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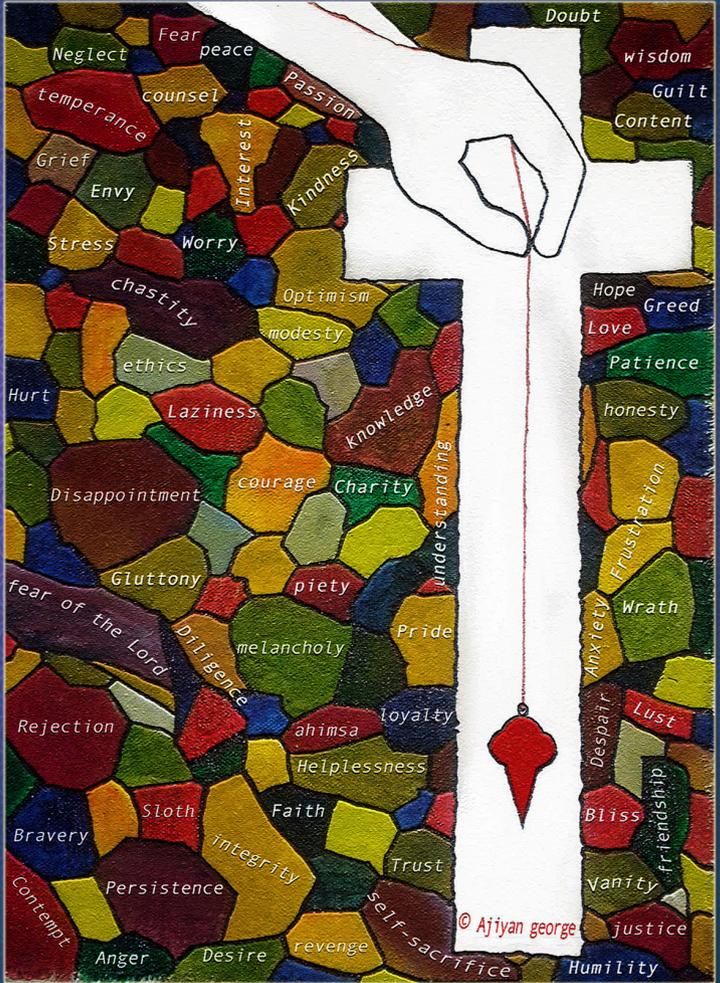
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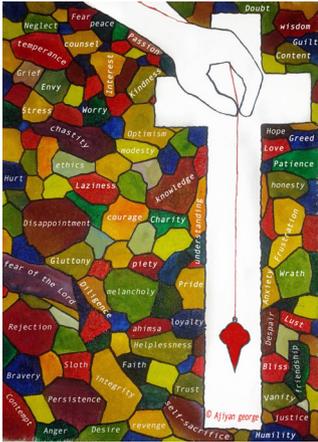
Ph: 0484 - 2748079, 2748072, 2748061

web: www.msotseminary.edu.in

email: msotseminary@yahoo.co.in

editor.hekamtho@gmail.com

About the cover painting...



“The Plumb Line”

by Ajiyan George | Acrylic on Canvas | 24x30 | 2013 |

“And the Lord said to me, “Amos, what do you see?”

And I said, “A plumb line.”

Then the Lord said, “See, I am setting a plumb line
in the midst of my people.

- Book of Amos 7:8.

For spiritual growth, we require a plumb line to guide us in the right direction. This painting depicts the Cross of Christ as the plumb line that guides us towards salvation. In our spiritual journey we come across many different attributes. Some of which motivates us to go forward and others that pull us back. We need to keep looking at ‘The Cross’ which is the plumb line that will guide us to our ultimate destination!

Editorial

In modern times, the word ‘spiritual’ is found to be confusing, since it has many different connotations. Different people have different opinions regarding ‘what is spiritual and what is not’. Even though, the philosophical and technical meaning of ‘spiritual’ may vary, the underlying experience of being born again, renewed, and revived remains the same for all. It gives new hopes for a bright future ahead. In this regard, the current issue of Hekamtho tries to elaborate upon various dimensions of Spirituality

The first article, ‘Spirituality: An Eastern perspective’ by Adai Jacob Corepiscopa, describes the importance of Spirituality in the oriental church tradition. He correlates the biblical and theological accounts of spirituality with the prominent patterns of philosophical thoughts from the east.

Jacob Joseph, in his article ‘Youth, Spirituality, Orthodox Faith and Public Square’, explains the necessity to mold spirituality that can address the needs of the present day youth. It also critically evaluates the present situation of spirituality within the church premises with special reference to the Orthodox faith.

The third article ‘A Semiotic Study of the Works of Contemporary Video Artist Bill Viola’ by Ajiyan George provides a systematic semiotic outlook into the art world of renowned video

artist Bill Viola. It also analyzes the communicative process in Viola's spiritual statement through video art.

The Fourth article titled 'Paul in Chains to His Church in Chains' by Eldho MC, is an exegetical study of the Epistle of Philippians. It rereads the Pauline letter and tries to draw a parallel between St. Paul's life-situation as a prisoner of Rome and the life-situation of the faithful in Philippi.

Basil Paul, in his article 'Eucharistic Missiology: Mission Paradigm of the Orthodox Churches' explains the importance of Eucharistic celebration as a mission paradigm in the Orthodox belief. He also affirms the need of a proper understanding of Eucharistic missiology in the contemporary world of 'Spiritual but not religious' tag.

Hope this issue of Hekamtho enriches your spiritual life and benefits you to understand few of the concepts of spiritual wellbeing!

- Fr. Dr. Ajiyan George

Editor

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Spirituality: An Eastern Perspective

Rev. Dr. Adai Jacob Corepiscopa

Introduction

In general the origin of all Christian spirituality in East and West is Jesus Christ the incarnated son of God. The immeasurable and eternal love of God the Father towards the humanity is revealed in sending His only Son Jesus Christ to the human world, and Jesus through His death on the cross became the Symbol of self-sacrifice and selfless divine love. The Christian spirituality tries to follow the path of the love of Jesus Christ in order to unite the whole humanity to become the children of God filled with His selfless love under one God the Father.

1. Christian Spirituality in General

Spirituality is a summarized terminology to express all the qualities of a person, who believes in God and adopts a Style of life according to his faith aiming at his salvation. Since faith in God is always related to a religion, spirituality is again summary of the style of life prescribed by a religion. In this sense Christian spirituality means all the qualities that a Christian has to possess

and practicing of a style of life prescribed by his church. The Christian spirituality didn't develop in one place with uniform nature and form, but in different parts of the world with different forms, expressions and emphasizes. The forms and expressions of spirituality developed in the East were different from that in the west and let us try to distinguish some of the special features of Eastern Spirituality.

It can be perceived that the eastern spirituality is based on the scripture and it is continuation of the spirituality of 1st century Christian church. When we compare the Eastern spirituality with the western we can discern the special features of the eastern spirituality. It emphasizes in general not theory of spirituality but practical realization of spirituality in the present time and space through participation in the sacraments, prayers and all the worships of the church. The divine force behind this realization of spirituality is the Holy Spirit of God and therefore the eastern spirituality gives very much importance to the work of the Holy Spirit in connection with the performance of sacraments. The main aim of the spirituality of the east is deification of man and creation leading to salvation.

The deification process already began when Adam, the crown of creation was created in the image God and His spirit was breathed into the nostrils of Adam.

1.1 Old Testament background

Eastern spirituality was developed not within a short span of time, but through centuries. Several factors contributed to the development of the same. The OT and Jewish background have to be considered when we deal with eastern spirituality. If spirituality deals with the relation between God and man and the style of life adopted by man on the basis of this relation, then man is simply a breath and passing shadow before the almighty God who created the universe (Ps 144: 3-4). But Israelite was conscious that they are the elected people of God and therefore God will forgive their sins. In order to forgive their sins they

have to stay before the Glory of God and worship Him with fear and trembling. Fear of God is thus the central aspect in the OT spirituality. This fear is not to keep away from God but to believe in God and to dedicate oneself fully to God. In OT Abraham is presented as the model for such dedication and faith. God demanded from him the abandoning of his past and present (profession native place father and mother) and sacrificing of his future (only son Isaac). Abraham's faith in God was so perfect that he was ready to take up this full dedication to God. The fulfilment of this self-dedication to God is found in the idea of suffering servant in Isaiah.

In Judaism before the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians participation in temple worship was one of the most important aspects of Jewish spirituality. During the exile in Babylon Torah or the Law of Moses became the centre of Jewish spirituality. To be spiritual means to learn and meditate over the Torah day and night. Pharisees' developed a tradition in which a formal outward truthfulness to the Law is demanded. Such type of Spirituality was criticized vehemently by Jesus and named it as hypocrisy. Along with the truthfulness to the law came also the spirituality of the hope for the future and expectation of a Messiah. From this hope developed the faith in the resurrection of the dead and the judgment of all in the future. The Apocalyptic literature contributed to a great extent to such spirituality.

1.2 New Testament background

The spirituality of Jesus was based on the Spirituality of OT. But Jesus radically reinterpreted the OT spirituality giving to it deeper spiritual meaning. The fearful God of OT was presented by Jesus as the merciful and loving father and taught his disciples to pray to such a loving father. Jesus came to proclaim the Kingdom of God, in which God as a merciful and loving father rules over the human beings and handle them as his children. This demands from human beings radical obedience and

dedication to the father leading to self-sacrifice. For that our model is the only begotten Son of God Jesus Christ. Spirituality is in short following of the path of Jesus and transformation to become children of God.

1.3 Spirituality of the primitive church

We become children of God through baptism and baptism is at the same time participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through baptism one receives the Holy Spirit of God. Christian life is life according to the spirit and not according to the flesh. Life according to the spirit also means bearing of the fruits of the spirit and practically leads an ethical life every Christian participates in the whole Christ event through participation in the Holy Eucharist. The spiritual life of 1st century Christians is summarized in Acts 2:42. Hope for a glorious future is inseparable part of Christian spirituality. The Christian spirituality is thus related to the past Christ event the present ethical Christian life and the hope for future glorification.

2. The main features of Eastern Spirituality

All the general aspects of spirituality like biblical, ecclesiological, eschatological, ethical etc. have to be taken into account when we think of an eastern spirituality. The revelation of the triune God head through the incarnation of the son of God is the basis for the Christian spirituality.

2.1 Trinitarian Character

The central and basic aspect of eastern spirituality is its Trinitarian nature. Father Son and Holy Spirit is equally adored in the practical exercise of spirituality. The western spirituality is on the contrary centralized in Christ. Spirituality according to eastern concept is not aimed at selfish salvation of ones soul through individual piety. It is dedication to God and glorification of God, who expressed his endless eternal love in the creation of the Universe and human beings. God sent his son for the salvation of the creation and therefore the divine salvation and

blessings are delivered to human beings through Jesus Christ. So a spiritual man has to follow the footsteps of Christ in the practice of spirituality. Through baptism each individual participate in the Christ event and receives the Holy Spirit of God as the first instalment of his salvation (Eph 1: 13-14). Thus a Christian is the one, who received the Holy Spirit from God the Father through the Son -Jesus Christ.

2.2 Holy Spirit and eastern spirituality

The eastern spirituality lays special importance to the work of the Holy Spirit in the church and in individual. The triune God is present and works in the church and in individual through the Holy Spirit. The Holy sacraments as media to convey salvation are fulfilled through the work of the Holy Spirit. The eastern churches believe that a sacrament reaches its climax with indwelling of the Holy Spirit. According to St. Paul the Christian life is in short a life in the Spirit. This means that the Holy Spirit that dwells in us has to lead and regulate our life.

