

# ... Οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς κοινωνοὺς τῶν δαιμονίων γίνεσθαι – Separative Integration as a Theological Model of Communication

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**Abstract—** Communication theology is a relatively new field of thought at the meeting point of two disciplines, a result of an attempt to approach communication from a theological perspective. Showing the characteristics of basic researches when describing phenomena and grasping concepts which usually belongs to the field of communication studies, it vindicates the essentially theological character of communication. However, the established discourse is one-sided: Within its framework, communication is integration-focused in a specific way, as integration through acts of the Divine Persons or through human acts in correspondence with ontological and revealed truths. In the meantime, little light was shed both on the separative aspect of this integration and on the explication of other, negative integration processes, described in the Bible as a type of communication. In this paper, we will examine these issues postulated as weaknesses in communication theology, and trying to argue for the following propositions: First, the lack of setting up a line of demarcation between positive and negative communication in an ontological sense poses a serious problem in a proper theological understanding of communication, and second, it is necessary to differentiate between communities created through these processes.

**Keywords—**communication theology, communicatio, koinonia, integration, separation

## I. INTRODUCTION

A number of communication theories focus on integration. Social cognitive theory, cultivation theory, participation theory, the theory of communicative action as well as socialisation theories and ritual models of communication, to name only a few of them, share a common ground in conceptualising communication as an essential process in creating a real or imaginary “community” either of the communicative agents, or of their understandings, behaviours, value-choices, and identities. Some of them also take into consideration that deviant patterns in communication make integration not only difficult but even impossible. However, no theory seems to have attempted yet to go beyond the integrative characteristics of communicative actions and to

conceptualise their separative aspect, which—considering how mutually exclusive memberships can be in either large or small-scale organisations as well as in communicative actions—indicates that there is a significant aspect and a highly possible outcome of communication that have not yet been adequately addressed. Moreover, neglecting this aspect can raise some difficulties concerning the plurality of discourses in the explication of relationship between various actions or statuses.

## II. DISCUSSION

When we say “mutually exclusive”, we mean at least one of the following:

- They can not occur simultaneously
- The occurrence of one automatically implies the non-occurrence of the other
- If proposition ‘A’ is true in the context of one, it is false in the context of the other
- If proposition ‘A’ is true in the context of one, it implies that its contrary (if applicable) is also true in the context of the other

The practical relevance of these assertions is clear. Realising a communicative action or a membership requires decisions, that is, selection from a set of possibilities available for the agent at the moment of decision. Both the decisions and their outcomes can be exclusive of each other. Moreover, actualisation of a possibility often means the simultaneous elimination of the actualisation of other possibilities: We can not say multiple sentences simultaneously, and making eye-contact with someone excludes the possibility of making eye-contact with another one at the same time. In some countries, citizenship is exclusive, working for a competitor may be forbidden by contracts with employers and there are many groups with negative membership criteria. Perhaps the best examples for mutually exclusive memberships are that in binary oppositions: Gesellschaft and Gemeinschaft (Tönnies),

Dionysian and Apollonian (Nietzsche), Dry and Wet (Lifton), Capitalist and Communist (as well as Bourgeois and Proletarian; Marx), I and Thou-relations (Buber) and, of course, Sacred and Profane (among many others, Durkheim, Eliade and Caillois).

The last item of the list is especially interesting from a communication-theoretic perspective. According to Eilers, communication is a theological principle, and – as Gilbert Greshake has already shown– both the expression and the concept of communication is essentially theological [1, p.18-19]. Fore defined community as “the fulfilment of effective human communication” [2, para. 17], which, considering the shared roots of communication and community (communitas, from greek *koinonia* (κοινωνία), can be argued to signify a special mode of symbiosis between God, humans, and the rest of the created world as well.

