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**THE HERMENEUTICS OF THE TRINITARIAN *KOINONIA* AS  
A FUNDAMENTAL COMPONENT OF CONTEMPORARY  
CHRISTIAN PRACTICE**

Supervisor

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Masters of Arts in Theology.

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## DEDICATION

To my parents, especially my mother, who brought me into this stupendous, transient and temporal existence, and more so, into the ineffable realm of the Catholic Church. In memory of the late Bishop Deogratius Muganwa Byabazaire and Msgr. Augustine Mukumbya, men who labored to emulate the Trinitarian *Koinonia* by embracing everyone, irrespective of their diversity.

## **EPIGRAPH**

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matt 18:20)

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I cannot fail to recognize the support and encouragement from my confreres that gave me the zeal to accomplish this work. And above all my formators, for providing the necessary atmosphere that helped me to write this thesis without much challenges.

## STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work achieved through personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts in Theology. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as the College supervisor.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## ACRONYMS

1-2 Cor	The First and Second letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians
1-2 Kgs	The First and Second book of Kings in the Holy Bible
1-2 Sam	The First and Second book of Samuel in the Holy Bible
AA	<i>Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, Apostolicam Actuositatem</i> (18 November 1965)
Acts	Acts of the Apostles in the Holy Bible
AG	<i>Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, Ad Gentes divinitus</i> (7 December 1965)
AMECEA	Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift (Biblical magazine)</i>
CCC	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i> (11 October 1992)
Cf.	Confer, compare
CL	<i>Apostolic Exhortation “Christifideles Laici” on the vocation and the mission of the laity in the Church and in the world</i> (30 December 1988)
DC	<i>Encyclical Letter “Deus Caritas Est”, on Christian Love</i> (25 December 2005)
Deut	The book of Deuteronomy in the Holy Bible
DV	<i>Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum</i> (18 November 1965)
e.g.	<i>exempli Gratia</i> : for example
EA	<i>Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Africa</i> (14 September 1995).
ed.	edited by
EE	<i>Encyclical Letter “Ecclesia de Eucharistia”, on the Eucharist</i> (17 April 2003)
EWTN	Eternal Word Television Network
Exod	The book of Exodus in the Holy Bible
Gal	The letter of St. Paul to the Galatians
Gen	The book of Genesis in the Holy Bible
GS	<i>Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes</i> (7 December 1965)
i.e.	<i>id est</i> : that is
Isa	The book of Prophet Isaiah in the Holy Bible
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
Josh	The book of Joshua in the Holy Bible
LE	<i>Encyclical Letter “Laborem Exercens”, on Human Work</i> (2009)
Lev	The book of Leviticus in the Holy Bible
LG	<i>Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium</i> (21 November 1964)
LS	<i>Encyclical Letter “Laudato Si”, on Care of our Common Home</i> (24 May 2015)
NAB	New American Bible
NM	<i>Apostolic Letter “Novo Millennio Ineunte”, at the close of the great Jubilee of the year 2000</i>

Num	The book of Numbers in the Holy Bible
PC	<i>Decree on Renewal of Religious Life, Perfectae Caritatis</i> (28 October 1965)
Phil	The letter of St. Paul to the Philippians
RSV	Revised Standard Version
S.C.R.I.S	Sacred Congregation for Religious Institutes and Societies of Apostolic Life
SC	<i>Apostolic Exhortation "Sacramentum Caritatis", on the Sacrament of Charity</i> (22 February 2007)
SS	<i>Encyclical Letter "Spe Salvi", on Christian Hope</i> (30 November 2007)
SS	<i>Encyclical Letter "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis" On the Concern of the Church for the Social Order</i> (30 December 1987)
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
VC	<i>Apostolic Exhortation "Vita Consecrata" on consecrated Life</i> (25 March 1996)
VD	<i>Apostolic Exhortation "Verbum Domini", on the Word of the Lord</i> (30 September 2010)
Wis	The book of Wisdom in the Holy Bible



## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This paper is a research aimed at proving my major thesis that the Trinitarian *koinonia* is an essential and indispensable element of contemporary Christian praxis. In trying to prove my thesis I will draw from Augustine's *De Trinitate* whose prominent statement, "If you see charity, you see the Trinity"<sup>1</sup> will be important in delving into the mystery of the Trinity and its relationship with contemporary Christian living. It is on this foundation that Pope Benedict XVI helps us to see the call of living in love through *koinonia* as having its foundation in the mystery of the Holy Trinity.<sup>2</sup> The fact of living together in the spirit of fellowship by sharing what we have as humanity is a mirror of the Trinity made alive in us. Karl Rahner's definition of person brings out this relational character of man more clearly. He says: "To be a person is to possess oneself as a subject in conscious, free relation to reality as a whole and its infinite ground and source, God."<sup>3</sup> In other words, to be person is to be relational.

Rahner further explains that "the Greek New Testament term *κοινωνία* (communion), connotes fellowship in faith...it is the union of a number of personal beings who are joined in society by certain relationships, personal communication, juridical bonds, proximate in time and

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<sup>1</sup> ST. AUGUSTINE, *De Trinitate*, VIII, 8, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 19.

<sup>3</sup> K. RAHNER – H. VORGRIMLER, "Person", *Theological Dictionary*, 351.

space or transcendental relations”.<sup>4</sup> It is therefore true that whenever human beings eliminate their capacity to relate with God and neighbor, they are deemed to experience a crisis of alienation as seen in the world today. Hence, the Trinity can be defined as “the name of the fundamental mystery of Christianity, that of the one Nature and the three Persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) in God....”<sup>5</sup> Given this situation therefore, this thesis seeks to explore how the problem of selfishness has contributed to human misery and show the necessity of employing new hermeneutics that will improve the understanding of the Trinitarian fellowship as paramount in restoring human fulfillment in contemporary times. For this life of fellowship with one another springs from the Trinity and finds its strength in God like the way a tree survives from its roots that are responsible for supplying it with water, which is necessary for its life.

## 1. Motivation of the Study

The problem of selfishness and individualistic tendencies has negatively impacted humanity in the contemporary world. While reflecting on the life that was lived by the first Christians in the scriptures, we realize that their life was characterized by four common features i.e. fidelity to the breaking of bread, fidelity to Apostolic teaching, fidelity to prayer and above all fidelity to fellowship (Acts 2: 42-47). There is no doubt that there is some effort among Christians today in the first three aspects, but the fourth one i.e. fidelity to fellowship is greatly lacking. This aspect of *koinonia*, meant a lot to the extent that the first Christians would meet

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<sup>4</sup> K. RAHNER – H. VORGRIMLER, “Community - Koinonia,” *Theological Dictionary*, 84, 266. And from <http://www.ellopos.net/mail/koinonia.html>, the word *Koinonia* (κοινωνία) comes from the verb *koinoneo*, which means to communicate and share in the same (realities, properties or even problems), with another person. It is an intimate relationship, an internal affinity and likeness.

<sup>5</sup> K. RAHNER – H. VORGRIMLER, “Trinitarian Theology - Trinity”, *Theological Dictionary*, 512-3.

together daily and even went to a degree of selling what they had in order to meet the needs of those who did not have.

In the contemporary world however, we are seeing the exact opposite of this spirit of fellowship. Many people do not care about others. Many will agree to the statement that “for God and my stomach” summarizes this situation very well. It is my-self who matter but not the other! Majority of the people today do not want to know about the situation the neighbor is undergoing so long as they themselves are fine. The spirit of individualism is deeply rooted and embedded in people’s hearts. It is visibly seen for instance in high walled fences around their homes. This situation depicts fences which are inside the people’s hearts that they are so closed in themselves not to mind about their neighbors. Notices like “Mbwa Kali” (dangerous dogs) are so common on the wall fences to scare anyone who might want to come closer to the house.

The same individualistic tendency finds its manifestation in cars of public transport. It is common today to enter a public vehicle and one is welcomed by statements like “SMS only”. The idea behind this is that, one is not allowed to make conversations in the vehicle either to the person seated next to one or by phone call. Then loud music is played which impedes people to talk to each other and then people resort to smart phones and I-pads connected to the head sets. Such lack of hospitality is clear indication of a crisis that is eating up modern society in terms of selfishness and lack of concern for the neighbor. For this reason therefore a Christian response is needed in overcoming this individualistic culture and that is what this thesis is aimed at: the rediscovery of Trinitarian *koinonia* as paramount for today’s Christian living.

According to Torrell, there is a link between individualism and Western civilization that dawned with the Renaissance and the Reformation. For he states that, “Thomas never thinks of man in the individualistic terms that has predominated in Western civilization since the

renaissance and reformation. He always sees him as engaged in a community of the saved....without ever abstracting it from the great human family of which it is a member by birth.”<sup>6</sup> It is therefore clear that, the modern culture of relativism has catalyzed the spirit of egoism in contemporary society.

It further reveals itself in the contemporary society’s denial of objective truth. This according to Pope Benedict XVI wants to exempt man from any form of common values i.e. accountability and responsibility which have guided humanity through our history and that it is our duty to mitigate it. “It is very important for us to oppose such a claim of absoluteness conceived as a certain sort of ‘rationality’.”<sup>7</sup> This shows the danger of modern individualism to the extent of claiming absolute freedom which even excludes God from the realm of humanity. It is against this background that this thesis is meant to provide alternatives to mitigate this challenge which makes humanity to become alienated from its own homeland, mother earth.

The effects of selfishness and individualism are also seen in the inequalities that are visible in society today. These are noticeable in individual socio-economic differences. One preacher in explaining God as a Good Shepherd once said that God created the world with enough resources necessary to cater for all humanity. But that it is because many “haves” like those in leadership positions have swindled what does not belong to them that the “have-nots” are suffering of the lack of the basic necessities. Furthermore, this attitude of lack of solidarity has contributed to modern forms of slavery. A case to mention is that of house assistants. Many of these people are exploited in terms of payment i.e. they are paid little yet they work hard. This leads to oppression and eventually the preferential option for the poor is endangered. It is unfortunate that this lack of solidarity with one another and with all creation has completely

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<sup>6</sup> J.P. TORRELL, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Spiritual Master II*, 277.

<sup>7</sup> BENEDICT XVI – P.SEEWALD, *Light of the World*, 61.

detached humanity from its essential call that springs from its source as sharing in the Trinitarian God.

The lack of solidarity in living a life of *koinonia* has degenerated into modern atrocities witnessed by contemporary society. Cases of these include racism, tribalism and nepotism. Color and race have become determinant factors for many people to relate in all spheres of life. It is not surprising to hear people comment proudly that “blood is thicker than water” to imply that their biological relations are more important than anything else. It has even become worse to hear this conviction stretched to Christian circles that “blood is thicker than baptismal waters”. Yet for Boff, “As persons, human beings ever remain open to the possibility of being something more and relating to others. They are not just a being-there; they are an ex-istance.”<sup>8</sup> This is a clear implication that the Trinitarian nature of human beings, as being relational, is open to the other. This “other” entails all kinds of people without segregation.

Coupled with racism is the problem of corruption that has also revealed how selfish humanity has become. It is the desire for people to enrich themselves economically at the expense of others. People forget easily as Aquinas remarks in Boethius’s words that “there is no delight in possessing any good whatever, without someone to share it with us”<sup>9</sup>. And finally, selfishness in the form of tribalism has been heightened by the gravest monster that has befallen humanity in modern times in the form of genocides. It has been painful to witness brutal killings in the name of preserving a particular race at the expense of the other. This has clearly shown how selfish humanity can turn out to be. Clear instances like in the case of the 1994 Rwandan genocide can illustrate this situation. Kenya’s 2007/8 post-election violence also depicted some traits of this evil. If there is no physical fighting then they are based on ideologies of race and

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<sup>8</sup> L. BOFF, *Liberating Grace*, 4.

<sup>9</sup> T. AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica.*, 2a. 4, 8.

religions. It is on this ground that I feel motivated that there is need for us to retrace the call to *koinonia* as a fundamental component of contemporary Christian living in order to redeem humanity from this modern monster of selfishness and individualism with all its adverse effects.

## **2. The Context**

From which context do we assert this fellowship given the crisis that hovers around it? Of course it is inevitably true that the crisis of *koinonia* in the world is experienced universally, since it is a challenge for all human beings. There are similarities of problems concerning this issue in question irrespective of which part of the globe one belongs to. Therefore, in this research we shall focus on the local experiences that dominate many societies in Africa as far as the call to communion is concerned. But it is also our hope that this endeavor will shed light on the global perspective in regard to the way the life of fellowship is lived by humanity. The reason for this approach is due to the fact that globalization has a substantial impact on African society. In fact it is coming as an effect of globalization.

In the modern world today, it is very easy to export ideologies from one part of the world to another in a second. That is why the world is being called a “global village”. This indeed necessitates us to adopt a global perspective in dealing with this crisis in our research. It is also true that the effects of this crisis are being experienced globally without singling out particular parts of the world. These include, as mentioned earlier, racism, nepotism, tribalism and corruption among others. Aware of this background, it is of paramount importance to proceed by pointing out another matter for consideration: the problem of individualism and its effects.

### 3. The Problematic of Individualism

“We are building a dictatorship of relativism.....that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate standard consists solely of one’s own ego and desires”<sup>10</sup> declared Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in a homily at the opening of the conclave in 2005. After posing for a moment in analyzing this statement, one will immediately realize how our world today is pervaded with selfish individualistic tendencies. One cannot fail to realize how humanity has forgotten its roots of interdependency as necessary in order to realize and achieve human fulfillment and temporal happiness as well. The old common adage that “No man is an island” is long forgotten because people want to live on their own and they therefore look at one another with suspicion. Only by going back to our roots in rediscovering the spirit of human fellowship (*koinonia*) as originating from Trinitarian love, will humanity be able to realize fulfillment in this world.

It is to the above fact that Aquinas remarks: “If we speak of the happiness of this life, the happy man needs friends....For in order that man may do well whether in the works of the active life, or in those of the contemplative life, he needs the fellowship of friends”.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, there is no doubt that there is need for human beings to live in fellowship with one another and the whole universe in order to experience happiness in this world. Karl Rahner emphasizes the importance of the community to an individual. He says: “Since fulfillment of the ‘I’ can only occur through and in community, self-discovery and union with community grow in the same not inverse, proportion”.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> BENEDICT XVI – P.SEEWALD, *Light of the World*, 59.

<sup>11</sup> T. AQUINAS , *Summa Theologica.*, 2a. 4, 8.

<sup>12</sup> K. RAHNER – H. VORGRIMLER, “Community”, *Theological Dictionary*, 84.

An illustration of this experience can probably help us to grasp this crisis in a better way. There was a man who used to frequent the church always in order to find fellowship with other Christians as one family. It so happened that this man became weak and ended up lapsing into individualism of always remaining home alone even on days of church fellowship. The pastor became concerned of the absence of this one time great Christian. He decided to follow him up to his home just like a good shepherd who left the ninety nine sheep to look for one which was lost. He arrived in the home of this man only to find him warming himself on a fire place. The pastor remained silent and picked one piece of firewood which was ablaze with good fire from the furnace and put it outside to continue lighting alone. This single piece of firewood continued giving light and slowly went out. The pastor left the man without mentioning a word. The next Sunday the man came back to church for he realized what the pastor meant by this gesture.

United in fellowship with others we shall stand, but when we become individualistic we cannot be fulfilled. We only become alienated from the rest of humanity and hence misery creeps in, and when faced with any problem however good we are, we cannot overcome it alone. We shall burn out! This scenario makes one to wonder why today, humanity has degenerated into all forms of individualistic tendencies. It is because of such experiences that this research will therefore aim at dealing with the above challenges and therefore help us to rediscover our roots in the Trinitarian fellowship as the foundation of realizing human happiness in modern times.

#### 4. The Articulation of the Study

This research will mainly be based on published books and journals. In this paper, the Greek word *κοινωνία*<sup>13</sup> will be employed to mean fellowship, communion, community, love, charity and solidarity. In addition, these words will be used interchangeably throughout this paper. It will be comprised of five chapters. In the first chapter, we shall delve into the Trinity as the origin and source of *koinonia*. This will show as we remarked above how this relationship is like that of a tree drawing its life from the roots which supply it with water on which it survives. This is because, without going back to the roots of the Holy Trinity, all that we are saying will remain superficial and will appear as if it is external to us to live a life of fellowship.

Yet indeed, the life of communion is at the heart of humanity's desire for happiness in this contemporary world. In this section therefore, the point of departure will be that of examining the Immanent Trinity that is the three divine persons and their relationship with one another. We shall draw from St. Augustine's psychological notion of the Holy Trinity which sheds light on the modes of emanations that occur within the Immanent Trinity. This will lead us to the Greek concept of *perichoresis*<sup>14</sup> as a foundation of the Trinitarian *koinonia*.

Having examined the Immanent Trinity, we shall move on out of necessity to lay grasp on the Economic Trinity. This is because the flow from Immanent Trinity to the Economic Trinity is inevitable given the nature of the Holy Trinity himself; the love in the Trinity over-spills into its external manifestation out of necessity, as revealed in the economic Trinity. Four

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<sup>13</sup> Thus: K. RAHNER – H. VORGRIMLER, "Community", *Theological Dictionary*, 84, this reality is based on the New Testament to mean community or fellowship in the faith.

<sup>14</sup> From <http://www.yourdictionary.com/perichoresis>, the ancient Greek term *περιχώρησις* (*perikhōrēsis*, "going round, rotation"), comes from *περιχωρέω* (*perikhōreō*). This is derived from *περί* (*peri*, "around") + *χωρέω* (*khōreō*, "go forward, travel"). This is because the relationship between the three members of the Trinity was described by early Christians as an eternal interpenetrating circulation.

manifestations of *koinonia* in the Economic Trinity will be treated thus: Creation, Grace, Incarnation and Eschatology.

In Creation, we come to realize how God has created all things to depend on each other. Everything on earth is necessary for the good life of others. That is why the creation account in Genesis concludes each day with the words that “God saw it was good” (Gen 1:31). Through Grace on the other hand, we come also to grasp the fact that, the Trinitarian God decides to communicate himself to humanity so that the human beings can come to share in the divine nature (uncreated grace). Sharing in the divine nature comes with new experience of life i.e. inner transformation with the capacity to love one another and to love God (habitual grace). And this is practically lived in our daily life by choosing to do good every time we are faced with new choices to make (actual grace). In other words, it leads one to acquire the capacity of self-transcendence. This therefore, makes a life of *koinonia* possible for humanity. The Incarnation on other hand also makes us become sons in the Son; divine son-ship is realized. Our relationship with God changes from slave-master relationship to children of God. Thus being children of the same Father makes us to develop new relationships with one another based on our new family.

This life of *koinonia* is aimed at revealing that perfect fellowship that we shall have in the beatific vision of our Father in heaven when we shall see him as he is, and enjoy the perfect communion with the saints in heaven, all the angels and Mary our mother. This chapter will conclude by showing how the Trinitarian *koinonia* is intrinsically embedded in our nature, and its rejection on our part only leads to lack of peace and harmony in the world.

The second chapter will then trace the Biblical foundation of the call to Communion. This will give our theological thesis a scriptural background basing on the recommendation of the Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Word of God which stipulates: “Sacred theology rests on the written word of God, together with sacred tradition, as its primary and perpetual foundation” (DV, 24). The biblical foundation will therefore begin with the Pentateuch and will illustrate how *koinonia* was lived by the Israelites in the Old Testament. Wisdom literature and prophetic literature will also be examined. Then we will move on to Jesus as the principal source of *koinonia* in the New Testament through his inauguration of the kingdom of God in the synoptic gospels. We will draw from the Acts of the Apostles since it gives the praxis of *koinonia* by the early Christian community. The Johannine literature will be studied because it shows that fellowship is from the Father through the Son and lived in the Holy Spirit. It stipulates that since Christians have already been loved in such a way, they too need to do the same by living in fellowship with one another. This section will then be concluded by reflecting on Pauline literature in calling us to live the life of fellowship.

The third chapter will dwell on the anthropological foundation mainly focusing on the African perspective of communal living. The African concept of *Ubuntu* meaning “humanness” will be treated to highlight the importance of fellowship in Africa. The South African proverb “I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am”<sup>15</sup>, will be central in our analysis of African fellowship. We shall then narrow it down to scrutinize how *koinonia* is lived in the Nyoro culture. This is important because the disintegration of traditional culture is also a major cause of individualism. Bunyoro cultural values of hospitality, for instance, are important expressions of

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<sup>15</sup> J. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 108-109.

the Trinitarian *koinonia*. In addition, the importance of the word *palaver* in African culture will be studied and how it is important in fostering the spirit of fellowship in the community.

The other African theme to scrutinize is the family and marriage as visible expressions of Trinitarian *koinonia*. Marriage being a matter of the whole community given the way it brings together the whole society. The family is so extended to include almost everybody in society. On this concept however we shall critique its limitations so that it can be raised to a higher level of being inclusive by viewing the whole of humanity as a family, not only remaining restricted to kinship ties, because this breeds into tribalism which is against the true Trinitarian *koinonia*. The rites of passage in Africa are done in such a way that they reflect how an individual is progressively integrated into the community at different levels. We shall close this chapter by advocating a rediscovery of the above mentioned values in order to realize a true happy human family.

The fourth chapter then shifts the focus on the ecclesial dimension of *koinonia*. This will be expressed by showing how the life of fellowship is lived in the church. This will also help us by equipping our thesis with the magisterial foundation as far as living a life of Trinitarian fellowship is concerned. In it, we shall first examine how fellowship is lived in the Church according to the Vatican Council II teaching. This will focus on the Council idea of the Church as People of God. It will then study the spirit of fellowship as experienced in the liturgy through public worship. The importance of the word of God and the Eucharist as visible expressions of this fellowship will be vital in this chapter.

The concept of Church as people of God will also be analyzed as taught by the theology of Vatican Council II, especially in its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 9. This is because the Church is the visible sign of the Trinitarian *koinonia* in the world. The practice of love, *caritas*, is so central to the Church vocation that it indeed makes fellowship tangible to the world. This chapter will also present the hierarchical dimension of the church and her obligation of fostering the spirit of communion. It will close by critiquing the over-emphasis of the pyramidal aspect at the expense of the ‘concentric one’, but advocate striking a balance in order for the Trinitarian fellowship to be more visible, and also give chance to all to participate in this noble vocation.

The research will end with a general conclusion in which there will be a personal evaluation on the topic and a synthesis of the whole thesis. In addition it will explore how this call to communion with one another is lived in the contemporary Christian praxis. The challenges will be stressed and conditions necessary for *koinonia* proposed so as to redeem the spirit of Trinitarian *koinonia* in the contemporary world. Among the challenges we shall reemphasize selfishness and prejudice or bias. The identified conditions and attitudes will range from conversion, the fundamental option and the spirituality of communion. If considered, these will enable the spirit of Trinitarian *koinonia* to be rediscovered in contemporary Christian praxis.

## Chapter I

### The Trinitarian *Koinonia*

#### Introduction

At the heart of the blessed Holy Trinity, lies the highest degree of fellowship or communion. There is mutual interdependency and intercommunication in all aspects. It is on this foundation that we begin our inquiry, by looking at this form of communion which effects human life on earth, as we recall the analogy of the tree that draws its life from the roots which supply it with water in order to survive. In this chapter, we shall try to trace this fellowship within the three divine persons i.e. the Father, the Son and the Spirit. In other words, we shall delve into the *κοινωνία* within the Immanent Trinity in which first, we are going to deal with the psychological notion of the Trinity; the divine “persons” as illustrations not as individuals and the *perichoresis*.<sup>16</sup> Then we shall move our focus onto the Economic Trinity in which the spirit of fellowship in the Triune God manifests itself through the historical circumstances of space and time. Some of these realities will be illustrated to mention creation, grace, the incarnation and eschatology. All these aspects reveal the essence of the economic Trinity as centered on communion between God and the entire created reality on earth. In this inquiry, the relationship

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<sup>16</sup> Thus: K. RAHNER – H. VORGRIMLER, “Perichoresis”, *Theological Dictionary*, 377, highlights the fact that the Greek *perichoresis* is equivalent to the latin *Circumincessio* in which both mean penetration. In Trinitarian theology it is necessary being-in-one-another or circumincession of the three divine persons given their single divine essence.

between the immanent and the economic Trinity will also be emphasized. By the end of this chapter we hope to set a foundation of why humanity must live a life of Trinitarian *koinonia* in order to experience temporal happiness and fulfillment. This discussion however, does not eliminate the fact that the Trinity which we are dealing with here remains a mystery which cannot be comprehended fully by human reason. So, let us begin with our first issue and that is the Immanent Trinity.

### ***1.1 Koinonia in the Immanent Trinity***

We understand the Immanent Trinity as the way the three divine “persons” of the one God relate to each other within themselves. From this deeper level of communion in God originates a strong bond of relationship between the three divine persons who exist as “modes of subsistence”. For Boff, God in himself is communion rather than solitude. “This is the reality of Trinitarian communion, so infinite and deep that the divine three are united, and are therefore one sole God”.<sup>17</sup> By this we can realize how the bond of unity is so existential in God. This bond of communion is brought about by the ontological nature of God himself. Since in God there are two ontological levels i.e. one nature and three persons. It is what the Cappadocian Father Basil the Great clarified by the terms *ousia* as essence or substance, and *hypostasis* as individual persons.<sup>18</sup> The former accounts for the unity of the three divine persons i.e. that which is common to the three and the latter accounts for the individual persons; the properties which are proper to each person. “Hence, we recognize the Trinity in the distinction of persons and we

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<sup>17</sup> L. BOFF, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 3.

<sup>18</sup> P. KARIATLIS, “Saint Basil’s Contribution to the Trinitarian Doctrine”, 2.

profess the unity on account of the nature or substance. Thus the three are one by nature, not as person.”<sup>19</sup> This then sheds light on the origin of the unity that exists in God.

