It is through Him that salvation reaches all of humanity. The *Charter of the Salvatorian Family* expresses this quite lucidly.

### **1.1.3 In the Charter of the Salvatorian Family**

We read in the first chapter of the Salvatorian Charter on *Our Call and Charism*:

Today the Salvatorian Family has three autonomous branches: the Society of the Divine Saviour, the Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Saviour, and the International Community of the Divine Saviour. We are united by our commitment to the mission as

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<sup>4</sup> SD I (1/2), 1 ; SD I (67/3), 36-37 ; SD I (176/1).

envisioned by our Founder, forming one family of zealous apostles who announce to all the salvation that has appeared in Jesus Christ (Titus 3:4). Just as Father Jordan's original project evolved over time, we are open to where the Spirit will lead us in the future.<sup>5</sup>

Jesus is the unique channel of salvation. In a word, Jesus is not only the Saviour of the world; but in virtue of the fact that his very identity is to be Saviour, he is, so to speak, SALVATION.

We have already reflected upon the fact that the spirit of the new Foundation was hidden within the articulation of its mission as the Charter stipulates it in chapter 2, *Our Mission*:

Following in the footsteps of the Saviour like the apostles, we are called to live and announce God's unconditional love, continuing Jesus' life-giving work of bringing salvation to all creation and liberation from all that is a threat to fullness of life. (Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15).

Our Salvatorian mission is to spread salvation to all of creation and especially to families. The family is under serious threat: indeed it is undergoing a time of grave crisis.

Many of us may have the personal custom of taking an introspective glance into our spiritual life to increase our awareness of who we are. We then realize that we are who we are mainly because of the education, formation, and climate of trust that we have enjoyed as gifts from our parents in the family. We can hardly deny that the family is truly the first school. It is the family that initiates children into all kinds of human relationships. The family exists as an *ecclesiola*, a little church, whereby parents faithfully transmit to their children the basic elements of catechesis and so cultivate the children's friendship with Jesus Christ. In the language of the Second Vatican Council, the Christian family is a 'domestic Church'<sup>6</sup> and 'domestic sanctuary of the Church.'<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Charter of the Salvatorian Family, 1.

<sup>6</sup> *LG* 11.

<sup>7</sup> *AA11* : "The family has received from God its mission to be the first and vital cell of society. It will fulfil this mission if it shows itself to be the domestic sanctuary of the Church through the mutual affection of its members and the common prayer they offer to God, if the whole family is caught up in



Within this domestic Church, parents are called to be the first preachers of the faith to their children.<sup>8</sup> In view of this, Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor makes the following point:

Nor should one ignore the fact that parents themselves share in the teaching authority of the Church. It is axiomatic that it is within the Christian family itself that children are taught to worship God and love their neighbour according to the faith given to them in baptism. If the Church really is a family of faith, one will find that the duty of teaching the faith and learning the faith is focused not only in the hierarchy of the Church but also at every level where the Christian community comes together. Thus, in the school, the home, the parish, there will be a relationship between the teacher and the teaching that serves to deepen the unity of the whole family of the Church.<sup>9</sup>

A foremost proponent of this principle of subsidiarity was John Paul II, who in his Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, in the seventeenth paragraph, declares: "The future of the world and of the Church passes through the family." The Synod confirmed this evaluation of the family as an ecclesial community:

Not only is the Christian family the first cell of the living ecclesial community, it is also the fundamental cell of the society on which the social edifice is built. The Christian family of Africa will thus become true domestic church, contributing to society's progress towards a more fraternal life.<sup>10</sup>

When the family suffers a crisis, the Church suffers a crisis. The integrity of the Church's faith depends much on the fidelity of the family to the faith. Perhaps we can paraphrase the common French proverb *Tel père, tel fils*, "like father, like son," as *Telle famille, tel monde*, "like family, like world"; or *Telle famille, telle Eglise*, which could literally mean, "like family, like Church". The world is the true mirror of the family; that means one understands the

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the liturgical worship of the Church, and if it provides active hospitality and promotes justice and other good works for the service of all the brethren in need."

<sup>8</sup> LG 12.

<sup>9</sup> C. MURPHY – O'CONNOR, *The Family of the Church*, London: Darton Longman and Todd, 11.

<sup>10</sup> For more information, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 80-85.

current state of the world better by looking at the current state of the family. The world would not be suffering ethical corruption if families, by and large, cultivated excellence in ethics. The Salvatorian charter has touched the essence of the Church mission by reminding us to weave salvation into the fabric that tears apart the family at the seams and so brings division and destruction where there should be fullness of life. Beware of the temptation to accept failure in our mission as an inevitability or even as a possibility; as the Salvatorian Charter exhorts us, “Our personal and communal experience of salvation is the dynamic and animating energy for our mission”.

## **2. The Mission of Fr. Francis Jordan**

### **2.1 Who Is a Salvatorian?**

To understand Fr. Francis Jordan’s sense of the word “mission”, one must rely on the way he defines a Salvatorian. On Good Friday, 13/04/1900, he made an extraordinary exhortation on this topic. He said: *A Salvatorian is a savior of the world: est salvator mundi*.<sup>11</sup> He does not speak of the Christian world but of the entire world without any discrimination because “for God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:17). He continues: *If you want to call yourself Salvatores mundi, you must seek to become like the Saviour*. This was St. Paul’s aspiration when he declared: “For to me life is Christ death is gain” (Phil 1:21). This Christocentric theology brings to my mind the image of a soldier of Christ as Tertullian envisions him.

By baptism says Tertullian one has made a sacred oath to become the soldier of Christ. Among the many virtues that a soldier

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<sup>11</sup> Fr. Jordan’s sense of the word “saviour” here seems to correspond with Pope St. John Paul II’s explanation of co-saviour in *Salvifici Doloris*, nn. 23-27, especially n. 27. Even though Jesus’ suffering in itself is enough to accomplish the world’s salvation, he, in his infinitely gracious love, has chosen to share his redemptive power with all those who unite themselves to Him in their suffering. Hence they form with Jesus a multiple subject of his supernatural power, i.e., the power that saves the world. (Editor’s note)

cultivates, obedience, discipline, courage and perseverance are the most anticipated. Fr. Francis Jordan is saying almost the same thing even though he underlines only two virtues: "If you want to call yourselves *Salvatores mundi*, you must seek to become like the Saviour especially in these two things: obedience and suffering!" Never shrink from obedience in *omnibus*, in everything", he exhorts.<sup>12</sup>

Lastly, it seems that for our Founder, the one who is a Salvatorian is obedient to Christ in everything as a soldier is obedient to his superior. To apply this principle to military life in our day and age, we may expect that the soldier is clever and intelligent enough so that he/she can manipulate sophisticated, up-to-date weapons against the enemy. Nevertheless, to be a soldier of Christ requires another type of armour that the mere human mind cannot easily grasp. Saint Paul describes this armour for us in the letter to Ephesians 4:11-18:

Put on the full armour of God so as to be able to resist the devil's tactics. For it is not against human enemies that we have to struggle, but against the principalities and the ruling forces who are masters of the darkness in this world, the spirits of evil in the heavens. That is why you must take up all God's armour, or you will not be able to put up any resistance on the evil day, or stand your ground even though you exert yourselves to the full. So stand your ground, with truth as a belt round your waist, and uprightness a breastplate, wearing for shoes on your feet the eagerness to spread the gospel of peace and always carrying the shield of faith so that you can use it to quench the burning arrows of the Evil One. And then you must take salvation as your helmet and the sword of the Spirit, that is, the word of God. In all your prayer and entreaty keep praying in the Spirit on every possible occasion. Never get tired of staying awake to pray for all God's holy people.

Unless we wear this armour, we cannot be called soldiers of Christ. Our Venerable Father was totally right when he admonished his sons and daughters "to live as true Salvatorians". "Oh how I wish", he says, "that in these days you would really fathom what it means to call yourselves *Salvatores mundi*, Saviours of the

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<sup>12</sup> Talk 1900/04/13, 384-385.

world”. Concisely, “a Salvatorian is a saviour of the world. The Redeemer and Saviour of the world became obedient unto death, even death on the cross”.<sup>13</sup> The Founder goes on to say, “Be Salvatorians through steadfast obedience even to the point of crucifixion! Be Salvatorians in suffering even up to crucifixion; seek to become like the Saviour so that you will not be found unworthy”.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. In the Cross Is Salvation

#### 3.1 Nothing Grows except in the Shadow of the Cross

As I mentioned previously, this particular discourse on a true understanding of what it is to be a Salvatorian is one of the more incisive exhortations of our Venerable Founder. From my perspective, one should contemplate what he said with all its theological weight within the circumstances which he chose for speaking with such dynamism: he chose Good Friday, the day of our redemption. The liturgy highlights what Jesus accomplished on Good Friday, the day of our salvation, by assigning a place of privilege to one of the rituals contained in the liturgy. As the deacon or priest uncovers a cloth that covers the crucifix, he sings, *Behold, the wood of the Cross on which hung the salvation of the world. Come, let us adore*.<sup>15</sup> We know that our Venerable Founder cultivated a very deep spirituality of the cross and wished us to do the same, which makes me conclude that the entire gestalt of Jordan spirituality lies hidden in the spirituality of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. He wrote: *The works of God prosper only in the shadow of the cross*.<sup>16</sup> He continues: *It belongs to us to glory in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in which is SALVATION, life and resurrection*.<sup>17</sup> The theology of salvation develops in the shadow of the cross because, according to our Venerable Father, “The cross

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<sup>13</sup> Talk 1900/04/13, 384-385.

<sup>14</sup> Talk 1900/04/13, 384-385.

<sup>15</sup> Ritual of the Adoration of the Holy Cross on Good Friday.

<sup>16</sup> SD I (163/6), 107.

<sup>17</sup> SD I (180), 119.

is our life, the cross is our crown, the cross is our glory, the cross is our hope, the cross is our shield, the cross is our protection, the cross is our portion, the cross is our joy.”