This would be in harmony with the trend of western theological explication of communication, which seems to have a very similar integration-focused approach to some mainstream communication theories mentioned in the introduction. Since the 1920's when (mass) communication studies started to develop in English-speaking countries, theological reflection to vertical modes of communication (i.e. explaining communication with theological categories such as creation, incarnation, ascension, union, prayer, eucharist etc. for a better understanding) has seemed to be dominated by an interpersonal<sup>1</sup> model, and an instrumental one in pastoral theology to horizontal modes of communication. These reflections are integration-focused in a specific way, i.e. integration through ontological acts of God or through human acts in correspondence with ontological and revealed truths. As a consequence of that, communication as an integrative process is situated in the positive value domains of the Christian framework, and little light was shed either on the separative aspects of a positive integration or on the theological explication of vertical modes of communication with negative ontological values, even though the foundation of these areas of examination can be found both in the sociology of religion and in ritual models of communication. “Profane” or “secular” rites linked to socialisation and human behaviour in situations of everyday contemporary lives are often depicted in these disciplines as fulfilling the same functions and needs in a secularised society as religious rites in a sacral community[3]. Durkheim's distinctions between negative and positive rites[4] also open the possibility to theological reflections to distinguish between two types of communication processes: One with its focus on the separation of the individual and/or the community from the world, from demons or demonic influences (maintaining that it is impossible without the preliminary affirmation of the necessity, and the simultaneous realisation of an integration with God and, consequently, with the Church), and another with an emphasis on the remembrance and practical realisation of community with God and fellow Christians. Which is

<sup>1</sup> Here, “interpersonal” signifies both the relation between the members of the Trinity and the relation of these Persons to humans.

naturally impossible without a separation from the world and a renunciation of demons.

Passages from the Bible<sup>2</sup> and their traditional, exegetical interpretations seem to support this approach, as we can see in 1 John 2:15:

Μὴ ἀγαπᾶτε τὸν κόσμον μηδὲ τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ.  
ἐάν τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κόσμον, οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ  
πατρὸς ἐν αὐτῷ [Love not the world, neither the  
things that are in the world. If any man love the  
world, the love of the Father is not in him.]

As it can be seen, “love of the world” and “love of the Father” are mutually exclusive, as the occurrence of the former implies the non-occurrence of the latter. James (4:4) explains further:

μοιχαλίδες, οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ἡ φιλία τοῦ κόσμου  
ἐχθρα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν; ὃς ἐάν οὖν βουληθῇ φίλος  
εἶναι τοῦ κόσμου, ἐχθρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσταται  
[Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of  
the world is enmity with God? Whosoever  
therefore would be a friend of the world maketh  
himself an enemy of God.]

This means that if the statement “A is a friend of the world” is true, the statement “A is a not-friend of the not-world” is also true (Maintaining that a dichotomy exist between God and the world, and between friend and enemy in the context of relation to God). Here, we need to make clear to exactly what refers the *world* mentioned in the verses above. It is certainly not identical with the “world” in its everyday sense. In order to better understand what the Greek term *cosmos* (κόσμου) refers to in this context, it is worth looking up its meanings in the writings of the Church Fathers which legitimise separation from the world from a Christian point of view. Here, I will only mention three of these meanings:

1. We can speak of a separation from the world in the sense that we mean the kingdom of Evil, and Satan as the prince of this world (*kosmos arkon* in Jn 14:30). For reasons of length, we will not examine its literature here but it should be indicated that references for this specific meaning of the world can be found, f.e. in Lampe's patristic lexicon, under κόσμου C.7.c. [5, p.772] and in Robinson's Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament, κόσμου 2.c [6, p.456].
2. We can also speak of this separation in the sense that the “world” signifies humanity alienated from God. As the apostle told about Jesus (Jn. 1:10) :  
”ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω. [He was in the world,

<sup>2</sup> For the greek text, we used the 3rd edition of The Greek New Testament [5], available online at greekbible.com, while the english translation conforms to the American Standard Version, retrieved from biblestudytools.com.

and the world was made through him, and the world knew him not.]” and Paul explained –analogically– the impossibility of the communion of believers and unbelievers<sup>3</sup>: “Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship [μετοχή] have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion [κοινωνία] hath light with darkness?” (2 Cor 6:14).