In addition, the two ontological levels in God can be distinguished by the help of properties that is to say natural and personal properties. The natural properties are absolute whereas personal properties are relational. For Lonergan the natural properties refer to the divinity in itself without reference to something else. These include for instance, simple, one, and eternal, omnipresent among others. The personal properties on the other hand, refer to the distinct persons in relation to something. These include, generating (Father), generated (Son) and Gift (Holy Spirit). This therefore implies that in God everything is the same except in cases of opposite relations.

Thus, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit have one divinity, one power, one substance; they are, however, three hypostases or persons distinguished from one another by their proper attributes, which are relative; hence in God all things are one where there is no relational opposition.<sup>20</sup>

The other aspect that reveals *koinonia* in the Immanent Trinity is that of consciousness in God.<sup>21</sup> To this fact we concur with Lonergan who says that “in the Trinity we are dealing with three subjects who are reciprocally conscious of each other by reason of the same consciousness which the three subjects ‘possess,’ each in his own proper way”.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, we avoid the extreme of a tripartite God whereby the three persons each possesses his own individual consciousness.<sup>23</sup> If the knowing and understanding in God is shared, then *koinonia* becomes

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<sup>19</sup> J. NUENER – J. DUPUIS (ed), *The Christian Faith*, 150.

<sup>20</sup> B. LONERGAN, *The Triune God: Doctrines*, 409.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. W. KASPER, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 289, clarifies that, it is impossible to accept three consciousnesses in God.

<sup>22</sup> B. LONERGAN, *The Triune God: Doctrines*, 409.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. W. KASPER, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 289.

intrinsic in God. Having laid foundation on the life of the Immanent Trinity in itself, let us now explore the emanations of the relations in God.

### *1.1.1 The Psychological Notion of the Trinity*

Lonergan's psychological notion of the Trinity means that the inner workings of the human mind offer a created image or similarity of the eternal generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit. Since the holy Trinity remains a mystery to humanity, human language remains limited in articulating it with certainty as far as the internal dynamics of this great notion of faith is concerned. It however, does not presuppose that, human knowledge is incapacitated in understanding this great mystery. It is on this ground that the psychological notion<sup>24</sup> of the Trinity becomes important. It is a tool that provides an insight into the workings of the Immanent Trinity, though it does not do so without limitations. By reflecting on this psychological analogy, we shall regard it more as an illustration than as the proper theological interpretation bearing in mind its limitation.<sup>25</sup>

The psychological notion is expounded by the help of three illustrations. The first one originates from Origen, based on the human mind which stipulates that the logos originate from the Father as the will from the mind. This is because the human mind is the image of the Father. The second is that of love, whereby in the process of love, there is the one who loves, the beloved, and love itself. The Father loves, the Son is the beloved and the Holy Spirit is love itself. Finally, the two are combined into the analogy of knowledge and love. By this analogy, we

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. N. FOGLIACCO, "The Trinity", 62, defines this theory as that which provides an insight into the workings of the Immanent Trinity by showing how the inner workings of the human mind offer a created image or similarity of the eternal generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father. This is because the inner workings of the mind are the only instances of the spiritual reality and activity available to us.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. P.C. PHAN, "Systematic Issues in Trinitarian Theology", 18.

mean that, when we speak, we only express the concept already in our mind. It is in a way based on Stoic philosophy. Hence, we have the word inside our mind and the word outside our mind. Before it is spoken outside, the word is first “spoken” inside the mind. In other words, there must be a word inside the mind, then it is spoken in the mind and finally it is spoken outside the mind.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the eternal procession of the word involves the word, word in the mind as logos, the word spoken inside the mind as Christ logos and word spoken outside the mind as the incarnate logos- the man Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit then proceeds from the third relation of mutual love between the father and son. Walter Kasper has this to say about this psychological notion:

For knowing and willing are the essential activities of the spiritual nature. In knowing himself, God begets his eternal word; he is therefore Father and Son. The Holy Spirit then proceeds as the third person from the mutual love of both Father and Son. In this conception of the Trinity, unity in Trinity is made psychologically intelligible.....A triangle or a circle is a more suitable image for the Latin conception: the Father begets the Son; the circle of Trinitarian life is then closed in the Spirit as the reciprocal love between Father and Son.<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, God’s infinite dynamic consciousness can be perceived as in the circle whereby the Father gives himself to the Son. The Son in turn gives himself in return to the Father. The Father sees himself in the Son as his own image and the two share the self-giving in love. By this the Son becomes the word and image of the Father. The Spirit then is the love (mutual self -exchange) of the Father and the Son. He is the gift that the Father and the Son exchange with one another. By this mutual exchange the Trinitarian *koinonia* is born in the Immanent Trinity.

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. N. FOGLIACCO, “The Trinity”, 62

<sup>27</sup> W. KASPER, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 296.

### 1.1.2 *The Rational Ground for the Divine Relations*

By ‘relation’ here we mean the reference of one thing to another. That reality by whose very being consists in having reference to something or someone else. Since God is a mystery, it is only by encountering Jesus Christ and recognizing him in the Holy Spirit as God’s eternal Son that we can gain some understanding of God’s inner life as eternal generation, eternal overflowing of life and the giving of the divinity. These divine ‘relations’ therefore are rooted in the ‘giving’ and ‘receiving’. The dynamism and movement referred to here is that of giving of the divinity since in God only this type of giving can be conceived.<sup>28</sup> This is because God is simple and indivisible. As Lonergan remarks this giving produces two terms: the principle from which the divinity flows and a principle towards which the divinity flows; a generating and generated principle, the former being the Father and the latter the Son. These two principles face one another as two opposite end points on a single line. They are thus, distinct and opposed to one another and essentially related to one another as the beginning and end of one and same movement that constitutes them.

This same principle is applied to the flowing of the Holy Spirit from the Father and Son together. “In a similar way, The Father and the Son communicate their divinity to the Holy Spirit. Hence, Father and Son are God ‘as-giving-the-divinity;’ while the Holy Spirit is God as ‘Gift.’ Here, ‘as-giving-the-divinity’ designates the relation of active spiration, and ‘gift’ passive spiration, or the relation of the Spirit to the Father and the Son.”<sup>29</sup> Hence from the above treatment we can summarize a statement that the Father is giver, the Son the given and the Holy Spirit is gift. These relations symbolize the basis of fellowship among the three divine persons.

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. N. FOGLIACCO, “The Trinity”, 54-6.

<sup>29</sup> B. LONERGAN, *The Triune God: Doctrines*, 180.

Let us now deal with the next issue which illustrates communion in the Immanent Trinity explicitly.

### *1.1.3 Perichoresis as Koinonia*

As already illustrated in the general introduction, the Greek word *perichoresis* has a double meaning. This explains why two Latin words were used to translate it. One of the meanings appeals more to the Western interpretation. The first meaning of *circuminsessio*, it is that of one thing being contained in another, dwelling in, a static state. In the Trinity it is more inclined to the inward movement than the outward because one person is in the others and occupies the same space with others. Yet in the second interpretation of *circuminsessio* is more active and depicts an interweaving of one person with the others. Henceforth, the Greek word *perichoresis* or Latin, *circuminsessio* means mutual immanence of three divine persons. For Kasper “This being-in-one-another and mutual penetration are attested in the tradition at a very early stage.”<sup>30</sup> In this sense, Boff remarks “...*perichoresis* is a good term to designate what we have seen to be meant by *koinonia*: a permanent process of active reciprocity, a clasping of two hands: the persons interpenetrate one another and this process of communicating forms their very nature.”<sup>31</sup> This second interpretation appeals more to the Greek mind.

In his own words Kasper sums it up: “All the Trinitarian concepts... lead to a final, all-inclusive basic concept: the being-in-one-another and mutual penetration of the divine persons, or the Trinitarian *perichoresis*.”<sup>32</sup> By this fact thus we come to grasp *koinonia* as being an existential reality in God. This gives us a good foundation of communion. There are scripture

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<sup>30</sup> W. KASPER, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 283.

<sup>31</sup> L. BOFF, *Trinity and Society*, 135-6.

<sup>32</sup> W. KASPER, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 283.

passages that shed some light on this reality of God: “the Father and I are one” (John 10.30); “the Father is in me and I am in the Father” (John 10:38; 14:11); “Father, may they be one in us, as you are in in me and I am in you”(John 17:12). This scriptural evidence thus is paramount in making this concept of *perichoresis* concrete to us since it is passed on by the perfect revealer of God who is none other than Jesus Christ.

St. Augustine too wrote extensively about the *perichoresis* in God. In his famous work *De Trinitate*, he remarks that in the Trinity “there is no mixture or confusion. Each person is in himself, and yet the three are each wholly in the others; each of them in the other two or the other two in each of them, and thus all are in all.”<sup>33</sup> The concept of *perichoresis* thus is so paramount that without it the belief in the Trinitarian God would easily lack a solid foundation.

It is well believed that of the two meanings above, the first appeals more to the Latin sense whereas the second is more to the Greek sense. This is because the Latin mind thinks first in terms of the divine essence whereas the Greek mind begins from the persons, attracted more irresistibly to each other as subsistent relations. From this perspective, we deduce that both meanings are important in understanding the concept of *perichoresis* in God. This is because when the two are translated into the everyday term of fellowship, there is need to remember that the *koinonia* is more infinitely intimate (Latin sense) and active (Greek sense) in God than any type of community we can find in the realms of human experiences.

Jurgen Moltmann asserts that in the *perichoresis*, the very thing that divides the three divine persons becomes the same thing which binds them together. The ‘circulation’ of eternal divine life becomes perfect through the fellowship and unity of the three different persons in the eternal love. For him therefore, the doctrine of *perichoresis* links together in a brilliant way the

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<sup>33</sup>ST. AUGUSTINE, *De Trinitate* IX, 5(CCL 62,297-300).

threeness and the unity, without reducing the threeness to the unity, or dissolving the unity in the threeness.<sup>34</sup> This implies that the same doctrine helps us to avoid falling into the dangers or heresies of ‘tripartism’ and at the same time calls us to the spirit of communion that is implanted in our existential reality.

As we conclude this section it is important to connect this great doctrine into real life. Kasper reminds us that, the *perichotic* unity in the Trinity provides a model for the union between Jesus Christ and human beings and between God and man. By this we realize firstly, that there is a deeper connection between the Trinitarian *koinonia* and humanity. Secondly, this divine *koinonia* leads into a web of relationships among human beings. “In Christianity, the mysticism of unity between God and man and between man and Christ is a mysticism of encounter, friendship and communion with God; it is realized in and through human encounter, friendship and communion, and in turn radiates out word into human friendship and communion and attains its full stature in these.”<sup>35</sup> The impact that is created by *perichoresis* in the Trinity to humanity will become concrete in the next section that will deal with the Economic Trinity. Let us now focus our attention on it.

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<sup>34</sup>Cf. J. MOLTSMANN, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 175.

<sup>35</sup> W. KASPER, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 284-5.

## ***1.2 Koinonia in the Economic Trinity***

The notion of the Economic<sup>36</sup> Trinity is derived meaning simply God's revelation to us in history. Though we come to know about the inner life of God, it is only through the Economic Trinity as 'God for us' that we lay grasp of him as Immanent Trinity; 'God in himself.' The two realities can be equated to the two sides of the same coin. That is why Karl Rahner's axiom makes sense that "the Economic Trinity is the Immanent Trinity and the Immanent Trinity is the Economic Trinity"<sup>37</sup>. The same premise was emphasized on in a different way by Karl Barth that "The reality of God in His revelation is not to be bracketed with an 'only', as though somewhere behind his revelation there stood another reality of God, but the reality of God which meets us in revelation is his reality in all its depths of eternity".<sup>38</sup> It is this aspect of the Trinity which makes the doctrine of the Holy Trinity concrete in the life of humanity.

Because of many possible misinterpretations however, Rahner's axiom has been credited mainly for the first part of it.<sup>39</sup> This is due to the fact that when we meet the three divine persons as they manifest themselves in time and space, what we meet are the three divine persons as they are in themselves. No better words express this fact than his own that, "...in the economy and history of salvation and revelation we have already experienced the Immanent Trinity as it is in itself...because its free and supernatural manifestation to us in grace manifest its innermost life."<sup>40</sup> The dangers involved in affirming the opposite of the axiom the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity can range from the disappearance of the distinctions between eternity and time,

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<sup>36</sup> Thus: K. RAHNER – H. VORGRIMLER, "Economy", *Theological Dictionary*, 142, insists that this term derives from the Greek term *Oikonomia* or "economy" a concept ancillary to theology ... which means that God's transcendent causality intervenes in the world sparingly and with utmost discretion. Thus God remains the cause of natural occurrence and his activity does not make him a link in the chain of secondary causes.

<sup>37</sup> K. RAHNER, *The Trinity*, 21.

<sup>38</sup> K. BARTH, *Church Dogmatics I/I*, 548.

<sup>39</sup> The first part of his axiom goes thus "the Economic Trinity is the Immanent Trinity".

<sup>40</sup> K. RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 137.

God and the world, to the assertion that God needs history to become a Trinity. It is to this fact that one of the Catholic theologians Hans Urs von Balthasar bases his criticism of this second part of Rahner's axiom. He says

From the Christian perspective the economic trinity is to be seen as the exposition of the immanent but the latter is the basis which sustains the former and may not be identified with it. For in that case the immanent and eternal trinity of God threatens to disappear in the economy or more clearly expressed, God will be interwoven with the world process and only through this come to himself. In the trinity opened up to us in Jesus Christ both are known together—that God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is involved with the world for its salvation.<sup>41</sup>

Having seen the distinction between the Immanent Trinity as the three persons and their relationship to one another in eternity and the Economic Trinity as the way the three persons relate to us (and implicitly with one another) in the history of salvation, there is need for us to continue our quest for the Economic Trinity and its perpetuation of the *koinonia* aspect to us. In this discussion, it is important to begin with Barth's insight on the concept of revelation as far as the *koinonia* in the Economic Trinity is concerned. Barth stipulates that, "For God reveals himself as the Lord and according to Scripture this signifies for the concept of revelation that God himself in unimpaired distinction is revealer, revelation and revealedness."<sup>42</sup>

In this analysis, the revealer stands for God the Father, revelation is the Son and the revealedness refers to the activity of the Holy Spirit in our acceptance of revelation. This implies that revelation is an act of the Trinity. There is indeed one revelation but it is structured in the way that it dynamically relates to one another the three distinct persons. It further means that, God also communicates himself to us as a Trinity. In this discussion, we can deduce a syllogistic statement which connects the revelation, communication activity of the Economic Trinity to

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<sup>41</sup> H.U.V. BALTHASAR, *Theo drama* II/2, 39.

<sup>42</sup> K. BARTH, *Church Dogmatics I: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 295.

arrive at a synthesis *koinonia*. All these two activities reveal a synergy behind *koinonia* that is to say they are activities done together by the Father, Son and the Spirit. In other words, God the Father communicates himself to us through the Son and in the Holy Spirit.

It is because of the Trinitarian *koinonia* as revealed in the Economic Trinity that the God of Christianity is referred to as love. The Father is the lover, the Son is the beloved and the Spirit is love itself. For Michael Downey, “All theology, indeed, all Christian faith and practice has to start with the Economic Trinity, with the naming of Father, Son and Spirit in the scriptures....The Father speaks a Word and breathes Love, drawing us into communion with the one Love.”<sup>43</sup> This name of God as unbounded love can be verified by the event of the paschal mystery<sup>44</sup> from the Incarnation to the resurrection. Amidst the paschal event is the figure of the Cross. The Economic Trinity for that matter helps us to appreciate the paschal event as a Trinitarian event. For it is God the Father who loves us so much that he empties himself by sending to us his beloved Son. In turn, in the Incarnation the Son responds to the Father’s love by stripping himself of his dignity as God and takes on the human flesh to suffer in order to die for humanity on the cross. The spirit on the other hand enabled Christ to offer himself without blemish to God (Heb. 9:14).

O’ Donnell, reminds us that, the God we believe in as Christians is the one whom we have come to know in Jesus Christ. He is the God of John’s gospel who is love. Yet the culmination of our experience of Jesus is his cross and paschal mystery. “...the cross was an act of divine forgiving love on the part of the Father and of divine suffering love on the part of the Son. Thus the bond of love uniting Father and Son in this moment of dereliction was the spirit of

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<sup>43</sup> M. DOWNEY, *Altogether Gift: A Trinitarian Spirituality*, 52-3.

<sup>44</sup> CCC, cf. 654; 1067, stresses the Paschal Mystery as Christ’s work of redemption accomplished principally by his Passion, death, Resurrection, and glorious Ascension, whereby “dying he destroyed our death, rising he restored our life”.

their union.”<sup>45</sup> Hence there is no doubt that this bond of love keeping the Trinity together in the events of the paschal event is none other than the Trinitarian *koinonia*. It is also of paramount importance to realize that this bond of love mediated by the Spirit does not remain only inward looking but it eventually flows outwards into the adoption of humanity to share into divine Sonship of Jesus Christ to the Father. Thus we become sons in the Son in order to share in the ‘Abba’ experience. It is on this ground that the Trinitarian *koinonia* becomes a mandatory vocation for us in our daily Christian praxis.

### 1.2.1 *Koinonia and Creation*

Nothing exists by itself in the universe; indeed, there is nothing which lives and operates in isolation but each living being is vitally related to everything else. This is the reason why Moltmann refers to the human being as, “a creature in the fellowship of creation”.<sup>46</sup> He in fact sees the human person as an *imago mundi* or “a being that can only exist in community with all other created beings and which can only understand itself in that community.”<sup>47</sup> This therefore implies that the whole created reality in the universe forms a basic pattern of *koinonia*.

It should also be remembered that the human person lives in a system which modern science calls an eco-system<sup>48</sup>. This is a community of forms of life, their physical environment, and the complex web of relations that holds them together in a particular unit of space. Moreover, this system is comprised of a “complex web of linkages, relationships and

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<sup>45</sup> J. J. O’DONNELL, *The Mystery of the Triune God*, 72-4.

<sup>46</sup> J. MOLTSMANN, *God in Creation*, 186.

<sup>47</sup> J. MOLTSMANN, *God in Creation*, 186.

<sup>48</sup> The word “eco” is derived from the Greek word *oikos* which originally means “house” so all creatures are in the same house. This implies that all creatures are related to each for life. Yet all this life comes from the Spirit who is the author of life as stipulated in John 6:63.

interdependencies.”<sup>49</sup> We can deduce from this that the universe can be called a ‘macro-ecosystem’ which is inhabited by an enormous number of these ‘micro-ecosystems’ that are mutually interdependent and linked in many ways. This reality is based on the fact that, all the elements of a life-supporting environment are parts of an integral network in which each element interacts directly or indirectly with all others, and affects the function of the whole. Given this interdependence, each life-form depends on the entire system, just as the system depends on each of its elements. The African savannah offers a good illustration of this fact of interconnectedness and interdependence. In other words, if this is an ecosystem, the earth as a whole is an ecosystem of ecosystems, all contained within the largest of them, the ecosphere, which encompasses the entire physical earth (geosphere) and all its biological components (biosphere).

When Gebara observes the cosmos and all its life forms, marked as they are by multiplicity and unity, by the difference among all things and yet they are interdependent, she immediately deduces from this *koinonia* a ‘Trinitarian Structure’.

They attract one another, couple with one another, blend with one another, destroy one another, and recreate themselves in species of pale or exuberant colors....if we accept this diversity as part of the Trinitarian structure itself ...what we have now is a cosmic citizenship...we need one another, and can exist only on the basis of a community of being, of interdependence among our differences.<sup>50</sup>

By the above analysis, we can concur with Gebara that since all the created reality depicts a high degree of *koinonia* yet remains in its diverse community, this similarity can only be traced in the mystery of the Triune God who desires to communicate himself in his creation. Hence, in the act of creation, the three persons reproduce the relationality and communiality which exist

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<sup>49</sup> S. McDONAGH, *To Care for the Earth*, 17.

<sup>50</sup> I. GEBARA, “The Trinity and Human Experience: An Ecofeminist Approach”, 17.

among them-selves. It is to this fact that Aquinas affirms, “From the procession of the distinct divine persons every procession and multiplicity of creatures is caused”<sup>51</sup>.

The aspect of God creating the human being in his own image and likeness springs also from this fact of relationship and communion. Since God is relation based on love, he passes on his image into the entire created reality so that it can mirror him in his own character and being. Balthasar stresses this regard, “Creation in God’s speaking (Son) and his Spirit (Holy Spirit) is, from the beginning (even where the Trinity is still hidden), the indispensable foundation from the revelation of the Trinity.”<sup>52</sup> Though some creatures may seem independent of one another, for instance, human beings cannot survive without trees whilst trees can survive without them, this may be because their influence on each other is implicit rather than explicit. This is why we also concur with Rahner that this reality remains a mystery to a greater extent. For him “the universe as a whole implies that basic oneness of the world, so difficult to grasp, yet so very real, by which all things in the world are related and communicate anteriorly to any mutual influence upon each other.”<sup>53</sup>

The same thought of one humanity runs through the creation account in Genesis and indeed the entire bible. This doctrine is at the heart of divine revelation. The unity of the human race is so apparent that it is depicted from the fact that God brought humanity into existence from the same material which is the earth. All are from one earth. Joseph Ratzinger reminds us “In the great genealogy of genesis 10...there is only one humanity in many human beings... In the face of all human divisions and human arrogance, whereby one person sets him-self or her-self over and against another, humanity is declared to be one creation of God from his one

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<sup>51</sup> T. AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica.*, 1a. 13, 7.

<sup>52</sup> H.U. BALTHASAR, “Creation and Trinity”, 288.

<sup>53</sup> K. RAHNER, *On the Theology of Death*, 27.

earth.”<sup>54</sup> Having seen therefore how the universe mirrors the *koinonia* of God, it is worth to examine the mystery of the Incarnation and how it bridges the *koinonia* of the Trinity and humanity.

### *1.2.2 Koinonia and the Incarnation*

The doctrine of the Incarnation<sup>55</sup> stipulates that Jesus Christ’s human nature was assumed by the second person of the Trinity...<sup>56</sup> It is the meeting point between the self-communication of God to his creation and the self-transcendence of man. This Incarnation is a result of the self-emptying or a *kenosis* of the Father out of love for his creation. This selflessness is seen in his surrendering of his Son to assume human nature in order to redeem it and reclaim it back onto the path to him-self. It is also generally accepted by many that the Incarnation is the goal of creation. In it, creation which has fallen gets to realize the perfect picture of what it ought to be. While recalling Rahner’s words O’Donnell emphasizes that, when God expresses himself, what comes to be is Jesus of Nazareth. He himself is the perfect self-expression of the Father in space and time. We can therefore, only understand the creation properly on the basis of and in the light of the Incarnation.<sup>57</sup>

It is on the basis of the Incarnation that relationships between God and creatures and between creatures themselves are rejuvenated. Through the Incarnation heaven and earth are reconciled to sing a song of love again. After the fall, man becomes alienated from his creator and it is only through this mystery that his relationship with his creator and other creatures is

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<sup>54</sup> J. RATZINGER, *In the Beginning*, 43-4.

<sup>55</sup> K. RAHNER – H. VORGRIMLER, “Incarnation”, *Theological Dictionary*, 233, Incarnation is from the Latin verb *incanare* meaning becoming flesh. For Rahner, the human nature of Jesus Christ therefore as person of the Logos, must be understood to mean that Jesus Christ is really and truly a human being with everything this implies.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. K. RAHNER – H. VORGRIMLER, “Incarnation”, *Theological Dictionary*, 233.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. J.J. O’DONNELL, *The Mystery of the Triune God*, 162.

rehabilitated. This is why during the nativity scene; Saint Luke reports to us the song of the angels in the words “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will” (Luke 2:14). This song summarizes the restoration of the *koinonia* between God and his creatures, and it is only with the restored *koinonia* with God that the creatures can live this communion among themselves. Balthasar reminds us in this regard that, God both grounds and surpasses all we mean by separation, pain and alienation in the world and all we can envisage in terms of loving self-giving, interpersonal relationship and blessedness.<sup>58</sup>

It is because in the Incarnation the Logos has assumed the flesh that Jesus Christ can become the authentic chief mediator between God and humanity as divine revelation tells us. Even human logic will prove us right that only the person of Jesus Christ who has embodied the two natures qualifies to bridge the wide chasm that existed between God and humanity. By the Incarnation, we have all become sons in the Son. We have been adopted into God’s kingdom. We now have a share in God as “Abba” Father. Because we now share in the divine son-ship of the Son, we can rightly experience and relate with God and one another in love. This is the basis of a true *koinonia* that is due to the salvation we have received. Leonardo Boff affirms this fact by emphasizing that

The Son is incarnate in our history. He thereby confers a character of son and daughter on all creatures, primarily human beings. In some sense now that the risen Son is back in the Trinity, something of our nature is made eternal and definitely enters into eternal life, love and communion. If he is Son of the Father, united to the Spirit, we are sons and daughters in the Son and all brothers and sisters in the power of that same Spirit.<sup>59</sup>

We shall explore this fact of divine son-ship as we reflect on the next section on how Grace is an embodiment of Trinitarian fellowship to humanity. We now turn to that matter of importance.

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<sup>58</sup> Cf. H.U. BALTHASAR, *Theo- Drama* IV, 325.

<sup>59</sup> L. BOFF, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 81.

### 1.2.3 *Koinonia and Grace*

We have already hinted on the fact of divine son-ship which has been passed on to all human beings in Jesus Christ. We shall now in this section delve into its dynamics and how it is acquired through grace. In our study we understand grace as the mystery of God who in his free, unmerited and always surpassing love lowers himself down to sinful humanity, saves it from sin and reconciles it with himself. This enables him to bring humanity into divinizing communion with the Father through the Son and in the power of the Holy Spirit. In De Lubac's words

Between nature as it exists and the supernatural for which God destines it, the distance is as great, the difference as radical, as that between non-being and being; for to pass from one to the other is not merely to pass into 'more being', but to pass to a different type of being. It is a crossing, by grace, of an impassable barrier.<sup>60</sup>

Hence the process of divinization is enhanced by the grace of God in us.