To underline the close relationship between salvation and the cross, the Venerable Founder gave another challenging admonition:

Why are we afraid of taking up the cross, which leads to the Kingdom? In the cross is salvation, in the cross is life... in the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness. In the cross is perfection of sanctity. Take up your cross, then, and follow Jesus, and you shall go into everlasting life... nothing grows except in the shadow of the cross.<sup>18</sup>

At this point, it becomes clear that the Salvatorian spirituality of salvation as wished by the Venerable Founder finds its inner meaning in the paschal mystery under the shadow of the cross. It is the cross that invigorates its members to become vehicles of the salvation that has appeared in Jesus Christ. We are to become *salvatores mundi* in complete communion with Jesus. This is possible only when “our personal and communal experience of salvation is the dynamic and animating energy for our mission”.<sup>19</sup>

Let us not forget that in the cross is salvation, in the cross is life... The question is, what kind of life is this? Jesus gives the answer in his response to Nicodemus: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him” (John 3:14-15). Hence, salvation is readily available to everyone who welcomes the grace because as Jesus says, it is a matter of surrendering our eyes, mind and heart to the crucified in order to suffer with him by the stirrings of compassion and so be granted grace and pardon from the One from whom true life springs. In a mysteriously lucid manner, God’s Lordship is totally revealed on the Cross. That is why we sing *Reginabis a ligno Deus*, meaning to say that God reigns from the wood [of the cross]. This leads us to affirm that the theology of salvation threads itself through the

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<sup>18</sup> SD II (73/4), 129, 205.

<sup>19</sup> Charter of the Salvatorian Family, 5.

theology of the cross. Where there is the cross, there is salvation; there is life.

### 3.2 Salvation Is Life

The grace of salvation that Jesus offers from the wood of the cross seems to be at the heart of Jesus' opening words when he offers his priestly prayer to the Father. We hear Jesus say to the Father (17:3): "Eternal life is this: to know You, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent". There are many who have commented on this verse; I choose that of Pope Benedict XVI in his book *Jesus of Nazareth* (Part II). Pope Benedict notes,

"Eternal life" is not – as the modern reader might immediately assume life after death, in contrast to this present life, which is transient and not eternal. "Eternal life" is life itself, real life, which can also be lived in the present age and is no longer challenged by physical death. This is the point: to seize "life" here and now, real life that can no longer be destroyed by anything or anyone.<sup>20</sup>

Pope Benedict's manner of commenting on this verse, John 17:3, brings to mind Jesus' declaration to Martha, the sister of Lazarus, in John 11. These words of Jesus seem purely Salvatorian: *He who believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die* (John 11:25-26). Pope Benedict continues his elucidation of eternal life:

"Because I live, you will live also", says Jesus to his disciples at the Last Supper (Jn 14:19), and he thereby reveals once again that a distinguishing feature of the disciple of Jesus is the fact that he "lives": beyond the mere fact of existing, he has found and embraced the *real* life that everyone is seeking. On the basis of such texts, the early Christians called themselves simply "the living" (*hoi zōntes*). They had found what all are seeking – life itself, full and, hence, indestructible life.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, II, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa 2011, 72.

<sup>21</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth II*, 72.

... The Christian does not believe in a multiplicity of things. Ultimately he believes, quite simply, in God: he believes that there is only one true God.

This God becomes accessible through the one he sent, Jesus Christ: it is in the encounter with him that we experience the recognition of God that leads to communion and thus to "life"...

"Eternal life" is thus a relational event. Man did not acquire it from himself or for himself alone. Through relationship with the one who is himself life, man too comes alive.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.3 Life for Africans

Having this in mind, we should look at African life as a 'being with'. By our very nature, we Africans are relational, a 'being with'. This means that we are taught from our very youth through sayings and proverbs that any human being is powerless without the family community, that is to say, without communion. There exist popular proverbs in the hearts and mouths of Africans such as *Mtu ni Watu*, which can literally be translated as "The human being is people" and the second *Kidole kimoja hakivunji chawa*, which means, "One finger does not pick out a louse." These sayings emphasize the togetherness dimension and underscore the fact that the family is the first place of education and human formation. The family, so to speak, is the first school where every person experiences and tastes the community-communion style of life. There is no individual life, and life outside the community means nothingness. Anyone living outside the community-communion is considered as a living dead. There is no longer life in him or her because to live is to 'be with'. And to be with is to be in harmony with the community-communion.

Once the person's involvement with the family/community disintegrates, once the relation of 'being with' is broken, the member loses his/her integrity and lacks energy and vital force. In order to avoid such a disastrous situation, parents repeat unceasingly to their children this principle of life: 'I am because

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<sup>22</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth II*, 72.

you are; and without you, I am not; you and I are the community.’<sup>23</sup> The moral behind this is to incorporate as much as possible the individual into the large community-communion of brothers and sisters. As the African Synod Fathers emphasized:

By its nature, the family extends beyond the individual household; it is oriented towards society. The family has vital and organic links with society, since it is its foundation and nourishes it continually through its role of service to life: it is from the family where citizens are born and it is within the family where they find the first school of the social virtues that are the animating principle of the existence and development of society itself.<sup>24</sup>

In this sense of ‘being with’, Africans are conscious of their being for one another and with one another. In *Bantu Customs in Mainland Tanzania*, Van Pelt splendidly expresses the same idea:

Africans feel responsible for one another and are held responsible for one another by the other groups of related people. They keep in contact with one another and frequently stay with one another. They rely on each other in all circumstances and are very much interested in the family’s offspring.<sup>25</sup>

This is how the extended family in Africa operates. It creates the climate of ‘being with’, of a readiness to relate to others, to help them, to live with them and die for them. Van Pelt goes on to stress that since “the nuclear family is only a cell in the extended family, it is natural that the children belong to the extended family.”<sup>26</sup>

In our tribe, we consider the nuclear family as an island. And no one can live as an island; he will soon die. Africans are called to be open to others, to ‘be with’. This is why an African is

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. J. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Nairobi: Eastern African Publications 1994, 108-109; A.E. OROBATOR, *The Church as Family. African Ecclesiology in Its Social Context*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa 1999, 154-155; S. BOCKIE, *Death and the invisible Powers: The World of Kongo Belief*, Bloomington – Indianapolis, 1993, 10. He is quoted by OROBATOR: ‘No one speaks of ‘my life’ separated from ‘our life’.

<sup>24</sup> *Ecclesia in Africa (EA)*, 85.

<sup>25</sup> P. VAN PELT, *Bantu Customs in Mainland Tanzania*, Tabora: TMP 1982, 13-15.

<sup>26</sup> P. VAN PELT, *Bantu Customs in Mainland Tanzania*, 13-15.



evaluated more by what he is than what he has. "To be with" or "not to be with" is the radical question for Africans. To have or not to have comes afterwards. In fact, an African might get rich, but the wealth is not his/her alone. It is for the whole family, because his/her being is always a 'being with'. Otherwise, the more he/she has as a self-concentrated individual, the less he/she is.

Meanwhile, we should know that the 'being with' dimension of Africans goes together with their respect for life. Life is the ultimate reality for Africans. In their concern for life, the Synod declares:

In African culture and tradition the role of the family is everywhere held to be fundamental. Open to this sense of the family, of love and respect for life, the African loves children, who are joyfully welcomed as gifts of God. The people of Africa respect the life which is conceived and born. They rejoice in this life... Africans show their respect for human life until its natural end, and keep elderly parents and relatives within the family.<sup>27</sup>

The Church is a family that shows this same respect. She stands wholeheartedly for human life. To use Orobator's words, the church as family is at the service of life. He refers to Bishop Laurent Monsengwo who states emphatically: "In a broader sense the Church as Family must always be present on the side of the forces of life in this great battle that pits her against the forces of death until the second coming..."<sup>28</sup>

Placide Tempels stressed the fact that African life is dynamic.<sup>29</sup> Life can either increase or decrease in energy, in vitality or in spirit. But whatever the case may be, Africans always fight for the increase of life. One custom that manifests the African fondness for life is a form of greeting that brings out into the open the need for life. For instance, in many African tribes and especially in the Baluba from the Kongo, when individuals meet, they greet each

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<sup>27</sup> EA 43.

<sup>28</sup> L. MONSENGWO, "L'Eglise famille et images bibliques de l'Eglise", in *Revue Catholique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* 14-15 (1996) 121-138.

<sup>29</sup> P. TEMPELS is a Belgian Franciscan Missionary to Congo who wrote the book *La Philosophie Bantoue* in 1947. This was the very first book dealing with African thought. It provoked controversy among those who read it.

other with the word *moyo* or *kolako*, which means ‘live; be alive’ or ‘be strong’. To live and to be strong are great aspirations for Africans. Life is sacred and therefore nobody can dispose of it as she or he wants. Hence, one may ask: if life is the ultimate reality for Africans, where does life find its fullness?

Obviously, individual life is rooted in the life of the community. Africans will never conceive of life outside of the community because it is the community that gives life and protects it. Whenever life is diminished because of unworthy behaviour, the people of Africa call for reconciliation through the rituals of purification and expiation within the family community. Through these rituals they express their deep religious sense, a sense of the sacred, of the existence of God the Creator, and of the existence of a spiritual world. They feel also the reality of sin and the need for reparation.<sup>30</sup>

The African family, therefore, is a shelter of rest, security, identity, solidarity, and community. Community, in turn, refers to communion of life, mutual participation, belonging together, listening to one another, mutual understanding in frank dialogue, forgiveness and reconciliation. The philosophy of ‘being with’, ‘increasing life’, and ‘reconciling’ together with the African insight into what a family is can enrich very much our understanding of the nature and the mission of the universal Church.

The Salvatorian theology of salvation in the African context should strive to establish a civilization of life against the culture of death that is being relentlessly perpetuated by an ideology of indifference and relativism supported by powerful multinational organizations. For us Salvatorians, the strife occasioned by this cold war between the two cultures reminds us our primordial and fundamental mission. We are to be “saviours of the world”, i.e., co-redeemers, by accepting the cross of Jesus in our hearts and by spreading the culture of life. We are to carry within our souls the conviction that the world – and every family, community and society within the world – needs Jesus as its Redeemer: “I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full” (John

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<sup>30</sup> *EA*, 42.

10:10). It is our mission to remind Africans, indeed all people, that by the grace of the redemption, they too become co-redeemers when they unite their suffering, in an act of communal love, to the suffering of Jesus on the cross.

In other words Jesus, the Saviour of the world is saying: "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though he die". Life in the Saviour does not come to an end because it is true and everlasting.