2.3 The Church and eastern spirituality

The church is the community of believers, who are indebted to follow the Christian spirituality. According to NT and as per Christian tradition the concept of church is defined differently. The church is defined as body of Christ, community of believers, new Israel, fellowship of the Holy Spirit etc. The members of the church follow the Spirituality prescribed by the church. The external form of spirituality need not be uniform and it will be different because of the different society, Culture and life situations. The eastern spirituality is not intended to remain in intellectual level, but it is intended to be practised and realized in life. The practice of spirituality by an individual is related to the parish church, which is the basic unit of the church. The Parish church gives shape to the spirituality and therefore the spirituality of the east is inseparably related to the parish church. In this sense spirituality is not individual and selfish but part of the fellowship of the church.

2.4 Sacraments and the eastern spirituality

The eastern churches believe that the sacraments are media of salvation and through participation in the sacraments an individual participate in the spirituality. The Christ event was the act of salvation fulfilled by God in history for the humanity. Through the sacrament this act of salvation of the past is brought to the present and made available and experience-able for all generations. The most important expression of spirituality of the eastern churches has to be sought in performance of sacraments. It is believed that each individual is able to participate in the act of salvation of the son of God through participation in the sacraments. This stand point of the eastern churches is clarified when we analyse the meaning of the two most important sacraments – baptism and holy Eucharist.

2.4.1 Baptism

The first Adam in OT symbolizes the old fallen humanity and Jesus on the other hand as 2nd Adam represents the new redeemed humanity and through baptism an individual becomes a member of the new Humanity. The water baptism symbolizes the death of the old man and resurrection of the new man simultaneously it Symbolizes the participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The baptized person is then anointed with the Holy oil. This anointment symbolizes the reception of the Holy Spirit. Through the possession of the Holy Spirit a baptized person becomes an adopted son or daughter of God and become eligible to call God as his or her own father. In this sense the baptized Christians are indebted to live a life according to the spirit and follow the footsteps of Jesus Christ. The spirituality of a Christian must be therefore rooted in the inner meaning of baptism.

2.4.2 Holy Eucharist:

Christ event was the work of God in history for the salvation of humanity. During the time of the Holy Eucharist we bring to the present and participate in the whole Christ event. The coming

of John the Baptist, the birth of Jesus Christ, his public ministry, suffering death, resurrection and second coming are celebrated in the Holy Eucharist. According to Eastern teaching the celebration of the holy Eucharist is considered as the most important and also climax of all Christian spiritual activities. The celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the participation in it and the mystical experience overcomes all the limits of time and space. It is a crucial moment in which heaven and earth past, present and future are brought together. In Holy Eucharist the separation between heaven and earth is removed and the participants are brought to the eternal spheres and experience the heavenly joy. It is also experience of the presence of the Father son and the Holy Spirit and the unique occasion to praise the triune God with the heavenly angels. Eucharist is eternal heavenly feast, but celebrated in this world. Holy Eucharist is a mystery indented to participate and experience and not a subject indented to analyse and interpret. At the time of Holy Eucharist the church as the body of Christ and the consecrated bread and wine as sacramental body and blood of Christ is the most important spiritual food for the growth of the church, which is the body of Christ. Therefore the most important aspect and special feature of eastern spirituality is the participation in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist on Sundays in which each believer is able to hear the word of God read and preached, take holy communion, experience the presence of the triune God, experience the Christian unity and fellowship and above all the church as historical entity finds its concrete expression, when the believers assemble together to celebrate the Christ event in Holy Eucharist.

2.5 Spirituality and Salvation

The ultimate aim of spirituality is attainment of eternal salvation and joy. The sacraments as outward and practical expression of spirituality are also aimed at eternal salvation. Spirituality is not the selfish and parochial attempt to bring ones soul to heaven. On the contrary it is sharing of the eternal joy in heaven as sons and daughters of God. Those who are baptized

and received the Holy Spirit are in the path of Salvation and they have to grow up to the fullness of Jesus Christ.

2.6 Spirituality and Theology

Spirituality and theology are mutually related and complementary to each. Spirituality and the related sacraments are application of theology in the life of the believer. The prayers connected to the sacraments are now great sources of Christian theology. Therefore the eastern spirituality and theology are complimentary to each other. As per western perspective theology can remain as an independent science without any relation to spirituality.

2.7 Spirituality and prayers of intercession

Intercession to St. Mary as the mother of God and to all other saints is inseparable part of eastern spirituality. In the case of St. Mary the final process of divinization of humanity and the creation began with annunciation. In annunciation the second person of trinity was pleased to come down and join with sinful human nature. The process of sanctification and divinization of humanity and the creation began with this union of the divine with the human in Mary. Therefore the fathers of eastern churches considered St. Mary as the first among all saints and composed thousands of hymns praising St. Mary. The intercession of St. Mary and all other saints are given great importance in the East. In day today prayers and in Sunday worship intercession to St. Mary and saints became part of eastern spirituality and piety.

2.8 The fruits of eastern spirituality

2.8.1 Monks Movement

The monks' movement thrived in the east was one of the most important fruits of eastern spirituality. In the east a great number of monasteries were established and they became ideal centers in realizing the eastern Christian spirituality. The life of the monks was fully dedicated to the worship of God and they

were real scholars not only in theology and Bible, but also in philosophy and in various branches of science. Therefore in early centuries bishops were selected only from monasteries. The monks' movement in the East had different forms and different ways of life and all those forms and ways were Christian spiritual exercises or expressions of spirituality.

2.8.2 Centres of theological education

Another fruit of eastern spirituality was the establishment of great centres for theological education. Eastern spirituality is not confined in simple and practical exercise of piety or celebration of sacraments, but it has got on the other hand a vast scholastic and intellectual side. The oriental Syrian Spirituality is a unique example to Eastern spirituality, in which eastern scholasticism played an important role. The Eastern Church fathers were scholars and also great leaders of eastern spirituality. The great theological schools of Edesa and Nissibis were great centres of eastern scholasticism and spirituality. The eastern spirituality has therefore concrete theological basis.

2.8.3 Martyrdom

In the early centuries thousands of Christian believers became Martyrs. The Roman officials forced the Christians to leave up their Christian faith and spirituality and to adopt the spirituality prescribed by the state. But the early Christians were not ready to leave up their faith and spirituality and the result was Martyrdom or banishment. The blood of the early Christian Martyrs played a crucial role in the spreading of the Christian church in the world.

Conclusion

The spirituality embedded and revealed in the sacraments of the one holy catholic and apostolic church and practicing of the same in the local parish church is one of the most important aspects of eastern spirituality. Special emphasis also has to be given to the mystical and ecstatic experience obtained through

whole hearted participation in the sacraments and in all other worships. The Holy Spirit works through the sacraments and in the participants in all the true worships and celebrations. We have to see in spirituality the attempt to realize in life the multi-various aspects of Christian faith. God and his endless and limitless love was revealed in Jesus Christ and therefore Christian spirituality is in end effect an attempt to reveal this divine love to the whole world.

Youth, Spirituality, Orthodox Faith and Public Square¹

Jacob Joseph²

Introduction

The postmodern society has accepted the dictum: Religion is a private, not a public, affair. The root of this dictum may be found in Rene Descartes' philosophical position on modernity, with the Latin phrase "cogito ergo sum", meaning, "I think, therefore I am."³ It affirms one's own existence to prove one is 'thinking.' Probably one could argue that this is the gift of the Eurocentric enlightenment of the seventeenth century. It is embraced in all the public squares that accept the inevitability of modern influences in everyday life. Little wonder that our

¹ Public Square is a place of assembly for the people in ancient Greece. Modern social scientists use this word to denote public life, state life, social life of the country deriving from the Latin word *pubicus* - meaning 'of the people,' 'of the state,' 'commonly done for the state' so on and so forth.

² Rev. Fr. Jacob Joseph is a Research Fellow at The University of Divinity, Melbourne, Australia.

³ This phrase is also used as "I am thinking; therefore I am." See. John Veitch, trans. *The Meditations and Selections from the Principles of Rene Descartes* (Chicago: Open Court, 1903), 30-31.

societies have tried to keep religion from the public square, considering it thought-less and irrational.

A recent informal conversation with my Australian neighbour on religion and free society prompted me to think about the topic from a different perspective. Quoting from the various religions in India, she said that religion and modern society were an extreme contradiction. According to her, in spite of the diverse and highly dense religiosity in India,⁴ the majority live under insecure economic, political and social impediments.⁵ She thinks that in order to be authentic, religiosity must be a visible expression of “helping, loving and taking care of one another.” Is it not hypocritical, if one confesses to be religious and turns away from the social needs of the other?

Although this conversation created a conflict in me, I did not think about it critically until recently when I heard a comment from an immigrant parent about their young children. The parent’s concern was that their children “were more comfortable outside the Church than in the community” (I call the community as Public Square). This was a surprise to me as the children appeared to be very devout in the Church during Holy Eucharistic service. The parent’s comment raised three questions: First, is this a problem? Second, if it is, is it an issue of the Church, the young people, or their parents? And third, what is so attractive outside the Church? Taking the above example and the ensuing questions, while not wanting to sensationalize the issue, I would like to explore the fundamental reasons for these concerns, if they are, in fact, a problem!

⁴ Even though my neighbour made a random statement, while writing this paper, I researched to find out the up-dated statistics. According to the report of Win-Gallup international, Global Index of Religiosity and Atheism 2012, (p. 10-13), 81% of people religious. <https://sidmennt.is/wp-content/uploads/Gallup-International-um-tr%C3%BA-og-tr%C3%BAleysi-2012.pdf> < 19.02.2019>.

⁵ India’s latest Socioeconomic and Caste Census (SECC) paints a stark picture of widespread rural poverty and deprivation. <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/08/02/asia/india-poor-census-secc/> < 19.02.2019>.

I perceive the issue as a disconnection between the ‘lived’ religious practices and ‘living’ social realities. I do not wish to identify this problem as one-sided, either of religion or the Public Square. However, in our case, the genuine interest of the Church to provide a religious and cultural space for the next generation cannot be overlooked. At the same time, the reality that young people are attracted to identify with the Public Square rather than the Church cannot be underestimated. The dichotomy is real, and there needs to be more transparency and dialogue within and between the communities involved. Therefore, this paper is a very brief meditative engagement on the subject of youth and its spirituality in the postmodern Public Square, with special reference to the Orthodox faith.

Modernity and Public Square

For the Orthodox faithful in modern society, the discourses on ‘the Public Square’ may be considered ‘irrelevant.’ This phenomenon is not new. The modern pietistic influences among Christian communities geared them to form a sense of detachment from public-social discourses, primarily due to the assumption that ‘society is evil’.⁶ It is not a constructed reality but an attributed perception of religiosity as sacred against secular.

The impact of this division of secular and sacred was prompted by Descartes’ social philosophy of modernity. Descartes promoted the critical thinking of human beings before the unquestioning faith of religion. Eventually, the Public Square became a synonym for thinking and human-centred growth; many proponents of the Public Square believed that religion became a stumbling block for critical thinking. It is not an exaggeration that we attribute critical thinking to the young. Or more specifically, that modernity amplifies the critical thinking in every sphere of

⁶ D’Costa, by drawing attention from Burtchaell, the social philosopher, discusses how Christianity in the modern period embraces the influence of pietism, which demarcates a strong division between the religion-sacred and state-secular perspectives. Gavin D’Costa, *Theology in the Public Square: Church, Academy and Nation* (Malden, M. A: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 49.

‘young’ life. Young people can be satisfied, but only if they are given the opportunity to find meaningful conclusions; consequently, they trust those sources that can provide answers satisfactorily, and the Public Square becomes that open space where the youth discover more comforts than within the ‘non-interpreted’ religious spaces. Finally, they end up putting their trust in the Public Square rather than in religion. From their perspective, the Public Square becomes a space free from ‘social taboos,’ ‘suppressed thinking,’ ‘confusion’ and ‘contradictions.’

Is Religion a Space of Confusion and Contradiction?