The life of grace therefore, becomes our participation in the pneumatic life of the risen Lord. This means that, to be divinized entails an interior transformation according to the supreme model of God's own perfection. The action of the Son as revelation is complimented with that of the Holy Spirit as moral transformation who is given to us by the Holy Spirit to dwell in us as the principle of that divinization. Being love, the Spirit plants into us the spirit to love which makes it possible for us to mirror God's love. By this we are divinized because, like God, we can love all human beings, even our enemies.

The fact that we have acquired divine son-ship lays ground for us to realize it in our categories of space and time. This for Christians is experienced through the sacrament of baptism. With this, a new family is formed under one Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of the

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<sup>60</sup> H. DE LUBAC, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 107-8.

Son in the Spirit. It is this acquiring of a new life in the spirit that lays ground for the establishment and sustenance of new relationships and a new way of relating with one another. By this reality, a new fellowship is bestowed on us in the life of grace. Paul S. Fiddes, reminds us of the fruits of our baptism that, “We share in life as we come out from under the waters (whether immersed in them or affused by them), to take our place in the new community of the body of Christ, and to be filled with the new wine of the spirit.”<sup>61</sup> In baptism therefore, we are empowered to a higher capacity of living a true *koinonia* of God, through the mediation of grace that we acquire in this sacrament.

#### a) The Holy Spirit as the Principle of *Koinonia*

We have already reflected on the new family of relationships, founded by the new life in baptism. We now turn to the reality of the person of the Holy Spirit who is the protagonist behind this new web of relationships. Fiddes emphasizes that, “God happens, in interweaving flow of relationships like those between the Father and a son, opened up and deepened by the currents of the Spirit.”<sup>62</sup> The last section of this statement ‘opened up and deepened by the currents of the Spirit’ poses a new insight for us in this discussion. In this we come to grasp the fact that, the Holy Spirit opens up and deepens the love of the Trinity by mediating it to humanity. This therefore, makes him that dynamic energy behind all human relationships that are self-transcending rather than self-centered.

This capacity to relate is also well stipulated by Karl Rahner in his definition of the human person as given in the introductory chapter of this work. The whole logic is in the human

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<sup>61</sup> P.S. FIDDES, “Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity”,281.

<sup>62</sup> P.S. FIDDES, “Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity”,281.

person as a relational being. This capacity to relate is so intrinsic in the human being that in every decision he or she makes to the self, an implicit and indirect impact is made with regard to God, other persons, society and the world at large. This is the reason why Benard Lonergan insists that, “the existential moment when we discover for ourselves that our choosing affects ourselves no less than the chosen or rejected objects, and that it is up to each of us to decide for himself what he is to make of himself.”<sup>63</sup> In this regard there is an implication of self-making and world-making as two sides of the same coin. This implies, that whatever man does has a relational dimension to it.

It therefore, follows that, this whole project of relationality and communality is due to the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts to bring us anew in love. Hence the apostle Paul says that “And hope does not put us to shame, because *God's love has been poured out* into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who *has been given to us*” (Rom 5:5). Having seen the Holy Spirit’s work in propelling us into the life of fellowship, then we need to move on to another matter of importance.

#### 1.2.4 *Koinonia and Eschatology*<sup>64</sup>

The reality of *koinonia* remains fundamental to Christian life to the extent of spanning into the world to come. It is a reality both for the now; this temporal existence and also for the world to come, the world which is eternal. The life of fellowship here on earth is a depiction of the full fellowship which will only be realized at the end of time when God will be all in all. This is why for Boff, Creation is projected towards communion. This same creation for him has two

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<sup>63</sup> B. LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, 240.

<sup>64</sup> Eschatology, from the Greek words *eskatos*, last, and *logos*, discourse, literally means the doctrine of the last things.

faces i.e. one which is temporal and visible, and the other that is eternal and invisible. The former is what we see physically in the succession of all forms and expressions of being, whereas the latter is the idea and project of the three divine persons.<sup>65</sup>

We mentioned earlier that God's self-communication to us through his Son in the Holy Spirit is pure grace to us. We also remarked that this lowering of himself in the *kenosis* of his Son is to elevate us to a supernatural order by divinizing us to share in the divine son-ship of his Son. Our elevation to the supernatural order therefore, does not stop in God's relationship with us in the temporal world but has as its main goal to lead us to him eternally and this will be realized during the final consummation. This is when all creation will be drawn into the Trinity as it is. This idea is enhanced by the fact that when in the final eschatological condition our bodily dimension is immersed in the Spirit, we can imagine how our capacity to relate to others and to the cosmos will be enhanced.

The heavenly life is life of fellowship. This can only be understood by reflecting on the communion of saints. Our life of communion on earth as Christians is also extended to include the communion of these Christians who have triumphed. On this note Ratzinger teaches "...part of the Christian idea of immortality is fellowship with other human beings...Man is not engaged in a solitary dialogue with God. He does not enter an eternity with God which belongs to him alone. Christian dialogue with God is mediated by other human beings in a history where God speaks with men. It is expressed in the 'We' form proper to the children of God."<sup>66</sup> This shows how the spirit of *koinonia* is at the heart of the Christian faith to even provide some understanding about eternity.

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<sup>65</sup> Cf. L. BOFF, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 103-4.

<sup>66</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal life*, 159.

This communion is enhanced by the gift of faith of the community. Faith is a prerequisite to enter into the community of believers which is realized through baptism. This baptism is a door to a profession of faith lived in communion with other believers aimed at eternal life. Pope Benedict XVI reminds us of the importance of the dialogue between the priest and the parents of the infant to be baptized. “According to this dialogue, the parents were seeking access to the faith for their child, communion with believers, because they saw in faith the key to ‘eternal life’.”<sup>67</sup> Faith therefore, is what propels the believers to live in communion in hope of eternal life. Joseph Ratzinger makes a good synthesis of this study in his words

Conversely, the dialogue of human beings with each other now becomes a vehicle for the life everlasting, since in the communion of saints it is drawn up into the dialogue with the Trinity itself. . .Eternal life does not isolate a person but leads him out of isolation into true unity with his brothers and sisters and the whole of God’s creation.<sup>68</sup>

On this ground therefore, it can be discerned well that the life of communion is geared towards eternity. It is a call for everyone who belongs to the kingdom of God. We can also discern a logical pattern from this analysis that the life lived well here on earth in communion will yield to a life of perfect communion with the Trinity and one another (saints) in eternal life. On the other hand however, if this temporal life is lived in isolation, there is a possibility of the same solitary life in eternity.

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<sup>67</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Spe Salvi*, 10.

<sup>68</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal life*, 159-60.

## Conclusion

In summary, we have seen in this chapter that the Trinitarian *koinonia* is the basis and foundation of all human *koinonia* in both the temporal and eternal existence. It not only founds it but all human communions are enhanced by this Trinitarian communion. This idea is supported by the notion of *perichoresis* as that mutual interdependence on one another of the three divine persons in the Immanent Trinity. Due to that perfect bond of love between the divine persons, the Holy Spirit opens this love which is *ad intra* to become *ad extra*, and this has been realized in the Economic Trinity as God ‘with us’. Then under the economic Trinity we have seen how God has desired to communicate himself to us through the mystery of the Incarnation of his Son in the Holy Spirit. This we have agreed that it was an act of self-emptying of the Father himself out of love for humanity. When the Logos takes on human flesh then the entire humanity is raised to a supernatural level that makes it move from the status of creatures to divine son-ship. Of course all this movement, as we have pointed out, is pure grace initiated by God to human beings. We have ended with an analysis on how the aspect of human *koinonia* becomes a vehicle for life everlasting in that man does not dialogue with God in solitary life but requires the companionship of others who call God ‘Father’. Although, this was not done with utmost exhaustion, we believe that the issues highlighted could be further expanded. However, we have to proceed to the next chapter that looks at the biblical foundation of our enquiry.

## Chapter II

### Biblical Foundation

#### Introduction

Out of the twenty one times in the whole bible, the word *koinonia* appears in the Septuagint only three times, compared to the eighteen times in the New Testament in its strict sense. Nevertheless, for McDermott "...it would be misleading to consider the New Testament doctrine as an Athene-like inspiration springing whole and entire from St. Paul's brain. The Old Testament offers a tremendous foundation of the material that acts as a preparation for a later synthesis."<sup>69</sup> To mention not only the exact term itself in its strict meaning will be considered, but also its implications and synonyms as applied in the Hebrew Scriptures can validate its importance in the Old Testament, despite the differences in its connotation. We therefore intend to focus on fellowship in a wider perspective, than in its narrower sense of only human relationships and participation.

In the Old Testament we seek to explore the origin of this doctrine of fellowship and its implication, especially as far as the Genesis creation account is concerned. In addition, we shall see it from the perspective of the Divine Covenant and the Mosaic Law. Then, we will trace our

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<sup>69</sup> V. M. MCDERMOTT, "The Biblical Doctrine of Koinonia I", 65.

notion from the wisdom literature and later on in the prophetic literature. This will show how it was understood and lived by the Israelites in their history. Having seen the foundation of fellowship in the Old Testament, we shall then focus on the New Testament, where we shall trace it from the synoptic gospels by seeing how Jesus lived and practiced it. This is so because he alone is an embodiment of the true communion. After this we shall explore how the first Christians witnessed to this fellowship that Christ passed on to them, in the Acts of the Apostles. This will lead us to St. Paul and then finally we shall end with the Johannine literature on the teaching of a true life of fellowship. Let us now begin with exploring the Old Testament itself.

### ***2.1 Koinonia in the Old Testament***

The Hebrew word מַעֲנֵק מַחְקָר denotes fellowship. It comes closer to the Greek word *koinonia*. In the Septuagint *koinonia* is found in Lev 5:21; Wis 8:8; and in Mac 4:6. However, it does appear in the form of its adumbrations in a wider perspective even in the Hebrew Scriptures. For instance, the Hebrew awareness of the “corporate personality” has a lot in common with this notion’s meaning and implications in the New Testament especially the Pauline literature. It implies a Hebrew assumption of the basic human solidarity among all the sons of Adam and within smaller groups. This is because the individual is considered as a representative, as well as a constitutive member of his group.<sup>70</sup>

It is however important to note with Jourdan that all the above three mentioned instances of the term *koinonia* hint at a fellowship between man and man. He specifies that, “Nowhere in the OT is heard any mention of a God-man fellowship. In Jewish Literature *koinonos* took the place of Hebrew *haber* and like it, was descriptive of the bond which existed between

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. V. M. MCDERMOTT, “The Biblical Doctrine of Koinonia I”, 65-6.

worshippers of God....But nowhere in the OT does *haber* and its cognates ever connote the relationship of man to God.”<sup>71</sup> This in a way implies a great distance between God and man which is typical of the Hebrew mind that understands Yahweh as a transcendent God at the expense of his own immanence with creatures. The reason behind this conception of God is the absolute reliance and trust in him.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, even though the connotation of fellowship in the Old Testament is still limited, there is need to appreciate its essence that gives a foundation of a wider conception of the same notion in the New Testament.

### 2.1.1 *Koinonia* in the Pentateuch

#### a) *Koinonia* in the Creation Account

According to the story of creation in the book of Genesis, *koinonia* necessarily proceeds from God’s relationship with the human person and indeed all other creatures right from the time of creation. Moreover this fellowship, whether spiritual or physical, is the first element which qualifies humanity to be authentic. On this note Karl Barth insists that, “This two-sided openness is the first element of humanity. Where it lacks, and to the extent that it lacks, humanity does not occur. To the extent that we withhold and conceal ourselves, and therefore do not move to know others and to let ourselves be known by them, our existence is inhuman.”<sup>73</sup> This qualifies Hunsinger’s argument that, we were all created to live in community, to speak and listen to one another and to assist one another with gladness.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> G. V. JOURDAN, “Koinonia in 1 Cor 10:16”, 111-112.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. F. HAUCK, “Koinos-Koinoo”, 801.

<sup>73</sup> K. BARTH, *Church Dogmatics* III/2, 251.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. D.V.D HUNSINGER, “Practicing Koinonia”, 356.

From this creation story of the bible, we see the *koinonia* in God and that same *koinonia* passed on to the whole of creation, with the human being at the center of this call. In the first chapter of the book of Genesis we see God speaking to himself, “Then God said, ‘*Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.*’” (1:26). Even though the plural format, used in this section as a form of speech i.e. *Us* and *Our* in which God refers to himself, has been rejected by many biblical scholars to be an adumbration of the Trinitarian God or at least in a way a reference to a plurality of divine beings in one Godhead or an illustration of God’s divine majesty<sup>75</sup>, as Christians however we cannot fail to acknowledge this fact since it was recognized by some Church fathers.

Irenaeus reminds us in this regard, “For God did not stand in need of these [beings], in order to the accomplishing of what He had Himself determined with Himself beforehand should be done, as if He did not possess His own hands. For with Him were always present the Word and Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit, by whom and in whom, freely and spontaneously, He made all things, to whom also He speaks, saying, ‘Let Us make man after Our image and likeness;’ [Gen. 1:26]”<sup>76</sup>. This language hints at a community of life in God where no action is taken individually but communally. It is a depiction of how God is a communion of persons. This same plural self-reference of God appears elsewhere in the same creation account, for instance, Gen 3:22; and 11:7. We can therefore say that despite the faith of the Jews to which these scriptures belonged primarily not having acknowledged the idea of a plurality in God, at least these texts hint at a *koinonia* in the creator God for the Christian believers.

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<sup>75</sup> Cf. P. DAVIDSON, “On the plural form of the word Elohim”, 1:26.

<sup>76</sup> SAINT IRENAEUS, *Against Heresies*, 4:20:1.

Yet it is clear that in the same account, we read of God creating man in his own image and likeness and he entrusts him with the stewardship of all other creatures. It is also made clear that male and female he created them, calling upon them to become fruitful and multiply by filling the earth and subduing it (Gen 1:27-28). The syllogism becomes more vivid to us in this account. First we begin with a God who reveals himself as a ‘plurality of beings’ in communion. Secondly, this God creates humanity in his own image. It automatically follows that this image and likeness entails as its essence a fellowship of existence. This implies that God who is fellowship of persons communicates his own essence to humanity, which he creates in plurality as male and female yet united by bonds of fellowship. It is this bond that will unite all creation under one head of humanity after the multiplication and fruitfulness has been realized.

We can conclude this sub-section of *koinonia* in the creation account by grounding it in the words of Hans Urs von Balthasar

We can grasp this by considering that the central creature, the human being, is described as having been created ‘in the image and likeness of God’ (Gen 1:26-27; 5:1). The gift of rationality as a directedness to relationship, to dialogue, and to fruitfulness proceeding from the creature (as an analogy to the act of creation) is also clearly indicated here. One must in no way disregard this first constitution as an inner property attaching to the creature. In it alone does the creator’s judgment ‘very good’ (Gen 1:31) have its correctness....<sup>77</sup>

The last aspect of *koinonia* in this creation account is revealed in the name given to Adam. The name of one man becomes representative of the entire humanity. We can also not mention Adam as representative of humanity without appreciating Eve’s role too in the same representation. Eve as a name in Hebrew means “mother of all living”. Adam only participates in this role in solidarity with his wife Eve. This argument can be qualified by the forming of a woman from a man’s rib (Gen 1:21) and Adam’s words which describe his wife as, “bone of my

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<sup>77</sup> H.U. BALTHASAR, “Creation and Trinity”, 288.

bone and flesh of my flesh” (Gen1:23). “Not only is Adam in corporate solidarity with humankind, but Eve (from the Hebrew word meaning ‘life’ or ‘living’), as the ‘mother of all living’ (Gen 3:20), is presented as in corporate solidarity with the whole human race that would in effect issue forth from her womb.”<sup>78</sup>

The creation account in the book of Genesis has a wealth of knowledge it passes on to us as far as life in general is concerned. However, we have only reflected on one aspect of this knowledge and that is the call of humanity to fellowship with the entire creation. Let us now look at how the rest of the Pentateuch reminds us of the same reality.

#### b) *Koinonia* as Corporate Personality

We agreed earlier on the fact that the modern idea of ‘corporate personality’ was manifested by the Hebrews in-terms of human solidarity among the sons of Adam. Robinson remarks on this fact, “there is a fluidity of reference, facilitating rapid and unmarked transition from the one to the many, and from the many to the one”<sup>79</sup> By this is implied the fact of the communitarian awareness of Israelites.

This notion of togetherness becomes vivid in the stories of the patriarchs. To begin with is Abraham who becomes the father of Israel: God promises him multitudes of descendants who are due to God’s blessings upon him because of his obedience to him. “In Gen 22, following the ‘Binding of Isaac’ on Mt. Moriah, the Lord gives Abraham a promise in vss. 17-18: ‘In blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed [ zera‘ ] as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your Seed [ zera‘ ] will possess the gate of His

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<sup>78</sup> R. M. DAVIDSON, “Corporate Personality in the Old Testament”, 3.

<sup>79</sup> H.W. ROBINSON, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel*, 50.

enemies’.”<sup>80</sup> It has also been believed that this “Seed” of Abraham which is Isaac becomes fulfilled in the New Testament Messiah who is Jesus Christ, who saves the entire human race in solidarity with it.

The spirit of fellowship is also revealed in two dimensions of Jacob’s life: the solidarity with his ancestors in death and his descendants. In the first case Jacob wishes to be buried with his ancestors. “I am to be gathered unto my people; bury me with my fathers” (Gen 49:29). For Robinson, “burial in the family sepulcher is the realistic act which unites a man with his ancestors. If he is not properly buried, this unity is not properly achieved.”<sup>81</sup> Joseph makes a similar request--that his bones be carried up from Egypt when the children of Israel returned to Canaan (Gen 49:25) and this request is fulfilled in (Exod 13:19). The statement that one who died was ‘gathered to his people/fathers’ is used also of Abraham (Gen 25:8), Ishmael (Gen 25:17), Isaac (Gen 35:29), Aaron (Num 20:24), and also with Moses (Num 27:13; Deut 32:50). Therefore corporate solidarity with one’s ancestors is especially revealed in being buried with them.

The second dimension of Jacob’s corporate personality with his later descendants is revealed in the usage of his name. At the place he called *Peni’el*, after wrestling with God the whole night, God promised him that his name would no longer be Jacob but Israel. “Then He said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed’ ” (Gen 32:28). From this point onward in the Old Testament, we find the name ‘Israel’ sometimes referring to the individual patriarch and sometimes the nation of Israel that descended from him. For Diop, “this movement from the individual patriarch (Israel, Jacob) to corporate nation Jacob, Israel) is not just a literary device of metonymy but

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<sup>80</sup> R. M. DAVIDSON, “Corporate Personality in the Old Testament”, 7.

<sup>81</sup> H.W. ROBINSON, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel*, 7.

serves a deep theological purpose of delineating the ideal identity and mission of God's people."<sup>82</sup>

Something peculiar with *koinonia* in the Old Testament as corporate solidarity is that it was concerned with the relationship between people, unlike that in the New Testament that went higher to elevate this relationship to include God. This can be illustrated further by the sacrificial meal that bound Israel to God, described in Deut. 12 and Exod. 24; this was never considered to establish a community between Israel and Yahweh. At most the legal bond is what established this relationship in the form of a covenant. Yet this covenant is not to be considered as a treaty between equals.<sup>83</sup>

One of the most striking clusters of passages in the Pentateuch revealing the spirit of *koinonia* in the form of corporate solidarity is the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. Moses himself remarked that, many of the new generations of Israelites who had not participated in the historical exodus event were to consider themselves as having participated in the event as God delivered his people. Future generations were to say to their children, God "delivered our households" (Exod 12:27); "By strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exod 13:14); For Craige, Moses presses this point home: "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord did not make this covenant [only] with our fathers, but with us...those who are here today, all of us who are alive. The Lord spoke to you face to face at the mountain..." (Deut 5:2-4; cf. 29:14-15).<sup>84</sup> This reminds us of the fact that the old covenant has a lot to do with fostering the call to fellowship of God's people.

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<sup>82</sup> G. DIOP, "The Name 'Israel' and Related Expressions in the Books of Amos and Hosea," 360.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. V. M. McDERMOTT, "The Biblical Doctrine of KOINONIA", 66.

<sup>84</sup> P. C. CRAIGE, *Deuteronomy*, 148.

We can end this section of the Pentateuch by reflecting on one last adumbration of *koinonia* among the people of Israel in the Torah. This life is to restore the practice of reconciliation according to Yahweh's commands. As we hear in the book of Leviticus

The Lord said to Moses, 'If someone sins and commits a sin of dishonesty against the Lord by denying his neighbor a deposit or a pledge for a stolen article, or by otherwise retaining his neighbours' goods unjustly, or if, having found a lost article, he denies the fact and swears falsely about it with any of the sinful oaths that men make in such cases, he shall therefore, since he has incurred guilt by his sin, restore the thing that was stolen or unjustly retained by him or the deposit left with him or the lost article he found or whatever else he swore falsely about; on the day of his guilt offering he shall make full restitution of the thing itself, and in addition, give the owner one fifth of its value. Lev 5:20-24 NAB

By this analysis we realize the expected spirit of solidarity among the people of Israel by their God. This firstly, confirms that God's command to humans about a call to fellowship still holds, and efforts must be made in fostering reconciliation in case this communion has been broken and lost. Secondly that this process of restoring communion must be based on true justice; that is restorative justice, by giving back what was lost, and even adding more. In the end therefore we can concur with the fact that the call to communion in Israel is embedded in the demands of the covenant, and as such it becomes significant in people's faithfulness to God.

### 2.1.2 *Koinonia in the Historical Books*

Earlier on in the previous section, we specified that *koinonia* in the Old Testament is adumbrated in the form of 'corporate solidarity', and this theme runs throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. In so doing, the historical books are not an exception to this rule. The first case is that of the conquest of Jericho and the role played by Rahab the prostitute with her entire household cannot go unmentioned, as far as the life of fellowship is concerned in Israel. In this case, family responsibility is shown by the sparing of the entire household of Rahab because of her

cooperation in the kind treatment of the spies and affirmation of Yahweh. (Josh 2:12-14; 6: 22-25). This is revealed in part of the sixth chapter that “she dwelt in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out on Jericho.” (Josh 6: 25). To this fact, Jon Berquist comments insightfully on the implications of solidarity in the phrase “in the midst”: which refers to inward parts, or even the womb. Rahab the prostitute now enters the womb of Israel and the story reaches its second climax. The community enfolds Rahab.<sup>85</sup> By this illustration therefore, Rahab is linked in corporate solidarity of the entire nation of Israel and her citizens.

The second case in the same book referring to this form of solidarity is that of Achan the Son of Zerah, whose sin in violating faith with the ‘devoted’ things, affected the whole of Israel by suffering defeat. The entire nation of Israel is held responsible for the iniquity of one man, hence not only Achan who dies, but many of the Israelites, and eventually the defeat of the entire Israel. In support of this fact Joshua reminds us that “Did not Achan the son of Zerah break faith in the matter of the devoted things, and wrath fell upon all the congregation of Israel? And he did not perish alone for his iniquity.” (Josh 22:20)<sup>86</sup>

The period of Judges also give evidence to this notion of communion in the history of Israel. When we reflect on chapters 19 – 21, some understanding is acquired on how solidarity was experienced at this time. A case is made of some evil-hearted men from the town of Gibeah in the lineage of Benjamin who went and performed a shameful act against the Levite concubine. This Levite ‘was sojourning in the remote parts of the hill country of Ep’hraim’ when he took to himself the concubine. This act led to the whole town and tribe of Benjamin to be held

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<sup>85</sup> Cf. J. BERQUIST, “Expectations and Repeated Climax in the Rahab story” Paper presented at the AAR/SBL Annual meeting.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. R.M. Davidson, *In the Footsteps of Joshua*, 121-128.

responsible for this crime of these few men to the extent that the book of Judges concludes with the Benjamin lineage at the verge of extinction due to the principle of solidarity. In addition, during the same period of Judges, there is a case of pronouncing a curse on the entire house of Eli because of his sons' wickedness (1 Sam 2:31). And also, how the entire town of Beth-She'mesh was punished because of its few inhabitants who looked into the Ark of the Covenant (1 Sam 6:19). All these cases support the fact that there is a sharing in the effects that spring from the Israelites' good and evil acts.<sup>87</sup>

In ending this subsection, we focus on how kings were also an embodiment of the communion with their people. A case in point is that where the people of Judah have to go into exile because of the sins of the kings as their representatives e.g. in the case of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 20: 15-20) and Manasseh (2 Kgs 21: 1-18). To this passages, we concur with Kaminski "that the king is representative of the whole nation, and thus if he errs, the nation as a whole might suffer for his misdeed."<sup>88</sup> For this matter therefore, a life of *koinonia* is highly reflected in these incidents that were peculiar to Israel's history.

### 2.1.3 *Koinonia in Wisdom Literature*

For McDermott, The late Wisdom literature, which reflected so heavily the Hellenistic world and its immanent deity, never lost sight of Yahweh's transcendence. Man may possibly establish a community with Wisdom which is Yahweh's attribute, but not directly with Yahweh.<sup>89</sup> All this fact is to cement the idea that the communion in Israel is more horizontal than

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<sup>87</sup> Cf. R. M. Davidson, "Corporate Personality in the Old Testament", 19.

<sup>88</sup> J. S. KAMNISKI, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible*, 37.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. V.M. MCDERMOTT, "The Biblical Doctrine of KOINONIA I", 67.

vertical as far as their relationship with God is concerned. This is because there is no equality between man and God.

One of the dimensions of a life of communion found in this literature is that of solidarity with the previous generations in righteousness. The other side also shows solidarity in sin but we dwelt on it more in the previous section. We now concentrate on the blessings that are shared by the later generations as fruits of the good life of their ancestors. The relevant passages cluster especially in the Psalms. For example, Ps 25:13 “He [the righteous one] himself shall dwell in prosperity, and his descendants shall inherit the earth.” Similarly in Proverbs 20:7: “The righteous man walks in his integrity; his children are blessed after him.” Hence the fellowship of blessings is shared by the later generations from their fore-fathers.