#### 4. Our Charism in Four Words: *Salus tua ego sum*<sup>31</sup>

An event in the Gospel of Luke expresses a meaningful insight into this motto, *Salus tua ego sum*. It seems true that the Founder never used this reference in his spiritual diary, but it seems to dovetail beautifully with our charism. I am referring to the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10.

It is said that Zacchaeus was not so much seeking to see Jesus but rather was seeking to ascertain who Jesus was. He was a chief of the tax collectors (St Matthew was one) and also a wealthy man. For sure he was not an ordinary man. His problem is that he could not see Jesus because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. Let us underline one fact: Zacchaeus was seeking to determine who

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<sup>31</sup> In the Mother House Chapel of the Salvatorian Sisters in Rome, there is a nice painting on the central wall with the logo: *Salus tua ego sum*; I am your Salvation. I compare this logo to the Gospel of Saint Mark, which is short, clear, concise and precise. Why can we not use this logo as a leitmotiv for the entire Salvatorian family?

Where does this logo come from? Some years ago, I did a simple investigation in order to find out the origin of the Sisters' logo. This motto seems to have originated from Father Pancrace Pfeifer. In the square of our Mother House, there is a statue of the Divine Saviour with these words in Latin: *Ego Deus Tuus Salvator Tuus*; I am your God and your Saviour. This statue was inaugurated in 1925. Furthermore, it is very interesting to know that the same words are found on the Statue of the Saviour on the top of the Mother House of the Jesuits. The Jesuits' Saviour can be seen from far away especially during the night because it shines. We can read on the sculpture, this time, in Italian: *Io sono la Tua Salvezza*; in Latin "*Salus tua ego sum*" and in English "I am Your Salvation".

Jesus was. You can see Jesus without knowing who Jesus really is. You can see Jesus passing by without recognizing Him. Zacchaeus took the initiative, but he failed to reach the essential.

The human person, by his own private endeavour, cannot possess God. The initiative should come from God. Zacchaeus did his level best: he ran ahead and even climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, who was about to pass that way. What was the result of his efforts? It was not really he who saw Jesus; it was Jesus who looked up and saw him.

The look of Jesus is extraordinary; it penetrates the depths of the heart. It is a gaze that saves. It restores the lost human being to his/her intimate relationship with the Creator. From the saving gaze originates a wonderful call: “Zaccheus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house today” (Luke 19:5). Jesus adds: “Today, salvation has come to this house... Zaccheus, I am your Salvation” (cf. 19:9).



Zacchaeus came down quickly and received Jesus with joy. Salvation transforms your heart and your life. It makes you stand firm on your two feet. You no longer have to climb or look for support from something else. Salvation itself upholds you. Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over" (Luke 19:8). By distributing his property to the poor, Zacchaeus is reciting implicitly Psalm 27:1: "The Lord is my light and my salvation", whom should I fear?"

*Salus tua ego sum* means in this context, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay in your house". On account of this proclamation of salvation, people started grumbling and said, "He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner".

How many people would like to know Jesus, to see who Jesus is and they cannot because of the crowd that saturates the world with all its pleasures, manipulations, deceptions, suspicions, threats, seductions, power plays, indifferences and all manner of obstacle, temptation and challenge. The world is hanging from a tree, a big tree like that of the sycamore tree that Zacchaeus climbed. We as Salvatorians must play fully the role of Jesus.

We are the ones to gaze upon the trees that harbour those who are confused, disillusioned, disappointed and discouraged; we are the ones to bring them salvation – to bring them to Jesus. To look into the tree is to be able to read the signs of times. The salvation that springs forth from the crucified Christ always corresponds to the milieu of the people to whom we are sent. Pope Francis rightly says: *I expect that each form of consecrated life will question what it is that God and people today are asking of them.* From us Salvatorians, the world awaits Salvation – the world awaits Jesus Christ – and that is everything.

Therefore, *Salus tua ego sum* should be a truth of faith, a truth in love that gives us dynamism. It forces us to abandon old ways of thinking and to live our charism. The question is no longer how we are going to live our charism in our contemporary milieu; rather how do God and people today want us to live our charism in this

rapidly changing world. For that Pope Francis' invitation should never leave us at peace:

I also expect from you what I have asked all the members of the Church: to come out of yourselves and go forth to the existential peripheries. "Go into all the world"; these were the last words which Jesus spoke to his followers and which he continues to address to us (cf. Mk 16:15). A whole world awaits us: men and women who have lost all hope, families in difficulty, abandoned children, young people without a future, the elderly, sick and abandoned, those who are rich in the world's goods but impoverished within, men and women looking for a purpose in life, thirsting for the divine... Don't be closed in on yourselves, don't be satisfied by petty squabbles, don't remain a hostage to your own problems. These will be resolved if you go forth and help others to resolve their own problems, and proclaim the Good News. You will find life by giving life, hope by giving hope, and love by giving love. I ask you to work concretely in welcoming refugees, drawing near to the poor, and finding creative ways to catechize, to proclaim the Gospel and to teach others how to pray. Consequently, apostolate should be adjusted to new needs.<sup>32</sup>

We give life, we give hope and we give love to those who in their fragility bring to the forefront their new needs: those who have attracted my attention are the families to be catechized. They need to regain their original mission of bringing to birth a thriving domestic church. They need to recover their stature as the first school for children and an oasis of peace, of true life, and of salvation.

Nobody can deny the pivotal position of the family in every human society. There is no society without family. Hence, the family is the foundation rock upon which the society is built. This is a very significant reason for giving major priority to the evangelization of the family in general and to the African family in particular.<sup>33</sup> God Himself elevated and sanctified the institution of the family by His incarnation – by his choice to enter into human history as a Redeemer who is born into and grows up in a human

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<sup>32</sup> Pope FRANCIS, Apostolic Letter, *To all Consecrated People*, Vatican, 21 November 2014.

<sup>33</sup> *EA*, 80.

family. God, therefore, wants to show how open the family is to every human being. God wants to bring into evidence how open the Church, the Family of God, is to every human being. Consequently, we as Salvatorians should meet God's desire to show how open we as a religious congregation are to every human being. Happy to find ourselves within Jesus' declaration that he is our Salvation – *Salus tua ego sum* – we should be in the front line for designing new strategies and new pastoral plans in order to evangelize families and encourage them to give Jesus Christ a dwelling place in their midst.

## Conclusion

We may synthesize the keynote of the Salvatorian charism in a single affirmation: *Salus tua ego sum*. Jesus is our salvation. This affirmation identifies us as those who, graced by the Saviour, are called to be collaborators in the task of redeeming the world. United with Jesus, we form a multiple subject of his supernatural power. God requires us to be *Salvatores mundi*, co-redeemers. The Salvatorian Charter is a call. The words of the logo *Salus tua ego sum* should awaken us from our tendency to find a comfortable niche for ourselves so that we may live the grace of our charism and the requirements of our mission in a manner that does not stop short of the expansive parameters of the divine will. Our charism should inspire us to reach out to those who are perennially the neediest. With Jesus as our backbone, the conviction *Salus tua ego sum* should enable us to reach families in the public sphere, on the street, and labouring under the burdens of life's journey. It should lead us to families to enkindle in them the light of the risen Christ because the salvation of the world passes through the family. Our Salvatorian mission calls us to develop apostolic skills, to be broad-minded, to act and think in the manner of the local culture, always faithful to the universal Church. We must respond to the call to bring salvation to the streets, to the neglected, the forsaken, the unloved, and the deprived. We must bring the grace of salvation to the existential peripheries since we are the world, we are the family, we are the Church. May we be so dedicated to the service

of others that the whole human family may become a pleasing sacrifice to the honour of the *Salvator mundi*, Jesus Christ!



# **A Worthy Model of Faith Transmission for Contemporary Youth? An Assessment Based on the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the 15th Synod of Bishops**

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In this article, we will explore one paradigm of faith transmission currently being used with young people. In so doing, we will assess the *Instrumentum Laboris*, written for the Synod for Youth that is scheduled to take place in 2018. In order to discuss and clarify the value of this paradigm of faith transmission, we shall offer evidence from pertinent events and ecclesial documents with a special focus on *Dilecti Amici* which was written by St. John Paul II in 1985 and addressed to the youth of that time. Our approach will be to use the relevant tools available from comparative and descriptive methods in order to understand the shifts that occur in the paradigm, and then apply the analytic method to help us explain reasons for our findings.

## **Introduction**

In Krakow, Poland, at the opening of the last World Youth Day, that of 2015, Pope Francis brought back memories of Pope St. John Paul II's manner of approaching youth, when he addressed a direct question to the remarkably large crowd of the youth who were in attendance: "Can we change things?"<sup>1</sup> The vast audience of youth shouted back their reply in unison: "Yes!" That shout came from this very large throng representing almost every country in the

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, JOHN PAUL II (1994), *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, London: Jonathan Cape, 124.

world – and the emphatic tone that ushered forth from their youthful hearts, capable of a creative idealism, manifested their sense of urgency for change. All were united in their convictions: *No* to injustice, *No* to the whims of today's throw-away culture, *No* to globalized indifference. Caught up in the enthusiasm that spread forth like an uncontrolled bonfire, the crowd had taken its stand. At that moment, Pope Francis invited them to listen to the cry arising from their own inner selves and from all those around them chanting the same answer. "Even when you feel like the prophet Jeremiah, and in the inexperience of youth, God encourages you to go where He sends you: *Do not be afraid, [...], because I am with you to deliver you* (Jer 1:8).<sup>2</sup>

The planners for the Synod for Youth that will take place in October 2018 have expressed their conviction that it is *the right time* for Church leaders to *listen to the voice of youth who seem to cry back unanimously to Pope Francis and the Church: Can we change things?* The Pope himself has not yet given his own reflections on the mood of the youth since he himself must first formulate his convictions so that he may act in his role as Pope through this Preparatory Document: *The Youth, the Faith and Vocational Discernment* (PD) in a form that might be expressed in this or in a similar statement: *Change is possible if you help me.*<sup>3</sup>

## The Fear of Changing the Status Quo

It may be difficult to decipher why people are afraid to change a status quo that seems not to correspond adequately to the norms of the truth in love that we discover in Jesus and the Gospel. We may draw upon a comparison between the youth's frame of mind with the milieu within which Pope Benedict XVI promulgated the

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<sup>2</sup>Pope Francis, *Letter to young people on the occasion of the presentation of the Preparatory Document of the 15 Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, 13 January 2017, available online (accessed 6 May 2017): [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2017/documents/papa-francesco\\_20170](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2017/documents/papa-francesco_20170)

<sup>3</sup>Synod of Bishops, XV Ordinary General Assembly, *Young People, the faith and vocational discernment: Preparatory Document*. (Accessed 1 May 2017). [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20170113\\_documento-preparatorio-xv\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20170113_documento-preparatorio-xv_en.html)

Apostolic Letter *Ubicumque et semper* in September of 2010. With this document, Pope Benedict XVI instituted the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization.<sup>4</sup> Immediately after its promulgation, there seemed to be critical comments and questions such as: Do we really need a "New Evangelization"? What about the "old" one? Are we going to denounce evangelization tools and methods that are currently in use, are well understood by many, and indeed have worked well up to now? How will this "New Evangelization" affect our parishes and formation houses? Will it provoke dramatic change? What will this involve in terms of instructors needed to teach this new approach, books that would be necessary to implement planning and development, and the training of new staff who would learn the new approach and, in their turn, introduce and teach these changes to young people not only by an oral transmission of content but also by a meaningful praxis? Finally, how would the Church proceed to evaluate with effective assessment tools the degree of success that the New Evangelization might achieve?