It is true that modernity contributed to a methodological shift in the world social order by grounding itself on the Western social phenomenon of ‘enlightenment’.⁷ It’s worth noting that this movement cannot be understood as a sudden intellectual movement; rather, a gradual response to the decaying nature of religious credentials, particularly in Western Christian religious practices. This new movement had an impact not only on society, but also in the religious domain. Western religious thinkers embraced the idea of a ‘rational’ or ‘intellectual’ face of religion (secular) in rejecting the mystical nature (categories of sacraments⁸ or mystery – rozo) as ‘irrational.’ This distinction between the secular and the sacramental viewpoints fuelled in people’s minds a dichotomy between the ‘rational secular’ and the ‘irrational sacramental’. The new emphasis caused confusion and contradiction in those within society who were ‘religious.’ Perplexingly, Christianity as a whole subscribed to such a model without justifying the call of different ‘traditions’ within Christianity. For instance, Orthodox Christianity has been

⁷ Enlightenment is a European social movement of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries stressing the intellectual, rational and individualistic, rather than traditional models. Descartes and many other 17th century philosophers influenced by this moment. To cite a remark, this moment cannot be understood as a response to the decaying nature of religious credentials particularly the Christian religion.

⁸ Baby Varghese, “Structure of the Sacramental Celebrations: Syrian Tradition,” *The Harp* 25(2010), 202-03.

uncritically observing the patterns of secular-sacramental relationships that were created in the Western social context.

I contend here that the Orthodox churches did not deliberately choose their ‘tradition,’ which has smooth secular and sacramental relations: the connecting point is the spiritual (mystery) dimension of the church. The Orthodox Christian’s thoughts endorse ‘tradition,’ but without any analytical tools to explore its mystical or spiritual nature. So, when Western Christianity lost the ‘sacramental (mystical) elements’, Eastern Christianity was bewildered by the ‘rational elements’. Further, because tradition is less analysed or interpreted by Orthodox faith communities, their youth, particularly in diaspora, whose foundational thought patterns emerge in the Public Square environment, are faced with serious contradictions. Here, the youth are bottlenecked. They can neither reject the ‘rationality’ of the Public Square nor enjoy the ‘mystery’ of religion. This is the confusion and contradiction of the young people today.

Can Mystery Take a Rational Approach?

In this present discussion, being rational means encouraging one to, be able to experience the ‘mystery’ meaningfully. What is the mystery in Christian religious thought? The profound example of the mystery in Christian tradition is the incarnation of God in human form that remains completely (inseparably) both human and divine. Being in human form, humanity consubstantially exists in the God’s mystery of divinity. This inseparability is the ‘mystery’ and it is ‘rational’ because God is tangibly or historically revealed in the incarnation. Thus, the beauty of Christian religiosity in general, and the Orthodox religiosity in particular is the potential scope to experience God in the ‘embodiment’ of the ‘mystery’, as Johannine Gospel testifies that “the Word became flesh” (John 1.1). Differently stated, the Orthodox religious experience (spirituality) is possible by both the rational and mystical, and the secular and sacramental as they believe in the ‘mystery’ of the inseparable unity of God’s

revelation in the divine and human form. Therefore, experiencing Christ and His embodiment within (Church) and outside (Public Square) the religious space is the central meaning of Orthodox spirituality. In this regard, B. Varghese, an Orthodox liturgical theologian, opines that the mystery of incarnation also indicates a meaning that “brings people from different ends to one,”⁹ as God reconciles the world through incarnation.

Creation, World (Public Square), and Tradition

The creation of the ‘visible world’ happens out of God’s love. It is the story of the inception of the embodiment: “life” against “darkness” (Genesis 1:1); and for God, it was “good” (Genesis 1:4). The overpowering of darkness (human fall) did not stop God from giving eternal love to the world (John 3:16). God-world connection is central to Creation itself. Thus, it is imperative to continue God’s desire on earth by having a relationship to both God and the world; Christians cannot neglect their vocation in the ‘world’. In order to clarify the nature of this rationality, St. Paul intelligibly interprets, saying, “do not be conformed... but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...(resulting) good, acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12: 2). Paul’s exhortation bears fruit in the writings of the Christian teachers from early times. For instance, Mathetes, an early second century Christian disciple, writes on Christian-world relations through a metaphor, which reads, “the invisible soul is guarded by the visible body, and Christians are known indeed to be in the world, but their Godliness remains invisible (mystery).”¹⁰ Carrying the early church’s notion of a ‘virtuous’¹¹ (mystical) relation to the world was never disconnected from the Orthodox tradition of Christianity. This was the ‘spirituality’ that

⁹ Varghese, Baby. “Liturgical Use of the Word Rozo: A Preliminary Survey.” *The Harp* 18 (2005): 125–33.

¹⁰ Philip Schaff, *The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus: Relations to the Christians to the world*, Ante-Nicene Fathers (ANF) vol.1 Chapter 6(Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1885), 81.

¹¹ Justin Martyr, *ANF, The Second Apology*, Chapter 7.

the church projected for centuries. There is no Orthodox spirituality (liturgical life) possible, devoid of social realities. Historically, although there are few exceptions in practice, Orthodox theology is essentially a theology with a cosmic nature (all-embracing), where God–world–human interactions preserve God’s covenant to His creation.¹² Local communities, both religious and the Public Square, therefore, are the models of such embodiment of the revealed God.

For instance, in many parts of the world the Orthodox youth embody themselves within the Church-World (Public Square) relationship. In other words, the transformative spiritual witnessing of the Orthodox youth through their ecclesial engagements in the local parishes is creating a different Orthodox matrix. Some of their models are Parish University (youth to youth connectivity within and outside the parish), Parish Campus (youth-church-spirituality classes extending the impact outside), Youth Newspaper (youth to youth sharing Word-tradition-Public Square), Parish gatherings of parents (youth as an integral presence in the Church, in liturgy and worship, and in community relationships).¹³ This is the cosmic vision: that Orthodoxy penetrates local and global loci’s, empowering both the religious community and the Public Sphere.

Conclusion

As I conclude, I strongly believe that the local spaces like parish and Public Squares must imperatively make ‘areas’ for translating the ‘spirituality’ of the public sphere so that the spiritual scope of the Public Square can have a constructive interface with the Church. As discussed earlier, non-interpretative religious practices can stagnate the momentum and continuity of its traditions. Liturgical practices and genuine

¹² John Chryssavgis, ed. *In the World, Yet Not of the World: Social and Global initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 274.

¹³ George Lemopoulos, ed. *Your Will be Done: Orthodoxy in Mission* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989), 185-192.

worship need to express vibrancy to their parishioners, or they can be perceived to be dead rituals. As in the case of the young people today, the lion-portion of their time is involved with the Public Square.¹⁴ While we dream in making new formative media that connects ‘spirituality through its theology’ and the ritual mysteries, we must also aim to envisage and respond to the realities of the Public Square. Only then will the young people in the body of Christ confess their life in the liturgy, where spirituality is offered and received both in private and public life.

¹⁴ Paul Varghese, *The Joy of Freedom: Eastern Worship and Modern Man* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1967), 68-69.

A Semiotic Study of the Works of Contemporary Video Artist Bill Viola

Ajiyan George¹

Introduction

Bill Viola² is one of the most insightful intellectual of modern art world whose works have been the centre of a number of studies related to art and aesthetics. He used to employ a series of symbols and imageries as a key to show how the human beings managed to convey spontaneous, unscripted meanings through emotional expressions. His work is slightly complicated and at the same time it is easily appreciated by the common man.

¹ Fr. Dr. Ajiyan George is the Academic Principal of MSOTS. His research interests include the Christian art, eastern spirituality, new media, and social communication

² Bill Viola (1951-) is a renowned American video artist based in New York. His works are considered to be the foundation of video-art as an art form especially in the field of modern art. He contributed significantly to its development in terms of technology adoption and content.

Even though Viola's work is mainly involved with the exploration of the moving images, he is also influenced by the great Renaissance artists. The natural beauty of the Renaissance art is due to the integration of scientific knowledge into the traditional art. Viola would have surely surprised the masters of Renaissance period by his combination of new technology and visionary approach of painting, where he depicts the moving images by using the technique of slow motion. On seeing the video installation by Bill Viola, the first impression that would cross the mind of a viewer would be that of a still image similar to a painting, but on closer observation it would reveal the fact that it is moving in extreme slow motion.

By analyzing the works of Bill Viola one can gather a lot of knowledge about the science of semiotics. When compared with other academic disciplines, semiotic study is more rational and easy to understand because it gives an entire picture of communication while others offer only a part of it. Semiotics deals with not only the study of the processes of sign but also with communication and its signification. It explains the understanding of meaning occurs within human mind.

The video art of Bill Viola is rich with spiritual meanings. The viewer is always invited to see the spiritual content of the work and at times they are even challenged by it. So the main intention of the following semiotic study is to analyze how the spiritual meaning is communicated to the viewer.

1. Semiotic Analysis

Semiotics can be applied to any substance that signifies something - in other words, it refers to everything which has meaning of its own within a culture³. It plays an important role in both the context of art as well as aesthetic. In video art, the aesthetic experience is created by the profound audio visual buildup, and semiotics adds on to create a sensual pleasure by

³ <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem02.html> <Accessed on Jan. 14, 2010>

consolidating the theoretical base for it. It is not the fragmentation of an individual part; instead it is the study of the interaction between different entities of communication in video art. For example, the task of the semiotician in the Saussurean tradition⁴ is to look beyond the specific texts or practices and to analyze the systems of functional distinctions operating within them⁵. The primary goal is not only to establish the underlying conventions but also to identify the significant differences and oppositions in order to help one to attempt to model the system of categories, relations, connotations, distinctions and rules of combination which are employed⁶.

With breath taking visual and aural beauty, spiced with poetic resonance and technical intelligence, Viola has made an excellent effort to change our perception about video art. Viola's works render his viewers the highest possibility to analyze one's sensory perceptions. Semiotic study is the only available window to attain it in a very systematic manner⁷.

2. A brief description of the chosen video

In a traditional point of view a visual art is always a still image suspended in time, Viola's video characters have a life of their own because they blink and they cry and it seems as though reality is just a breath away. Viola's command over sound, light, and space along with his technical mastery; when intermingled with his deep understanding of spirituality and knowledge of art both in Western and non-Western practice resulted in the formation of a master piece work named *Going Forth By Day*.

⁴ Saussurean tradition is an approach in semiotic study based on the works of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, His concept of sign/signifier/signified/referent forms are the core of this tradition.

⁵ <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem02.html> <Accessed on Jan. 14, 2010>

⁶ LODGE D. & WOOD N., *Modern criticism and theory: A reader*, Pearson Education, Harlow, 2008, p. 50.

⁷The following semiotic study is based on the dispense of Ehrat Johannes, *Semiotica ai media*,2009.

Going forth by day is a five layered series created by Bill Viola for the Guggenheim Museum in New York. The five videos are *Fire Birth*, *The Path*, *The Deluge*, *The Voyage*, and *First Light*. In order to create this powerful five-part projection-based installation Viola takes the reference from Luca Signorelli's fresco painting⁸ which was painted between 1499 and 1504 on the walls of the Orvieto Cathedral, Umbria, Italy where he tries to create a circle of life that contains different cycles of birth, death, and rebirth⁹.

Each "panel" is a projection which is viewed directly on the walls and is approximately 35 minutes long. It was recorded with the latest High Definition camera. This suite of works crated an epic articulation of the changes that occur in nature's cycles and it also put forward some mythic reflections on the flow of birth and regeneration¹⁰.

1. *Fire Birth* features a naked human figure which seems to be swimming in a montage of fire and water, representing an unconscious state suspended in between death and rebirth.
2. *The Path* showcases a vast area of the forest through which people from all walks of life and age, walk by each other at their own pace, as if there was an intermediate space between the two worlds.
3. *The Deluge* portrays people roaming in all directions in front of a newly constructed stone building. It is followed by panic as a flood burst out through the doors and windows of the building.
4. *The Voyage* pictures the sad demise of an old man living in a small house situated on a hill overlooking a bay of water. Soon after his death, he reappears on the shore where he is greeted by

⁸ Fresco panting is done on wet plaster on the walls or ceilings. In fresco painting it is necessary to have a well-thought-out design prepared beforehand, as the medium does not permit experimentation or changes in drawing as is possible in most other ways of painting.