Secondly the use of the concretization of the group in an individual also brings out this *koinonia* in biblical poetic literature. This is a case whereby the individual person is used in reference to the entire group. A good illustration of this fact can be traced in the use of “I” in the psalms. Fraire has this to say in line with this idea, “Any time that we have an ‘I’ that shifts without any definite reason to the collective ‘we,’ there is a good probability that the ‘I’ may be an individual who, in some way or other, through the ‘we’ expresses his union with the others of his group.”<sup>90</sup>

Psalm 44 can be used to attest to this element, “Thou art *my* King and My God....Through thee *we* push down our foes...” (Ps 44: 4-5). Having examined this notion of fellowship in wisdom literature, let us now turn to how the prophets perceived it in history.

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<sup>90</sup> J. D. FRAINE, *Adam and the Family of Man*, 231.

#### 2.1.4 *Koinonia in Prophetic Literature*

Prophetic literature addresses a variety of issues related to a life of fellowship between the people of Israel and with those of their neighboring nations. The first striking feature in the prophets is that of referring to the nation of Israel and other nations as individuals. Whereas this may be called a literary device of personification, it nevertheless brings out the awareness of fellowship in terms of solidarity. Hence we have the references of Israel as a “virgin”, (Jer. 18:13) a “Daughter” (Amos 5:2) a “mother” (Isa 49:18) and an “adulteress” (Isa 1:21) among others. Likewise, Babylon is referred to as the “virgin daughter of Babylon” (Jer. 51:33).

The servant songs of Isaiah too are instances of investigation as far as solidarity is concerned. This is seen in the way the collective language is used to refer to the corporate servant in alternation with singular language to refer to the individual servant. In this way as Davidson remarks that the prophet dramatizes the fact that the messianic servant is in solidarity with the whole nation of Israel, and will come as the new Israel, to recapitulate in His experience the experience of the old Israel, in particular with regard to His death-resurrection.<sup>91</sup>

Prophet Ezekiel too embodies the theme of solidarity between the prophets and the people of Israel. This is true in that he is called just from the start of his ministry to lie on his left side for 390 days, and then on his right side for 40 days. The reason for this task is given as: “For I have laid on you the years of their [Israel’s] iniquity . . . ; so you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel” (Ezek 4:5). As Block describes the role of Ezekiel that, “Instead of representing Yahweh, he now plays the role of the priest, carrying the burden of his people’s sins on his

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<sup>91</sup> Cf. R. M. DAVIDSON, “Corporate Personality in the Old Testament”, 23.

shoulder.”<sup>92</sup> Block further suggests that “Ezekiel is hereby called on to be a suffering servant, bearing the consequences of Israel’s sin.”<sup>93</sup> We therefore see in Ezekiel’s actions a singular example of corporate solidarity between himself and the people whose iniquities he bears. Of course the issues raised by the prophets as far as *koinonia* is concerned still apply even up today.

In a brief conclusion of this section, we can say that as stipulated before *koinonia* in the Old Testament remains a matter of corporate solidarity. We shall now turn to examine this notion from the New Testament perspective.

## ***2.2 Koinonia in the New Testament***

As we stipulated in the previous section, the concept of *koinonia* is a New Testament notion though in the Old Testament only its adumbrations can be found. “If one includes all related forms of the noun *koinonia*, it appears in the New Testament 36 times, most frequently in the Pauline corpus.”<sup>94</sup> We also come to realize that, in the New Testament it is lifted to a higher level to include both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of participation in a strict sense. This is why Burdick insists that, “The breadth of [*koinonia*’s] usage is to be seen in the fact that New Testament *koinonia* is first of all fellowship with God. To be a Christian is the same as being in fellowship with him.”<sup>95</sup> It now ceases seeing God as far from human beings, but a loving one who is always near his people. Thus in the New Testament communion now includes also an intimate relationship with God. In fact according to Hennebusch, the New Testament authors expressed the essence of Christianity in one word. It is the Greek word *koinonia* usually

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<sup>92</sup> D. I. BLOCK, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 175.

<sup>93</sup> D. I. BLOCK, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 175.

<sup>94</sup> R. R. GAILLARDETZ, “Communion/ Koinonia”, 1.

<sup>95</sup> D. W. BURDICK, *The Epistles of John*, 21.6.1.

translated as ‘fellowship’. That is to say, fellowship with Christ, leading to a fellowship with the Father, and fellowship with one another in Christ: there you have Christianity in one word.<sup>96</sup>

Even though this notion is mostly employed by St. Paul in the New Testament as Seesemann clarifies i.e. 13 out of 18 occurrences,<sup>97</sup> it is also employed by the Johannine Literature and the Synoptic gospels as far as Jesus’ life is concerned, as well as the Acts of the Apostles where community life is so central in the lives of the first Christians. In other words, it is true that Jesus may not have used the word in its strict sense<sup>98</sup> but his life was characterized by fellowship as attested to by his great deeds. On this note, we shall also explore the same practice of fellowship in the New Testament as expressed in various forms. Some of the interpretations will include what believers have in common, as a close relationship, participation, sharing, partnership and contribution of gifts. How the unity of the believers in Christ is also an expression of communion and the use of the various terms like *adelphos* and *agape* as manifestations of the notion of *koinonia* in the New Testament.<sup>99</sup> Of course, this is going to be the approach throughout the New Testament because of the Christian way of looking at life.

### 2.2.1 *Koinonia* in the Synoptic Gospels

Several aspects concerning *koinonia* have been highlighted in the Synoptics. We have already seen that Jesus himself may not have used this word in its strict meaning but his message and life was a witness to this fact. “Thus at the very beginning of his public life a dynamic is set in motion, a dynamic of *gathering to himself*, which continues throughout his own life, and

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<sup>96</sup> P. HENNEBUSCH, “Christian Fellowship in the Epistle to the Philippians”, 793.

<sup>97</sup> H. SEESEMAN, *Der Begriff Koinonia im Neuen Testament*, 67.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. R. R. GAILLARDETZ, “Communion/ Koinonia”, 1.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. M.W. RUPULGA, “Christian *Koinonia* Strengthens and Transforms Western Highlands Communal Life”, 91.

which, after his death and resurrection, still continues in the life and mission of the Church.”<sup>100</sup>

This gathering has no limits and to fully grasp the true nature of God’s fellowship as revealed in Jesus Christ, this dynamic of gathering and its unlimited scope needs to be examined.<sup>101</sup>

This dynamic of Christ living in fellowship is first of all manifested in the ‘meal stories’<sup>102</sup>. The first case in this regard is that taken from Saint Mathew

And as he sat at table in the house, behold many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, ‘Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ But when he heard it, he said, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners (Mt 9: 10.13 RSV).

This illustration depicts Jesus’ Spirit of fellowship. It is that form of life where even sinners are welcome despite them being despised by the Pharisees. It is an occasion where mercy is granted and reconciliation is made possible for all. This clearly identifies God’s *koinonia* as embodied through the person of Jesus Christ.

Secondly is the story of the multiplication of loaves and fish in Mathew 14: 14-16; 19-20. For Fink, the most charming in this story is the note of compassion that sets it off. This fellowship is moved by *agape*, the love of God. The Lord commanded his disciples to give the people ‘something to eat’ despite their weariness and eagerness to rid themselves of the big crowds. In this story, there is lesson to Christ’s disciples as far as their call to fellowship is concerned. That is to say, it entails a responsibility of the disciples to offer food whether material

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<sup>100</sup> P.E. FINK, “God’s Koinonia”, 389.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. P.E. FINK, “God’s Koinonia”, 389.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. P.E. FINK, “God’s Koinonia”, 389.

or spiritual in a compassionate way to all who come<sup>103</sup>. All have to be served without segregation and without anyone being turned away.

The second aspect that mediates the *koinonia* of Jesus to us is the use of the term ‘brother’ in the gospels. According to Ratzinger, Jesus uses the word ‘brother’ Greek *Adelphos* at three different levels.<sup>104</sup> The first level of its usage is at the meaning it has in Judaism i.e. one’s Jewish coreligionist. The second group of these texts is the normal rabbinic usage of the term in reference to a rabbi’s pupil. And finally the third usage of the term is the typical Christian meaning of it. The first group of texts all belong to the gospel of Matthew e.g. (Mt 5: 21.24) about reconciling with a brother first, before offering to God, and (Mt 7: 4-5) about removing a speck in a brother’s eye. The second category includes the commissioning of Peter to strengthen his brothers (Lk 22:31) and the sending of the first women who met the risen Lord to go and inform Jesus’ disciples of his resurrection (Mt 28:10). Ours is thus to focus more on the third category of the usage of the term which brings out more clearly the Christian meaning of ‘brotherhood’.

In this third category, the first text to consider is that of an encounter between Jesus and his biological family. When Jesus is told that his mother and brothers are outside, Jesus responds that “‘Who are my mother and my brothers?’ And looking around at those who sat about him, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother.’” (Mk 3:31-35 RSV). By these words we concur with Ratzinger when he stipulates that, “In the place of blood relationship, and surpassing it, is set spiritual relationship. For Jesus, brothers are those who are united with him in the common acceptance of the will of

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<sup>103</sup> Cf. P.E. FINK, “God’s Koinonia”, 390.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, *The Meaning of Christian brotherhood*, 22.

God.”<sup>105</sup> Hence in this case Christian brotherhood or fellowship is not seen as an original phenomenon of nature but depends on the decision of the Spirit, a saying of “yes” to the will of God. The above text can be substantiated with another one in the gospel of Mark, where Jesus promises him who leaves his parents and lands of all he had for the sake of the gospel even though persecution will not be an exception in this endeavor (Mk 10:29). It automatically follows that the greater family promised to the missionary in this case, is that which is composed of the members of the Christian communities looked after by him.

Another new aspect to the question of fellowship identified by Ratzinger is the different usage of the term brother in the parable of the last Judgment in the gospel of Mathew (25: 31-46). The judge in this case declares that the works of mercy done or not done to the needy were done for the Lord.<sup>106</sup> In this scene he identifies himself with the needy by referring to them as “the least of these my brethren” (Mt 25:40). All the needy in this case are brothers of Jesus without differentiation. Ratzinger, though, reminds us in this regard that Jesus does not imply in this parable that only the needy are his brothers, though he mostly sees himself in the poor and lowly.<sup>107</sup> Hence the brotherhood of Christ is founded here, not on free choice of community, but on that community which is based on lowliness and suffering. This scene is complemented by the answer Jesus gives in the parable of the Good Samaritan in the gospel of St. Luke (10:30-37). To the question “Who is my neighbor?” Ratzinger reminds us of Christ’s response that my neighbor is the first man I meet who is in need, for, as such; he is simply a brother of the master who is always present to me in the lowliest of men.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> J. RATZINGER, *The Meaning of Christian brotherhood*, 26-7.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, *The Meaning of Christian brotherhood*, 27-8.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, *The Meaning of Christian brotherhood*, 28.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, *The Meaning of Christian brotherhood*, 29.

All in all we can say that at the heart of Jesus' spirit of fellowship lies the driving principle of *agape* which is the love of God. As we have seen, this fellowship breaks all the barriers such as nationality, race, and religion among others. We realize that this *koinonia* is based on the common paternity of God. In other words, we can end with Ratzinger's emphasis on this note that "If, therefore, Christian brotherhood is to be vitally realized, both a vital knowledge of the fatherhood of God and a vital joining with Jesus Christ in a unity of grace are necessary."<sup>109</sup> Let us now look at fellowship in the Johannine corpus.

### 2.2.2 *The Johannine Perspective of Fellowship*

The exposition of the notion of *koinonia* has helped us to have a deeper insight into the nature of biblical fellowship. However there is a need to investigate one more part in this section before we make a final synthesis of the whole topic. The vertical and horizontal dimensions of communion we shall encounter in Acts and Paul have their further development in the Johannine literature. For Panikulam, "it remains the only text in the whole bible where a *koinonia* with the Father is mentioned."<sup>110</sup> Maletesta has come up with a plan that verifies how the whole Epistle of First John is constructed around fellowship as a major theme.<sup>111</sup>

To begin with, is the revelation of the Incarnate Son as the mediator of *koinonia*. For Thornton, the text of 1 John 1: 3 which must be read in the context of 1 John 1 :1-4, stands in strict parallel with the prologue of the fourth gospel (John. 1: 1- 18). Hence the verb speaks for the Incarnation, God's epiphany in the person of Christ.<sup>112</sup> The Son's mission, thus, is that of salvation for the whole human race and this is achieved through the liberation of all from sin, and

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<sup>109</sup> J. RATZINGER, *The Meaning of Christian brotherhood*, 45.

<sup>110</sup> G. PANIKULAM, *Koinonia in the New Testament*, 130.

<sup>111</sup> E. MALATESTA, *The Epistles of St. John*, 6-47.

<sup>112</sup> L.S. THORNTON, *The Common Life*, 162.

in turn giving divine life to all. The author of this text therefore does not only set Christ at the center of the divine human fellowship but also presents the Incarnate Son's soteriological aspect in its exposition of the criteria of *koinonia*. Hence Thornton is right when he asserts that "The essence of *koinonia* lies in the fact that communion between God and man exists in Christ."<sup>113</sup>

The second analysis now shifts to the Father as the initiator of fellowship. This divine enterprise leads to divine filiation as a result of conferral of life to all humanity through the Son. For Malatesta, the whole section of 1 John 2: 29 – 3: 10, attests to the central theme of divine filiation where the fellowship is considered in terms of father- children relationship (4:7 – 5:13) with the criteria of doing righteousness and avoiding sin.<sup>114</sup> Thus it becomes clear that according to I John, the Father sending His Son to the world initiates a fellowship with men and this initiative continues in the divine filiation and immanence which transforms and vitalizes the spirit of fellowship.

Panikulam identifies the third facet of this fellowship as the believers being heirs of communion through faith and love. "The two aspects stressed by the author when he mentions the commandment are faith and love. In 3: 23 he clarifies this 'this is the commandment that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another according to the commandment he gave us'. The mention of the connection between faith and love gets a detailed development in the third exposition of the criteria of fellowship (4:7 -5:3)".<sup>115</sup> This point is further confirmed by Malatesta when he says that, in 4: 12 the mutual love of the members of the community is the sign and result of the fact that God remains in them and his love has been

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<sup>113</sup> L.S. THORNTON, *The Common Life*, 158.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. E. MALATESTA, *The Epistles of St. John*, 21.

<sup>115</sup> G. PANIKULAM, *Koinonia in the New Testament*, 138.

perfected in them.<sup>116</sup> Therefore the believers inherit their *koinonia* from the Son, and act according to the demands of love which this revelation requires.

We cannot conclude the Johanneic corpus without recognizing the role of the Spirit in the development of fellowship. This is because the Spirit arouses faith and love in the believers, enabling them to respond positively to the vocation of communion. However, the Spirit of communion in this section also does not go on without hiccups. For Perkins “The appeals for *koinonia* in 1 and 2 John make it clear that the *koinonia* about which the author speaks is not a firmly established reality”.<sup>117</sup> The case that verifies this datum is that of division which could have resulted from the death of an elder, and affected the original fellowship in the Johannine letters. This led to a crisis of authority in which, according to Brown, it even led to the rejection of human teachers.<sup>118</sup> While concluding this part of John’s corpus, we can say that in addition to the Lucan and Pauline development of fellowship, John gives their view a deeper theocentric dimension. The mutual communion of the believers is brought to a *koinonia* with the Father and the Son, and by doing that 1 John has added to the theological depth of *koinonia*.<sup>119</sup> We now turn to the Acts of the Apostles.

### 2.2.3 *Koinonia in the Acts of the Apostles*

In the Acts of the Apostles we encounter the first praxis of *koinonia* in the life of the first believers. Gaillardetz acknowledges that, “The communal dimension of the Christian experience of *koinonia* is further reflected in Acts 2.42 in which the *koinonia* among the disciples is evident

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<sup>116</sup> E. MALATESTA, *Interiority*, 131.

<sup>117</sup> P. PERKINS, “Koinonia in 1 John 1: 3-7”, 636.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. R. E. BROWN, *Epistles*, 374- 76.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. G. PANIKULAM, *Koinonia in the New Testament*, 140.

in their sharing of all things in common.”<sup>120</sup> Thus “they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” (Acts 2:42, RSV). We realize in this case that this fellowship is propelled by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is because this feature becomes predominant among the first believers after Pentecost. Hence Hinnebusch affirms that, “their fellowship, or communion in one life, found its nourishment in the preaching of the word by the apostles and in the Eucharist.”<sup>121</sup> Again Fitzmyer notes that this fellowship also included another dimension of life and that was the communal ownership of goods among others. (Acts 4: 32b-35; 6:1).<sup>122</sup>

Panikulam insists that *koinonia* in the Acts of the Apostles can be seen from several viewpoints. In the first case we have Pentecost as the context in which this fellowship originates. This feast becomes a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. This makes it clear that as the new covenant is fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Christ, the community originating from this event must be called the community of the new covenant witnessed in the life of fellowship. The second viewpoint is that, this life of communion is an effect of the work of the Spirit in the community. This means that it is based on faith and finds its expression in cult, and its concrete realization in the sharing of material goods. Hence *koinonia* has a spiritual basis and a concrete expression of it in service (*diakonia*), which itself becomes witnessing (*Martyria*), a testimony for the salvation of all.<sup>123</sup>

Bridges also reminds us of a fact that should characterize the true *koinonia* as depicted in the life of the first Christian community we have seen in the Acts. He insists that it’s not about a socializing community, but it’s based on a deeper spiritual relationship.

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<sup>120</sup> R. R. GAILLARDT, “Communion/Koinonia”, 3.

<sup>121</sup> P. HINNEBUSCH, “Christian Fellowship in the Epistle to the Philippians”, 793.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. J. A. FITZMYER, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament*, 283.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. G. PANIKULAM, *Koinonia in the New Testament*, 129.

The first Christians of Acts 2 were not devoting themselves to social activities but to a relationship- a relationship that consisted of sharing together the very life of God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They realized that they had entered this relationship by faith in Jesus Christ, not by joining an organization. And they realized that their fellowship with God logically brought them into fellowship with one another. Through their union with Christ, they were formed into a spiritually organic community....<sup>124</sup>

The above words can remind us how the Christian fellowship is different from other secular organizations that form communities based on similar goals and objectives. It reminds us that Christian relationship goes deeper in forming communities based on faith in Jesus Christ. Of course, as Bridges confirms, it is not that we are united by common purpose that make us a community but rather that we share a common life in Christ.<sup>125</sup> We can therefore sum up this study in the Acts of the Apostles by acknowledging that communion with Christ is in turn the basis for communion among Christians.<sup>126</sup> What about in Saint Paul's Writings?

#### 2.2.4 *The Pauline Perspective on Koinonia*

In Pauline Literature, the perspective about fellowship shifts completely. It is generally accepted by many biblical scholars that it is Paul who actually predominantly employs this notion in the New Testament corpus. It now has a rich semantic field of meaning in Paul's writing.<sup>127</sup> We now begin with the Holy Spirit as the life-giving Principle of *koinonia*. Panikulam reminds us that, "For Paul, it is the presence of the Spirit in the community that makes the members of the community living members."<sup>128</sup> It is for this reason that Paul reminds the Corinthians in his first letter that, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's

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<sup>124</sup> J. BRIDGES, *True Community: The Biblical Practice of Koinonia*, 2.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. J. BRIDGES, *True Community: The Biblical Practice of Koinonia*, 2.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. M.W. RUPULGA, "Christian *Koinonia* Strengthens and Transforms Western Highlands Communal Life", 208.

<sup>127</sup> R. R. GAILLARDETZ, "Communion/Koinonia", 1.

<sup>128</sup> G. PANIKULAM, *Koinonia in the New Testament*, 72.

Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy and that temple you are." (1 Cor. 3:16-17, RSV).

The above mentioned aspect is further substantiated by Paul's insistence on the gifts or *charisma* conferred upon the community by the Holy Spirit. He insists that "To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7, RSV). Therefore it becomes clear also that the imagery employed by Paul in the same letter points to a fellowship of believers by the work of the Spirit. He insists that, just like the body has many parts whose functions are different, yet meant to lead to the wellbeing of the whole, so do the believers have different gifts and roles, yet meant for the good of the whole body of Christ.(1 Cor. 12:14-17). This communion does not segregate members based on race i.e. between Greeks, Jews, or classes like slaves or free, because all are meant to drink of the same Spirit. Therefore we agree with Panikulam when he stipulates that, "it is the Spirit that binds the Christians with Christ and among themselves."<sup>129</sup>

Having established the vertical dimension of the life of communion by the Spirit, Paul goes on to establish the horizontal dimension of *koinonia*. He advances this perspective in his letter to the Philippians.

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others (Phil 2: 1-4, RSV).

By this episode, Paul insists on the wellbeing of the community, and its own growth. To this growth the fellowship with the Spirit becomes the foundation and efficient cause. Hence, this

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<sup>129</sup> G. PANIKULAM, *Koinonia in the New Testament*, 72.

makes the horizontal dimension of the life of communion possible in the Christian community as a result of the work of the Spirit.<sup>130</sup> All in all, in this text Paul teaches us that, it is in the Spirit that we become partakers of Christ and thus share in the life of fellowship with one another.

We can say that in Philippians, when Paul urges the believers to be steadfast in one Spirit, he encourages them to participate in the gospel citizenship (Phil 1:17). To this we concur with Hinnebusch when he adds that, “there we have the essence of Christianity- heavenly citizenship, fellowship with the apostles and all the saints, unity of life with the Holy Trinity.”<sup>131</sup>

The other aspect of Pauline *koinonia* was in the collections. We see this in his two letters to the Romans and Galatians. In this brief passage of Romans (15: 25-28), we come to realize that the collections which were in the process of being done were meant for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. That the two regions of Macedonia and Achaia had participated in these collections, without being forced or coerced to do so, but out of their own generosity and that the entire act was in response to a spiritual indebtedness already incurred. Equally important was the fact that it was Paul himself who would deliver this collection.<sup>132</sup>

In Galatians on the other hand, Paul demands that “Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.” (Gal 6:6, RSV). This collection project points to a greater inner spiritual fellowship which united both the Gentiles and Jews. In other words it proved a great ecumenical tool, as well as an expression of *agape*; the love of God to those in need or charity. Johnson affirms this when he insists that the whole collection project was meant to symbolize the spiritual unity between the Gentile and the Jewish believers, as an effort which developed in response to one of the agreements made between Paul, James, John and Peter when

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<sup>130</sup> G. PANIKULAM, *Koinonia in the New Testament*, 77.

<sup>131</sup> P. HINNEBUSCH, “Christian Fellowship in the Epistle to the Philippians”, 797.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. G. PANIKULAM, *Koinonia in the New Testament*, 77.

they shook hands in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8-9, Gal 2:10).<sup>133</sup> This is because we can only realize the material needs of our poor brethren when we are connected to them spiritually. As McDermott affirms, “the obvious meaning is material help given to the ‘saints’, especially since the tone of the passage is paranelical. Nevertheless there may be overtones of the spiritual union of sufferings already considered.”<sup>134</sup>

The other aspect which Paul emphasizes in view of the life of communion is the Christocentric approach. This approach is meant for the believers to share in the fellowship of Jesus’ sufferings. This goal can only be reached by knowing Christ in his resurrection. We should not forget the fact that, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is primarily the work of the Father.<sup>135</sup> In the first letter to the Corinthians, the fellowship of God’s own Son, Jesus Christ, is the goal to which the Christian community in Corinth is called, (1 Cor. 1:9), though there is an indication that the believers in Corinth are still far from this call. In 2 Corinthians, the tone is different, because there is an indication of being comforted in sufferings and afflictions (2 Cor. 1: 3-7) and in (1 Cor. 1:7); the language used depicts a form of solidarity among the Corinthians in the sufferings of Paul.<sup>136</sup> This sharing in suffering will also lead to a sharing in the glory of Christ in his resurrection. Fitzmyer would take the power of resurrection as the power which raised Jesus Christ from the dead and which is present in him as a life-giving source for us. Thus he argues

The knowledge, then, that Paul seeks to attain, the knowledge that he regards as transforming the life of a Christian and his sufferings, must be understood as encompassing the full ambit of that power. It emanates from the Father, raises Jesus from the dead at his resurrection, endows him

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<sup>133</sup> Cf. L. T. JOHNSON, “Koinonia: diversity and unity in early Christianity”, 310.

<sup>134</sup> V. M. MCDERMOTT, “The Biblical Doctrine of Koinonia II”, 225.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. J. A. FITZMYER, “To Know Him and the Power of His Resurrection (Phil 3:10)”, 414.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. V. KOPERSKI, “Suffering, *Koinonia*, and Wisdom in 2 Corinthians”, 139-140.

with a new vitality and finally proceeds from him as the life-giving, vitalizing force of the new creation and of the new life that Christians in union with Christ experience and live.<sup>137</sup>

This same view is supported by Beare in his commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians.<sup>138</sup> Hence our analysis still stands that, the Trinity is the source of *koinonia* for the Christian community, with the Father as initiator, the Son as mediator and the Spirit as principle of the communal life among the believers.

Finally we also need to appreciate Paul's emphasis on the Eucharist as far as the life of fellowship among the believers is concerned. This element is so central in Pauline writings that failing to mention it will be denying the Pauline *koinonia* its foundation. In his first Epistle to the Corinthians Paul emphasizes the centrality of this theme in the lives of believers. "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." (1 Cor. 10: 16-17, RSV). In response to Weiss, who insists that it is superfluous to say that the community which had already lived long in Christ, can be called anew through the fellowship of bread and wine, Seesemann insists that Paul's thought is not static; for him the call to fellowship with Christ is not lived anew by the fellowship of Christ in the Lord's Supper. Dynamic thought is common in Paul; God who once called the faithful to the fellowship with His Son reassures them in the Lord's Supper of a fellowship with his Son also.<sup>139</sup> All in all we can conclude with Panikulam that after examining *koinonia* from the different angles, Paul presents it with a special rich theological content with special

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<sup>137</sup> J. A. FITZMYER, "To Know Him and the Power of His Resurrection (Phil 3:10)", 420.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. F. W. BEARE, *A commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians*, 122.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. H. SEESEMAN, *Der Begriff Koinonia*, 51.

applications to Christology and Ecclesiology.<sup>140</sup> Having examined Paul's perspective of communion, we are now on a better ground to give our concluding perspective to this biblical notion.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter we have been looking at the biblical foundation of the reality of *koinonia* from both the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament, we have looked at the genesis of the life of Fellowship in the creation account, where God's inner life of communion is passed on to human beings, and his command to the human beings to be fruitful and multiply to fill the earth. Then we have also observed how the Hebrew concept of corporate solidarity and personality was a depiction of the fellowship that was lived by the Israelites in the form of a horizontal dimension beginning with the rest of the Pentateuch. In addition, we highlighted how this theme was lived in the Hebrew tradition, as it runs through the Historical Books, the Wisdom and Poetic Literature, and finally what the Prophets themselves had to say about certain issues related to this life of communion.