In order to initiate the New Evangelization, the Pope insisted on priorities that were either rejected, forgotten, or brushed aside by many. The Pope urged those in responsibility to: (a) study the Catechism of the Catholic Church, (b) read the Bible, (c) renew and make more profound the programmes of catechesis; and (d) strengthen the parishes to function as centres for both human and spiritual growth. Simultaneously, the new Pontifical Council was already analysing in detail how the social, political and economic climates were themselves changing in complicated, almost unanalysable fashion and so were making people more confused than before.

The first Prefect for this Pontifical Council, Cardinal Rino Fisichella, accepted the opportunity to examine negative factors that seemed to act as catalysts for crises of faith. He noted that there were conflicts in axiological norms, beliefs, and practices

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<sup>4</sup> Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter in the form of Motu Proprio *Ubicumque et semper* establishing the Pontifical Council for promoting the New Evangelization, in The Holy See, (accessed 1 May 2017), [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_apl\\_20100921](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_ben-xvi_apl_20100921)

especially in the regions that historically were thought to be solidly built on Christian values.<sup>5</sup>

Soon after, we witnessed the *Instrumentum laboris* of the XIII Ordinary General Assembly, entitled: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith,”<sup>6</sup> where Bishops from all over the world discussed how to evangelize in a changing world where social and consequently religious paradigms undergo rapid and sudden shifts. This event coincided with the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, the 20th anniversary of the publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the inauguration of the Year of Faith. The Synod proceedings gave birth to the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG) written by Pope Francis.<sup>7</sup>

## The Pastoral Self-Assessment

Let us now return to Pope Francis’ “Letter to Young People”, a document that he issued on the 13th of January, 2017, in which he stated: “I wanted you to be the centre of attention, because you are in my heart.”<sup>8</sup> And later in the same document we read: “My brother bishops [and] I want even more to ‘work with you for your joy (2 Cor 1:24).’”

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<sup>5</sup> In his book, the Prefect analyses the context and circumstances in which the Pontifical Council had been established. “Secularization has put forward the thesis of living in the world *etsi Deus non daretur*, as if God did not exist. Nevertheless, having removed God, our contemporaries have lost themselves... If God is relegated to the corner, the darkest and the furthest away from life, the human being becomes lost because there is no longer any meaning to being in relation with oneself, much less with others.” R. Fisichela (2012), *The New Evangelization: Responding to the Challenge of Indifference*, Herefordshire: Gracewing, 31.

<sup>6</sup> XIII Ordinary General Assembly, *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith: Instrumentum Laboris* (2012), Vatican City: Vatican Printing Press.

<sup>7</sup> Papa Francesco (2013) *Esortazione Apostolica Evangelii gaudium*, Milano: Edizioni San Paolo.

<sup>8</sup> *Pope Francis’ letter to young people*, in: Rome Report, (accessed 6 May 2017), <http://www.romereports.com/2017/01/13/pope-francis-letter-to-young-people>

The *Instrumentum laboris* expressed this same desire: "By listening to young people, the Church will once again hear the Lord speaking in today's world... Listening to their aspirations, the Church can glimpse the world which lies ahead and the paths the Church is called to follow."<sup>9</sup>

In a manner similar to what happened at the time of Pope Benedict's initiation of the New Evangelization, one can wonder about the Church's strategy regarding youth during the period preceding the preparatory document. One can think sceptically and ask: What was the Church doing up until then? Was the Church ignoring youth and their needs within the community of the faithful? Was the Church *neglecting to listen* to the voice of young people?

The introductory part of the document seems not to ignore the possibility of such negative thoughts: "The Church has decided to examine herself on how she can lead young people to recognize and accept the call to the fullness of life and love, and to ask young people to help her in identifying the most effective ways to announce the Good News today."<sup>10</sup>

In this sentence, we see more clearly that *the Church declares publicly* the need for an ecclesial self-examination in order to help young people to discern and accept the call to the fullness of life and love, i.e., the call to follow Christ. The Church also professes her desire for the collaboration of young people in the task of identifying the most effective means for evangelizing in today's world.

Youth are at the centre of the document. The Church acts in the role of the *servant* who intends always to be an *ally* of the youthful generation. The world, on the other hand, does not seem to be youth's ally. The world is the place where the youth grow and where they fight for their daily survival; it also seems to be precisely the world that prevents young people from becoming the very "disciples whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23; 19:26; 21:7). The world, in other words, inhibits young people so that they are slow to reply to Our Lord Jesus' generous invitation to join Him.

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<sup>9</sup> PD, Introduction.

<sup>10</sup> PD, Introduction.

The Pope suggests that despite the Church's effort to take charge and lead the youth forward, the world of today drains the young people of their momentum because it is not able to satisfy their needs. In her service to young people in this precarious situation, the Church needs to review carefully what her Founder has decreed in order to resolve this unfortunate stalemate situation.

Because John the Apostle is both an example of a young person who chooses to follow Jesus and the "disciple Jesus loved," he serves as an inspiration at the beginning of the process of the discernment that leads to the fullness of joy in Jesus.

In the search for meaning in their lives, the two disciples of John the Baptist hear Jesus make the penetrating question: "What do you seek?" To their reply, "Rabbi (which means Teacher), where do you live?", the Lord responds with an invitation: "Come and see" (Jn. 1:38-39). At the same time, Jesus calls them to embark on an inner journey and to be prepared to move forward in a practical way, without really knowing where this will lead them. It will be a memorable encounter, so much so that they even remember the exact time of day (cf. Jn 1:39).

As a result of their courage to go and see, the disciples will experience the abiding friendship of Christ and will be able to pass each day with him. They will ponder his words and be inspired by them; and will be deeply affected and moved by his actions. John, in particular, will be called to be a witness of the Passion and Resurrection of his Master... John's example can be of assistance in understanding that the vocational experience is a gradual process of inner discernment and growth in the faith which leads to discovering the fullness of the joy of life and love, making a gift of oneself and participating in the proclamation of the Good News.<sup>11</sup>

## **A Changing Paradigm for Pastoral Ministry**

Although the Preparatory Document doesn't quote St. Pope John Paul II, we find here an echo of his Apostolic Letter *Dilecti Amici* that he promulgated on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 1985 in preparation for the International Youth Year.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *PD*, Introduction.

<sup>12</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dilecti Amici*, to the Youth of the World on the Occasion of International Youth Year, in the Holy See. [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_letters/1985/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_31031985](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1985/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_31031985) Accessed 20 April 2017.

In you, young people, there is hope, for you belong to the future, as the future belongs to you. To you belongs responsibility for what will one day become reality together with yourselves. In this regard, the first and principal wish of the Church is that you should "always be prepared to make a defence to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you."<sup>13</sup>

When one makes a cursory comparison of *Dilecti Amici* with the Preparatory Document for the Synod on Youth, one notices immediately that Pope St. John Paul II supported his affirmations with about 70 quotes from the Bible and concentrated his presentation on the Church's full awareness of the mission that Jesus Christ entrusted to her.

As the Second Vatican Council teaches, [the Church] is a kind of sacrament or sign of the intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind. Every vocation in life, insofar as it is a Christian vocation, is rooted in the sacramentality of the Church: it is therefore formed through the Sacraments of our faith.<sup>14</sup>

The document from 1985 identifies vocation as a crucial dimension of the commitment of every Christian who has met and recognized Jesus through sacramental initiation within the Church.

St. John Paul II explains the contours of the word "vocation":

One could speak here of the *life* of vocation, which in a way is identical with that plan of life which each of you draws up in the period of your youth. But *vocation* means something more than *plan*. In this second case I myself am the subject who draws it up, and this corresponds better to the reality of the person which each of you is. This *plan* is a *vocation* inasmuch as in it there make themselves felt the various factors which call. These factors usually make up a particular order of values (also called a *hierarchy of values*), from which emerges an ideal to be realized, an ideal which is attractive to a young heart. In this process, the *vocation* becomes a *plan*, and the plan begins to be also a vocation...

Young people, entering into themselves and at the same time entering into conversation with Christ in prayer, desire as it were to read the eternal thought which God the Creator and Father has in their regard. They then become convinced that the task assigned to them by God is left completely to their own freedom, and at the same time is determined by various circumstances of an interior and exterior

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<sup>13</sup> DA, 1.

<sup>14</sup> DA, 9.

nature. Examining these circumstances, the young person, boy or girl, constructs his or her plan of life and at the same time recognizes this plan as the vocation to which God is calling him or her.