⁹ VIOLA B., *Going forth by day*, op. cit., p.21.

¹⁰ Cfr. VIOLETTE R. & VIOLA B., *Reasons for knocking at an empty house*, op. cit., p.79.

his wife, and the two are shown boarding a boat together with all their valuable possessions of life.

5. *First Light* showcases a team of dedicated rescue workers in a dessert who have been working real hard throughout the night trying to save people caught in a massive flash flood. A woman is seen waiting for her son fearing that he will never return. The rescue works try consoling the anxious mother when all of a sudden a soul appears from the water which happens to be her son in the form of a ghost, but she is unable to see him.

In this powerful installation Viola tries to create a ‘sense of seeing’¹¹ of the changes that occur in nature’s cycles. Due to his deep involvement with Christian Spirituality and Buddhism, Viola’s preoccupation has always been associated with the inner or spiritual-self and the boundaries of consciousness. Since 1990s¹² his work has been often drawn from his own life experiences exploring recurring themes of birth, death, self-discovery and personal transformation.¹³

By addressing spirituality in a secular age, this work of Viola has been considered as one of the most explicit demonstration of religion to the modern world. Using his expertise in the media he conquers viewers’ prejudices of images and emotionally manipulates them. He does it by basing his video works on traditional painting approach that on completion will be both devotional and aesthetic in appearance. This type of video works is indeed considered as a supreme affirmation of his technological brilliance. Using the latest technology, he portrays the various manifestations of emotion either through silence, extreme slow-motion or by psychologically-gripping depictions expressed through the faces and body language of his performers.

¹¹ ‘Sense of seeing’ is a Buddhist concept of mindful engagement in the act of seeing.

¹² 1990 was crucial year in his life, in which he lost his mother and at the same time blessed with a kid.

¹³ <http://www.billviola.com> <Accessed on Jan. 02, 2010>

3. Enunciation

In semiotic terms enunciation is the signification of an utterance. It denotes “a process that mediates between the underlying non-perceptible system and the perceptible level”¹⁴. In *Going forth by day*, Bill Viola creates a splendid audio-visual space where spatial and temporal and actantial relationships occur¹⁵. This is the space where the audience tries to identify the meaning of what is portrayed by the characters on screen. Here the mediation occurs between the characters shown on screen and the formation of their respective meaning. Through this enunciation the narrative produces meaning; ‘it is the very act of producing a sign, a message or an utterance’¹⁶. It is complemented by the specific traits of audio visibility such as visualization of fact/act and subjectivity/reflexivity of an image and sound.



(Exhibition of *Going forth by day* at Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2004)

¹⁴ BUCKLAND W., *The Cognitive Semiotics of Film*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 54.

¹⁵ Cfr. SEBEOK T. A. & SEBEOK D. J. U., *Advances in Visual Semiotics*, Walter de Gruyter, New York, 1995, p.261.

¹⁶ VARNUM R. & GIBBONS C.T., *The language of comics: Word and image*, , Mississippi: University press, 2001, p.146.

The spatial organization of *Going forth by day* is constituted within a single room. The five videos are projected simultaneously on the walls of a closed gallery space. This series can be seen as a single piece of work with five different layers. The entire room has changed into a scene of enunciation.

This gallery space became changed to a structure of mediation which advocates the construction of a communicative situation. It is a proposal of an interaction. Here the act of enunciation helps the viewer to travel through a passage from virtuality to reality: ‘from signification to communication’¹⁷. Enunciation as an act tries to find the most useful means to communicate the meaning. For which it institutes a textual conversation between enunciator (sender) and enunciatee (receiver).

3.1 Enunciator and enunciatee

“Enunciator refers to the instance initiating a speech act”¹⁸. In art it is the visual text/ image which made the utterance of a message to an enunciatee; to which it is addressed. In the context of visual message, the enunciator has to be distinguished from the narrator or creator of art. The characters on screen are in fact a construct, an actant to whom the enunciator has delegated his voice¹⁹. In *Going forth by day* the image of enunciator is impersonated by Viola.

On the level of enunciated utterance, the persona, ‘I’ on screen is not identical with the real enunciator but an invisible simulacrum²⁰ of his vision is present. The characters are not referential being but a hyper real of enunciator. They are the models of a real without reality; signs of a really real identity.

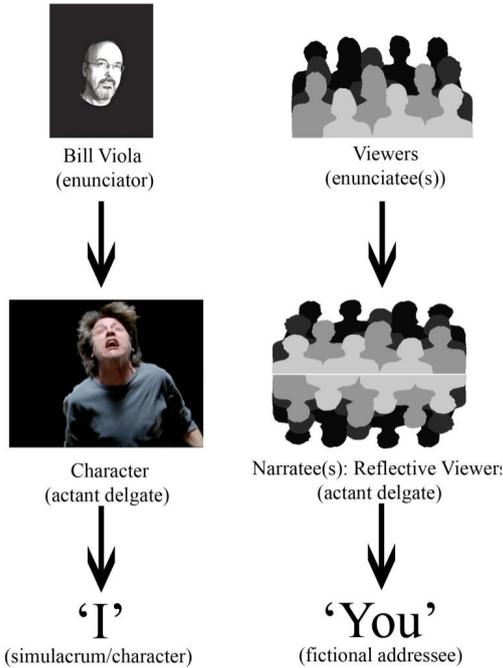
¹⁷ Ibid., P.263.

¹⁸ BROWNE M. & RINGHAM F., *Key term in semiotics*, Continuum Publishing Group, London, 2006, p. 76.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Simulacrum is that something that replaces reality with its representation. It is used to describe a representation of another thing. It also connotes an image without the substance or qualities of the original.

Correspondingly, the real enunciatee/receiver of the message is represented by an actant delegate called ‘narratee’. It is the reflective identity of that viewer. The latter be present on the discursive level in the final meaning making process with the mention ‘you’.



3.2 Diegetized enunciation: Space, time and subjects

Diegetized enunciation is the organization of space and the temporal relationship of characters/imageries in the given piece of work. It is the condition which shows the relationship of subjects and their cognitive roles. Visual art preconceives the concept of enunciation as the theory of perspective²¹. There exist four basic spatial organizations in Viola’s work. They are

²¹ Perspective theory suggests the approximate representation of an image on flat screen as it is perceived by the eye. It is based on the study of spatial distribution of

(1) The space behind the panel/screen(the space simulated by perspective).

(2) The space in front of the frame(the hanging space, the illusion of prominence).

(3) The planar surface of visuals with its geometrical relations of objects within frame.

(4) The simulated space and temporality of visual portrayal within the viewer's mind.

Going forth by day was commissioned by the Berlin based art museum, Deutsche Guggenheim and in the original installation in Berlin, the viewers are supposed to enter onto the gallery room through the first panel, *Fire Birth*. In the words of museum catalogue 'To enter the space, visitors must literally step into the light of the first image'²². This five panel installation showcases the circle of life from birth to death and then resurrection. In which the first one is an amniotic²³ underwater scene, visualized in orange. Entering through this grabs the audience attention to a new world of innovative vision. Thus from the very moment one enters into the gallery space they are transformed into a new spatiotemporal reality. Here, he/she refines his/her subjective relationship with oneself and with the mental picture of perception. It is the reflexive phase of enunciation which allows the viewer to incorporate the four above said spatial arrays. In subjective aspect enunciation helps to start a pictorial conversation between self and the viewing image. And it operates as a channel for 'suspension of disbelief'²⁴ in the given space.

images and the relative position of eye towards a given object. As the objects become more distant, they appear smaller in size as compared to the near objects. The visual angles of the objects also suggest the idea of vanishing point.

²² VIOLA B., *Going forth by day*, op.cit., p.71.

²³ Amniotic fluid is the liquid that contained in the amniotic sac of pregnant woman as a protection to the fetus.

²⁴ Suspension of disbelief is an aesthetic principle explains the interactive relationship of viewer to art. It is the willingness of a viewer to accept a piece of art as real/true even if they are fantastic or impossible.

Here the viewer knowingly fused him/herself to the visual spectra of art and enter into a new delicate experience of consciousness.

3.3 Purpose of Enunciation

Enunciation institutes the audio visual text of the exhibition and enables the viewer to overcome the spatial constraints of the two-dimensional support and to obtain the illusion of third dimension. The sociological perspective of ‘symbolic interactionism’²⁵ also comes into play in the process of creating a communicative situation between the image and viewer. The symbolic interactivity of enunciator and enunciatee plays a great deal in the reinforcement of textual credibility. They both symbolically participate within the gallery space and make it as a creative hub. It makes the situation into a meaningful communication milieu. At the same time the Viola avoids an account of intellectual discourse, the prime emphasis is on the sensorial experience.

The communicative space of *Going forth by day* is not a unidirectional; there is a clear interplay between the ‘signifier-signified’ duo and enunciator-enunciatee. It helps the viewer to get hold of the maximum effect of the message. Viola clearly leads his audience to a new version of amplified reality through an enriched simulacrum of enunciation.

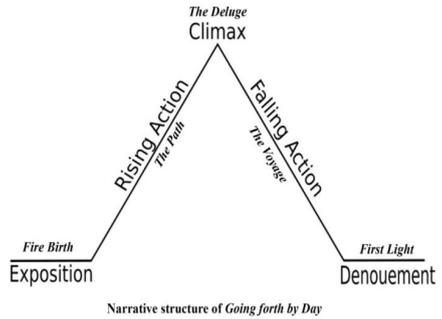
4. Narrative Structure

The primary difficulty in analyzing a video art on the basis of *actantial model*²⁶ is due to its trait of a non-narrative approach.

²⁵ “Symbolic interactionism explains the nature of humans to accommodate him/herself to a new situation or an environment. According to this concept humans are pragmatic actors who continually must adjust their behavior to the actions of other actors in a given social structure. It also consider the human tendency “to think about and to react to his/her own actions and even as symbolic objects”. <http://web.grinnell.edu/courses/soc/s00/soc111-01/introtheories/symbolic.html><Accessed on Feb.27, 2010>

²⁶ Actantial model is a device that can theoretically be used to analyze any real or thematized action, particularly those depicted in literary texts or images. During the sixties, A. J. Greimas proposed the actantial model, which is based on Vladimir Propp's theories (sphere of action).

However, the works of Bill Viola offers a significant distinction from the other common nature of video art is that it contains a semi narrative structure or an open ended narration. Most of Viola's works including the chosen sample *Going forth by day* comes under the classification of video installation²⁷ and it contains a series of three or more videos together. Although each of it doesn't carry a complete element of narration, as a whole it contains the five elements of a narrative structure such as exposition/introduction, rising action, climax, falling action and denouncement/conclusion.



The installation comprises of five panels, representing a cycle from birth to resurrection. These five videos impart the feeling of a pentagonal narrative structure. They are as follows:

1. Exposition: In this first panel of *Fire Birth*- an unconscious man is seen to be swimming in orange colored amniotic water as though he is suspended in a state of pre-birth.

2. Rising action: It is depicted by *The Path* where a large panel is shown in which individuals are walking towards something unknown. It seems to be the passage of life and it truly defines what a rising action is.

3. Climax: *The Deluge* portrays the climax scene where a building is shown to be flooded through its doors and windows and people rushing about in panic. It represents the struggle for existence and unpredictability of human life.

4. Falling Action: *The Voyage*- It pictures the falling action by showing the sad demise of an old man after which he is shown

²⁷ Video installation is an art form which the incorporates the space as a key element in the narrative structure. It contains multiple panels and other visually interactive materials. In this situation, the viewer plays an active role in the space.

boarding a boat along with his wife and all the things he treasures the most in life and he sets off to an unknown destination. It portrays the sunset of life.