In the New Testament on the other side we have explored the Synoptic Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Pauline Literature and the Johannine perspective on *koinonia*. What has stood out in the New Testament about communion is the fact that it does not originate in man but the Triune God. Neither is it a random coming together of men sharing similar interests and objectives, but rather a coming together of those whom God has called into this fellowship with himself through His Son in the Holy Spirit and in him with one another. The new life of fellowship is promulgated by Jesus Christ who establishes new relationships without considering

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<sup>140</sup> Cf. G. PANIKULAM, *Koinonia in the New Testament*, 108.

the old boundaries that separated humanity. In this section Paul has stood out more as an advocate of the goal of human existence as *koinonia* with the Son Jesus Christ. With this we can end by saying that, our study has indeed taken us through the entire bible in an attempt to understand the meaning of the fundamental call to the entire human race as *koinonia*. Let us now move on to give an anthropological foundation of fellowship from an African perspective in our third chapter.

## Chapter III

### *African Koinonia*

#### **Introduction**

So far, we have dealt with the Trinitarian *Koinonia* as the foundation of an existential phenomenon of human fellowship. We have also explored the biblical roots on which our theme for communion is based. Now in this chapter, we shall do a more anthropological exploration of the life of fellowship. We shall attempt to do this task in a two-tier approach that is connected. On the one level, we shall focus on the question of communion as lived in the African culture in general. Under this level, several realities that foster this endeavor will be examined. This will include, the *Ubuntu* concept originating from South Africa, the African palaver system and its usage in fostering the life of fellowship, the importance of a meal as a sign of togetherness and how the reality of work is perceived as a communal activity in Africa. In addition, more themes like marriage, family life, African celebrations, the rites of passage especially the initiation ceremonies, and of course death will be examined. On the other level, we shall narrow down to reflect on the *Nyoro* culture as a contextualization of our study as far as fellowship in Africa is concerned. While at this level more of the above themes will be concretized and furthermore, others will be developed as far as the *Banyoro* people are concerned. Among these will be the

concepts of hospitality, leadership and neighborhood. Before everything else therefore, let us explore how the South African concept of *Ubuntu* fosters the call to fellowship.

### **3.1 *Ubuntu and Koinonia***

The word *Ubuntu* comes from *mtu* which in Bantu languages means “person”. There are variations in pronunciation and spelling of this word among the Bantu. The Bantu of Uganda and western Kenya use the word *muntu*. Bantu is the plural of *muntu*. By adding the prefix “ba” (plural) we get *bantu* which means “human beings”. *Muntu* means a being in relationship: hence a human being is a living being, possessing a life relationship. The root *utu* (Swahili) or *obuntu* (in many East African Bantu languages) or *ubuntu* (South African Bantu languages) means “humanity”, “humanness”, “humaneness” or “kindheartedness.”<sup>141</sup> It also means that which gives life meaning. For that reason a person who is aggressive and unkind to others is often referred to as a person without *ubuntu*. Bantu also refers to African ethnic groups with linguistic bonds. These ethnic groups are found in Sub – Sahara Africa, from Cameroon east across central and eastern Africa to southern Africa. Mogobe Ramose and Augustine Shutte, perhaps the world’s leading scholars on *ubuntu*, rightly point out that the notion of identity through relationship is central to the African world-view. The African statement that describes personal identity is *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (a person is a person through other persons). At the heart of this statement is the Bantu concept of *ubuntu*.<sup>142</sup> In short, to be truly human means being in relationship with other persons who give form and substance to one’s true humanity.

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<sup>141</sup> Cf. M. RAMOSE, *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*, 49.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. A. SHUTTE, *Philosophy for Africa*, 46.

In Bell's own words "the concept of *Ubuntu* is tied to one's personal identity ...and is intrinsic to this 'community-oriented' outlook".<sup>143</sup> This concept in a way entails the best intrinsic human values that build community. At its heart lie values like generosity, friendship, brotherhood, forgiveness and love, among others. It can thus be equated to African humanism, African socialism and African communitarianism. In fact, Boraine credits South Africa for having employed *Ubuntu* in order to come to terms with its past by "holding in balance of (sic) the political realities....and an ancient philosophy [*Ubuntu*] which seeks unity and reconciliation rather than revenge and punishment."<sup>144</sup> The past of South Africa here refers to apartheid and how the perpetrators of injustice were dealt with. Archbishop Desmond Tutu who was on "The Truth and Reconciliation Commission" says that the underlying idea why South Africans chose reconciliation rather than retributive justice (like The Hague) was *Ubuntu*. He says: "Let us conclude this chapter by pointing out that ultimately this third way of amnesty (here he refers to reconciliation) was consistent with a central feature of the African *Weltsanschauung* – what we know in our languages as *ubuntu*, in the Nguni group of languages, or *botho*, in Sotho languages. What is it that constrained so many to choose to forgive rather than demand retribution, to be so magnanimous and ready to forgive rather than wreak revenge?"<sup>145</sup> Tutu's answer to the question is *Ubuntu*.

Moreover, this idea of *Ubuntu* has its very important manifestation in the area of traditional African jurisprudence as restorative justice. Tutu further illustrates this element

I contend that there is another kind of justice, restorative justice, which was characteristic of traditional African jurisprudence. Here the central concern is not retribution or punishment but, in the spirit of *Ubuntu*, the healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships. This kind of justice seeks to rehabilitate both the victim and the perpetrator,

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<sup>143</sup> R.H. BELL, *Understanding African Philosophy*, 87.

<sup>144</sup> A. BORAINÉ, *A Country Unmasked*, 423.

<sup>145</sup> D. TUTU, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 31.

who should be given the opportunity to be reintegrated into the community he or she has injured by his or her offence.<sup>146</sup>

In this text we realize how the spirit of *Ubuntu* is a source of reconciliation among African people. Moreover, it is true that the emphasis and deployment of the above process is what brought about a high degree of South Africa's peace restoration. It enabled the South African people to come to terms with their past and reconciliation with their previous oppressors into unity to forge the way forward. To Braithwaite therefore "Restorative justice is about restoring victims, restoring offenders and restoring communities."<sup>147</sup> And for De Lange, it is justice in its broadest sense...a collective justice aimed at nation-building and reconciliation.<sup>148</sup>

*Ubuntu* also unmask the tension between the African "I am because we are" as opposed to the Western Cartesian "I think therefore I am".<sup>149</sup> This reveals how *Ubuntu* seeks to reveal the communitarian aspect of Africans as opposed to the Western modernistic individualism which we are trying to address in this work. There is need to rediscover the wealth of this ancient African wisdom in order to address the selfish interests that have eaten up the contemporary culture. This fact is seen in the modern lifestyle of relativism, the desire for absolute autonomy from any official structures and it is also manifested in the justification of subjective truth at the expense of objective truth. However, while involved in this project of rediscovering the African *Ubuntu*, it is important to avoid the danger of politicizing it for the selfish interests of independence or cultural sovereignty. Praeg cautions us in this endeavor: "The paradox emerges when *Ubuntu qua* philosophy of our interdependence (our shared humanity) is used for the political ends of demonstrating independence or cultural sovereignty...in suspending the

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<sup>146</sup> D. TUTU, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 51.

<sup>147</sup> A. BORAINÉ, *A Country Unmasked*, 426.

<sup>148</sup> J. DE LANGE, "The Historical Context" 24.

<sup>149</sup> L. PRAEG, *A Report on Ubuntu*, 89.

relationality that makes it necessary and possible to think Ubuntu, we contradict the very meaning of Ubuntu.”<sup>150</sup> we therefore have to keep in mind this tension.

Waldmeir reminds us thus, “In our understanding, when someone doesn’t forgive, we say that person does not have *Ubuntu*. That is to say he is not really human.”<sup>151</sup> The implication in this statement is thus if one has no *Ubuntu*, that is, love, forgiveness, generosity etc., such a person has a moral deficiency. In supporting this argument, Bell insists that “this is true, in part, because of the context of community in South Africa and the qualities of moral character that flow from this more communitarian way of being.”<sup>152</sup> On the other hand however, we cannot fail to acknowledge the fact that this notion has been forgotten in some African communities on several occasions. To this fact, Tutu challenges us with questions for reflection. He insists that it doesn’t always happen, of course. Where was *Ubuntu* in the Belgian Congo in the early 1960s? Why did the Rwandans forget *Ubuntu* in 1994 and instead destroy one another in the most awful genocide...?”<sup>153</sup> With this debate the answer which flows from Tutu is worth of attention. He agrees that honoring *Ubuntu* is not just a mechanical, automatic and inevitable process.<sup>154</sup>

We cannot conclude this subsection without emphasizing that at the heart of *Ubuntu* rests the attitude of self-sacrifice for the benefit of others. Gyekye puts it clearly: “The moral life, which essentially involves paying regard to the needs, interests, and well-being of others, already, implies self-sacrifice and loss, that is, loss of something- one’s time, money, strength and so on.”<sup>155</sup> Such generosity of self-sacrifice promotes the welfare of others and for Gyekye it

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<sup>150</sup> L. PRAEG, *A Report on Ubuntu*, 91.

<sup>151</sup> P. WALDMEIR, *Anatomy of a Miracle*, 268.

<sup>152</sup> R.H. BELL, *Understanding African Philosophy*, 87.

<sup>153</sup> D. TUTU, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 36.

<sup>154</sup> C.f. D. TUTU, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 36.

<sup>155</sup> K. GYEKYE, *Tradition and Modernity*, 73.

should be considered as a basic moral responsibility the way it is perceived in many African societies.

As we draw towards the end of this subsection, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of *Ubuntu* as far as the life of communion is concerned without pointing out its challenging values to individualism. In this regard, we concur with Deleuze that Descartes's axiom 'I think therefore I am' not only explains what thinking means but also the conceptual persona who is an idiot, a private thinker; one who does not think or act with or alongside other people or a tradition as such.<sup>156</sup> Contrary to this, Ngoenha insists that "The savior, not content with liberating the self through the act of self-recognition, sees in Ubuntu the additional potential to free the rest of the world from its misplaced infatuation with individualism."<sup>157</sup>

In summing up our investigation on *Ubuntu*, we concur with the South African proverb *I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am*<sup>158</sup>. Moreover it is a clear manifestation of the position that the spirit of fellowship holds in the African traditional society. This brings us to another pertinent issue.

### ***3.2 African Kinship and Koinonia***

The practice of African Kinship depicts a deep sense of community-living in Africa. It derives its very existence from humans and its purpose is directed towards them. To this fact Mbiti remarks

The deep sense of Kinship, with all it implies, has been one of the strongest forces in traditional African life....it is kinship which controls social relationships between people in a given community....indeed, this sense of kinship binds together the entire life of the 'tribe', and is even

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<sup>156</sup>Cf. G. DELEUZE – F. GUATTARI, *What is Philosophy?*, 62.

<sup>157</sup> S.E. NGOENHA, "Ubuntu: A New Model of Global Justice", 125.

<sup>158</sup> J. S. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 108-9.

extended to cover animals, plants and non-living objects through the ‘totemic’ system. Almost all the concepts connected with human relationship can be understood and interpreted through the kinship system.<sup>159</sup>

The above attitude acts as a foundation for a wider bond of relationships that foster the life of communion. It is on this basis that Njoku insists on communalism being central in African social consciousness. This is because it is a cultural model that shapes the individual’s self-vision, relationship with the ‘other’ and the entire cosmos.<sup>160</sup> The kinship system therefore is like a vast network stretching horizontally in every direction, to embrace everybody in any given local group. This implies that all people are related in one way or another; everybody is related to someone else. According to Mbiti, when two strangers meet in an African village, the first step is to sort out how they may be related to one another in order to refer to each other in that capacity.<sup>161</sup>

The other dimension of Kinship is the vertical dimension of relationship. This refers to the ancestors, and those not yet born. This practice is usually perpetuated through genealogies which connect individuals in the ‘Sasa’ (present) period to those in the ‘Zamani’ (past) period. Hence, “Through genealogies, those who are in the Zamani and those who are in the Sasa periods become ‘contemporaries’ in the timeless rhythm of human life.”<sup>162</sup> It is from this foundation that organizational divisions into clans have evolved among different people, into tribes, clans, families, households and finally to individuals. The most important advantage that accrues from the clan system is the provision of a closer co-operation between peoples, especially in the time of need. This is true in cases for instance, if one finds oneself in

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<sup>159</sup> J. S. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 104.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. U.J. NJOKU, “African Communalism”, 59.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. J. MBITI, *African religions and philosophy*, 104.

<sup>162</sup> J. S. MBITI, *African Traditional Religion*, 105.

difficulties, it is common for one to call on the help of his clan members for help i.e. in payment of a fine for damage of property, in finding enough bride-price to exchange for a wife, in finding school fees for students in the universities.

It is therefore proper to argue that in both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the African kinship discussed above, there is a revelation of the traces of how the Trinitarian *koinonia* is manifested among African peoples. This is the reason why Opoku argues that African communalism has “a religious foundation, and goes beyond the limits of its visible members to include God, often regarded as the first grand ancestor of the community.....the divinities who sustain the social institutions as part of their assigned responsibilities from the creator, also form part of the community.”<sup>163</sup> This fact is further substantiated by Bujo and Agu whereby the former insists that the African participates in a community life in which he or she shares in a “common family-hood with others -those who are dead and those who are to be born.”<sup>164</sup> Whereas the latter adds that the African does not only participate in communion with fellow human beings but with spiritual realities that permeate the entire societal fabric, making existence unthinkable without this communion.<sup>165</sup> In other words we can end this part of our discussion by concurring with Bujo that each member of the community in Africa is bestowed with the “inalienable responsibility for protecting and prolonging the life of the community in all its aspects”.<sup>166</sup>

It would be unfair however to finish our study on this notion of kinship without looking at its extreme, which many times has endangered the call to communion rather than foster it. Moreover it is true that it has led to the evil of tribalism which is characteristic of African culture

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<sup>163</sup> K.A. OPOKU, “Communalism and Community in the African Heritage”, 489.

<sup>164</sup> B. BUJO, *Foundations of An African Ethic*, 86.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. C.C. AGU, *Secularization in Igboland*, 228.

<sup>166</sup> B. BUJO, *African Christian Morality at the Age of Inculturation*, 101.

even in modern times. This is because, though African culture is based on community, this community is not all embracing. This is due to the fact that traditionally speaking, some Africans could only recognize as “neighbors” people from their own family, clan and ethnic group and no one else. This sense of community thus becomes more partial and exclusive. It is on this ground that our study aims at equipping African communion with the Christian flavor that will make it more inclusive. There is no doubt that we shall continue exploring this fact in this same chapter. But for now we turn to the importance of the African palaver system in fostering the life of fellowship.

### ***3.3 The African Palaver and Fellowship***

In the African councils, it is common to engage in long dialogical talks known as *palaver* which deal with various community issues. It is important to note the fact that, this African procedure is opposed to the western procedure which entails technical argumentative talks used in legal suits. The *palaver* system therefore entertains casual arguments and counterarguments in a cordial way for the sake of clarifying the issues in question. For Bujo, there is need to appreciate the significance of the “word” in black Africa, if one is to understand well the *palaver* system. “In this connection the importance of the ‘word’ must be emphasized. The ‘word’ establishes the foundations of the community and causes it to grow, because it means life. The ‘word’, however, can mean death, as well, and can destroy the community. The ‘word’ has power.”<sup>167</sup> Hence from this fact, the “word” contrary to western views plays a key role not due to its rationality but because it is powerful in bringing either life or death. In fact it never remains

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<sup>167</sup> B. BUJO, *The Ethical Dimension of Community*, 70.

without consequences to the community.<sup>168</sup> Therefore its effect depends on how it is uttered, the intention of the person who utters it, and the way it is received and digested.<sup>169</sup> Since the effects of the “word” go back to the community, the validity of an uttered “word” has to face the test of the community. It is on this ground that the community requires a *palaver*, as an arena for the “word” to be uttered; and where the process of chewing and digesting it begins. It is also important to recall that the community emphasized here includes both the living and dead members, whose will are respected in the process of the *palaver*.<sup>170</sup>

While examining the use of the *palaver*, the importance of dialogue as a tool to enhance communal living in Africa cannot go unappreciated. This is due to the fact that this approach is one of the means through which the African communities are strengthened, particularly in time of need, and most specifically in resolving tensions, toward reconciliation. Bujo emphasizes the fact that there are several types of *palaver*, depending on the nature of the issue in need of consideration, out of which three genres could be discerned: these include: the *palaver* in the praxis of healing, the family *palaver* and the *suprafamilial* or administrative *palaver*.

We begin thus with the *palaver* in the praxis of healing which rotates on African health care. In this regard, sickness is seen not only as a result of an infection or a general body weakness but also as a result of sin which is understood as a breach of a community norm or a conflict with one’s kin or ancestor. “Admittedly, this *palaver* begins with the dialogue between the doctor and the patient, provided that the latter is still capable of conversation. By means of questions and replies...”<sup>171</sup> this case applies to the dialogue between the patient and the living community. However there is need to note that the *palaver* may also take a form of nonverbal

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<sup>168</sup> Cf. B. BUJO, *The Ethical Dimension of Community*, 70.

<sup>169</sup> This tendency explains the emphasis that is given to the oral over the written “word” in Africa.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. B. BUJO, *Foundations of an Africa Ethic*, 69.

<sup>171</sup> B. BUJO, *Foundations of an Africa Ethic*, 69.

dialogue in the communicative community. This is mainly between the living members of the community and the ancestors. “Thus, a patient who relates his concerns at the grave of his deceased mother and asks her for forgiveness is not carrying on a monologue; the grave is a symbol which represents the deceased woman herself, and this nonverbal presence summons the patient to ‘unpack’ the burden of all his problems and thus come out of his shell.”<sup>172</sup> In other words, while the patient is being medically attended to, the community gets deeply involved in consulting the ancestors through sacrifices and prayers on one hand and in discussions in view of uncovering the occasion of conflict. The patient in this case is not left alone in his suffering but rather the community suffers with him.<sup>173</sup> Also at the end of the process, the individuals became aware of their responsibility for their condition, to the extent that they had incurred guilt vis-a-vis their neighbors.<sup>174</sup>

The family *palaver* also deserves special attention. As a matter of principle, serious family issues are dealt with in a *palaver* for a better discretion. In this regard, clan representatives from the respective households gather. The members are the elders known for their wisdom and knowledge of the community tradition, and in particular, in discerning the will of the ancestors.<sup>175</sup> It is to be noted however that, although the wisdom of the ancestors is important in these discussions, the *palaver* system does not take their will *ad verbum*. What is being followed is their *spirit*; as can be found in their words and deeds in the interest of the entire family.

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<sup>172</sup> B. BUJO, *Foundations of an Africa Ethic*, 69.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. E.J. LARTEY, “Two Healing Communities in Africa” 43.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. P.B. OKOT, *Africa’s Cultural Revolution*, 88.

<sup>175</sup> Thus: B. BUJO, *Foundations of an Africa Ethic*, 69, insists, is necessary because, in order to keep the family together and give it its required dynamism, the ‘anamnetic dimension’ is necessary. This is the ability to recall the way the ancestors tackled the same issues in the past, and preparing the way for the future progeny.

The third genre is the administrative *palaver*. This involves the life of a larger group than the individual family or clan communities. It has an official political character and is related to a trial in the courts of law. Participants are those from the village or regional council of elders. It also involves the president who may be a chief, an elder or king who leads the proceedings. The *palaver* thus takes several days depending on the issue being handled. These issues include conflict resolution, difficulties that require dispensation of traditional regulation, or a serious disease that defeats the normal treatment. This practice reflects the value that community life has for an African, whereby within this society, the wrong done to a member of the same society is viewed with great consternation.<sup>176</sup> It is also the reason why in many African cultures there is no vocabulary for *uncle, aunt, niece, nephew* and *cousin*. All are fathers, mothers, brothers or sisters.<sup>177</sup> All in all at the end of the *palaver* process, there must be a sort of celebration depending on the issue at hand. Taking the issue of conflict for instance, there is a shaking of hands at the end, and a roundtable meal is shared. It is of course important for us to bring this *palaver* discussion to a halt so that we can consider another matter of equal importance as far as the life of fellowship is concerned in the African context.

### ***3.4 The African Meal and the Life of Communion***

Among the African major themes which express this fact of *koinonia*, is the importance accorded to food or the meal as a communal event. For Okafor

In traditional African culture, whenever there is food to be taken, everyone present is invited to participate even if the food was prepared for far less number of people without anticipating the

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<sup>176</sup> Cf. C. ACHEBE, *Things Fall Apart*, 86-7.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. N. MANDELA, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 10.

arrival of visitors. It would be a height of incredible bad manners for one to eat anything however small, without sharing it with anyone else present, or at least expressing the intention to do so<sup>178</sup>

The above text highlights how important the meal is in fostering the bond of communion among the African people. Above all, we can say that food cuts across all the different African dimensions of life i.e. hospitality, work, marriage, celebration and solidarity. One Sukuma Riddle goes thus “*I have a riddle. ‘Let it come’. ‘At the sound of the alarm nobody is afraid to go?’... (Answer), ‘Food.’*” This riddle is employed to imply how people are attracted to the sound of the alarm of the invitation of food.<sup>179</sup> This is complemented by one of the proverbs that “*The Sorghum in the stomach gives us the strength to farm.*”<sup>180</sup> Firstly, this proverb highlights the interconnection between food and work in Africa. It is from the food eaten together as a community that Africans are able to gain the energy to enable them to work hard, especially in tilling the land. There is need here not to underscore the plural usage of the article “us” in this proverb which is a clear indication of the communal awareness of food in African society.

Secondly the importance of food in building relationships is highlighted by Mbinda.<sup>181</sup> He sees eating together as a depiction of a relationship. Thus he stipulates that a meal is perhaps the most basic and most ancient symbol of friendship, love and unity. Food and drink taken together in common are obvious signs that life is shared. For him, it is unusual for people to eat alone in the African context. Anyone who does so is either a witch or a wizard. A meal is a communal affair. The family normally eats together since eating together is a sign of being

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<sup>178</sup> F.C. OKAFOR, *Africa at Crossroads*, 23.

<sup>179</sup> It is based on the African custom of the *yowe* people which is a loud shout of danger. For instance if a lion was seen in the neighborhood, this alarm would be made and many people would remain in doors for fear of the lion. Yet when the alarm for food was made, everyone is ready for food and no one is afraid. Instead of the host saying “welcome to the food”, he will give this riddle and everyone responds “food”.

<sup>180</sup> Both the above proverb and riddle is from the *Sukuma* people of Tanzania. For the proverb is mainly used during times of farming and eating. It is said that when the farmers are working hard in their fields and start feeling hungry, they use this expression.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. M. MBINDA, “The Eucharist and the Family”, 2.

accepted to share life and equality.<sup>182</sup> The meal is therefore a strong factor in strengthening the bond of communion.

To bring out further the centrality of food in the life of African fellowship is also its sacredness. This is expressed by another *Sukuma* proverb, *when you arrived the chief had already gone*.<sup>183</sup> It is about a person who arrives at a house and finds that the people have already eaten.<sup>184</sup> This implies that food was also treasured as a sacred dimension of life. Up until today it is a taboo to greet people if one finds them eating, because they are talking to their “chief.” This also emphasizes the importance and even the sacredness, of eating a meal together.

As we stipulated above, food cuts across the different dimensions of life in an African context. We cannot end this study without acknowledging its importance in the African celebrations. To this fact Mbinda emphasizes that “Occasionally there are times when the daily rhythm of the families in a community is interrupted for the celebration of birth, marriage, initiations and thanksgiving rites. These celebrations call for a feast. At such a feast the symbolism of a meal is much more elaborate and therefore it is a meal on a much larger scale.”<sup>185</sup> This implies that the meal stretches the spirit of fellowship to include a wider level of the whole community, not only the family as a nuclear part of society. In Nigeria during the celebration of the new yam festival, “Yam foo-foo and vegetable soup were the chief foods in the celebration. So much of it was cooked that, no matter how heavily the family ate or how

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<sup>182</sup> Cf. M. MBINDA, “The Eucharist and the Family”, 2.

<sup>183</sup> For C. HEALEY – D. SYBERTS, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, 255, the proverb is based on the traditional story of the *Sukuma* that when a chief met people in a meeting they would all stand up and greet the chief but when he found them eating it was a taboo to stand up and greet him. If they did, he would forbid them by responding to them that he is not their chief but *Ugali* (Food) is, it takes care of your life and mine. It is therefore not good to glorify chief than food.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. C. HEALEY – D. SYBERTS, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, 255.

<sup>185</sup> M. MBINDA, “The Eucharist and the Family”, 3.

many friends and relations they invited from neighboring villages, there was always a huge quantity of food left over at the end of the day”<sup>186</sup>

In a nutshell we can say that since food as shared in the form of a meal pervades all the African social strata, it is therefore the pivot point of both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of *koinonia*. The former being revealed in its sacredness i.e. connection with the divine and the latter being revealed in the fostering of human relationships. Having thus ended on this note, it is better now to examine the theme of work and its relationship with *koinonia*.