I desire therefore to entrust to all of you, the young people to whom this Letter is addressed, this marvellous task which is linked with the discovery before God of each one's life vocation. This is an exciting task. It is a fascinating interior undertaking. In this undertaking, your humanity develops and grows, while your young personality acquires ever greater inner maturity. You become rooted in that which each of you is, in order to become that which you must become: for yourself – for other people – for God.<sup>15</sup>

A more in-depth comparison seems to indicate that these two documents vary in their core structure. The first one presents the Church as a strong leader, as a companion for youth on their life journey, and sees youth as people ready to sacrifice and struggle for their vocation. The Preparatory Document for the youth Synod, written 37 years later (which is not really a long time) brings to the surface a dramatically different paradigm: it locates both the Church and the youth within a *milieu* of rapid social changes. The Church exists in this milieu, but she fails to have an impact on the society-at-large; nor does she have an impact on youth even though she would wish to do so. The texture of this document shows the prevailing paradigm: many allusions within the document make it *heavy* on sociology and social psychology and *light* on Scripture and Tradition.<sup>16</sup>

This might be justified by the style of the present Pope, but also it is visible and characterized in the document where the Church loses its leading shape but believes to get it back after listening humbly to (forgotten) young people. By the same time, reasons of these problems are connected to the rapidly changing world where growth of uncertainty results in a state of vulnerability, that is a combination of social unease and economic difficulties as well as insecurity in the lives of a large part of the population.<sup>17</sup> The

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<sup>15</sup> *DA*, 9.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. T. R. Ascik, "The 2018 Synod and the new approach to youth in the Church," *The Catholic World Report*, March 16, 2017 (accessed 31 May 2017). [http://www.catholicworldreport.com/Blog/5501/the\\_2018\\_synod\\_and\\_the\\_new\\_approach\\_to\\_youth\\_in\\_the\\_church.aspx](http://www.catholicworldreport.com/Blog/5501/the_2018_synod_and_the_new_approach_to_youth_in_the_church.aspx)

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *PD*, Part 1, Section 1.



document characterizes youth as a group that always want their options open. At the same time there are youth who suffer because the door to education, employment and training seems definitively shut. The contrast with the tone of Pope St. John Paul's document is remarkable:

Young people, on one hand show a willingness and readiness to participate and commit themselves to concrete activities in which the personal contribution of each might be an occasion for recognizing one's identity. On the other hand, they show an intolerance in places where they feel, rightly or wrongly, that they lack opportunities to participate or receive encouragement. This can lead to resignation or fatigue in their will to desire, to dream and to plan, as seen in the diffusion of the phenomenon of NEET ("not in education, employment or training", namely, young people are not engaged in an activity of study or work or vocational training). The discrepancy between young people who are passive and discouraged and those enterprising and energetic comes from the concrete opportunities offered to each one in society and the family in which one develops, in addition to the experiences of a sense of meaning, relationships and values which are formed even before the onset of youth. Besides passivity, a lack of confidence in themselves and their abilities can manifest itself in an excessive concern for their self-image and in a submissive conformity to passing fads...

Together with the spread of western culture, a conception of freedom as the possibility of having access to ever-new opportunities is emerging. Young people refuse to continue on a personal journey of life, if it means giving up taking different paths in the future: "Today I choose this, tomorrow we'll see."<sup>18</sup>

Another aspect that might surprise the reader is the fact that for the 2018 Synod for Youth, the term *youth* has been narrowed to people between 16 to 29 years, leaving room for adaptation according to local circumstances. This might bring confusion and/or misunderstanding, especially if we keep in mind that such a narrowly defined age group might be considered and recognized as normative only in developed countries while the other 80% of the world's population defy such a distinction by facing the cruel reality of a child forced to become an adult as soon as possible. This particular confusion about the meaning of the demographics,

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. *PD*, Part 1, Sections 2 and 3.

in my view, may affect the accuracy and reliability of data that are to be collected from every diocese around the world.

From the sociological point of view, we learn that the notion that youth constitute a separate group within a society has a short history. Maintaining their custom of systematising and categorising, the social sciences recently divided a social group into certain subdivisions. But again, applying every qualification that the sciences make is often limited to the developed world.

What seemed to be a common point of agreement in the recent past is that young people as an age group roughly coincided with what was called the “young generation”; and often the ones who belonged to this group were not distinguished from children until the elders recognized them as having reached a certain stage of maturity by conducting a ritual social initiation. It could be a tribal initiation or an actual marriage. The *PD* does not indicate the precise reason for its identification of the 16 to 29-year-old age range as the period to be designated “youth”.<sup>19</sup> Neither does it specify whether the range is based on biological markers or the kind of cultural indicators that cultural anthropologists may adopt from such perspectives as beliefs, family life styles, or socio-political organizations.<sup>20</sup> It is well known that without such specification, *youth* can become “just a word” that carries within itself an evolving concept that can easily become social in its repercussions.<sup>21</sup> For instance, the UN has defined youth as a person from 15 to 24 years of age.<sup>22</sup> Some sociologists define youth as a transition between childhood and adulthood.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless in spite of such attempts to establish an age range for youth with

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. C.W. Stewart, *Adolescents*, in R.J. Hunter, ed. (2007) Dictionary of pastoral care and counseling, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 8-10.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. M.J. Kehily (2007) *Understanding youth: Perspectives, identities and practices*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. P. Bourdieu, (1978) *Sociology in Question*. London: Sage Publication, 94-102

<sup>22</sup> Cf. United Nation, *Definition of Youth* (accessed 14 May 2017), <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> Similar theories and statements might be find in J. Roche, et al. (2004) *Youth in Society*, London: Sage Publication.

precision, one has to notice that many cultures have good reason to offer their own parameters: the African Youth Charter, for example, defines youth as people between the age of 15 and 35.<sup>24</sup> This seems logical enough since a 33 or a 34-year-old woman who is not married may still be called a girl in some African cultures.

If we return to the perspective that characterises this Preparatory Document, we notice a particular emphasis on the fact that young people are those who "seek a religious faith community for two primary reasons: spiritual transcendence and social belonging."<sup>25</sup> The issue of age parameters, however, remains. Does the lack of clarity – or the lack of concern – that this *Instrumentum Laboris* manifests about who belongs to that group of people called youth intensify for some the difficulties inherent in understanding the document's intention? Is this a problem that casts a shadow over the international character of the document and the questionnaire that supplements it?

Although this document takes pains to note that some international studies were conducted to help understand the characteristics of the young people of our times<sup>26</sup>, the author(s) of the document do not mention a specific reference related to these identifying characteristics. On the other hand, the authors of the document seem to undertake their analyses without specific supporting studies. This approach brings forth repercussions in the attitude adopted towards socialisation and the formation of a personal identity of a young person.

The word *discernment* holds a prominent place in Part II, Section 2 of the document. The authors of the document understand the word in the context of what Pope Francis already wrote in *Evangelii Gaudium*, where he uses three guiding verbs in relation to discernment: recognizing, interpreting and choosing.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. African Union Commission (2006), *African Youth Charter* [http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/african\\_youth\\_charter\\_2006.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/african_youth_charter_2006.pdf) (accessed 6 May 2017)

<sup>25</sup> S.D. Parks, "Youth Adults", *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, R.J. Hunter, (Ed.). Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2007, 1344-1345.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *PD*, Part 1, Section 2.

<sup>27</sup> *EG*, 51.

While mentioning meditation on the Word of God and dialogue with Jesus as a significant dimension for all three stages of the process, this Preparatory Document seems to bring into the foreground the socio-psychological character of discernment: “recognizing”, for example, is related more to desires, feelings and emotions than to a purely spiritual dimension that accords with the norms of truth in the love of Jesus. “Interpreting” has its connotation of understanding to what the Holy Spirit may be indicating by means of feelings and desires. The final verb accentuates what takes place in the individual’s conscience when he or she makes a vocation-related decision.<sup>28</sup> While the document warns against both relativism and individualism in the discernment process – and the temptation to be ego-centred – one sees so to speak an unbalancing because of the stress on the emotional pushes and pulls that are captivating the person’s attention during the process. In 1985, Pope St. John Paul II, on the other hand, did not stress the individual’s dreams and desires. He stressed the desire of one person, Jesus. “It is Christ we must ask for the answer.”<sup>29</sup>

## A Risk Made Worthy by the Gospel

In its First Part, the Preparatory Document recalls the ever-present search for persons of reference or *heroes* and indicates parents and families as those who are supposed to engage themselves in the primary role in the *search*. At the same time, the document seems to be restrained in its attitude towards the family and tends to avoid giving any place of privilege to the family who in fact may provide the milieu for the first discernment that takes place in a life of a young boy or a girl.

This low-key attitude towards the family carries an impact on the second part of the document entitled Faith, Discernment, and

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. *PD*, Part 2, Section 2.

<sup>29</sup> *DA*, 3. This very clear evangelical statement finds its detailed explanation in the Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* written by John Paul II on the inauguration of his papal ministry. Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor hominis*, in *The Holy See* (accessed 12 May 2017), [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_04031979\\_redemptor-hominis.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis.html)

Vocation.<sup>30</sup> The title of this Second Part might provoke a bit of confusion because, if there are substantial insights related to faith or discernment, the reader will not find them there. One notices that, yes, there is a promising remark about faith: "Faith is seeing things as Jesus does." Yet if a person was hoping to see the indispensable niche that belongs to the truth in both faith and discernment – the truth of who Jesus is as Redeemer and Lord and the personal truth, i.e., the identity of the one doing the discerning – he or she would be disappointed.

Of course, this is understandable if, as it was stated right from the beginning, the Church has decided to listen to young people and to learn from them without speaking in an authoritative manner about the vital issues that concern the lives and destinies of the young people to whom she is listening. We suggest that this is another very important contrast to Pope St. John Paul's Apostolic Letter of 37 years ago.

For instance, in relation to marriage and the family, the document highlights the gift of discernment and relates this gift to the ability to cultivate opportunities for self-realization. The Preparatory Document does not give guidelines about how a family may prepare a son or daughter for the most precious vocation of marriage. Indeed the document blithely refers the reader to *Amoris Laetitia*, nn. 159-190, where much is said about the formation in ethical habits, but not much is said about forming children to the vocation of marriage.

We may witness the quite evident contrast from the way John Paul II specified the role of family. In his 1985 Letter to the Youth he speaks specifically about the discernment and choice to marry as an issue that concerns the parents of the prospective bride or groom.<sup>31</sup> He mentions the all-important point that when a young couple begin their journey through life as a sacramentally married man and woman, they carry within their hearts and souls everything that they learned from their parents as an "inheritance".