5. Denouncement: It is excellently showcased through the *First Light* where a dead man returns back in the form of a ghost ascending from the water. This shows the transition of life into another regenerative form of life.

Thereby the usage of pentagonal narrative structure Bill Viola effectively explains to his audience about the circle of life from birth to rebirth.

Although the title *Going forth by day* is obtained from the literal translation of the title of the Egyptian book of the dead²⁸ named as ‘The Book of Going Forth by Day’²⁹, the video installation is not totally concerned only about death. Instead it covers the entire circle of life ranging from birth, life, death and last but not the least rebirth. Viola has got a group of artists and technicians who he uses for his work always. Most of the time he uses the same set of actors for different characters.

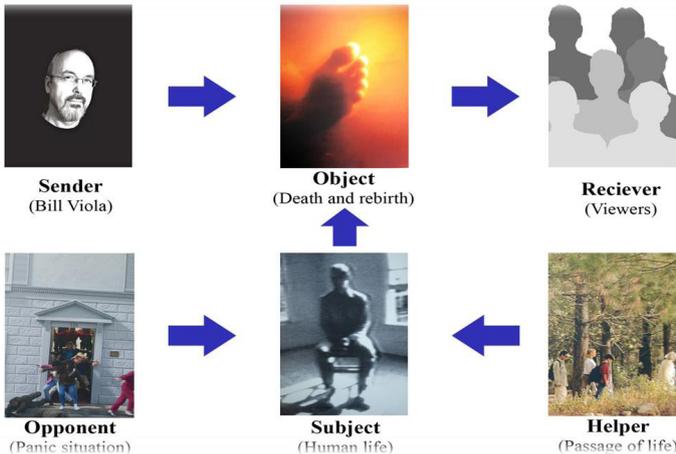
The role of viewer is also redefined in this visual space. Installation videos are usually meant to make use of viewer’s participation in its communicative process. The idea of a participatory audience is stretched further in this interactive video installation. Here the video is displayed in such a way that the viewer becomes part of the plot as a character in a narrative. All the five videos are simultaneously played for 35 minutes without any editing or cut. The transition and visual cuts take place within the mental picture of the viewer. Thereby it emphatically proposes the viewer to participate in the process of enunciation.

²⁸ Book of the Dead was thought to be an ancient Egyptian Bible/ funerary text. It describes the ancient Egyptian understanding of life after death. It is as a collection of hymns, spells, and instructions written on a papyrus scroll and placed in the coffin or burial chamber. It offers a hope to pass through obstacles in the afterlife.

²⁹ Cfr. VIOLA B., *Going forth by day*, op.cit., p.87.

5. Actantial Roles

Actantial roles are structural positions in a narrative. The term was first introduced by A. Julien Greimas in his discourse on ‘Actantial model for analysing a fictional story’ in 1966³⁰. According to him an action/narrative can be divided into six components called actants. They are Subject/Object, Sender/Receiver, and Helper/Opponent.



- Actantial roles in Going forth by day -

These are the binary opposition pairings and used for generating problems/tensions within the narrative and that have to be resolved. They give contrast and strength to the narrative and the success of the narrative depends on the way the tensions in the narrative is resolved.

Subject

The subject is the protagonist of an action and it is always directed towards an object. In this video art series Viola distinguishes the subject of narration as the human life (which includes body and psyche) and personified as human body. It is subjected to temporal changes and it moves forward in the

³⁰ Cfr. <http://people.cohums.ohio-state.edu/herman145/existentialist.html> <Accessed on Feb. 23, 2010>

narrative process. Life as the subject of narration acquired different skills to achieve the objective values in its process of evolution.

Object

The object of this narrative is the point where the subject is directed towards³¹, in this context it is death. Death is not the end point in one's life, instead there remains a chance for rebirth according to Viola's 5th installment, *First Light*. Viola depicts death as an intermediary point where body loses its momentum, but the soul remains still. The subject-object pairing holds the viewers' attention to understand the larger meaning which is life. This contrasting pair carries the viewer's interest throughout the 35 minutes video. Viola's credibility as a spiritually sound visualizer contributes to the reliability of subject. Thus the sender-object relationship works out effortlessly.

Helper

The supporting factor in this series is the second panel, *The Path*. It is the ability of the human life to accommodate with any situation and to imitate the action of fellow beings. It is the instinctive flow of life which starts from within. It projects life as a band of different people walking indefinitely with different paces to an unknown destination. The cross connects the five images, the viewer gets adjusted to the object easily and the helper part here, *The Path*, helps the audience to understand the subject-object (life-death) relationship. It supplements the idea: life is a journey, a pilgrimage, a sacred adventure between birth and death or even beyond or within everyone's inner solitude³². The video being paced slowly helps the audience to clearly understand the meaning without being forced and it also makes sure that the viewer does not miss out on any critical moment/feature.

³¹ Cfr. COORAN F., *Organizing property of communication*, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2000, p.72.

³² Cfr. <http://www.artvilla.com/mair/article1.htm> <Accessed on Jan. 08, 2010>

Opponent

The struggle in human life, which is depicted in the third panel, *The Deluge* is the opponent actant in this narrative. The bursting out of flood is the interruption in the serene flow of passing people³³. It adds an extra dimension to the strength of subject (life). All human beings at some point of time go through different transition periods or changes in life which affect their 'well-planned' day to day life. The flood creates a panic state and recalls the absurdity of human condition on a larger frame of existence which includes unexpected attacks and disasters.

Sender

As an actant, sender should always be within the frame of narration. Even if the sender is visually absent, he/she makes their presence felt through their characters. Bill Viola as the real sender of this message acquired his enunciating stature through the simulacrum identity and supports the object actant, the death and rebirth.

Receiver

One of the basic features of video installation is the inclusion of the spectator. As an interactive art form, the video installation *Going forth by day* emancipates the viewer to participate in the narrative process. The final settlement of denouncement is taking place in the mental picture of viewer³⁴. As the binary opposite of sender, receivers counterchecks all the previous information based on their thoughts and ideas of life and existence. There by Viola wins his viewers heart and soul by surpassing their clarity of vision of life.

³³ Cfr. TOWNSEND C., *The art of Bill Viola*, op. cit., p. 96.

³⁴ In general video art doesn't bother about a narrative flow, it concentrates more on the expressive nature of visuals. It can be seen as an attempt to put bits and pieces together to present a semblance of a whole. In this regard, the role of the viewer is to have an integral approach towards this communicative process and juxtapose different visuals and themes together to find out the meaning what appropriate for him or her.

6. Modalization

The act of modalization presumably starts from the very beginning of utterance a fact, while the enunciation simply produces a logical presupposition on that fact. Among the other modalities of the utterances, ‘modalization of being’ has a great importance in video art³⁵. It gives an audio visual appeal to video art. Here modalization is the modification of a subject where the information is encoded for the understanding of the viewers. Each person has his/her own orientation towards perception. He/she moulds his frame of his vision in accordance with his/her needs.

Hence we can say that the fundamental annunciation of modalization of a being is the announcement of a reality just as how Bill Viola has portrayed human life in his series *Going forth by day*. In video art the modalization of being also refers to the modification of a subject by the predicate. In video art modalization produces a feeling of a ritual in the minds of the viewer. This could be easily understood by the following points which will substantiate the fact that video art creates a feeling of rituality.

1. Transition of the subject to achieve the goal of narration, from the level of a human body to a human spirit. There occurs a transition from the subjective level of human body to an objective level of soul. While a viewer observes the characters portrayed on screen certain ideas and formulates within his/her subconscious mind. Which will later on come into action at the required time.

2. Incomprehensible reality made comprehensible to the human mind. Video art simplifies things which other forms find it difficult to achieve. It converts the incomprehensible reality into an more of a comprehensible form of the human mind.

3. Video art has got a lot in common with rituals. Just like in every ritual where there is a progressive growth occurring, video art too has a different set of progression; where the images are

³⁵ Cfr. http://www.lituanus.org/1990_3/90_3_02.htm <Accessed on Feb. 26, 2010>

layered one on top of the other to create an extravagance piece of art.

4. Rituals are indeed a form of initiation which helps a common man to obtain a divine connection with the Higher Being. It is an invitation to participate in a higher reality. By quoting the title of his series from the Egyptian book on death, 'Forth by Day' Viola unconsciously directs/manipulates the minds of his viewers towards a higher reality and the truths about life and death. It also helps the viewers to overcome their inhibitions and thereby make them to interact.

7. Axis of Communication

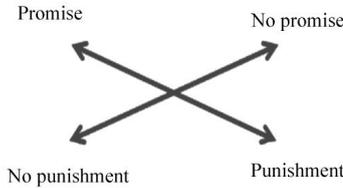
Axis of communication³⁶ establishes the connection between the sender and object of a narration. It is the axis of transmission by which the sender establishes the junction between subject and object. The quest is made for the most important element which happens to be the receiver.

Going forth by day set forth a clear communication axis between the artist Bill Viola and his viewers by reflecting the cyclical nature of life and relating the past with the future. Viola brilliantly narrates the flow of life through his subject of narration, human life. This act is exercised in four different ways: promise(wanting to do), threat(having to do), provocation (knowing how to do) and seduction (being able to do).

7.1 Wanting-to-do(Promise)

Here the artist Bill Viola prepares his viewers to participate in the show interactively. Through the museum catalogue he informs them what kind of show is going to take place within the dark space of the gallery room. His well-established name as a living legend in the field of video art also supports his pre-statements about his art. Viewer enters the space with a considerable amount of hope to have a life time experience. It is Viola's promise to his viewers.

³⁶ According to Greimas axis of communication is also called axis of knowledge.



Promise: Bill Viola offers his viewer a chance to take part in an experience of life time.

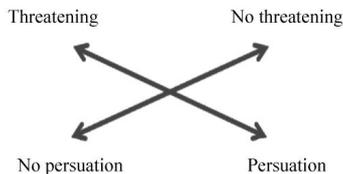
No promise: Participation in the narrative process of a video art is solely depending on viewer’s discretion; either view or skip the exhibition.

Punishment: The inefficiency of the viewer to interact properly with the message or the inefficiency to meet the promise.

No Punishment: It comes due to various factors such as viewers ignorance in the medium, inefficiency in the execution of utterance, differences in the frame of references of sender and viewers.

7.2 Having-to-do(Threat)

As an interactive art form *Going forth by day*, envisages the audience participation to perform well, otherwise it would be a mere cluster of aesthetically sound panels hanging on dark walls³⁷. Viola, the sender challenges the viewers to get them involved in the narrative process.



Threatening: Five panels with five different images and the viewer is supposed to find the connection.

³⁷ Cfr. TOWNSEND C., *The art of Bill Viola*, op. cit., p. 96 p.174.

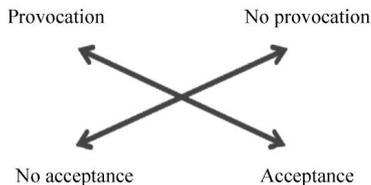
No Threatening: Each of them are finite them in itself but offers a limited experience of life.

Persuasion: The visuals are connected with each other by means of actors and a theme. It tempts them to find meaning by cross connecting the panels.

No persuasion: The decision whether to view the art or not depends on one's own the discretion power. There are no persons standing in the gallery to influence the viewer. There only exist the cognitive thirst to participate in the narrative process as a result of Viola's aesthetic threat.

7.3 Knowing how-to-do(Provocation)

Bill viola challenges the viewer to solve the visual puzzle of five juxtaposed moving images. Even though they know it's about life and journey, they have to find out how it is.



Provocation: Sender demands viewer's knowledge about the subject and a moderate reasoning capacity to understand the narrative progression. Man/woman as a rational being is easily subjected to provocations. Which in turns pricks his/her curiosity and makes him/her to observe things. Thereby adding to his knowledge.