### ***3.5 Human Work and Koinonia in Africa***

Human work is “as old as people and their life on earth”,<sup>187</sup> so goes the words of Pope John Paul II. In fact, it “accords with God’s will” (G.S. 34) and it is a mandate from God to the human person. Thus, it is in line with God’s universal plan; a plan not only for the human person himself, but for creation in general. In Africa on the other hand, work became a strong vehicle of enhancing community life. In fact, this very fact of African community attitude to work made it impossible to have beggars in the ‘clan-vital’<sup>188</sup>. Okafor concurs with this view when he specifies: “When a job had to be done, the whole community turned out with supplies and music and proceeded to sing and dance its way through to the successful conclusion of each particular chore. In this way work was converted into a pleasurable productive pastime.”<sup>189</sup> Generally speaking this spirit of goodwill and brotherly atmosphere, normally inspired and sustained

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<sup>186</sup> C. ACHEBE, *Things Fall Apart*, 26.

<sup>187</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Laborem Exercens*, 9.

<sup>188</sup> For Emeka, “african\_cultural\_vaules.pdf”, 2, a clan vital is a living clan: it is a community where real life is assured, where one can suffer neither social nor cultural alienation. It is a clan that is alive because life in it is human and humane.

<sup>189</sup> F.C. OKAFOR, *Africa at Crossroads*, 22.

during the work periods, by music justifies its usage. Most important to stress however is the discipline of solidarity that it enhanced.

Moreover for Obiechina, whether the musical situation is meant to provide entertainment or is created for ritual and religious reasons, the ultimate effect seem to be the same: to bring the community together.<sup>190</sup> In fact for Pobe, “African communication and organization is based on a ‘communalistic ontology’”<sup>191</sup> For him, “A West African equivalent of Descartes’ well known formula should be *cognatus ergo sum*<sup>192</sup>, i.e, I am related by birth therefore I am. This means, people understand themselves on a fundamental level as being part of, and actually being depended on a network of relationships...”<sup>193</sup> Kunhiyop helps us identify two implications regarding work ethics from the above datum. First the community defines the rules and taboos guiding such things as war, farming, leadership, hunting and other work-related activities for the members of such community. The principle is that the common good takes precedence over the individual good. Secondly, work becomes a social responsibility, not solely economic.<sup>194</sup> Thus, no African works alone. He works with others, shares and enjoys the fruits of work with others.<sup>195</sup>

From the above regard, it becomes clear that human work is a platform for Africans to express the spirit of fellowship. By fostering the common good, it reveals the image of God that exists in every human being. This practice needs to be safeguarded and respected everywhere

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<sup>190</sup> Cf. E. OBIECHINA, *Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel*, 58.

<sup>191</sup> W. KAHL, “Human Dignity in an Intercultural Perspective”, 9.

<sup>192</sup> This axiom is of course contrasted with that of Descartes *Cogito ergo sum*; I think therefore I am which encourages the spirit of individualism and is so characteristic of the western mentality.

<sup>193</sup> W. KAHL, “Human Dignity in an Intercultural Perspective”, 9.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. S.W. KUNHIYOP, *African Christian Ethics*, 24.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. E. A. AJIBADE, “African Traditional Work Ethics and the Challenges of Decent Work Agenda”, 4.

and at all times because it is where human dignity resides. This brings us into another pertinent issue and that is the African family.

### ***3.6 Communion in African Marriage***

According to Bujo, Africans have a worldview of their own and lay emphasis on some values that western tradition does not. He emphasizes that marriage is important for the survival of all humanity.<sup>196</sup> For this reason marriage becomes a strong institution in Africa due to the strong influence it has on humanity in general. According to Mbiti, “Marriage is a complex affair with economic, social and religious aspects which often overlap so firmly that they cannot be separated from one another.”<sup>197</sup> For the African People therefore, it is an acceptable social structure for transmitting life so highly valued that it is actually regarded as an honorable noble thing.<sup>198</sup> There is also no doubt that the community in Africa plays a key role as far as marriage is concerned. This section will examine the relationship between the African view of marriage and the influence of the community on it.

To begin with as far as the communitarian aspect of marriage from the African point of view is concerned, Bujo insists that Marriage in Africa is not a matter for the individual but of the whole community. He stipulates “the marriage integrates a couple into their community so that it is possible to say that, in black Africa, marriage is an alliance or covenant, not only between two individuals but between two families and then into the broader community thereby

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<sup>196</sup> Cf. B. BUJO, *Plea for Change of Models for Marriage*, 17.

<sup>197</sup> J. S. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 133.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. V.C. LIMA, “Marriage as Understood in the African Context: Continuity and Change”, 151.

including and connecting two clans or tribes.”<sup>199</sup> The whole process of marriage in its stages therefore is characterized by the communal dimension.

In regard to this aspect, Hata remarks “For the episcopate of Zaire, any grasp of what African marriage means implies a correct understanding of the basic features of *muntu*, the human person, a being at once personal and communitarian.”<sup>200</sup> This fact solidifies the reality of the extended family in the African society. It follows that since the person is essentially connected to other members i.e. family, clan, tribe, village among others, marriage also is a communal reality. “‘*Muntu*’ is essentially a member and not a fragment, and is defined by membership of such and such a lineage or extended family”.<sup>201</sup> This relatedness has both the vertical and horizontal dimensions. The former includes the relationship with ancestors, i.e. dead members of the family and the latter includes the relationship with the living members of the family.<sup>202</sup> This communal dimension does not however, absorb the individual into the community. In fact far from being dissolved in the community, the individual is the basis of the community and the element which makes it possible.<sup>203</sup>

In addition to the above the African *koinonia* in marriage is still substantiated in the two dimensions of the vertical and horizontal. This is true in that the former does not only include ancestors, but God the creator of marriage as well. This is what makes marriage to be spiritual in the African culture. This same fact depicts the Africans’ view of marriage as a covenant which unites together not only human beings in community but the community on earth and that of the

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<sup>199</sup> B. BUJO, *Plea for Change of Models for Marriage*, 96.

<sup>200</sup> M.T. HATA, “African Marriage: Personal and Communitarian” 35.

<sup>201</sup> M.T. HATA, “African Marriage: Personal and Communitarian” 36.

<sup>202</sup> Thus: M.T. HATA, “African Marriage: Personal and Communitarian” 36, sees this to be two faces of the same family i.e. the visible to as limited to this world and the invisible which is beyond the grave. This makes the family to have a cosmic dimension..

<sup>203</sup> M.T. HATA, “African Marriage: Personal and Communitarian” 35.

departed. According to Beller, “Marriage is not simply a human or natural institution: it is clearly a cultural and spiritual unit, which is at the basis of the religious, economic and social life of the society.”<sup>204</sup> The spiritual dimension of marriage is very prevalent in the African understanding of marriage. Kenyatta adds to this fact when he stipulates “Nobody is an isolated individual but everybody is a member of a family group... His life is founded on this fact spiritually and economically, just as much as biologically...”<sup>205</sup> This spiritual dimension of marriage is further illustrated by Mbiti when he considers it to be the focus of existence. It is the point where all members of a given community<sup>206</sup> meet. Indeed all dimensions of time meet there, and in it the life drama of history is repeated, renewed and revitalized.<sup>207</sup>

On this ground Africans see divorce as not compatible with married life since it will undo the covenant between the communities<sup>208</sup> that was brought into being by the marriage. Mbiti reminds us that divorce<sup>209</sup> is the most painful of all marriage problems. Whatever the reasons are, divorce is a grave scar in the life of the partners, their children and, relatives and friends.<sup>210</sup> In this regard Magesa sees Marriage as “the acceptable social structure for transmitting life, the life that preserves the vital force of humans, families and clans.”<sup>211</sup> Churu has helped us identify other values common to the African tradition as far as *koinonia* in marriage is concerned. Firstly it forms a uniting link in the rhythm of life. Secondly it builds family, enabling the person to

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<sup>204</sup> R. BELLER, *Life, Person and Community in Africa*, 19.

<sup>205</sup> J. KENYATTA, *Facing Mount Kenya*, 309.

<sup>206</sup> For Mbiti, this community entails the departed members (ancestors), the living and those who are not yet born.

<sup>207</sup> Cf. J.S. MBITI, *African religions and philosophy*, 133.

<sup>208</sup> Thus: B. BUJO, *The Ethical Dimension of Community*, 94, insists here that marriage is not a contract but an alliance, even a covenant between two groups, yes, between two communities.

<sup>209</sup> For J. S. MBITI, *Love and Marriage in Africa*, 210, Divorce is the undoing of all that marriage means and should fulfill.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. J.S. MBITI, *Love and Marriage in Africa*, 209-10.

<sup>211</sup> L. MAGESA, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, 110.

integrate in the community. Thirdly it establishes new bonds in the community.<sup>212</sup> This it does by bringing people together- in and beyond the families immediately involved.

In our conclusion to this section we can concur with Caramazza that whether in Africa or in any other part of the world, the traditional types of families have been greatly altered as the world advances technologically, economically and morally.<sup>213</sup> However despite this fact, we cannot fail to appreciate the greatest value played by fellowship or community life as far as the African family and marriage are concerned. Let us now talk about the African celebrations.

### ***3.7 Fellowship in African Celebrations***

Since the African social life is pervaded by the sense of community and communion<sup>214</sup>, celebrations are not an exception to this rule. Indeed this sense of fellowship manifests itself in various involvements for community harmony and individual well-being. This spirit starts from the cradle and continues to the grave. John Paul II reminds us of this fact: “It is unthinkable to celebrate a feast without the participation of the whole village.”<sup>215</sup> As we remarked above, this shows how indeed the celebration of African peoples can foster the spirit of brotherhood among the people.

In traditional African culture celebration is an important part of life. The Baganda people of Uganda have a saying that, *when there is a feast everyone is welcome*. At local feasts there is

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<sup>212</sup> Cf. G.CARAMAZZA – B. CHURU, ed., *African Family Today*, 141.

<sup>213</sup> Cf. G.CARAMAZZA – B. CHURU, ed., *African Family Today*, 18.

<sup>214</sup> For K. GYEKYE, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought*, 154, ensuring the welfare and interests of each member of society- the essential meaning of Akan humanism – can hardly be accomplished outside the communal system. This reality is illustrated by the Akan proverb “The prosperity or well-being of man depends upon his fellow man”.

<sup>215</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 43.

always room for one more.<sup>216</sup> Africans celebrate several events in life. These range from the arrival of visitors, weddings<sup>217</sup>, and harvest times among other feasts. The celebration mood is also characterized by food, drinks, music and dancing. Characteristic of these celebrations is also lack of invitations because everyone is welcome since feasts are for the entire community. To this fact Ambe insists “the feeling of togetherness among the people surpasses all forms of formal invitations.”<sup>218</sup> Hence excluding people is seen as a very bad attitude; no one is excluded during feasts.

For Healey this practice combines the African values of personal relationships, sharing, community, and hospitality among others. The custom witnesses to the core value of maintaining relationships. Therefore the amount of time spent, the personal discomfort, and the work that is left behind are all secondary to the community event.<sup>219</sup> In other words the person comes first in all circumstances. In regard to how the personal relationship is primary to the attitudes and actions of many Africans, Kabongo explains that the African lives and wants personal relationships. It is on this basis that he often fails to make a decision for fear of displeasing someone. Hence he does not make precise plans in order to accommodate everyone.<sup>220</sup>

All in all we can say that African value attached to celebration<sup>221</sup> is not only a clear manifestation of the Trinitarian *koinonia*, but it is also its effect as far as it is a true call for

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<sup>216</sup> Cf. J. HEALEY – D. SYBERTS, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, 180.

<sup>217</sup> C.V. LIMA, “Impact of African Indigenous Cultural Values...” 150, insists that the wedding ceremonies and festivals are a custom that vary from people to people and are done in different ways. However generally speaking, feasting and celebrations follow the wedding (“Impact of African Indigenous Cultural Values...” 150.)

<sup>218</sup> J. AMBE, *Meaningful Celebration* . . . ., 14.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. C. HEALEY – D. SYBERTS, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, 181.

<sup>220</sup> B. KABONGO, *A Fifth Gospel* in Healey, 166.

<sup>221</sup> J. HEALEY – D. SYBERTS, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, 183, it is this aspect that makes parish celebrations enjoyable in Africa as illustrated by the people’s belief that “when everyone eats, then it is a real celebration.”

everyone. However, despite it being manifested in Africa it also becomes an obligatory duty and a vocational response to the divine command. Let us now talk about the African rites of passage.

### ***3.8 The African Rites of Passage***

Having seen the African celebrations as manifestations of the *koinonia*, we now turn our focus on the rights of passage in Africa as a vehicle for the same, especially in strengthening it. Gonza defines the rite of passage as a transition from one stage of life to another, as is recognized by a particular society or ethnic group.<sup>222</sup> The whole process may be divided into four stages. It begins with the period of birth and childhood. In this stage there is pregnancy, the actual birth and the naming and nursing of the child. The second stage is that of initiation and puberty rites. For Beller this stage entails three periods: separation from the previous life, the transition or liminal stage which entails seclusion and the reintegration into the community.<sup>223</sup> Thirdly, preparation for marriage follows, and finally the fourth and last one is that of death. It should be noted here that what is peculiar to all these stages and the idea behind them is that of strengthening African fellowship or community life. Moreover this makes it so central to our study of African *koinonia*.

#### ***3.8.1. In the Initiation and Puberty Rites***

Mbiti defines initiation as “a public recognition that the individual is now passing from childhood to adulthood.”<sup>224</sup> The three parts hinted at earlier as separation, transition and reintegration, each has a personal and community dimension. The first one entails one’s

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<sup>222</sup> Cf. R. K. GONZA, “The African Homestead as a School”, 114.

<sup>223</sup> Cf. R. BELLER, *Life, Person and Community in Africa*, 17.

<sup>224</sup> J. S. MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion*, 99.

separation from community life, the second focuses on the formation of one towards community expectations and the third one is the reintegration<sup>225</sup> of one into his former community now as someone endowed with rights and duties towards the community. Beller reminds us that there is need to note the fact that in traditional society there is no ‘natural’ continuous growth but rather one proceeds in life passing through ‘liminal’ stages sanctioned by culture, and endowed with a social and sacred meaning for the person and the community.<sup>226</sup>

It should also be noted that initiation entails both the physical and deeper level of the rite. Most people reduce the whole activity of initiation to the physical such as circumcision, yet it goes deeper to include the proven maturity of the candidate to become a responsible member of the community. As far as the fostering of fellowship is concerned Beller remarks “the initiation and circumcision celebration concerns the whole community of the living and the ancestors. Through its social function it acts as a revival and unification of the tribal organization.”<sup>227</sup> Moreover Sanon describes the experience that take place in the initiation societies to imply the raising of one’s degree in the participation of the entire community through the strengthening of the relationship bonds.<sup>228</sup>

At last we end this part of our study by concurring with Mbiti that this whole project of initiation helps the individual to change from a passive status into an active member of the community.<sup>229</sup> Moreover whatever happens to the youth also happens corporately to the parents,

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<sup>225</sup> Thus: R. BELLER, *Life, Person and Community in Africa*, 17, the candidates undergoing initiation together will be recognized from now on as a new age group of the tribe linked by a special bond of solidarity.

<sup>226</sup> Cf. R. BELLER, *Life, Person and Community in Africa*, 17.

<sup>227</sup> Cf. R. BELLER, *Life, Person and Community in Africa*, 17.

<sup>228</sup> A.T. SANON, *Enraciner l’Evangile*, 114, insists that the endeavor of these societies of Initiation is to teach that man is built up in his relationships with others – in a phenomenon of similarity and non- identity which allows sharing the life conditions of others, giving to these relationships beyond the opposition person-community, the consistence, the trust and importance that one gives to himself.

<sup>229</sup> J. S. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 121.

relatives, neighbors and the living dead. For this reason we turn to examine the concept of death in Africa and its impact on the community as far as *koinonia* is concerned.

### 3.8.2 *Death as a Communal Event*

As far as the African rites of passage are concerned death is seen to be the opposite of birth. As we highlighted in the section above, birth is the first rhythm of a new generation and the rites of birth are performed in order to make the child a corporate and social being. To this, other initiation ceremonies continue to integrate the candidate into the community more concretely. At the end of the rites of passage comes death which terminates human life for everyone who was born to this world. For Mbiti, death stands between the world of human beings and the world of spirits, between the visible and invisible world. He further illustrates “Death is something that concerns everybody, partly because sooner or later everyone personally faces it and partly because it brings loss and sorrows to every family or community.”<sup>230</sup> As much as possible therefore, death concerns the transition point from the life of the living to the world of the ancestors. As far as the life of fellowship is concerned, it makes the transition of one from the visible community to the invisible community of the living dead.

Seeing death as a community event can, for instance, be illustrated among the Ndebele<sup>231</sup>. All the rituals performed from when the sick man is on death bed to his funeral rites when he dies are communal centered. When death is immanent for instance, the relatives of the sick kill what is called ‘the beast of the ancestors’ which is either a goat or an ox. This slaughter is a sign which is meant to link the departed and the living members of the family. It also ensures that the

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<sup>230</sup> J.S. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 149.

<sup>231</sup> The Ndebele people are an artistic Bantu-speaking people of Nguni extraction comprising abakwaManala (the Manala Ndebele) and abakwaNdzundza (the Ndzundza Ndebele) located in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

dying will go into a friendly community of the ancestors. As if that were not enough, there is also another ceremony which involves the drinking of ‘medicine’ made from the ashes of burnt bones in which the deceased is mystically united with the members of his family and the community who are still alive.<sup>232</sup> There are also other rituals performed in many African societies for fostering the communal bond with the deceased. The underlying logic behind all these activities is that of ensuring a continued fellowship between the visible and the invisible dimensions of the community.<sup>233</sup>

There is however a common characteristic which is peculiar to death in Africa. This feature deals with the cause of death, and therefore it is risky as far as the life of *koinonia* is concerned. Since death remains a mystery to every individual and community, there is always a tendency to trace its cause from the spiritual realm. That is either someone else living is concerned, or the displeased ancestors are the cause of this death. Nkemnkia asserts “the cause of death is always shifted to someone else, no matter in what manner or form someone dies. In many African societies, people have to consult the charlatan or the witchdoctor to determine who is to blame for the death of someone.”<sup>234</sup> This tracing of the blame for the cause of a death on someone can many times lead to disintegration of the community by creating enmity between people. It follows the fact that some people can be accused innocently and this completely injures the relationships which are fundamental in maintaining the life of *koinonia*, which is characteristic of Africans.

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<sup>232</sup> Cf. J.S. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 150.

<sup>233</sup> R. BELLER, *Life, Person and Community in Africa*, 21, in referring to Mbiti, he clarifies that the purpose of the rituals of death is not so much to cancel the horror of death itself but to facilitate the passage from the world of the living to the world of the ancestors or the living-dead. It is due to this reason why even in modern Africa, these rituals are still very much alive and mandatory for the survival of the group and the individuals.

<sup>234</sup> M.N. NKEMNKIA, *African Vitalogy*, 118.

Before we turn to explore the aspect of *koinonia* among the Banyoro people which will concretize our study, let us conclude this section by recalling the fact that death is very central in bringing out the theme of fellowship among the African peoples. This is because it is a universal phenomenon, as the Akan proverb goes *death's ladder is not climbed by only one individual*.<sup>235</sup> Even though it is a mysterious reality it can be asserted that it brings together even the enemies in the village, since everyone needs the other at that moment.

### ***3.9 Koinonia among the Banyoro***

Up to now our study has followed a general analysis of the concept of *koinonia*, and how it is lived in the African context. We shall now, as we advance towards the end of this chapter, take a concrete example of one of the African tribes and see how the previous themes are lived and understood as far their connection with the life of fellowship is concerned. This illustration therefore will help us draw better conclusions for our study. This concretization of the Nyoro<sup>236</sup> people will mainly focus on the themes of kinship, marriage, hospitality and good neighborliness all being central in so far as the call to community living is concerned. Bettie reminds us that community relationships among the Nyoro people mean those day-to-day relationships characteristic of village life, which subsist between near neighbors and kinsfolk, who do not only live in the same place, but share common interests and values and a common way of life.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Cf. J. HEALEY – D. SYBERTS, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, 208.

<sup>236</sup> From the official kingdom website, <http://www.bunyoro-kitara.org/53.html>, This Bantu tribe resides in Bunyoro-Kitara, a kingdom in Mid-western Uganda. It comprises of the districts of Hoima, Kibale, Masindi and Buliisa, in the area to the immediate East of Lake Albert. The tribe boasts of a unique tradition regarding their culture. Their native language is Runyoro-Rutoro, which they share with the Batooro, because the latter have their origin in Bunyoro-Kitara. Their cultural leader is the Omukama (king).

<sup>237</sup> Cf. J. BETTIE, *Bunyoro: An African Kingdom*, 48.

### 3.9.1 In the Nyoro Kinship System

Since the Nyoro people belong to a political system called the kingdom, there are characteristics that pervade not only political<sup>238</sup> relations, but also social relations. These are the features of super ordination and subordination.<sup>239</sup> These exist for instance between the husband and wife, between parents and children among others. Kinship among the Nyoro implies relationship that develops from the clan basis which is an effect of sharing a common totem. They therefore inherit their clan names and associated totemic avoidance from a common membership of a particular group of kinsmen as well as the property from a father. Their kinship terminology is classificatory. The implication here is that the terms one applies to relatives in one's own line of descent are also applied to certain other relatives who are in collateral lines of descent.<sup>240</sup> It is true that in Bunyoro all the relatives from one's parents' side are either, fathers, mothers, brothers or sisters. It would be very misleading therefore to translate both the father's and mother's siblings as, uncles and aunts.

One peculiar aspect to note in the Nyoro kinship system is that it goes beyond genealogical relationships. As Bettie remarks "in Bunyoro this usage even extends to people with whom no genealogical relationship at all can be traced,.....indeed it would be unseemly to inquire about the exact relationship; Nyoro say that where clansmen are concerned the important

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<sup>238</sup> D.A. KIHUMURO, *A Thousand Years of Bunyoro*, v, insists that this social stratification was also given divine interpretation. This is contained in the myth where God set a test to his three sons and the results hence forth determined the social status one and his descendants would occupy in society. This myth which was a political ideology meant to keep the subjects calm was propagated by rulers. Hence the subject people, the *Bairu* had to accept their inferior status because it was God ordained.

<sup>239</sup> Thus: J. BETTIE, *Bunyoro: An African Kingdom*, 48, emphasizes that these two notions imply that in the community some people are naturally above or below other kinds of people. Though Bettie is quick to add that in Bunyoro, there is no class strata where some race is superior as in some nearby societies like in Ankore where there is sharp distinction between the Bahima(leaders) and Bairu ( slaves). In Bunyoro every one can raise to a high office without considering which class of Munyoro he or she is.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. J. BETTIE, *Bunyoro: An African Kingdom*, 49.

thing is friendship, not the degree of relationship.”<sup>241</sup> By this fact it follows that there are relationships brought about by kinship, marriage or blood-partnership. Therefore all these relationship bring about a close relationship which fosters a high degree of unity in the community of the Nyoro people. For that matter the Nyoro clan system, combined with the classificatory mode of designating relatives, provides for the extension of a few quite simple relationship categories over a wide social field. There is no doubt therefore that this kinship system depicts a high discipline of *koinonia* as experienced and lived by the Nyoro people of western Uganda.

### 3.9.2 *Koinonia in Nyoro Marriage*

As we saw above marriage is one of the aspects that contribute to the development of relationships in the Nyoro culture. Others are of course kinship and blood-partnerships. Bettie reminds us that the Nyoro think of marriage as a more or less permanent union between a man and a woman, the offspring of whom have recognized status as their children. Furthermore, ideally marriage should involve the payment of bride wealth<sup>242</sup> and the establishment of enduring relations between the husband and his wife’s people.<sup>243</sup> The aspect of marriage as a communal truth is reflected by several aspects. Mbiti stipulates for instance that, the beer brought in bride price, “is the symbol of friendship, communion, oneness and acceptability;”<sup>244</sup> In addition, marriage is only possible among the people of different clans. One cannot marry in one's own

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<sup>241</sup> J. BETTIE, *Bunyoro: An African Kingdom*, 50.

<sup>242</sup> The bride price called *Omukaaga* comprises of cows, goats, and many pots of beer and cash in modern times. When bride price is paid it marks the engagement event which is symbolized by a string of animal skin, *engonge*, tied on the wrist of the couple.

<sup>243</sup> Cf. J. BETTIE, *Bunyoro: An African Kingdom*, 55.

<sup>244</sup> J.S. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 138.

clan<sup>245</sup> or in that of his or her mother's. Marriage to one's cousins, no matter how far removed, is not acceptable. An exemption from this rule is claimed by the princes and princesses of the kingdom.<sup>246</sup>

Bettie concludes thus that to an observer of the complex series of rites involved in traditional Nyoro marriage, what is most striking is the strong emphasis on the different statuses of the two groups involved. For him this status difference is marked in the relations between husband and his close agnates and all his wife's agnates.<sup>247</sup> A series of new relationships are thus born between the two families who are involved in marriage in addition to those formed at the feast itself. This is what makes the marriage feast the greatest of all feasts since it is attended by huge crowds of people and therefore brings together a larger community into celebration. We can say, in line with our study, that these relationships become paramount for *koinonia* to flourish among the people. We turn now to look at the Nyoro hospitality.

### 3.9.3 Communion in the Nyoro Hospitality and Neighborhood

Like in any other African society, hospitality is a very important cultural and social value among the Banyoro. In fact 'it is a way of life' that is intimately bound up with personal relationships and community.<sup>248</sup> As far as hospitality is concerned it is impolite for the Banyoro to refer to each other by name. In fact it is a sign of disrespect. Rather they are expected to call each other by pet names; in fact according to the kingdom website "unique to Bunyoro and Toro

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<sup>245</sup> According to the official kingdom website, the clan is the collective group of people who are descended from the same ancestor, and are, therefore, blood relatives. Long before the tradition of kingdoms, the Banyoro lived in clan groupings. Areas of the land were named after the clan which lived there.