Pope St. John Paul wrote his Apostolic Letter *Dilecti Amici* within the context of what he had written four years previously in

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. *PD*, Part 2.

<sup>31</sup> John Paul II, *DA*, nn. 10-11.

his 1981 Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (FC). There John Paul related the role of the family to the various stages of preparation for the marriage of the son or daughter who grows with his/her parents.<sup>32</sup>

The document from 1981 is careful to give backbone to the young person's discernment about entering a Christian marriage:

Remote preparation begins in early childhood, in that wise family training which leads children to discover themselves as being endowed with a rich and complex psychology and with a particular personality with its own strengths and weaknesses. It is the period when esteem for all authentic human values is instilled, both in interpersonal and in social relationships, with all that this signifies for the formation of character, for the control and right use of one's inclinations, for the manner of regarding and meeting people of the opposite sex, and so on. Also necessary, especially for Christians, is solid spiritual and catechetical formation that will show that marriage is a true vocation and mission, without excluding the possibility of the total gift of self to God in the vocation to the priestly or religious life.

Upon this basis there will subsequently and gradually be built up the proximate preparation, which – from the suitable age and with adequate catechesis, as in a catechumenal process – involves a more specific preparation for the sacraments, as it were, a rediscovery of them. This renewed catechesis of young people and others preparing for Christian marriage is absolutely necessary in order that the sacrament may be celebrated and lived with the right moral and spiritual dispositions. The religious formation of young people should be integrated, at the right moment and in accordance with the various concrete requirements, with a preparation for life as a couple. This preparation will present marriage as an interpersonal relationship of a man and a woman that has to be continually developed, and it will encourage those concerned to study the nature of conjugal sexuality and responsible parenthood, with the essential medical and biological knowledge connected with it. It will also acquaint those concerned with correct methods for the education of children, and will assist them in gaining the basic requisites for well-ordered family life, such as stable work, sufficient financial resources, sensible administration, notions of housekeeping...

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<sup>32</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, in Austin Flannery (Ed.) (1982) *Vatican Council II: More Post-Conciliar Documents*, vol. 2. Bangalore: St. Paul Publication, 813-898.

The immediate preparation for the celebration of the sacrament of Matrimony should take place in the months and weeks immediately preceding the wedding, so as to give a new meaning, content and form to the so-called premarital enquiry required by Canon Law. This preparation is not only necessary in every case, but is also more urgently needed for engaged couples that still manifest shortcomings or difficulties in Christian doctrine and practice.

Among the elements to be instilled in this journey of faith, which is similar to the catechumenate, there must also be a deeper knowledge of the mystery of Christ and the Church, of the meaning of grace and of the responsibility of Christian marriage, as well as preparation for taking an active and conscious part in the... marriage liturgy.<sup>33</sup>

By means of this example, we witness a contrast between the tendency of the Preparatory Document to understate the family's role in vocational discernment and Pope John Paul's more emphatic use of language that highlighted the spiritual, ethical, and cultural inheritance that the family passes on to its youth, an emphasis that lay the foundation for the first World Youth Day.

The Church should listen to young people: the Preparatory Document says this; Pope St. John Paul II said this on a number of occasions.<sup>34</sup> But who is catching the attention of young people? To whom are they listening? What is the source of their knowledge and insight that they, in their turn, can communicate to the Church and to the Pope? Surely their source is not Christian Tradition because as it is stated in the document, "the Church has decided to examine herself on how she can lead young people to recognize and accept the call to the fullness of life and love..."<sup>35</sup> This keynote statement seems to insinuate that young people listen to sources that do not help them to recognize and accept the call.

John Paul II expressed what happens when someone does not accept God as his or her source of knowledge. The person who does not listen to God may confuse good and evil: "When God is removed from evaluations of good and evil, then evil is put forward as good, and good itself is rejected."<sup>36</sup> Through analogy, we know that if a teacher does not explain his or her subject eloquently and

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<sup>33</sup> *FC*, 66.

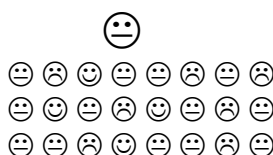
<sup>34</sup> See, for example, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*,

<sup>35</sup> *PD*, Introduction.

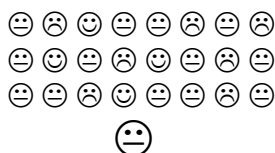
<sup>36</sup> *DA*, 4.

accurately, then the students might face a big difficulty during the exam to give correct answers. This rule applies to the Magisterium. Those who do not listen to the Magisterium may suffer great confusion when they try to answer life's most pressing questions.

The *Instrumentum Laboris* finalized its Second Part by recalling the importance of accompaniment. In this respect, we find a similarity between the recent document and the one that John Paul wrote in 1985. It harmonises with Pope John Paul about the difference between accompaniment in discerning and psychological support. The document minces no words about the objective of accompaniment: "By accompanying young people in their personal discernment, the church accepts her call to collaborate in the joy of young people rather than be tempted to take control of their faith."<sup>37</sup>



Solitary Leader



Fearful Leader



Responsible Leader

The one who accompanies a young person can only fulfil his or her responsibility if he harmonises his conduct with Evangelical standards. The diagram above shows three kinds of leadership: the first one represents a leader that accompanies his flock without looking at them. He does not care much if his speed matches with that of the group. The second leader is the fearful one and uses the flock as a shield. Surely, he does not know the way and is not willing to sacrifice himself for the group. The last one represents

<sup>37</sup> PD, Part 2, Section 4.



the leader who is ready to accompany the flock by listening to them, walking at their pace and ready to "take on the smell of sheep and the sheep are willing to hear their voice."<sup>38</sup>

## Pastoral Ministry in an Unfriendly Environment

The Preparatory Document now shifts its focus to the pastoral and vocational care of young people. Pastoral care requires a profound and continuing reflection concerning the rights and obligations that the Church assumes in helping youth to reach the joy of the Gospel.

The question that arises at this point draws our attention to the current state of pastoral ministry: "How does the Church help young people accept their call to the joy of Gospel, especially in these times of uncertainty, volatility and insecurity?"<sup>39</sup>

This question takes its roots from the First Point of the First Part where we have read:

The growth of uncertainty results in a state of vulnerability, that is, a combination of social unease and economic difficulties as well as insecurity in the lives of a large part of the population. With regard to work, this situation brings to mind unemployment, an increase of flexibility in the labour market and exploitation, especially of minors, or the overall series of civil, economic and social causes, including those of the environment, which explain the overwhelming increase of the number of refugees and migrants.<sup>40</sup>

According to some researchers, one of the most devastating factors that prevent youth from enjoying the fullness of life is unemployment.<sup>41</sup> During his visit to Kenya, Pope Francis met with the youth at the Kasarani stadium in Nairobi, where he suggested that unemployment pushes a young person into a number of

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<sup>38</sup> *EG*, 24.

<sup>39</sup> *PD*, Part 3, Section 1.

<sup>40</sup> *PD*, Part 1, Section 1.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. J.A. Gorka (2013) *Youth ministry in the face of unemployment: A historical-critical study of the development of the Church and its concern for youth formation and employment in Mwanza (Tanzania)*. Doctoral Thesis, Rome: Pontifical Salesian University.

dangerous areas: depression, criminality, drugs, prostitution, and sometimes even suicide.<sup>42</sup>

The Preparatory Document invites the Church to examine herself on how she can lead young people to recognize and accept the call to the fullness of life and love and to incorporate the contribution of young people into an analysis of the most effective methods for announcing the Good News in today's world. If we were to participate in this self-examination, we would notice that what often seems to hinder the young generation in their effort to recognize and accept this call to the fullness of life and love is a *False Charity* on the part of those with whom the youth interact. The diagram shown below describes, unfortunately, the typical situation when a deceptive political correctness, dishonest diplomacy, and a lukewarm attitude towards the Gospel (cf. Rev. 3:15-16) on the part of some of her leaders diminish the trust of the youth in the Bride of Christ (cf. Matt 5, 13).

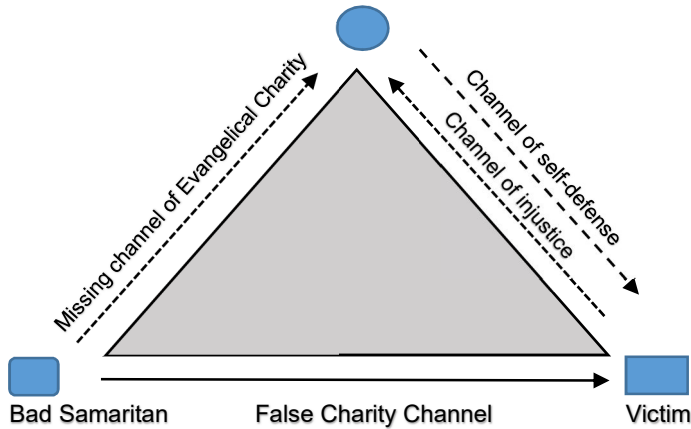
The diagram on the following page, identifies a "charitable" person that helps the victim but is afraid to confront the one characterized as a "tyrant/oppressor" who may very well be the reason for the female victim's pain and misery, for her sorrow, who may be ultimately depriving the male victim of hope and joy, and who may be responsible for marginalizing many.

In the First Point of this section, "Walking with Young People", the document cites *Evangelii gaudium* and recommends that agents of change for the youth apostolate be "bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities" (*Evangelii gaudium*, 33).<sup>43</sup> The document suggests Jesus' pastoral style follows three dynamisms: going out; seeing; and calling.

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<sup>42</sup> Address of His Holiness Pope Francis, *Meeting with Young People, Kasarani stadium, Nairobi, Kenya, 27 November 2015*, Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Kenya, Uganda and Central African Republic, 25-30 November 2017, in The Holy See, (accessed 12 May 2017), [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/november/documents/papa-francesco\\_20151127\\_kenya-giovani.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/november/documents/papa-francesco_20151127_kenya-giovani.html)

<sup>43</sup> *PD*, Part 3, Section 1.