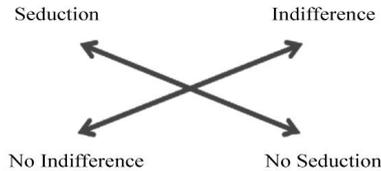
No provocation: Sender doesn't care whether the viewer has the capacity to organize self or not.

Acceptance: Viewers can view the show without any idea about the subject. It is also possible to read the text from their own point of view and discard the provocation of Viola.

No acceptance: Without participation this video art will not make any sense to the viewer.

7.4 Being-to-do(Seduction)

Viola emotionally manipulates the viewer attention by the effective use of background score. The sender seduces the receiver to move along with the progress of narrative.



Seduction: The soothing meditative ambiance(both visual, sound and dark space) seduces the audience to roam around the room. The aesthetic pleasure plays a significant role to hold the attention for a relatively long period of time(35 min).

No seduction: The principle characters interact with each other and the narrative is more concerned with what is happening inside the frame. It even doesn't bother what is happening on the next panel.

Indifference: There is also a chance of emotional detachment. Humanity in modern times is used to horrific acts, disasters, war etc. They may feel an indifference about the effort made by the artist to speak to his receivers who are trying to understand the passage of life and the meaning of existence.³⁸ It is the negation of the seduction offered by *Going forth by day*.

No indifference: Through this sequence of life the artist depicts the progress of a soul. Even if the audience cannot communicate properly with the theme, the images arouse a reflective feeling of silence deep inside their soul.

Here the axis of communication works as the virtual frame of reference through which the subject tries to attain the desired end envisaged by the sender.

³⁸ Cfr. VIOLA B., *Going forth by day*, op.cit., p.85.

8. Stages of narrative program

According to A.J Greimas, any work of art can be described as a series inter connected with the narrative system³⁹. Using the narrative schema it is possible to organize the elements of narrative development into a structure consisting of four components: (1) *Manipulation* (2) *competence* (3) *performance* and (4) *sanction*⁴⁰.

Manipulation	Competence	Performance	Sanction
-Wanting to do	-Being able to do	-Doing	-Recognition of the performance
-Having to do	-Knowing how to do		

8.1 Manipulation

Manipulation is the component that deals distinctively with all those strategies by which a sender is able to motivate the receiver to act. The two types of manipulations are positive and negative. The positive manipulations are used to produce or increase and if they are in the optimum level they are used to maintain it. While negative manipulations are used to decrease or destroy and if they are insufficient they are used to maintain it. These two types of manipulations are portrayed in *Going forth by day*. The sender, Viola starts to deconstruct the viewers' way of thinking from the very moment they enter into the gallery space. On entry the viewers are taken into a different world full of eye catching visuals and mesmerizing sound track. The viewers are given two choices here; they can either retract from the room or stay back and enjoy the art. The artistic effect of Viola captures their attention to react to his arguments. In this context the purpose of positive manipulation is to make them to participate

³⁹ Cfr. http://www.signosemio.com/greimas/a_schemanarratif.asp <Accessed on Mar. 1, 2010>

⁴⁰ Cfr. TAYLOR J. R. & VAN-EVERY E., *The emergent organization: communication as its site and surface*, Routledge, London, 2000, p.56.

(wanting-to-do); the purpose of negative manipulation is to prevent them from leaving the gallery space (having-to-do)⁴¹.

8.2 Competence/Qualifying test

The competence in a narrative are the results from the factors that are required by the subject(protagonist of the action) in order to accomplish the action (wanting-to-do, having-to-do, knowing-how-to-do, and being-able-to-do)⁴². Here, human life is the subject and the installation is about its voyage to arrive at death and then go beyond. Viola depicts the human life with all its vividness and potentiality.

Wanting-to-do: The narrative program begins acquiring the virtual mode of human life. The intention of this is not to show off his knowledge but to share his understandings of the subject(life) through his signature medium.

Having-to-do: Viola prefigures the human tendency to search for meaning in anything and everything and subjecting them in a mediated space of floating images of life and existence. It tempts them to find the meaning by bringing together the five distinctive images with their own life experience, i.e., the viewers are supposed to participate and that leads him/her to act dynamically.

Knowing how to: He impresses the viewer with the opening scene of receiving them through the first panel, where the first image of video is falls on the viewer and the canvas becomes the body of the audience.

Being able to: By creating curiosity and within the viewer within a fraction of a second he grabs their interest towards the subject. The subject itself plays a crucial role in maintaining the interest throughout the show. It is called positive competence when it is enough to lead to a performance, if not it is known as negative⁴³.

⁴¹ Cfr. COORAN F., *Organizing property of communication*, op. cit., p.71.

⁴² Cfr. CZARNIAWSKA B. & GAGLIARDI, P. (eds.), *Narratives we organize*, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Philadelphia, 2003, p.43.

⁴³Cfr. http://www.signosemio.com/greimas/a_schemanarratif.asp <Accessed on Jan. 08, 2010>

8.3 Performance

Performance is the final realization of an action which can be made possible only through the acquisition of competence. It presupposes competence and manipulation, since it involves wanting-to-do and having-to-do, just as competence does⁴⁴. The life(subject) performs its relentless passage through time. It overwhelms, frightens and mystifies the viewer by means of transition through different stages of life and changes direction from the comfort zone of life situations to unpredictable moments(*The Deluge*). The intelligibility of the message is perhaps the utmost feature of this work. At least once in a lifetime all human beings would have pondered about the existence of life. They would at least spare a few seconds from their busy schedule thinking about these facts. This tendency of viewer along with the emotional impact of the imagery helps the subject to perform its duty effectively.

If there is an excellent performance, then the effect of competence is automatically positive. The use of modern technology also facilitates the subject to offer a good quality performance. The quality of the high-tech image is enjoyable since it is bright and razor sharp. The aesthetic beauty of the landscape is enhanced so that it becomes a part of the physical beauty that moves along with the union of the audience's way of perception.

8.4 Sanction

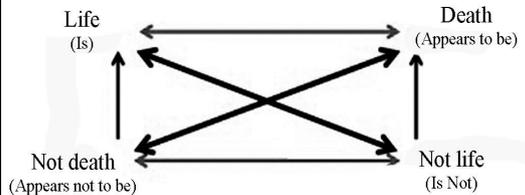
Sanction is a process of judging whether the communication of the action was properly understood or not. It is the final word in the analysis of communication procedure of a narration which clarifies whether the communication was positive or negative⁴⁵. It also attests the viewer's verdict over the efficiency of communication process and the feasibility of intended narration.

⁴⁴ Cfr. TAYLOR J. R. & VAN-EVERY E., *The emergent organization*, op. cit., p.56.

⁴⁵ Cfr. COORAN F., *Organizing property of communication*, op.cit., p.73.

8.4.1 Modality of being/Glorifying test

It was proposed by Greimas and in simple terms he explained it as opposition being/seeming which was projected onto the semiotic square⁴⁶. At this stage of the program narrative the subject is supposed to achieve result, which will take it to the glorifying test. The performance of the subject(life) is cross checked with its accomplished task in transforming the object of narration(death). It analyses the changes in narrative path: whether the subject has changed its first position or being in the process of narration.



Glorifying test of *Going Forth by Day*

Is: The subject of this narration ‘human life’ imparts the feeling of undergoing the struggles of life in a sublime way. The subject(life) is full of life and being.

Is Not: The state of body/life in a non empirical level gives a sense of alienation to the viewer.

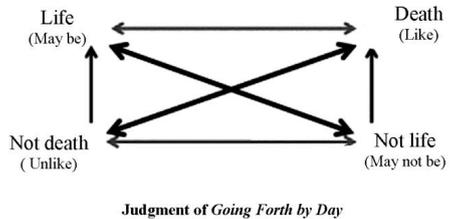
Appears to be: Life moves towards death and men/women are incredibly unpredictable being. Viola uses a highly animated manners to express this struggle(of being).

Appears not to be: Death will come at any stage of life; doesn’t matter whether one undergoes sufferings or not. It has its own style and what truly matters is the way it appears.

⁴⁶ Cfr. http://www.signosemio.com/greimas/a_carreveridictoire.asp <Accessed on Jan. 15, 2010>

2.8.4.2 Modality of judgment

It helps to understand the dynamics of true/false evaluations in a semiotic act⁴⁷. Viola's main emphasis in this narrative is to affirm that life is a journey: a passing going beyond death. From the beginning itself he nurtured this thought of travel and finally accomplishes it spiritually embodied by surpassing the idea of transformation of body to the form of ghost (in the fifth panel). And the name of the panel, *First Light* also points out to a new hope.



Life: Using the technique of slow motion Viola captures the attention of his viewers towards the minutest details of life. It is highly contemplative and communicative and at the same time the viewers are not all distracted.

Not Life: Viola showcases all the five panels moving simultaneously without any zone of transition in between them. It relies heavily upon the capacity of perception of the viewer. It is just like life where there are no retakes or editing occurring.

Death: Once born everyone has to die. There is no escape route and death is the only door to another unknown world. *The Voyage* extravagantly speaks about this concept and it lets the subject to converse expressively.

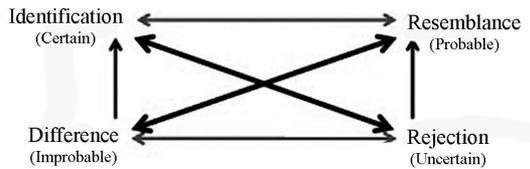
Not Death: Death is not the end road, or object is not the finality of subject, it travels much beyond that.

⁴⁷ Cfr. http://www.signosemio.com/greimas/a_carreveridictoire.asp <Accessed on Jan. 15, 2010>

When a viewer is subjected to participate in the communicative process, all these rudimentary binary oppositions comes into play as semiotic resistance to profound the viewers' understanding of the subject. These binary oppositions are subjective and are constantly changing from time to time⁴⁸ the viewer renews his/her understanding about utterance. The viewer get adapted to the message of this exhibition(*Going forth by day*) by comparing these differences with their own understanding of life and death.

8.4.3 Epistemic Modality

Epistemic⁴⁹ modality based on the sender's own judgment to determine whether the implicit or explicit contract which was made during the manipulative stage was effectively performed or not. By epistemic judgment the viewer confirms whether the subject is genuine or not and whether it has achieved the status promised in the beginning.



Epistemic Judgment of *Going Forth by Day*

Certain: The viewer identifies with the subject and undergoes the recollection of personal experience. It enriches the performance of the subject.

⁴⁸ LACEY N., *Image and representation: key concepts in media studies*, Palgrave Macmillan Publications, Sydney, 1998, p. 69.

⁴⁹Epistemic modality is the philosophy / logic denoting the branch of modal logic that deals with the formalization of certain epistemological concepts, such as knowledge, certainty, and ignorance. It concerns an estimation of the likelihood that (some aspect of) a certain state of affairs is/has been/will be true (or false) in the context of the possible world under consideration.

Uncertain: The over emphasis on the metaphysical exposition on human essence detaches the viewer to concentrate more on the visual pleasure instead of engaging in a dialogue with the subject. The viewer cannot endure such a profound reflection of self for a longtime (35 minutes) and his attention is slowly dragged towards the appreciation of beauty.

Probable: Since no one knows what happens after death, it is possible to assume that Viola's conviction is right.

Improbable: The rational thinking of the viewer distinguishes the imaginative and creative exercise of the artist to deploy the unknown reality of life and death through the medium of video art.

9. Semiotic assertion

By and large, the visual feast of Bill Viola overwhelms the viewer in all aspects of communicative process and the story ends in a positive way.

1. Bill Viola as the video artist uses the media as a tool for communicating spirituality. He overwhelms his audience in all aspects of communication. This factor is verified by means of axis of communication and narrative scheme.

2. In Video art, Viewers involvement is unquestionable and Bill viola succeeds in his obligation to evoke them to participate by different means.