<sup>246</sup> Only the *babiito* the ruling clan of the kingdom i.e. the royals are exempted from this rule in order not to dilute their blood.

<sup>247</sup> Cf. J. BETTIE, *Bunyoro: An African Kingdom*, 57.

<sup>248</sup> Cf. J. HEALEY & D. SYBERTS, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, 180.

are praise names, *empaako*.<sup>249</sup> These names are given at the same time a child is given its regular, kinyoro name. They are special names used to show love and respect.”<sup>250</sup> They are used to welcome and greet all people including visitors both known and strangers. The Banyoro even have a practice of serving a visitor with coffee beans as a sign of welcome. Indeed the visitor is seen as a blessing.

We also focus on the issue of neighborhood. This relationship does not matter whether one is a kin or not but simply as neighbors. The Nyoro attach a great value to good neighborliness. “Neighbors should help and support one another in everyday occupations. A man who cuts himself off from his fellows and lives far away from other people in the bush is distrusted and may be suspected of being a sorcerer.”<sup>251</sup> This sense of togetherness is exhibited in doing agriculture, house constructions, in times of trouble like accidents and death, to mention but a few. In addition, eating and drinking together expresses the friendly relations which should subsist between neighbors. It is thought to be a bad thing for a man to eat alone and in fact one would be punished for it in the old days. Communal beer drinking as a means of emphasizing village solidarity is common. The other practice fostering friendship concerns blood pact partnership.<sup>252</sup> According to Kihumuro, this cannot be denied when requested by a neighbor.<sup>253</sup> All this reveals how well the Banyoro live in fellowship with one another.

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<sup>249</sup> According to the kingdom website, <http://www.bunyoro-kitara.org/53.html>, the *empaako* is also the salutation when the Banyoro greet each other. Instead of the Western "Good morning, John?" the Banyoro substitute the *empaako* for John. There are eleven *empaako* names, shared by all Banyoro and Batooro. They are Abwooli, Adyeeri, Araali, Akiiki, Atwooki, Abbooki, Apuuli, Abbala, Acaali, Ateenyi and Amooti.

<sup>250</sup> Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom, “Banyoro”, <http://www.bunyoro-kitara.org/53.html>.

<sup>251</sup> J. BETTIE, *Bunyoro: An African Kingdom*, 57.

<sup>252</sup> This practice is executed by exchanging blood painted coffee berries, each one painted by the other party’s blood and swallowed by the other party in return. This establishes a very strong pact between the two friends never to be broken.

<sup>253</sup> D. A. KIHUMURO, *A Thousand Years of Bunyoro...*, 7.

The feasting and drinking, like in any other African culture, is also associated with the ‘rites of passage’ among the Banyoro, the most important of which include birth, marriage and death. During the death of someone, the members of the deceased’s household may not prepare food or indeed do any kind of work for some days after the death. Food during this period is provided by neighbors for the bereaved.<sup>254</sup> In this hard time, the eating and drinking together helps in comforting the bereaved family.

We cannot end our study of the Nyoro culture without emphasizing with Bettie that although the social relations in the Nyoro village community are, on the whole, strikingly easy and friendly, conflicts are sometimes inevitable.<sup>255</sup> The same practice of neighborliness plays a key role in matters of solving conflicts between neighbors. Conflicts are due to land, adultery, debts among others. Neighborhood courts which are informal, therefore adjudicate over the matter in dispute and reconciliation is therefore brought about which brings back the lost relationship in the community. By this way therefore the spirit of fellowship is restored through restorative justice.

We can end this part of our study on how the Nyoro live the spirit of *koinonia* by reiterating the words of a story which they themselves tell to illustrate the prominence of this fact

Once a man moved into a new village. He wanted to find out what his neighbors were like, so in the middle of the night he pretended to beat his wife very severely, to see if the neighbors would come and remonstrate with him. But he did not really beat her; instead he beat a goat-skin, while his wife screamed and cried out that he was killing her. Nobody came, and the very next day that man and his wife packed up and left that village and went to find some other place to live.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Cf. J. BETTIE, *Bunyoro: An African Kingdom*, 65.

<sup>255</sup> Cf. J. BETTIE, *Bunyoro: An African Kingdom*, 66-7.

<sup>256</sup> J. BETTIE, *Bunyoro: An African Kingdom*, 61.

## Conclusion

This brings us to the conclusion of our African perspective of fellowship in light of the Trinitarian *koinonia*. Indeed we have been able to show how the African concept of *Ubuntu* is central to a life of fellowship, but also most importantly how the other African themes of the “word” as palaver, the meal, the kinship and work also complement each other in making this reality more visible in the African way of life. Moreover we have also seen how the African celebrations are moments of living the call to community life, from which we have seen marriage as the apex of the social nature of an African person, which is at his or her existential level.

Actually we have also seen how the rites of passage focusing ourselves on the initiation ceremonies as an integration of an individual into the community at various degrees, culminating in death as a communal event and transition of one from the visible to the invisible community of ancestors. We have acknowledged the fact that the African communion needs the Christian flavor in order to become more inclusive. Thus we have ended our study by concretizing the general African experience of *koinonia* to a particular *Nyoro* culture. In this way this chapter has clearly shown that the spirit of *koinonia* is at the heart of the African peoples. Indeed the African notion “I am because we are” as opposed to the western Cartesian “I think therefore I am” has been demonstrated. We can now proceed with exploring the call to *koinonia* in the Church.

## Chapter IV

### *Ecclesial Koinonia*

#### **Introduction**

Having looked at the African perspective of *koinonia*, it is fitting that we also look closely at the ecclesial dimension of fellowship. In this chapter we intend to focus mainly on various aspects pertaining to the ecclesial perspective of *koinonia*. Firstly, we shall highlight the aspect of the Church as communion. Secondly, the dimension of prayer especially the liturgy and its implications on the life of fellowship in the Church will be studied. Thirdly, we shall show how the word of God is central in enhancing this communion. Fourthly, we intend to examine the role of the Eucharist in fostering the life of fellowship as experienced by the Church, before exploring the fifth aspect of religious life in regard to its vivid demonstration of how a life of communion should be lived in the Church and the world. This is because, “communion with the Triune God is inseparable from communion among believers.”<sup>257</sup> Since the contemporary Christian period has recovered the ancient dimension of the Small Christian Communities, it will be of paramount importance for us to explore their contribution as far as the call to fellowship is concerned among the people of God as the sixth aspect in this chapter. Seventhly, we shall end

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<sup>257</sup> E. P. HAHNENBERG, *Ministries*, 117.

by looking at the role of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue in fostering the spirit of communion for all mankind. Let us start by looking at the Church as communion.

#### ***4.1 Church as Communion***

According to Kasper, communion<sup>258</sup> holds as an essential ‘concern’ from which the Church comes and for which it lives. It does not designate the structure of the Church but its essence, or as the Vatican Council II says: its mystery. Thus questions of structure should help the Church to be a sign and sacrament of community with God and with other people in this atheistic time (*LG*, 1).<sup>259</sup> This becomes true because the Church is made up of the people of God who come together from different walks of life. These include both “Jews” and “Gentiles” who believe in Christ as the universal savior of mankind. To this fact Vatican Council II stipulates that “God gathered together as one all those who in faith look upon Jesus as the author of salvation and the source of unity and peace, and established them as the Church that for each and all it may be the visible sacrament of this saving unity” (*LG*, 9). Since the idea of people of God is implied in the model of Church as communion, there is among its strengths the emphasis on the themes of equality and commonality concerning everyone in the Church.

Edward Hahnenberg believes that emphasis on the hierarchical nature of the Church suffocates her fundamental witness as a communion of the people of God. He advocates for a relational approach to ministries positing that the Church should move away from the dividing line model to the concentric circle model, because the latter situates a minister within an ecclesial

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<sup>258</sup> Cf. W. KASPER, “Church as ‘*Communio*’, 106, states that this communion implies community, but also participation, more precisely, participation in the blessings of salvation bestowed by God: participation in the Holy Spirit, in the new life, in love, in the Gospel: but above all, in the Eucharist. This same model of the Church as communion implies that the subject of this participation is the people of God.

<sup>259</sup> Cf. Paraphrase in W. KASPER, “Church as ‘*Communio*’, 103- 105.

community to serve the Church and its mission to the world.<sup>260</sup> He adds that the relational approach draws its strength from the Trinity who is a mystery of relationships. “The early development of the Trinitarian doctrine witnesses to a belief in a God who is personal and relational; God’s ultimate reality lies not in nature or substance (what a thing is in itself), but in personhood, relationship and love.”<sup>261</sup> Moreover for him the equality of all members of the Church precedes any distinctions based on ordination or hierarchical status. This equality and unity is grounded by the sacrament of Baptism.<sup>262</sup> Therefore the Church is not primarily the institutional structures but the community of believers.

It should however be clarified that this communion does not just come about from below or by human efforts. It mainly has the blessed Trinity both as origin and goal of its existence. This is the fact which we affirmed in the introduction of this thesis and it reveals itself from all perspectives of humanity, becoming more vivid in the Church as its visible sign to the world. For this reason Ratzinger remarks “fellowship with God is mediated by the fellowship of God with man, which is Christ in person; the encounter with Christ brings about fellowship with him and, thus, with the Father in the Holy Spirit; on this basis it unites men with one another. All this is directed toward perfect joy.”<sup>263</sup> This originates from the fact that the Church bears within herself an eschatological impulse. The eschatological theme is furthered by the fact that this communion is not only restricted to a fellowship of persons, but also a communion of grace, uniting all its members in Christ and drawing all its members into the communion of the Triune God.<sup>264</sup> Hence it is a community modeled on that of the first disciples whose aim is to follow the way of Christ.

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<sup>260</sup> Cf. E. P. HAHNENBERG, *Ministries*, 10.

<sup>261</sup> Cf. E. P. HAHNENBERG, *Ministries*, 77.

<sup>262</sup> Cf. E. P. HAHNENBERG, *Ministries*, 117.

<sup>263</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 130.

<sup>264</sup> Cf. R. P. MCBRIEN, *Catholicism*, 721.

It has to be remembered here that the communion which exists among the people of God is wider than the physical confines of the Catholic Church but spans to all those who believe in God. It implies in itself a wider dimension of the Church. As far as this fact is concerned the Catholic Church in its narrow sense remains to be a visible sacrament<sup>265</sup> or sign of the gradual establishing of the kingdom of God on earth. In other words, she is at the service of the kingdom of God. This dimension therefore stresses the responsibility of the Church not only to mediate the graces of God to the believers through the sacraments but to also contribute positively to the growth of its members. In addition, as McBrien remarks, this model underlines the Church's abiding missionary responsibility to be of Christ's presence by the mutual love shown within the community of disciples.<sup>266</sup> Practically speaking this calls the Church to witness to her sacramental vocation to the rest of the world. As the Second Vatican Council expressed it succinctly: "The Church has but one sole purpose: that the Kingdom of God may come and the salvation of the human race may be accomplished" (*GS*, 45).

Another important matter to mention is the role of the Spirit in enhancing this communion. It is the Spirit who unites the Church in community and ministry (*AG*, 4). For Kasper thus, through the Spirit the Church is a *communio*-unity with God, as are the members of the Church among one another.<sup>267</sup> Viewing the Church as communion however has been criticized for not stipulating out clearly those traits that make it distinctive i.e. what makes the Christian community different from other communities? However, viewing it as a 'community of

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<sup>265</sup> Cf. H. D. LUBAC, *The splendor of the Church*, 203-10, the Church is the sacrament of Christ in this world as Christ is himself, in his humanity for us the sacrament of God. This implies that there is between her and Him a certain relation of mystical identity. DeLubac cites out some images both from scripture and the patristics to make this reality understood. These include the bridegroom and the bride are one flesh, the Church being the tabernacle of Christ's presence and the Church being the building of which Christ is the architect and cornerstone among others.

<sup>266</sup> Cf. R. P. MCBRIEN, *Catholicism*, 721.

<sup>267</sup> Cf. W. KASPER, "Church as '*Communio*'", 105.

disciples' would diminish the force of this weakness.<sup>268</sup> The only point of weakness may result from the emphasis of individual growth at the expense of the community's commitment to reform.<sup>269</sup> Having seen the Church as communion in general we now focus on how it is lived by different categories of the people of God in the Church.

#### *4.1.1 Religious Life as a Sign of Ecclesial Communion to the World*

We have already examined the concept of church as communion in a wider perspective. This is what contemporary theology calls the ecclesiology of communion. According to Pope John Paul II, the vocation to fellowship by the Church is then entrusted to communities of consecrated life. He insists that they are to fulfill this task of spreading the spirituality of communion, first of all in their internal life and then in the ecclesial community, and even beyond its boundaries, by opening or continuing a dialogue in charity.<sup>270</sup> This understanding has implications as far as the call to communion for the world is concerned. Due to the contemporary evils characterizing the world today like ethnic hatred and violence, communities of consecrated persons can act as prophetic signs to the world that communion can bring differences into harmony. This is because these congregations entail people from different ages, languages and cultures who come and live together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

It has to be emphasized that the religious community is not simply a collection of Christians in search of personal perfection. It is rather a participation in a qualified witness of the Church-Mystery, since it is a living expression and privileged fulfillment of its own particular 'communion,' of the great Trinitarian *koinonia* in which the Father has willed mankind to have

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<sup>268</sup> Cf. R. P. MCBRIEN, *Catholicism*, 721-2.

<sup>269</sup> Cf. R. P. MCBRIEN, *Catholicism*, 721-2.

<sup>270</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata*, 51.

part in the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>271</sup> Vatican Council II clarifies the mode of witnessing to this communion of the Church by the religious persons. They enforce it through the means of the religious institutes with the respect and esteem for the uniqueness of their different charisms (PC, 1). This is what makes it possible for them to reflect in their structures, motivations and distinguishing values the gift of fraternity given by Christ to the whole Church. What leads to this *signum fraternitatis* (Sign of fraternity) is the profession of the evangelical counsels<sup>272</sup> that produce the *sentire cum ecclesia* (thinking with the Church).

Despite the failures by some religious to live up to this call perfectly, it needs to be emphasized that it remains a prophetic sign to the world without which the world would be worse. Furthermore, there is need to emphasize the fact that fellowship cannot be lived up to its ideal because those who live it are in this world even though they are not of this world. Therefore it will only be perfected at the end of time. Having studied religious life as one of the paradigms of ecclesial communion let us now examine the laity who also belong to the people of God and are called to the same vocation.

#### 4.1.2 *The Participation of the Laity<sup>273</sup> in Ecclesial Communion*

It has already been highlighted in this study that before Vatican Council II the Church mainly thought of itself as institution. However with the Council's shifts in emphasis on the

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<sup>271</sup> S.C.R.I.S, *Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor*, 2.

<sup>272</sup> Cf. K. RAHNER – H. VORGRIMLER, "Community", *Theological Dictionary*, 158, these are concrete suggestions by Jesus Christ to man by which men and women are enabled to live according to the double commandment of loving God and neighbor in response to various existential questions. They include celibacy for the sake of the kingdom, poverty and obedience for service. All of them are aimed at being prophetic signs of the eschatological reality of the kingdom of God.

<sup>273</sup> Vatican Council II defines the laity as "all the faithful, that is, who by baptism are incorporated into Christ, are constituted the people of God, who have been made shares in their own way in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ and play their part in carrying out the mission of the whole Christian people in the church and in the world" (LG, 4).

Church as a community of the people of God in a way re-awakened the importance of the laity in the life of the Church which was given limited attention by the previous model. In fact the laity up to then had been passive in the life of the Church<sup>274</sup>. So since communion is about participation, a clear direction has to be explored as far as the laity's active participation is concerned. According to the second Vatican Council the lay people are called upon to take their part in the mission of the people of God both "in the Church and the world" It emphasizes above all the call of the renewal of the temporal world as a "distinctive task" of the laity (AA, 24). Among their roles is included charity to strangers, prisoners, the sick, social justice in the world, education, among others. All of these flow from the secular characteristic of the laity.

In John Paul II's own analysis, ecclesial communion is characterized by a diversity of gifts and a complementarity of vocations and states in life, ministries, charisms and responsibilities. Because of this fact every member of the lay faithful is seen in relation to the whole body and therefore contributes a unique offer on behalf of the whole. All these gifts originate from the Holy Spirit who intends them for the good of the whole body of Christ. This is because through baptism all the people of God share in the *trimunera*<sup>275</sup> of Christ. Particularly this is what makes all of the laity to acquire the right and responsibility of exercising it in their daily lives.<sup>276</sup> There is usually a juxtaposition of the clergy with the laity, in terms of their call to service in the Church and the world. This remains a mistake, as Conger insists that it is not proper to restrict God's work to the clergy and the world's work to the laity. It is rather more reasonable to consider the laity as Christians in the world who do God's work insofar as it must

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<sup>274</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Christifideles Laici*, 17.

<sup>275</sup> This mainly designates the three offices of Christ that are passed on to all the baptized. They include priest, prophet and king.

<sup>276</sup> Cf. J. HAMER, *The Church as Communion*, 101.

be done in and through the work of the world. They must be recognized as having an active participation in the Church mission.<sup>277</sup>

In concluding this study of the laity, it is important to highlight Schillebeck's appreciation, despite his critique of the Church's neglect of the role of the laity in her life. He insists that despite the above fact in restricting juridical authority to those ordained, "There is an implicit concession that both jurisdiction and ordination have their deepest sacramental foundation in baptism of the Spirit in which all believers share, though all this must be interpreted on the basis of a positivistic hierarchical authority which can decide as the sovereign will."<sup>278</sup> After the laity, the only thing that remains is to examine the role of those in authority in fostering *koinonia*.

#### 4.1.3 *The Charism of Leadership in Ecclesial Communion*

According to Hammer, "The Priestly, royal and prophetic role of Christ, sent by the Father, is exercised at once by the general ministry of the people of God and by the special ministry of those whom the Lord has singled out."<sup>279</sup> At the heart of this statement is the fact that the Church is both charismatic and institution. Both of these two ministries are correlatives of each other. In fact for Ratzinger when the two ministries are contrasted, it makes the Church to be inadequately described.<sup>280</sup> In the Catholic Church therefore those who are charged with primary leadership are the ordained ministers. Priesthood attained through the sacrament of

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<sup>277</sup> Cf. Y. CONGAR, *Lay People in the Church*, 454-5.

<sup>278</sup> E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *The Church with A Human Face*, 189.

<sup>279</sup> J. HAMER, *The Church as Communion*, 101.

<sup>280</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 182.

orders<sup>281</sup> therefore is a prerequisite for leadership in the Church. While examining the leadership dimension of the Church therefore, we need to acknowledge that the highest form of it is realized in the primacy of the Pope and then the bishop in the particular Church, presbyters and deacons in the parishes. Benedict XVI reminds us in regard to this fact “The Roman primacy is not an invention of the popes, but an essential element of ecclesial unity that goes back to the Lord and was developed faithfully in the nascent Church.”<sup>282</sup>

This leadership in the Church is exercised in two levels. These include both the universal and local levels. Whereas the former depicts God’s universal will for all men to be saved, the latter depicts this same universal will concretized in a given time and culture where the encounter between God and man happens. All this is possible because of the structural element of the Church which in itself is not an inferior order when compared with its spiritual gifts (charismatic dimension).<sup>283</sup> As such the Church according to De Lubac should be in verifiable continuity with the community of the first disciples which was social in character, organized, and having its heads, its rites and its legislation.<sup>284</sup> Both levels of leadership complement each other for the sake of the ecclesial communion. This is the reason why Kress emphasizes that the primacy of the Petrine office is that it is a focal point of unity which reflects the universal salvific will of God to all mankind through Christ. But at the same time one bishop is required as head of the population in the local Church for this unity to be manifest at the local level. At the same

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<sup>281</sup> The sacrament of holy orders is attained in three degrees i.e. Episcopal, Presbyter and Deacon. The laity therefore are not primarily leaders but only in exceptional circumstances. They are mainly to exercise their vocations charismatically in dialogue with the hierarchical church.

<sup>282</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Called to Communion*, 72.

<sup>283</sup> Cf. PIUS XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi*, 63.

<sup>284</sup> Cf. H. DE LUBAC, *The Splendor of the Church*, 87.

time however, the papacy is not to be understood in form of a pyramid<sup>285</sup> but should rather be thought of as a center which sacramentally helps keep the vitality of faith in the Church.<sup>286</sup>

All in all we can conclude by agreeing with Balthasar that it is necessary for the believers to accept their place under the supreme jurisdiction of Christ the Lord of the Church who concluded the gospel in calling upon Peter to follow him. This will help in striking a balance between the ecclesiastical jurisdiction and Church as love in communion.<sup>287</sup> This will only be possible however when the spiritual office of priesthood<sup>288</sup> is understood and lived as a charism. In other words the priest himself should be a *homo spiritualis* or a “pneumatic” Christian.<sup>289</sup>

#### ***4.3 Koinonia in the Liturgical Assembly***

As far as ecclesial communion is concerned, it involves two dimensions. This communion exists in the Church as such, but at the same time in the gathered assembly of worship. To this fact Hamer explains “If confirmation be needed, it is worthwhile remembering the twofold sense of the word *ekklesia*. In the New Testament this term designates simultaneously the community actually gathered together (the assembly) and the community itself as it permanently exists.”<sup>290</sup> All this is possible because of Christ’s presence in the Church in different ways. He is present to the church as a whole because he is its head, yet he is present in the assembly in his body through the Eucharist. Due to this fact, every act of the believer

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<sup>285</sup> This is because the pyramid or triangle model of the church was the scholastic understanding of the church. According to Vatican II this image remains illegitimate since it was in fact never an ecclesial reality but a theological theory.

<sup>286</sup> Cf. R. KRESS, *The Church*, 88-9.

<sup>287</sup> Cf. H.U. V. BALTHASAR, *The Office of Peter*, 265-6.

<sup>288</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 182, in this case all degrees of priesthood are implied in relation to their leadership role in the Church in its structural form. For Ratzinger, when priesthood is lived in its pneumatic and charismatic fashion, there is no institutional hardening.

<sup>289</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 182.

<sup>290</sup> J. HAMER, *The Church as Communion*, 204.

needs to be done in accordance to the whole Church because his very act is an act of communion. It is therefore true that among these very acts of communion, the actual gathering of the assembly takes pride of place. The liturgy thus becomes an “epiphany of the Church’ and an ‘act which expresses the Church’.<sup>291</sup>

This puts our study in agreement with Lathrop whose argument maintains that the liturgy<sup>292</sup> occupies a key position for the *koinonia* of the Church, not least in relation to the tension between the local and the universal.<sup>293</sup> Since Liturgy contains both universal and local elements, it becomes a good medium of drawing people of different cultures into one, and making them to speak the same language. Both the table of the word and that of the Eucharist are essential in uniting the people of God. The axiom of Paul that “there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28) is fulfilled at liturgy. Moreover Christ himself is present in the liturgy since he promised to be always present wherever two or three are gathered in his name (Cf. Mt 18:20). In fact even when *koinonia* is practiced through the sharing of goods between the rich and poor it remains an economic sharing rooted in the table sharing and public preaching of the community.<sup>294</sup>

This is the reason why the liturgy can play a key role in enhancing Christian unity.

But the patterns of word and table, of catechetical formation and baptism, of Sunday and the week, of *Pascha* and the year, and of assembly and ministry around these things – the principle pairs of the Christian liturgy- do give us a basis for a mutually encouraging conversation between the churches.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Cf. J. HAMER, *The Church as Communion*, 202-3.

<sup>292</sup> Cf. [http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2005/crouan\\_riteliturgy\\_may05.asp](http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2005/crouan_riteliturgy_may05.asp), Liturgy is an ancient word, which came from the ancient Greeks meaning ‘official work,’ It is thus a compulsory form of official worship rendered to God; this form is composed of elements that are harmoniously interrelated, having arisen from customs that are at first accepted by a specific community and then approved by the legitimate ecclesiastical authority.

<sup>293</sup> Cf. A. GERHARDS, “*Koinonia* and the Development of the Liturgy”, 82.

<sup>294</sup> Cf. G.W. LATHROP, “*Koinonia* and the Shape of Liturgy”, 70.

<sup>295</sup> World Council of Churches, “Towards *Koinonia* in Worship”, 7.

In addition the liturgy plays an eschatological role. To this Gordon insists “it is not a realization of *koinonia* but rather it serves as its eschatological realization. It is a community for the way<sup>296</sup>, a fellowship which invites individuals to conversion.”<sup>297</sup> This fact qualifies it to be as the Vatican II called it the "source" and the "summit" of the Church's life (SC, 10). Having examined the role of Liturgy in ecclesial communion let us now look at its two tables by beginning with the word of God.

#### 4.3.1 Ecclesial Communion in the word<sup>298</sup> of God.

It is true that the word of God as experienced through sacred scripture is essential for the visibility of ecclesial communion. This reality has been essential since the early Church up to the modern times as depicted in the Second Vatican Council. “*Koinonia*/communion, founded on the Sacred Scripture, has been held in great honor in the early Church and in the Oriental Churches to this day.”<sup>299</sup> This implies therefore that the word of God remains important in fostering ecclesial communion both in the Church life as such, but also mainly in the liturgy of the Church. To this fact Benedict XVI articulates “If it is true that the liturgy is the privileged place for the proclamation, hearing and celebration of the word of God, it is likewise the case that this encounter must be prepared in the hearts of the faithful and then deepened and assimilated, above all by them.”<sup>300</sup> Likewise it needs to be certainly argued that Christ himself as the Word of God is present in his word, since it is he who speaks when the sacred scripture is read in Church. In

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<sup>296</sup> This word was used to describe how Christians perceived themselves as seen in Acts 9:2.

<sup>297</sup> A. GERHARDS, “*Koinonia* and the Development of the Liturgy”, 82.

<sup>298</sup> In this case word of God with lower case ‘w’ refers to sacred scripture. In this research when we use Word of God with upper case ‘W’ then it will be referring to the Son of God who is Christ himself.