We must not confine ourselves to routines that have sapped us of our zeal: we must go out to enter the lives of young people in such a way that they discover their own inner freedom and ability to contribute. “Seeing” means paying attention: to fully understand and then review the gifts of God to the young persons we meet, we need to look further to know their historical and contextual background in depth. This will help us to empathize, i.e., experience the young person’s situation not from my point of view but from her/his point of view. In other words, before anything else, I should actively listen to what he or she is saying. Only then will I be able to walk with the young person as Jesus walked with disciples on the way to Emmaus (cf. Lk. 24).

In the Second Point, “Agents,” the document proceeds to highlight a conviction that lay at the heart of Pope St. John Paul II’s *The Acting Person*. All young people are self-determining agents living within the freedom that allows them to choose, as subjects, to live their lives in the Holy Spirit and so be a gift for others. The document specifies who these agents are: the young people who live in poverty, zones of war, violence, disease, disability and suffering – these are the ones into whose hearts God pours forth his love by giving them the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). The co-agents who accompany them, especially “people of reference,” are to open their own souls to the same Holy Spirit.

This part shows similarity with one of the Conciliar documents *Gravissimus educationis*<sup>44</sup> (GE), a document that reminds the Church, Parents, Schools and Government that they carry special and irreplaceable responsibility in cooperating within themselves, and them in accompanying and forming the future of our society.<sup>45</sup> The Preparatory Document mentions Parents and Families, Shepherds of Souls, Teachers and other Educators. Jesus invites the Church to continue tirelessly the process of education that goes in line with its etymological source coming from the Latin word *educere* that means both *to bring up* and *to lead out*.<sup>46</sup>

Each and every young person is a gift from God. The powers that inhere within the souls, minds and hearts of youth should be properly cared for, given scope to develop.

The Third Point of the section indicates strategic “places” where the Church accompanies youth so that the Church may form an integrated network of communication to the youth and so cultivate a suitable operating style of “going out”, seeing” and “calling”. The document specifies (a) World Youth Days, (b) Parishes, (c) Universities and Catholic schools, (d) Social activities and volunteer work especially among those who are poor and on the margins of society, (e) Associations, ecclesial movements and centres of spirituality, and (f) Seminaries and houses of formation. In a way that readily brings to mind a favourite theme of Pope St. John Paul II in his Encyclical Letter *The Mission of the Redeemer*, the document mentions a new Areopagus, namely, the Digital world:

The world of the *new media* deserves special attention, since, especially in the case of younger generations, it really occupies a major place in their lives. The *new media* offer many opportunities, especially with regard to access to information and creating relations with those in distant places. However, they also pose risks (such as cyber-bullying, gambling, pornography, hidden dangers in *chat*

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, Declaration on Christian Education, *Gravissimus Educationis*, 28 October, 1965 in Walter M. Abbott, (ed.) (1982) *The Documents of Vatican II*. New York: Guild Press, 637-651.

<sup>45</sup> GE, 3.

<sup>46</sup> R.R. Osmer, “Education, Nurture and Care”, in R.J. Hunter, Ed. (2007), *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*. Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 336-338.

rooms, ideological manipulation...). Despite the differences in this field among various regions, the Christian community is still developing her presence in this new *Areopagus*, where young people certainly have something to teach her.<sup>47</sup>

We may and should ask ourselves if we are ready and able to transmit our faith to youth that are always connected to the virtual world. There are some writers that call the young generation by the label *Born Digital*, while others suggest that they have already made their home in the digital world and only sometimes are connected to the one that by older or senior people is considered as the normal and real one. Often we adults are not aware of all the new opportunities and hidden dangers that inhere in the digital world.<sup>48</sup> It seems that theoretical knowledge about new forms of communication and the use of the internet might not be sufficient. We should not feel uncomfortable if youth might invite us to join their virtual world by reversing Jesus' invitation: come and see.

## **Appreciating the Power of Youth Ministry**

One last issue relating to the Third Point draws our attention towards the avenues that the Church has chosen to fructify the field of pastoral activity. One pertinent observation concerns the Church's need to focus once again on tools that, despite their utility, have been neglected in our times. The great resource within the Church that seminaries and schools of theology usually designate as Pastoral Theology introduces students to practical forms of ministry that traditionally derive from knowing and understanding the realities of life that exert a noteworthy impact on all of God's human beings and hence either facilitate or obstruct the human beings' journey into the Heart of God. Pastoral theology does not limit itself to simple observations in order to understand new challenges, but rather directs its search towards answering

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. PD, Part 3, Section 3.

<sup>48</sup> Valerio Bocci and Antonio Sparado written ground breaking books where they propose (each one of them in specific form) new form of catechization and evangelization addressed to "digital" youth 2.0. Cfr. V. Bocci, (2012) *Communicare la fede ai ragazzi 2.0*, Leumann, TO: Elledici; A. Spadaro, (2010) *Web 2.0: Reti di relazione*, Milano: Paoline, 2010.

fundamental questions, questions that may not be answerable by observation alone.

Pastoral Theology begins its reflection from the experience of History, and later, on the basis of an amalgam of Systematic Theology, Church Doctrine and Social Teaching proposes the most appropriate and predictably effective program for apostolic action. In other words, pastoral theology may be called a Science of Action, more specifically, a programme of action that serves to adapt theological knowledge to the concrete situation of the people.<sup>49</sup> The dimension of Pastoral Theology that dedicates itself to youth manifests an ability to be effective when it leads young people towards Jesus and so helps them to become ethically upright citizens and virtuous Christians.<sup>50</sup>

This simple and concise explanation of Pastoral Theology seems to resonate well with what Pope St. John Paul II wrote in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (PDV) where he explains the importance of Pastoral Theology:

It is a scientific reflection on the Church as she is built up daily, by the power of the Spirit, in history; on the Church as the “universal sacrament of salvation,” as a living sign and instrument of the salvation wrought by Christ through the word, the sacraments and the service of charity. Pastoral theology is not just an art. Nor is it a set of exhortations, experiences and methods. It is theological in its own right, because it receives from the faith the principles and criteria for the pastoral action of the Church in history, a Church that each day “begets” the Church herself... Among these principles and criteria, one that is especially important is that of the evangelical discernment of the socio-cultural and ecclesial situation in which the particular pastoral action has to be carried out.

The study of pastoral theology should throw light upon its practical application through involvement in certain pastoral services which the candidates to the priesthood should carry out, with a necessary progression and always in harmony with their other educational

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. R.L. Kinast, “Pastoral Theology”, in R.J. Hunter, ed., (2005) *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, Bangalore, India: Theological Publications, 873-874.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. F.V. Anthony, *Buoni cristiani e onesti cittadini competenti nell'agire generative e responsabile*, in: F.V. Anthony – Bruno Bordignon, eds., (2013) *Don Bosco Teologo Practico? Lettura teologico-pratica della sua esperienza educativa*, Roma: Las, 2013, 61-89.

commitments. It is a question of pastoral "experiences," which can come together in a real program of "pastoral training," which can last a considerable amount of time and the usefulness of which will itself need to be checked in an orderly manner.<sup>51</sup>

In summary, pastoral theology – unlike its relatives, Dogmatic Theology, Biblical Theology or Spiritual Theology – does not concentrate on the data of divine revelation that are communicated to the Church and to the world-at-large through the Bible, the Apostolic Tradition, the teachings of the Fathers and the Doctors, and the lives and writings of the saints. Pastoral theology concentrates on the application of these other brands of theology to the praxis of real life as it unfolds from day to day. For that reason, when pastoral theology makes its applications in communion with those branches of theology that are directly connected to divine revelation and the Church magisterium, pastoral theology makes effective contributions to the self-realization, self-actualization and self-determination of the Church.<sup>52</sup> Pastoral ministry's main goal is to ensure a constant renovation and updating of lines of action in perfect harmony with Jesus' intentions for the Church and for all humanity.<sup>53</sup>

Keeping this in mind, we can understand why the Preparatory Document wishes to keep its mindset in tandem with the array of mindsets that characterize today's youth and the multi-cultural milieu within which they are immersed: "As opposed to situations in the past, the Church needs to get accustomed to the fact that the ways of approaching the faith are less standardized, and therefore she must become more attentive to the individuality of each person."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>John Paul II (1992), Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis, On the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day*. Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, n. 57.

<sup>52</sup>Cf. H. Geller, (1979) *Operatore di pastorale*, in: K. Rahner – F. Klostermann – H. Schild – T. Goffi, eds., *Dizionario di pastorale*, Brescia: Queriniana, 476-481.

<sup>53</sup>Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world *Gaudium et spes*, 7 December 1965, 1-4, in W.M. Abbott, ed. (1982) *The Documents of Vatican II*, New York: Guild Press, 199-308.

<sup>54</sup>*PD*, Part 3, Section 4.

This Pastoral Ministry has its own distinctive branch that is called Youth Ministry and is dedicated distinctively to members of society, who are considered to be the young generation, the future of their own societies and the future of the Church.

In synchronization with Pastoral Theology, Youth Ministry (*YM*) is based upon the practical-concrete experience of everyday life. As the label implies, they serve youth, as they grow, mature, finish the required basic education and move forward into an erstwhile pursuit of vocational interests, life choices, training, employment, and formation. During each stage of the process, Jesus is present: youth ministers encourage the youth to recognize Jesus' presence in their lives.

Youth ministry, therefore, sets objectives for strategies and action that correspond to the prerogatives of Jesus and the Church, always within the milieu of the hidden but effective action of the Holy Spirit. *YM*'s effort is designed to bolster trust in God's Master Plan, a plan that confirms His Love for all of humanity, but with a preferential love for youth. Youth ministry then purports to see and understand a young person within Jesus' own vision of that person. Together with his Father he has endowed the young person with rights, needs, responsibilities and significantly with a capacity to give of oneself as a perpetual gift of love, which, in turn, creates the milieu for living his/her life in fullness.<sup>55</sup>

Youth ministry, following the example of Jesus, accepts the human person in the gestalt of their existence, physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. *YM*, therefore, functions entirely within a Christian cultural orientation; hence it opens the minds, hearts and hands of the youth to respond promptly to the urgent needs of their brothers and sisters in humanity. As the young people grow in their friendship with Jesus, they realize that it is an imperative and inescapable moral obligation for them to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, visit the sick and the imprisoned... in a word to open their interior life to a wholehearted love for the least ones (cf. Matt 25:31-46). With this in mind, the youth realize that they

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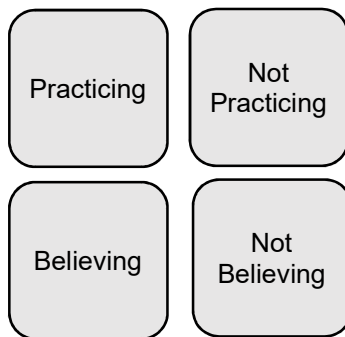
<sup>55</sup> Cf. R. Tonelli, (1992) *Pastorale giovanile*, in: M. Midali – R. Tonelli, eds., *Dizionario di pastorale giovanile*, Torino: Elle Di Ci, 755-756.