3. The subject matter of this video art exhibition (*Going Forth by Day*) 'human life' is found to be competent and its performance is quite impressive and for this reason, from the viewpoint of narration video can be categorized as a success.

4. The viewer's interest in this genre of art is increased by the efforts of Bill Viola. He reestablishes the lost link of art and spirituality of common man through simplification of the themes into a conceivable intensity.

5. The narrative progression of the communicative axis gives a positive feedback since the whole video has a positive feel to it and last but not the least it ends in a very positive manner.

Conclusion

Bill Viola has produced a space consisting of five different digital projections. It evokes the feel of the great religious frescoes of the past by its imaginary depiction of the progression of one's soul through the different cycles of life. It portrays the cycle of life where he highlights the fact of resurrection after death and thereby he evokes a sense of hope in his viewers.

The semiotic analysis of *Going forth by day* assertively proves the fact that Viola is not only mystic but also an existentialist artist. It is demonstrated by the way he has deconstructed the temporal structure of his series and has presented it in a spell bounding spiritual and aesthetic way. His unique style of mixing the state of the art technology and the baroque fresco of the renaissance period provides an excellent channel for communication and at the same time offers his audience an excellent audio and visual treat. He not only tickles the sensory organs of his viewers with his style but at the same time he creates a sense of inner peace, harmony and realization of one's inner soul by creating an atmosphere of meditation within the gallery.

Going forth by day is an aesthetic visual text that demands a change in perspective and a compassionate attitude towards the world in which we exist. It resists the meta-narrative⁵⁰ strategies that mix almost everything to the drama of life and making it a cartoon. Viola's modest use of audio visual text along with deep understanding of medium and its enunciating space offer a different experience to the viewer.

⁵⁰ Meta-narrative is a narrative form used in post modernism to explain other little stories within a narrative scheme.

In conclusion we can say that Viola by portraying the different concepts such as birth, voyage, soul, belief, death, rebirth and moral balance of life makes his viewers to stop and think for a moment to reflect back on their lives. He makes them to realize the different complexities that occur in their life are the results of the inspiration that originates from one's deep spiritual soul. Like a true Christian Bill Viola projects his series '*Going Forth by Day*' out of darkness as a source of light; a light of eternal hope!

Paul in Chains to His Church in Chains: A rereading of the letter to Philippians

Eldho MC¹

Introduction

The letter to the Philippians has significant importance in the life of Saint Paul as an Apostle and as a missionary. Philippi, in northern Greece, was the first major center where Paul preached the gospel in Europe.² The letter reveals the unique relationship which Saint Paul maintained with the church which he established at Philippi and the concern the people of the church had about the condition of the God's messenger to them and the spreading of the Good News. Epaphroditus, a member of the Philippian community who risked his life for the sake of the gospel, offers a

¹ Rev. Dn. Eldho MC is a Research Scholar at The Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome.

² P.T O'BRIEN, *Philippians*, 3.

good example of the zeal which the church at Philippi had towards the Lord and Gospel concerning his Son. Some commentators see this letter as thanks giving letter for the collection which Saint Paul received from the church in regard to the spreading of the gospel, but in my assignment I will concentrate on the condition of the church and the life situation of the people, especially people who were part of the church, who faced persecution from the aristocratic fraction of the society who were against the Gospel.

This letter is being categorized as a captivity letter, the letter which Saint Paul wrote during the time of captivity at Ephesus³. The life situation of the Apostle who was forced to lead a prison life due to the opposition from the authorities (or the aristocratic group) and the life situation of the people who were in Philippi i.e. the people who got persecuted or were forced to lead a constrained life under the authorities were the same. Paul is jailed in Philippi on his first arrival, Paul is writing the letter to the Philippians from the jail or during his captivity period. He is trying to say that they are in the same struggle that he is in and was in when he was with them (1:30).⁴ In contrast to many of Paul's other letters, especially the more polemical and/or apologetic letters such as Galatians and 1 and 2 Corinthians, Philippians reflects all the characteristics of a "letter of friendship," combined with those of a "letter of moral exhortation."⁵ So when trying to read the letter to Philippians from that point of view, the letter has a profound fragrance of the words of a father who is trying to consolidate his spiritual children by sharing his situation and the joy which he has for the suffering which he receives for proclaiming the faith in Christ. We could see a parallelism which is hidden in the text between the sender and the receiver.

³ J. REUMANN, *Philippians*, 14.

⁴ S.E FOWL, *Philippians*, 14.

⁵ G.D FEE, *Philippians*, 2.

1. Historical Setting

1.1 Philippi: Geographical and historical setting

Philippi is located in the north-eastern corner of Macedonia, about 16 km by road from its harbor town at Neapolis (modern Kavalla) on the Aegean Sea, and 180 km north of Thessalonica. The first-century city was not large: a conservative estimate based on the size of the theater would suggest fewer than 10,000 inhabitants (cf. Pilhofer 1995: 74-6). By contrast, the modern village called Filippoi has a population of only a few hundred people.⁶

The ancient Acropolis of Philippi looks across the fertile plain of Danto to Mt Pangaion in the south. The city itself is situated below on a relatively narrow shoulder between the Lekanis mountains to the north and swamplands to the south, guarding the ancient Via Egnatia, the main overland route from Rome to the Eastern Empire. Its location made the city ideally placed for trade links and especially agriculture, including grain and the wine for which the area around Philippi was long been famous. Nearby gold and silver mines at Mt Pangaion across the plain, which had once been an important source of wealth for Philip of Macedon, were in Roman times long since exhausted. Cf. Pilhofer 1995: 78-81.⁷

The founding of the city has a long history. Apparently found by Greek colonists from the island of Thasos in the early century BC, Philippi was then fortified by Philip of Macedon: royal coins issued after 365 BC first call the city 'Philippou'. Two centuries later (168 BC), the Romans defeated Perseus, the last king of Macedon, at Pydna, just south of Thessalonica. From then on, Philippi was incorporated into the first of the four Macedonian regions (*merides*: cf. Acts 16.12 and Hemer 1989: 113; Pilhofer 1995: 159-65) and became a way station along the Via Egnatia. (At Neapolis travelers on this route could speed up

⁶ M. BOCKMUEHL, *Philippians*, 2.

⁷ M. BOCKMUEHL, *Philippians*, 3.

their journey by taking a boat directly to Troas in Asia-Minor- or vice versa, as Paul does in Acts 16.11).⁸

In the later of course of time the city of Philippi comes to the arena of history when it hosted the war between Octavian and Mark Antony. After the defeat of Mark Antony at the battle of Actium in 31 BC, Octavian (the later emperor Augustus) refound Philippi as a Roman colony in honor of the Julian Family and under his personal patronage, boosting its native population with army veterans and landed Italian framers whom he had displaced as former supporters of Mark Antony.⁹

With this change of status just over hundred years prior to Paul's letter, Philippi now enjoyed the considerable privilege of Italian legal status (*ius italicum*): its colonists had not only citizenship but extensive property and legal rights, and they were exempt from poll taxes and land taxation. In return, the colony carefully maintained and groomed its image as a city loyal to the emperor's authority in both government and religion.¹⁰

1.2 Life of the people

Paul's first visit to Philippi will have impressed on him the city's emphatically *Roman* appearance and public culture, evidenced not least in the fact that the public inscriptions in the forum, on the streets and the buildings of this Hellenistic-Roman town were exclusively in Latin. Not only citizens and political loyalties were Roman, but even the form of local government was patterned in that of Rome itself, with two magistrates (*duumviri iure dicundo*) at the head. Citizens of Philippi were at the same time citizens of the city of Rome, assigned to the ancient family line of the *tribus Voltinisa*, which appears in the half of public inscriptions found at Philippi. See further Pilhofer 1995: 121f.¹¹

⁸ M. BOCKMUEHL, *Philippians*, 3.

⁹ M. BOCKMUEHL, *Philippians*, 3.

¹⁰ M. BOCKMUEHL, *Philippians*, 3-4.

¹¹ M. BOCKMUEHL, *Philippians*, 4.

The aristocracy, then were emphatically Roman and Latin speaking. Nevertheless, Thracians, Greeks and other nationalities of the region were also present in the area, perhaps predominantly as agricultural workers and skilled tradesman, retainers or slaves, and foreign merchants. They constituted the majority of the region's population, and the city's Latin culture and language began to give way to the resurgent influence of the Greek form the third century onwards.¹²

The Greeks were culturally and linguistically dominant prior to Philippi's refounding as a Roman colony. Greek speakers included the skilled labourers who worked as construction and as stonemasons in the local marble quarries.

The later development of Greek language and culture (i.e. in the third century) suggests that in some ways Latin never become much more than an official language and was used as a fashionable decoration. Paul writes the letter in Greek to accomodate the social setting of the church.

Paul is jailed in Philippi when he first arrived; Paul is writing the letter to the Philippians from the jail or during his captivity period. He is trying to say that they are in the same struggle that he is in and was in when he was with them (1:30). The civil authorities in Philippi seem as badly disposed toward Christianity among the inhabitants of the city (1:28-29) as they were when Paul and Silas first arrived. The joy in the midst of suffering which Paul and Silas display in the Philippian jail is precisely the joy that Paul displays for and seeks to cultivate in the Philippians in the epistle.¹³

The church in Philippi is facing the same problem which Paul and Silas faced. The omission of Latin language which was the prominent and language of the ruling class leads us to thinking that Paul is working with the people of the lower strata of the society whose prominent language was Greek and who

¹² M. BOCKMUEHL, *Philippians*, 4.

¹³ S.E. FOWL, *Philippians*, 13-14.

faced persecution and threats from the Latin speaking aristocratic wealthy class of the society. Here we could see a drastic change in the strategy of Paul, who normally tries for the conversion of the people of upper strata and moves on the other classes of the society, but in Philippi Paul lays the foundation of a church on a large share of people from working class and who are facing persecution from the ruling class.

2. Cultural setting

2.1 Church in a Greco-Roman city

Philippi was almost unique among cities Paul addressed in his letters: it differed from other places he evangelized because of its “Roman-ness” and lack of Jewish community. It was twice founded as a Roman *colonia* (Acts 16:12), first by Gaius Octavian (later Augustus Caesar) and Mark Antony after a double battle there in 42 B.C. when they defeated Cassius and Brutus and ended the Roman Republic; and then after the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra in 31 B.C. as *colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensis*. This “little Rome” had legal status as if in Italy, with some 10,000 inhabitants, many of them citizens, in a walled city of 167 acres plus over 700 square miles around it. Philippi reflected Thracian underpinnings, Hellenistic culture, but dominant Romanitas. Its religions included classic Greco-Roman gods and goddesses, Thracian deities, and Oriental cults (Isis). The dominant new factor was the Imperial religion and the Emperor cult, the faith of some fifty million people, more or less with rituals and celebrations that touched most of life.¹⁴ The abundance of religiosity resulted in the generation of a lion share of people who were god fearers, from whom Paul finds his first convert. The god-fearing community which existed in Philippi before the arrival of Paul, and the missionaries in one way or the other acted as a boosting factor for the spreading of the gospel and the establishment of the church and Christian worship. But the abundance of religion never helped in the inclusion of

¹⁴ J. REUMANN, *Philippians*, 3-4.

Christianity as another religion because the Romans considered it as a threat to their empire. Because of this reason, like the apostle, the church in a colony of Rome also faced persecution.