<sup>299</sup> EWTN, “The Church, in the word of God, celebrates the mysteries of Christ for the Salvation of the world”, <https://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/SYNFINAL.HTM>, 12/15-2015.

<sup>300</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Verbum Domini*, 72.

other words the Christ as Word of God becomes living and visibly heard in the word of God (Scriptures).

Furthermore the theme of revelation remains important in building the life of fellowship. This is true because revelation is what awakens faith among individual believers and calls them to witness it to others. This same revelation is effected through the Word of God both in history and recorded down in scriptures. Indeed “revelation and faith are correlative.”<sup>301</sup> In addition, this is what makes Jesus’ words of being with the Church always, become more vivid. With his word proclaimed in the Church as his fellowship which he gathers, Christ ceases to be a past event but a past, present and future event. Hence, “God who spoke in the past, continues to converse with the spouse of his beloved Son. And the Holy Spirit through whom the living voice of the gospel rings out in the Church and the... world leads believers to the full truth...,” (DV, 8). As such, it is this same attitude demanded of every Christian since only those who first place themselves in the position of listening to the word of God can go on to become its heralds in communion.<sup>302</sup> The word of God thus serves the ecclesial communion through a witness of faith.

This communion is brought about both as encounter with the Triune God and with one another.<sup>303</sup> In a narrow sense it is within the Catholic Church, yet in a wider sense it is lived with other Christians who accept the word of God in the Scriptures<sup>304</sup>, and above all with all humanity and the entire cosmos.

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<sup>301</sup> L. F. FUCHS, *Koinonia and the Quest for an Ecumenical Ecclesiology*, 230.

<sup>302</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, Address to the international Congress “Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church” (16 September 2005).

<sup>303</sup> Cf. L. F. FUCHS, *Koinonia and the Quest for an Ecumenical Ecclesiology*, 253.

<sup>304</sup> Cf. A. GOOLEY, “The Eucharist and Communion”, 2.

[http://aejt.com.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/395684/AEJT\\_2.20\\_Gooley\\_Eucharist\\_and\\_Ecclesial\\_Communion.pdf](http://aejt.com.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/395684/AEJT_2.20_Gooley_Eucharist_and_Ecclesial_Communion.pdf), (15/15/2015)

### 4.3.2 *The Eucharist and Ecclesial Communion*

According to the angelic doctor, the Eucharist is found at the root of the Church as a mystery of communion.<sup>305</sup> In addition to this fact John Paul II highlights this theme of communion to be central to the life of the Church. “The Church is called during her earthly pilgrimage to maintain and promote communion with the Triune God and communion among the faithful.”<sup>306</sup> It is however of paramount importance to clarify that the celebration of the Eucharist cannot be the starting point for communion. It only presupposes that communion already exists, by only trying to consolidate it and bring it to perfection. There are two dimensions in which the Eucharist expresses this communion. These include both the invisible and visible forms of communion. Whereas the former entails the person of Christ who through the working of the Holy Spirit, unites us to the Father and among ourselves, the latter entails communion in the teaching of the Apostles, the sacraments and the Church’s hierarchical order.<sup>307</sup>

Tillard reminds us on the other hand that the body of Christ is a body of communion. “At the Eucharistic table, the grains of wheat, that is, the believers- ground by trials- become in the fire of the Spirit, like the bread they receive, a single loaf which is Christ assuming in his communion the whole reconciled humankind.”<sup>308</sup> It is on this ground that the assertion of “congregationism”<sup>309</sup> by protestant reformers does not produce sound theology. In response to this attitude we can emphasize with Ratzinger that just as the Fathers summed up the two aspects of Eucharist and gathering in the word *communio*, so does the modern ecclesiology hold them.

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<sup>305</sup> Cf. T. AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 80, a. 4.

<sup>306</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 34.

<sup>307</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 35.

<sup>308</sup> J.M.R. TILLARD, *Flesh of the Church, Flesh of Christ*, 61.

<sup>309</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Called to communion*, 80-1, this is the assertion by reformers that only the word of God gathers men and creates “community”. The proclamation of the gospel produces congregation which is the “church”. No need of episcopal authority which results from the essence of the Eucharist. For them the church comes “from below”.

The Church is communion; she is so in the word and body of Christ and is thus communion among men, who by this communion are brought together from above and from within by becoming one people and indeed one body.<sup>310</sup>

The above can be illustrated in the words that the Church is the Eucharist. The Church therefore being communion entails unity in the whole body of Christ. The Eucharist thus can never be demanded with Jesus alone. Whoever receives him must do so with all his brothers and sisters who have become members of one body.<sup>311</sup> Furthermore, “through communion with the bishop as the visible head of the Church the congregation professes the unity of the Church. Here, in the Eucharistic assembly around the bishop, is the fullness of the *totus Christus*, the one Holy Catholic Church, whose fullness cannot be heightened.”<sup>312</sup> With the above analysis we can therefore end by reemphasizing the words of Benedict XVI that the “*res* of the sacrament of the Eucharist is the unity of the faithful within ecclesial communion.”<sup>313</sup> Hence it is not by chance therefore that the term communion has become one of the names given to this sublime sacrament.<sup>314</sup> We now focus our attention on the Small Christian communities and their contribution in regard to the call of communion.

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<sup>310</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Called to communion*, 76.

<sup>311</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Called to communion*, 82.

<sup>312</sup> International Roman Catholic-Old Catholic Dialogue Commission, “The Church and Ecclesial Communion”, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/vetero-cattolici/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_20090512\\_report-church-ecclesial-communion\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/vetero-cattolici/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20090512_report-church-ecclesial-communion_en.html), 15/12/2015.

<sup>313</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 15.

<sup>314</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 34.

#### ***4.4 The Theory and Praxis of Small Christian Communities<sup>315</sup> as Koinonia***

We have just examined the importance of the word and Eucharist. In it we have acknowledged the fact that the two are indeed twin poles in the life of the Church. This is in fact an agreement of many Church leaders and theologians.<sup>316</sup> The danger of this fact is to isolate it from the context of the Small Christian Communities which is often the case, without appreciating their power and influence. As Healey emphasizes “an important sign of the times is not just reading the bible, but reading the bible in community. The Spirit is deeply present as SCC members reflect on their lives in the light of the word of God.”<sup>317</sup> The fact remains true therefore that the SCCs are a new paradigm of being Church. They are a new model of being Church based on the Church as communion. They belong to the contemporary theology of the Trinitarian communion ecclesiology.<sup>318</sup> There is no doubt that the reality of the rapid growth of the SCCs is a new particular sign of the times in the development of the Church in contemporary times especially in Africa.

It is for this same reason that the AMECEA (Members of Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia) endorsed the creation of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as one of the ways to enhance evangelization in Eastern Africa. In 1973, the bishops issued a declaration that SCCs must be the new way of being the Church in this part of Africa. They

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<sup>315</sup> Cf. P. TZAUDA, “Family Life and the Christian Community”, 70, Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are the groups of believers which live, work and pray, listening attentively to the word of God, observing faithfully the church teaching and are in communion with the local hierarchy.

<sup>316</sup> Cf. C.M.MARTINI, “A Pastor’s vision”, 876-78.

<sup>317</sup> J. HEALEY – D. SYBERTZ, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, 143.

<sup>318</sup> Cf. J. HEALEY – D. SYBERTZ, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, 139.

commissioned the setting up of SCCs after realizing that the participation of the laity in evangelization was weak.<sup>319</sup>

As one Sukuma proverb says, *A few goats hear the whistle of the herder*. The implication in this proverb is that it is easier to work or teach a smaller group than a big group. This idea becomes true to the Small Christian Communities and therefore makes it of an advantage to deal with than a larger parish community. They become easier to manage, and minister to, in the pastoral setting. Kalilombe insists in this regard “If we want the Church to live and function actually as a community, then we must go down to that smaller level at which people live and interact in their daily lives. It is in these smaller communities that the Church can express itself in a meaningful Christian communion.”<sup>320</sup> That said, we agree on the whole with Mwoleka that SCCs are “communities with a human face.”<sup>321</sup> This is because the members live the personal relationships and community values that are treasured especially in Africa. These same communities encourage and nurture the participation of the laity including women.<sup>322</sup> We can say that for Africa SCCs make Africans joyfully Christian and truly African. As Kumi remarks that they actualize both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of *koinonia*.<sup>323</sup>

#### ***4.5 Ecumenism and the Quest for Communion***

We cannot end our study on ecclesial communion without exploring the ecumenical movement. This is because most of the aspects we have examined in this chapter express not only the internal dimension of communion but also the external dimension, and to this latter

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<sup>319</sup> Cf. AMECEA Bishops, “Planning for the Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980s” in *AFER* 16/1 and 2, 1974.

<sup>320</sup> P. KALILOMBE, “From Outstation to Small Christian Communities”, *Spearhead* (June – October 1984) No. 82-85.

<sup>321</sup> C. MWOLEKA in Healey, *A fifth Gospel*, 57.

<sup>322</sup> Cf. J.G. HEALEY – J. HINTON, ed., *Small Christian Communities Today*, 99.

<sup>323</sup> Cf. G.K. KUMI, “Basic Ecclesial Communities As Communion”, 165.

aspect ecumenism belongs. In other words they serve communion *in ecclesia* and *extra ecclesia*. Ecumenism thus belongs to the latter realm. According to the Catholic Church – World Evangelical Alliance, “the use of *koinonia* brings an important biblical term to bear on ecclesiology, as it suggests those things that bind Christians together.”<sup>324</sup> As we have seen the word of God in the scriptures unites all Christians who profess Jesus Christ as Lord. The Eucharist on the other hand however, though it is found at the root of ecclesial communion, continues to be a stumbling block to this fellowship among Christians who profess and believe in the same baptismal sacrament.<sup>325</sup> Nevertheless, an emphasis on the Eucharistic basis of ecclesial communion can contribute greatly to ecumenical dialogue with other Christians, not in full communion with the See of Peter.<sup>326</sup> This can be realized by emphasizing the ecclesial character of the Eucharist.

It should also be recalled that among the advantages of small Christian communities is their dynamic contribution to ecumenism. For Guiney, “Small Christian Communities are expected to be effective means to bring people into psychological, sociological, and ecclesiological communion with one another, and with larger Christian communities.”<sup>327</sup> We can therefore agree with Congar that, up to this day, no Church has succeeded in convincing other Churches that it is in possession of the truth. We are all still in a position of being face to face or side by side, though to some degree we are also together and even incorporated.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> Catholic Church – World Evangelical Alliance, “Church, Evangelization and ‘Koinonia’”, 311.

<sup>325</sup> Cf. P.C. BOUTENEFF, “Koinonia and Eucharistic Unity”, 74.

<sup>326</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 15.

<sup>327</sup> J. GUINEY, “Comparing BCCs in South America and Africa”, 168.

<sup>328</sup> Cf. Y. CONGAR, *Diversity and Communion*, 161.

## Conclusion

At this juncture, we affirm that the model of ecclesial communion is an essential principle in the life of the Church. It remains the locus and goal of the Church's eternal destiny given its eschatological nature. In the Church it is visibly manifested in the vertical dimension, with the blessed Trinity and horizontal dimension with one another. The former is invisible and the latter is visible. Furthermore the constant practice of worship initiates the vertical fellowship in faith as it establishes it through the gospel, baptism and the Eucharist. The horizontal fellowship on the other hand is a fruition of participation, contribution, sharing, fraternal charity, community and collegiality. The communion manifestation is translated into the daily participation of the believers in the life of the Church as such, but more so in the assembly of the liturgy. Here the word of God is listened to and the Eucharist culminates in this fellowship. It needs to be noted however that this communion is still limited because it is still a fellowship in "pilgrimage" which will be perfected at the end of time. Having endeavored to explore the ecclesial communion up to this extent, we now turn our study to the concluding section which will give a synthesis and recommend the necessary conditions for *koinonia* in Contemporary Christian praxis.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

*Koinonia* is a gift to human beings. It originates from the Triune God who is communion itself and whose plan is to make human beings share in this noble gift with the Holy Trinity and with one another. In this research we have established that God, created human beings in his own image and likeness, in order that they may be true companions in the life of communion. We labored to develop the hermeneutics of the Trinitarian *koinonia* as fundamental in contemporary Christian praxis. In fact, it is the reason God created them male and female. Thus human *koinonia* is the prolongation of the Trinitarian *koinonia*. As such, communion is not only traced in the temporal realm but it actually has God as its origin and end. Its purpose and goal is defined by God's own plan for humankind, whereby he decided to create human beings in his own image and likeness, so as to allow them to be his true representatives as far as the life of fellowship is concerned. Hence the communion that humans live in the world ought visibly and actively to portray the divine presence. The implication in this fact is that human communion is at the service of both the human person and the rest of creation.

It is however painful to see, as we pointed out in our general introduction, that the reverse of *koinonia* is what is more prevalent in contemporary times. The modern culture is being eaten up by various forms of selfish individualistic tendencies. These range from individuals to

collective systems like political and economic forms of oppression. This is true because according to Lonergan, the project of self-making and world-making equal two sides of the same coin. One's choice entails an effect on self and the world which surrounds that person.<sup>329</sup> Moreover, for John Paul II the root cause of this selfishness is to be traced in the poor ethics and morals of contemporary humanity.<sup>330</sup> Instead of the good values we only see vices like tribalism, corruption, economic oppression and racism, among others. All in all for the modern forms of selfishness to be mitigated we need to concur with Paul VI that there is urgent need for a radical change in the conduct of humanity. Despite the most extraordinary sophisticated scientific, economic and technological advancement, it will all be in vain if it is not accompanied by authentic social and moral progress.<sup>331</sup> Selfishness therefore remains a serious challenge to *koinonia* in the contemporary Christian praxis.

Therefore, in our investigation, in Chapter one, we affirm the fact that the call to human fellowship is intimately linked with the very being and destiny of human beings. We have seen in this chapter that the Trinitarian *koinonia* is the basis and foundation of all human *koinonia* in both the temporal and eternal existence. It not only founds it, but all human communions are enhanced by this Trinitarian communion. It helps them to tend towards their eschatological destiny, where they will attain full union with the Triune God. Thus, it is imperative for every human being to realize how communion is central in establishing the link between this stupendous, transient, temporal existence, and eternal life. Through this, not only will human beings realize themselves through the life of fellowship, but they will also help other human beings and indeed the rest of creation towards this goal. This will eliminate the tendency of some

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<sup>329</sup> Cf. B. LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, 240.

<sup>330</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 36.

<sup>331</sup> Cf. PAUL VI, "Address to FAO on the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its institution" (16 November, 1970).

who tend to look down on others in society perceiving them as second class citizens on earth. Moreover, this will help them to value each other, not basing on what they have, but on the basis of who they are i.e. human beings endowed with dignity.

In fact, as we have seen in our chapter two, this development in embracing communion in both its dimensions can be realized when we follow the example of Jesus Christ who became like us in everything except sin. We have seen in the scriptures that God's plan for humankind unfolded right from the Old Testament and culminated in Jesus Christ in the New Testament as an embodiment of true *koinonia*. Through him, humanity is restored from the effects of original sin which hampered communion, as seen in the story of creation and the fall. We also saw that fellowship was lived in a different way in the Old Testament but became more explicit in the New Testament. Jesus inaugurated this endeavor not only through his preaching, the call to *koinonia* in the proclamation of the kingdom of God, but he lived it through his deeds. This was so in his parables and miracles respectively. He advocated virtues like humility, love, equality, and liberation of all. Through him, human communion becomes a forum for human beings to enter and dwell in communion with his Father in heaven. Therefore the generous participation in the love of Christ becomes a proper measure for the true life of human fellowship as attested to by the Acts of the Apostles and Pauline literature respectively.

The anthropological realities in Africa as illustrated in chapter three of this inquiry are a true proof that the relational aspect of the human person is truly marked on human hearts as an ontological reality. Given this consciousness in African culture which is expressed in values like hospitality, service, importance of life, marriage, the 'word' as palaver etc., should act as arable soil for Christian *koinonia* to flourish in the contemporary cultures. Through this way, the

African culture will be elevated from its partial communion to attain a fuller communion inclusive of all human beings.

In this way, the transformation of the world through the ecclesial communion will be based on love, which will ensure the building of a new human family based on the gracious divine charity. The fourth chapter of this research emphasized this reality as it looked at the role of the Small Christian Communities in fostering the life of communion in church and society among other aspects of ecclesial communion. We have also emphasized the “concentric circle” communion rather than pyramidal structure which had dominated the Church before the Vatican Council II. The other aspects like the word of God, the Eucharist, the liturgy, among others, and their facilitation of ecclesial communion have also been emphasized. Thus in light of the Trinitarian *koinonia*, humanity is able to order its life and actions, so that in pursuit of the common good, everybody will reach true and full humanity.

However, human beings can only achieve this through authentic co-operation and collaboration with one another. This will result in the elimination of many vices common in today’s society. Hence we shall see little corruption, mistreatment, tribalism, racism, enmity, malice, oppression of the poor, unhealthy competition among others. Instead we shall witness virtues that enhance authentic living in society. Of course, this is far from being a reality, because in today’s world, there is more individualism as manifested in its different forms than communion. As we established in the introductory chapter of this inquiry, selfishness is a cancer that has eaten up contemporary society. This has been stretched to the environment as well, in terms of air pollution, water etc. Obviously, serious consequences have resulted, like reduced rainfall, soil infertility, famine, etc.

In addition, it is also important for us to examine Lonergan's notion of bias and prejudice and how they point to selfishness. Biases are common to all people in the form of tendencies, preferences, inclinations etc. Much as bias can be positive for enhancing personal and cultural growth, it nevertheless retards the development of society and therefore hinders communion among persons. A closer examination of Lonergan's notion of human bias<sup>332</sup> shows how it hinders the life of fellowship. For him there is a close relationship between knowing and doing. This is because it is the knowing which influences human behavior. He identifies four biases that impede the process of human knowing and doing. The first is dramatic bias which is a tendency to accept an 'oversight' at the expense of pursuing a desire to know towards an 'insight'. It is a preference of darkness to light.<sup>333</sup> The second hindrance is the individual bias in which the individual thinks and acts with self at the center. Everything one thinks or does is geared towards self-indulgence and gratification, paying little or no consideration at the concern of others.

The third form of bias for Lonergan is group bias which builds on individual bias. He remarks: "Just as the individual egoist puts further questions to a point, but desists before reaching conclusions incompatible with his own egoism, so also the group is prone to have a blind spot for the insights that reveal its wellbeing to be excessive or its usefulness at the end".<sup>334</sup> In this case therefore the group wants to look out for its own interests and desires at the expense of other groups. The ideologies of self-preservation and protection for the group lead to the victimization of other groups and hence the common good is compromised. We find examples of group bias among tribes and races in many countries, in the forms of tribalism and racism. Dominant powerful groups may be progressive or reactionary, resulting in conflicts and

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<sup>332</sup> Thus: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bias>, defines bias as a tendency to believe that some people, ideas, etc., are better than others that usually results in treating some people unfairly.

<sup>333</sup> Cf. B. LONERGAN, *Insight*, 214.

<sup>334</sup> B. LONERGAN, *Insight*, 248.

sometimes violence. This fact can explain very well the 1994 Rwandan genocide where death and violence gripped the country for about three months. This situation according to Aguilar has become chronic in Africa and indeed in other parts of the world.<sup>335</sup> Moreover it is true that *koinonia* remains more of a dream than a reality in these situations. The fourth form of bias is the general bias of common sense. It is concerned with the common sense which appeals to the concrete and in particular without any regard to the universal laws and the abstract.<sup>336</sup> This leads to circles of decline which makes society deteriorate into the *social surd*.<sup>337</sup> Bias therefore is the source of all underdevelopment of the community.

As we conclude our study it would not be fair to end it without investigating conditions that can enhance the fostering of fellowship. The first of these is proposed by Lonergan in correction of the above biases. Since for him, bias is the source of all human under-development, the possibility of achieving progress on the other hand can only be realized by overcoming these human biases through conversion<sup>338</sup> or redemption. This is because human biases are a result of the fall of mankind. This notion of bias parallels the law of concupiscence. He thus describes three conversions that individuals must undergo in the process of self-transcendence in order to overcome the effects of human bias. These include intellectual, moral and religious conversion. This process must eventually transform individuals and communities of individuals towards full human knowledge.<sup>339</sup> It should be noted however that, this conversion process can only be realized when a subject confesses guilt. This leads to change of attitude and thus progress results.

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<sup>335</sup> Cf. M. AGUILAR, *The Rwanda Genocide*, 17.

<sup>336</sup> Cf. B. LONERGAN, *Insight*, 250-1.

<sup>337</sup> Cf. B. LONERGAN, *Insight*, 689- 690, describes the *social surd* as ‘A succession of less and less comprehensive syntheses’.

<sup>338</sup> Cf. R.M. DORAN. – R.C. CROKEN., ed., *Early works on Theological Method I*, 14, explains conversion as “a reorganization of the subject, of his operations, of the world with which he is familiar. It can imply a broadening of the horizon, but principally it is that change in the subject himself.”

<sup>339</sup> Cf. R. K. MEYER, *An Evangelical Analysis of the Critical Realism and Corollary Hermeneutics ...*, 207.

The end results of this process are the successive viewpoints which entail the equality for all, recognizing their inherent dignity.

The first form of conversion is intellectual conversion. It is the abandonment of knowing through the senses only and the adoption of proper knowing from experience, understanding and judgment. The second level of conversion is moral conversion. This according to Haughey is moral self-transcendence which brings choosers from acting on their own preferences, wants and satisfactions to acting on values of others.<sup>340</sup> The third conversion is that of religious conversion. It is for Lonergan “the total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualifications, reservations.”<sup>341</sup> This process is due to the grace of God poured into the subject. However, Lonergan warns that though religious conversion sublates moral and moral conversion sublates intellectual, one is not to perceive that these conversions happen in progressive order.

The second condition is the contemporary notion of fundamental option which implies the question of human freedom as vital in fostering communion. This human freedom operates at two distinct but related levels i.e. the superficial level and the deeper level. While at the superficial level human beings are mainly concerned with objects and actions, at the deeper level they are concerned with the subject, and hence one decides what he is to make of himself. Since the fundamental option involves choice between two possibilities, it follows thus that this choice is between radical selfishness and self-transcendence. To this fact, Augustine remarked that, at this deeper level only two types of love are possible: “love of God that is ready to trample on self, or love of self on the verge of scorning God.”<sup>342</sup> That having been said, it is imperative to illustrate how the selfish fundamental option is developed and how it can be overcome by

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<sup>340</sup> Cf. J. HAUGHEY, “Responsibility for Human Rights: Contributions from Benard Lonergan,” , 767.

<sup>341</sup> B. LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, 240.

<sup>342</sup> SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *City of God*, 14, 28.

cultivating the loving fundamental option which fosters the true spirit of *koinonia*. What characterizes the former is a person being closed in on him or herself in proud self- sufficiency and self-seeking. This shows a correspondence of selfish fundamental option as a result of sin both original and mortal.<sup>343</sup>

On the other hand to achieve *koinonia* in the contemporary Christian praxis there is need for people to embrace the spirit of loving positive fundamental option. This requires cooperation on the part of human beings with the grace of God. It entails a radical conversion from the former selfishness into love of God and neighbor. It will be achieved by relating to God, neighbor, society and the environment in a constructive manner. For Lonergan, essentially speaking, this newly acquired ability to move beyond self-interest to disinterested love is called ‘self-transcendence’. Man achieves authenticity by ‘self- transcendence.’ This single word, better than any other, captures the situation- and capacity- constituted by the positive fundamental option.<sup>344</sup> The fundamental option is what makes it possible for a person to put the common good first, in a consistent manner, and personal interest second. This breeds communion among people and only when we are in communion with reality as a whole do we enjoy peace, harmony, a sense of deep-seated fulfillment and success in life. This leads to true communion.

The third condition is the spirituality of communion. In order for the spirituality of communion to be realized, the Church and society need witnesses who are profoundly rooted in Christ and find nourishment in his word and sacraments. This eventually culminates in the active participation of the faithful in the Sunday Eucharist, since the Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life" (CCC, 1324). Pope Francis emphasizes this when he insists,

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<sup>343</sup> Cf. N. FOGLIACCO, “The Theology of Grace”, 283- 4.

<sup>344</sup> Cf. B. LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, 104-5.

“Sunday, like the Jewish Sabbath, is meant to be a day which heals our relationships with God, with ourselves, with others and with the world.”<sup>345</sup>

John Paul II presents us with a number of conditions for the spirituality of communion and it is of paramount importance to mention them in this study. The first is the ability to perceive the light of the mystery of the Trinity shining on the faces of the brothers and sisters around us. Secondly is to be attentive to our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the mystical body, and therefore as ‘those who are a part of me’, in order to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep genuine friendship. Thirdly is the ability to recognize all that is positive in the other, so as to welcome it and prize it as a gift that God gives me through that person, in a way that transcends by far the individual concerned, who thus becomes a channel of divine graces. Finally, the ability to make room for our brothers and sisters, bearing ‘each other’s burdens’ (Gal 6:2), and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke completion, careerism, distrust and jealousy.<sup>346</sup> All these conditions are necessary for living in true fellowship with one another. Kasper reminds us of the same when he stipulates the importance of compassion in modern pastoral context. It is “to be able to put oneself into the situation, into the feelings, thoughts, and existential situation of another, in order thereby to understand his or her thinking and acting.”<sup>347</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> POPE FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, 237.

<sup>346</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 43.

<sup>347</sup> W. KASPER, *Mercy*, 16.

In a nutshell, we emphasize that all the social values that foster communion have to be hinged on divine communion, which in turn becomes the foundation of human communion. This is to be realized when humanity undergoes a series of conversions as emphasized in this study. Moreover the adoption of a loving fundamental option through the spirituality of communion, as has been explored and recommended in this concluding chapter, will make the life of true human *koinonia* possible. Hence, we affirm that, human fellowship has its origin and end in God. It is only to be restored in contemporary Christian praxis if this reality is acknowledged and embraced as a mission of everyone in the modern world.

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