3. Finally, deeply rooted in monastic tradition, St Isaac of Syria uses the term “world” as a summary description for passions, the struggle against which is one of the key components of monastic life:

“World’ is a collective name, embracing what are called passions. When we want to speak of passions collectively, we call them ‘the world’; when we want to distinguish between them according to their different names, we call them passions.” [7, text #22, p.187]

While it is not unreasonable to argue that the relative lack of unfolding the separative aspect of integration in theological reflections on communication is more a matter of emphasis than a genuine weakness in explicating power, the same is not true for the lack of conceptualisation of vertical modes of communication with negative ontological values. It is true that communication is a theological term, and theology is literally “knowing and talking about God” but this does not mean that a communicative act in the theological sense is *per definitionem* the act of God or leads toward God, and a communicative action carried out by humans not necessarily results in (a certain degree of) community with God. It can also result in community with demons and in sinful acts:

τί οὖν φημι; ὅτι εἰδωλόθυτόν τί ἐστιν; ἢ ὅτι εἰδωλόν τί ἐστιν; ἀλλ’ ὅτι ἃ θύουσιν, δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῷ [θύουσιν], οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς κοινωνοὺς τῶν δαιμονίων γίνεσθαι. [What say I then? that a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? But [I say], that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have communion with demons.] (1Cor. 10: 19-20)

The greek term κοινωνοὺς (koinonous) has many slightly different translations<sup>4</sup> in different English versions of the Bible; such as

- sharing/sharers (CEB, CJB, LEB, NAS, NCW, NIV)
- fellows/fellowship (KJV, NKJV, WBT, TMB, WYC)
- partners (GW, CSB, NLT, NRS, RSV)
- communion (ASV, HNV, DBY, WEB)
- participants (NIV, TNIV, ESV)

<sup>3</sup> The explicit instructions for separation with concrete examples can be found in 1Cor. 5.11 and 2Thes. 3:6.

<sup>4</sup> For an expansion of abbreviations, see Appendix 1.

- partakers (RHE),

but all of them signify a kind of unity with and inside a greater whole. In the aforementioned verse, however, this greater whole has nothing to do and is in fact incompatible with God and therefore, with positive ontological values. Another example when integration is linked to negative ontological values is that of shedding the blood of the prophets:

Οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὑποκριταί, ὅτι οἰκοδομεῖτε τοὺς τάφους τῶν προφητῶν καὶ κοσμεῖτε τὰ μνημεῖα τῶν δικαίων, καὶ λέγετε, Εἰ ἡμεῖς ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν, οὐκ ἂν ἡμεῖς αὐτῶν κοινωνοὶ ἐν τῷ αἵματι τῶν προφητῶν. [Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and garnish the tombs of the righteous, 30 and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we should not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets] (Matt. 23: 29-30)

Therefore, I think that the main challenge for a theology of communication is to strike a balance between adequately addressing the full scale of the meaning of *koinonia* and communicating the Christian message. Naturally, this does not mean that a theology of communication should be value-neutral (exactly the opposite), but favouring the latter over the former, and aiming to develop a theology within which communication, *communio* and community “*may all be interpreted as components of a single process of man aspiring toward meanings and self-transcendence*” [8, p.158], is posing serious problems to a proper theological understanding of communication.

### III. CONCLUSION

In this discussion, we have outlined two main aspects of integrative communication relevant to humans wishing to participate in a communication process. Examining multiple processes, we claimed that processes aiming at integration can be mutually exclusive: Integration with God excludes the possibility of integration with the world, and integration with the world excludes the possibility of integration with God. Also, through the examination of a communication process which leads to community with demons, we were able to show that every act of communication has, theologically speaking, an integrative and a separative side: as it closes the ontological distance on one end of a scale, the terminal points of which can be labeled as “God” and “Satan”, it widens the distance on the other end of the scale. Consequently, it is insufficient in communication theology to speak about communication without any further ontological distinction. Examining the object of communication, the type of community which can be created through it or what the communicative agent can

integrate into, communication theology should set up a line of demarcation between positive and negative communication in an ontological sense, and practise discernment when identifying communities of this world, which were created through passions and with demons, and those of God.

## I. APPENDIX 1

ASV American Standard Version	NIRV New International Reader's Version
CEB Common English Bible	NIV New International Version
CJB Complete Jewish Bible	NKJV New King James Version
CSB Holman Christian Standard	NLT New Living Translation
DBY, The Darby Translation	NRS New Revised Standard
ESV English Standard Version	RHE Douay-Rheims
GW GOD'S WORD	RSV Revised Standard Version
HNV Hebrew Names Version	TMB Third Millennium Bible
KJV King James Version	TNIV Today's New International Version
LEB Lexham English Bible	WBT The Webster Bible
NAS New American Standard	WEB World English Bible
NCW New Century Version	WYC Wycliffe

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