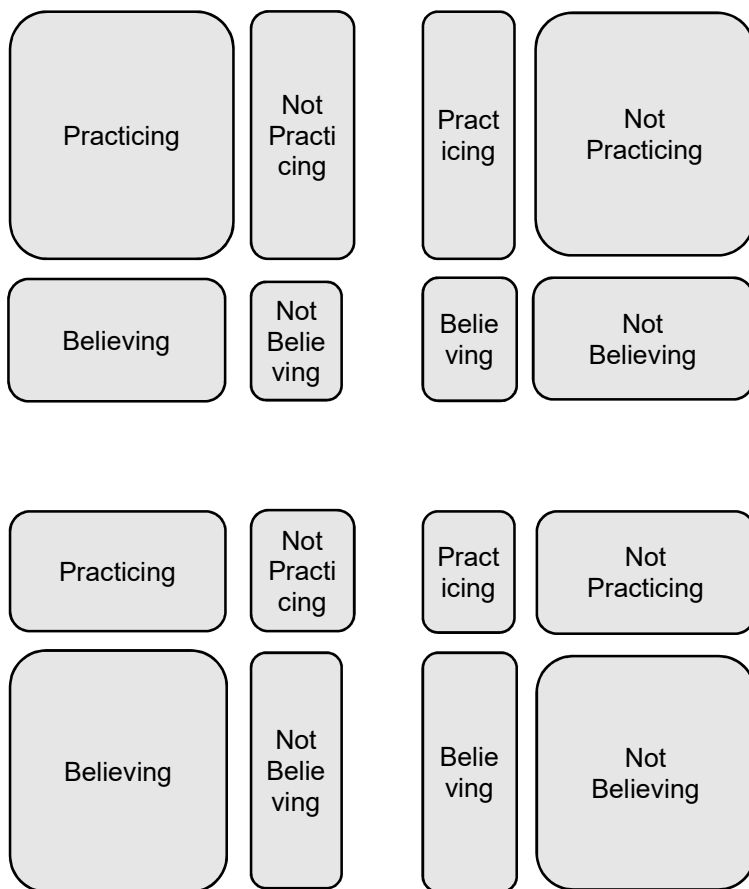


are devoting their lives to a Christian culture where the inequalities of wealth, the unbridled pursuit of sensual pleasure, and the anxious search for power defy the very notion of human person.

Youth ministry addresses forms of injustice and oppression by offering concrete solutions that are based upon convictions about human dignity, and God's perennial call to be generous in order to resist materialism, to be chaste in order to resist sensuality, and to be humble, in order to resist the thirst for power. Its methodology is solidly based upon a theology of action – dynamic theology that leads to programs of change, strategy and a positive source of action.

Youth ministry encourages youth to move out of the existential vacuum by promoting employment. Youth ministry strives to fulfil its mission, its responsibilities and its goals, i.e., it confirms its own identity and presence, when it engages in any socio-economic, psycho-social, and political activity that resist materialism, sensuality and the selfish pursuit of power.





Diagnosing a parish – especially the youth in the parish – according to concrete criteria that indicate whether persons and groups are believers and are practicing their faith can be very helpful for designing strategies for action. There is one item from each of the four variations of the diagram that easily catches the reader's attention. (A) If the influential group in the parish are the ones practicing their faith, the group of non-believers tends to be small. (B) If the influential group in the parish are the ones who are believing, the number of non-practicing parishioners tends to be small. (C) If the influential group in the parish are the ones who are

not practicing their faith, the number of believers in the parish tends to be small. (D) If the influential group in the parish are the ones who are not believers, the number of those practicing their faith is small. From the diagram, we learn how one positive pastoral effort that aims at encouraging people to practice their faith and at the same time does what is necessary to fortify their beliefs in Jesus and the Church can help to shrink undesirable pastoral challenges. Similarly we see that any pastoral neglect that provokes a decline in religious practice and leaves a trail of ignorance in matters of the faith can pull the parish away from its love for Jesus and the Church.<sup>56</sup>

Thoughtful engagement in Church practices and meaningful intellectual and emotional involvement in the essential truths of the faith are only possible within an atmosphere of silence and contemplation. Youth ministry labours wholeheartedly to cultivate this atmosphere. In order to practice silence of the mind and silence of the heart, youth ministers provide a formation for understanding one's experiences and for listening to the voice of one's conscience.<sup>57</sup>

We may come to the conclusion that the parish continues to be the best model for reaching young people. It has to be a parish, of course, that is ready to reorganize itself periodically – even frequently – in order to reach all, especially those who live on the peripheries. The parish, in other words, must have a preferential love for the marginalized (cf. Matt 9:12).

The Preparatory Document then gives voice to the name of a very important person in the life of each and every one of us: Mary. She is the Mother who is able to help the Church to rediscover once again her mission. She is the Mother to whom the synodal process has been entrusted.<sup>58</sup> She opens our mind to understand the real meaning of the famous *Go* that Abraham heard once from God. "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. H. Schilderman (2009) Religion, solidarity and the Church, Draft document presented on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2009 during Symposium on "Empirical Theology: Prospects and Problems", organized by the Institute of Pastoral Theology & DPGC at the Salesian Pontifical University Rome, Italy.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *PD*, Part 3, Section 4.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. *PD*, Part 3, Section 5.

the land that I will show you” (Gen 12:1). Addressing young people around the world, Pope Francis affirms:

These words [that were addressed to Abraham] are now also addressed to you. They are words of a Father who invites you to *go*, to set out towards a future which is unknown but one which will surely lead to fulfilment, a future towards which He Himself accompanies you. I invite you to hear God’s voice resounding in your heart through the breath of the Holy Spirit.<sup>59</sup>

## Conclusion

In the course of this essay we have indicated the major points of emphasis in the Preparatory Document (*Instrumentum Laboris*) for the Youth Synod and have accentuated the Church’s desire to shift its paradigm of faith transmission according to the multi-cultural milieu in which the youth find themselves. We have elucidated noteworthy contrasts and similarities between this document and John Paul II’s Apostolic Letter *Dilecti amici* of 1985, a document that corresponded to the International Youth Year. We highlighted the differences in approach between the Preparatory Document and Pope St. John Paul’s letter on the issue of formation within the family, especially in terms of vocational discernment on the part of those who eventually marry.

The addressees of the document seem to be determined and trustful towards the Church. The Church, for her part, presents herself as ever loyal to the mandate that Jesus entrusted to the Apostles (cf. Matt 28:16-20). The Preparatory Document seems to be at pains to discern the variations in circumstances to which the youth are exposed from one country to another, from one culture to another, from one milieu to another. Why? ... In order to bring forth the most effective manner of youth ministry for the country, the culture and the milieu in question.

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<sup>59</sup> Pope Francis, *Letter to young people on the occasion of the presentation of the Preparatory Document of the 15<sup>th</sup> Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, 13 January 2017. See online:

[https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2017/documents/papa-francesco\\_20170113\\_lettera-giovani-doc-sinodo.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2017/documents/papa-francesco_20170113_lettera-giovani-doc-sinodo.html).

Accessed 6 May 2017.

In the final analysis, the Preparatory Document injects hope into the Synod – it realistically creates the expectation that the outcome for the Synod will be desirable.

When we consider once again a comparison between the *Instrumentum Laboris* and Pope John Paul's letter, we recognize that the two documents link together in their common emphasis on *accompaniment* where spiritual and formative values overshadow the socio-psychological ones. The author of the present article believes that this emphasis might serve as a reference or starting point to help the Church rediscover how her mission and self-identity can have an impact on the young people of today, and, conversely, how the youth of today can have an impact on the Church, her mission, and her understanding of herself. Youth Ministry serves a primary role and is in a position to act as the facilitator for re-establishing mutual trust and dialog between the young generation and the Church.

There are three elements that seems to be crucial for both the youth and the Synod members:

1. At times the youth may feel neglected by the Magisterium. They may feel as if they are alone as they struggle with day-to-day challenges. This dissipates their sense of belonging to the Church and often is a factor for them to lose the faith.
2. The Pope, on behalf of the Church, recognizes that the cry of the youth is not heard as it should be. The Pope himself, however, is ready to listen and to walk together with the youth.
3. The Church confirms that it has a lot to offer – principally, she gives Jesus to youth and to the world – and so in the Spirit of Jesus, she is willing to study the changing paradigms of the transmission of the faith and to adapt youth's suggestions to the pastoral ministry.

The Synod maintains its awareness of this last point and realizes that it can have positive implications for fortifying the bond between the Church and young people. The Synod hopes to generate valuable insights from the results of the questionnaires that are being issued in every diocese throughout the world. Other factors that facilitate the effort to listen to what the young people have to say is the recent decision to open the Vatican website to

solicit input from youth, let them speak to each other and fill out the questionnaire even if they are on the go with a certain busyness in their lives. This kind of process creates a network that is relatively independent of the local churches that might not be putting too much emphasis on the preparation for the Synod.

Surely, we understand that not all problems will be solved (one remembers what happened after the Synod for Families in 2015). Nevertheless now is the proper time to listen to the young generation with a wholehearted openness to its issues.

There is still a need for a worthwhile discussion that can help in the discernment of the progress that the Church has made during the 37 years that have passed since the International Youth Year and the challenges she still faces. The present moment is always exactly the right moment to win the trust of young people and to walk together with them: we do not know what the youth will be like after another 37 years... What we are sure of is this: the Church is and will always be the Bride of Jesus, with the same mission, namely, to conduct herself as the unfailing, ever faithful Mother who offers to all the fullness of life, in a particular way to the young people that search for this life, sometimes with great restlessness, at moments with intense anxiety, at other moments with a hesitant hope, but always with the anticipation that God will not disappoint them.

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