2.2 Greco-Roman factors that influenced the compensation of Philippians

Heracles (Hercules), Alexander the Great, and the two Roman emperors. A. A. T. Ehrhardt noted parallels between Alexander of Macedon and Christ (II.D.11.a) and conjectured that Stoic texts about Heracles, *iisa theois* (“equal to the gods”) and a model ruler, stood behind both Plutarch’s “On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander” and Phil 2. Alexander was significant in Philippi, where inscriptional materials indicate Heracles cult. W.L. Knox lifted up Heracles (II.D.11.b) as a model for “Dying Hero’ Christology” in the NT. A “god becoming human” would have been familiar from Eur. Bacch. (Dionysus dishonored and imprisoned).¹⁵

In Roman times depictions were popular of Heracles leading Alcestis back from the realm of dead. Cf. Portefaix 110-12, 142-45, 147-49, Christ as slave and as “absolute ruler of cosmos” would have spoken to the people in Philippi.¹⁶

The Philippians knew stories about gods descending to the earth from Olympus, the toils of those born of a god(dess) and a mortal, and apotheosis, the hero elevated to some sort of divinity.¹⁷ From all this it is evident that Paul is trying to give assurance to the faithful in Philippi that the One whom they are worshipping is the ultimate and he is powerful and higher than the gods of the people who are persecuting them. In this war of faith Christ is going to be victorious and history proved it so.

¹⁵ J. REUMANN, *Philippians*, 363.

¹⁶ J. REUMANN, *Philippians*, 364.

¹⁷ J. REUMANN, *Philippians*, 364.

2.3 Paul and Philippi in Acts: The founding mission and subsequent visits (Acts 16:11-40; 20:1-6)

Paul's arrival with the gospel at Philippi on his second missionary journey has been estimated to have been between A.D. 49 and 52.¹⁸ Philippians has long been treated in light of the Apostle's visits to the city as reported in Acts.¹⁹ According to Luke's account in Acts, Paul and Silas, after passing through Syria and Cilicia, where they strengthened the churches, pressed on towards Ephesus, perhaps in order to make it a base from which to evangelize the province of Asia.²⁰

Luke may have good source materials for chs. 16 and 20, perhaps even "information concerning Philippi.....from an eyewitness of Pauline mission (Haenchen, Acts 503, cf. 86-87: Ludemann 1989b: 181-84, 222-25), behind his eight units: (1) Travel Itinerary, from Troas to Philippi (Acts 16:11-12a); (2) The first converts Lydia with her household (16: 12b-15). A "house church" results when Lydia "was baptized and her household" (oikos, children, slaves, extended family), the first of several in Philippi. (3) Exorcism of a Python-spirited slave girl (16:16-18); (4) The sequel to the Exorcism: Paul and Silas beaten and jailed by the Philippian authorities (16:19-24); (5) The Future Sequel: an earthquake frees the prisoners, the jailer and the household are converted (16:25-34); (6) The next day Paul and Silas get public apologies, but are asked to leave Philippi (16:35-40). Paul invokes his Roman citizenship in 16:37, that he possessed citizenship has sometimes been denied, but it is likely historical. (7) A second possible Visit by Paul to Philippi (20:1-2); (8) Paul's Final Visit to Philippi (20:3-6).²¹ The church held its meeting in the household and this could be taken as valid evidence for the secrecy of the Christian worship which the church maintained; this points towards the threat which the

¹⁸ B.B THURSTON – J. RYAN, *Philippians and Philemon*, 5.

¹⁹ J. REUMANN, *Philippians*, 5.

²⁰ B.B. THURSTON – J. RYAN, *Philippians and Philemon*, 5.

²¹ J. REUMANN, *Philippians*, 5.

church members faced in Philippi. By avoiding public worship and setting the gathering for Sunday worship in a household they were trying to protect themselves from the vigorous Roman Law which could even lead to their death, if found guilty. In a place where all kinds of personal gods and different religious practices were admitted and even allowed to build temples in the name of different gods and ritualistic practices were allowed in public, Christians were forced to keep their faith and identity as a secret is ample evidence to fully understand the rigidity of chain which bound the church in Roman Philippi.

3. Religious setting

3.1 The religion of Philippi

On their arrival Paul and the missionaries along with him encountered a religiously vivid community with different beliefs and practices and a people from different backgrounds.

Religiously, Philippi was a diverse as almost any city in the Empire, and its ethos was syncretistic. That is, people regularly participated in several of the city's many cults. The old Thracian gods, Apollos, Comaeus, and Artemis, continued to play an important part in the city's religious life. Mars was worshipped in his Thracian guise as Myndrytus. A votive monument to Apollo has been unearthed in the agora. There is also evidence of the worship of Dionysus. The Romans brought their own gods as well as those they have encountered in Asia Minor and the East. For example, after 42 B.C.E. Philippi was placed under the protection of Isis²²; also notable are the cults of Kabiroi and of Claudius. Lilian Portefaix has suggested that the city was divided into areas by religion. Inscriptions there also reflect the imperial cult. The south, along the Via Egnatia and the town center, was devoted to Roman state religion. North of the Via Egnatia was the seat of folk religion, principally Cybele and other Magna Mater religions and devotion to various healing deities. Entering Philippi through

²² Isis is a goddesses in ancient philippi which was also worshipped in some of the old Roman provinces.

the east gate from Neapolis via the Via Egnatia, Paul would have passed a spring and what is possibly a sanctuary to Cybele, the mother goddess.²³

In this letter we come across Paul's encounter with paganism. The church at Philippi faced persecution at the hands of the non-believers. Paul is writing to a Roman colony in which the Jewish presence, if any is negligibly small.²⁴ So the religious context of the church in Philippi is a point to be discussed.

3.2 Pagan religion

Commentators point out the importance of traditional Roman religion, including a particular Philippian penchant for the Emperor Cult with all its official temples and sacrifices, festal calendar and related cultural trappings, and personnel such as flamens, priestesses of Livia, and *seviri Augustales*.²⁵

The works of Portefaix and Abrahamsen have noted the prominence of women in the hilippian cults of Diana, Dionysus and Isis.²⁶

3.3 Judaism

There is no written or archaeological evidence of a resident Jewish community at Philippi, and no indication of a synagogue or even of Jewish homes.²⁷ The lack of Old Testament quotations in the letter could also be regarded as a factor which supports this argument.

The Evangelist Luke fails to mention either 'Jews' or 'synagogue' in his account of the important Pauline mission to Philippi, about which he seems to be remarkably well informed. Luke's picture in this regard agrees with that in Polycarp's letter

²³ B. B. THURSTON, J. M. RYAN, *Philippians and Philemon*, 8-9.

²⁴ M. BOCKMUEHL, *Philippians*, 6.

²⁵ M. BOCKMUEHL, *Philippians*, 6-7.

²⁶ M. BOCKMUEHL, *Philippians*, 8.

²⁷ M. BOCKMUEHL, *Philippians*, 9.

to Philippi, which mentions nothing about Jews or Jewish Christians there.²⁸

3.4 Anti-Jewish prejudice

Even though we cannot supply solid evidence to prove an anti-Jewish prejudice of the people of Philippi, the Bilical narrative and the experience which the evangelist faced there points to this direction of understanding.

The charge brought against Paul and Silas (16:20-21) by the owners of the slave girl, though dictated by commercial interests, appears to have played on the anti-Jewish prejudices of the Philippians, and it is possible that animosity against the Jews at Philippi may account for the continuing hatred of the populace against the infant Christian church. Claudius had taken steps to discourage Judaism and expelled the Jews from Rome.²⁹ So it is obvious that another form of living or belief propagated by Jews which has its origin in Israel and a faith system in which a Jew is worshiped as God the almighty will certainly be opposed and persecuted.

3.5 The Church in Philippi

There are many schorlay works regarding the church of Philippi, from which two important qualities or attributes of the church will be specifically showcased here.

The first attribute is Paul's unique relationship with the Philippian church. We cannot be sure from any of our sources how long Paul and his companions (Silas, Timothy and Luke) stayed in Philippi. But whatever its length, it was long enough to establish a close relationship between the apostle and this community of believers, undoubtedly aided by Luke's staying on in Philippi after Paul, Sialas, and Timothy had departed for Thessalonica (see on 4:3). The evidence for the kind of nearly "contractual" friendship is to be found in Paul's statement in 4: 15

²⁸ M. BOCKMUEHL, *Philippians*, 9.

²⁹ P.T O'BRIEN, *Philippians*, 5.

that “no other church entered into partnership with me in the matter of ‘giving and receiving’ except for you alone.” Social reciprocity is the primary element of Greco-Roman friendship.³⁰

The second specific factor is with the role of women in the church. It is commonplace in scholarship that Greek women enjoyed increasing freedoms during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. This was especially true in the religious arena.³¹ The house church which is centered in the house of a women, after Lydia “was baptized and her household” (*oikos*, children, slaves, extended family), the first of several in Philippi.³² It later develops into a community of faithful.

3.6 Circumstances of the church in Philippi

Marvin R. Vincent’s classic *Commentary on Philippians* accurately sets forth the general character of the church in Philippi as being reflected in the emotional tone of the letter. It is the church to which Paul had strong personal attachments and to which he wrote in mostly commendatory terms.

The Philippian congregation is undergoing suffering as the result of opposition in Philippi is explicitly stated in 1:27-30 and metaphorically so in 2:17. Once this is recognized, it is then easy also to recognize this reality as underlying a variety of other moments in the letter.³³ So we could attribute the strong bond which Paul had with this church to not only of the readiness they are showing towards the gospel by sending a messenger but also to their *sitz im leben*, and the zeal which they are showing towards the gospel like the apostle who shows his zeal to his faith even during the time of imprisonment.

The organization of the Philippian church is indicated at the outset of the letter as Paul greets the saints “with the bishops and deacons” (1:1). They have been able to dispatch their own

³⁰ G.D Fee, *Philippians*, 27.

³¹ B.B. THURSTON - J. RYAN, *Philippians and Philemon*, 19.

³² J. REUMANN, *Philippians*, 5.

³³ G.D Fee, *Philippians*, 29.

missionary, Epaphroditus, who has risked his life “for the work of Christ” (2:25-30). Further, the home church has “coworkers” with Paul (Euodia, Syntyche, Clement) who are well enough organized that Paul can ask one group to them to help the others (4:2-3).³⁴ Even though the church was under oppression from the state, as was Paul, they share the same attributes, e.g. of working towards the spreading the gospel. Here the identification of the conditions of both the church and the apostle is seen: the apostle who is been chained by the authorities on account of his faith and even chained works at the spreading of the gospel and a church which faces the chains of persecution and segregation from the ruling class but even if restricted works for the gospel of God.

Conclusion

The ultimate and relevant question here is what we should keep in mind before reading the Letter to the Philippians. While suffering is not the dominant motif in Philippians, it does constitute the church’s primary historical context in Philippi and thus underlines much of the letter. Two items are noteworthy. First, this context helps to explain Paul’s emphasis on his imprisonment and suffering in the thanksgiving (vv. 3-8) and in the narrative about his affairs (vv. 12-26). Part of his reason for thanksgiving is for their “joint-partnership” with him “in my chains, for both the defense and the confirmation of the gospel,” which he terms “this grace” (v. 7). Both parts of the narrative about “my affairs” that immediately follow (vv. 12-18a, 18b-26) seem intended to illustrate “how I am responding,” first, to his suffering at the hands of the Empire, and second, to the selfish ambition/rivalry of other believers who are trying to cause him grief in the midst of it. Thus the narrative, which functions as a typical (expanded) expression of friendship, also functions as an exemplary paradigm (= this is how you, too, should respond to your own suffering at the hands of “Rome” in Philippi).³⁵

³⁴ B.B. THURSTON - J. RYAN, *Philippians and Philemon*, 16.

³⁵ G.D Fee, *Philippians*, 30.

Thus the letter to Philippians is not only a letter of cordial and friendly relationship but also a letter of encouragement, consolation and confrontation. Through this letter the apostle Paul is trying to draw a parallel between his condition or life-situation as a prisoner of Rome and the life-situation of the faithful in Philippi who are part of the community which he established and left. So when we read the letter to Philippians through this lens we could clearly see the sky in which Paul is shining and is calling the Philippians to shine along with him (Phil 2: 15).

The shining picture of the apostle who in chains and even during the time of his constraintment is doing his best in the field of mission and a church which faces threat and legal action during the time of restriction is playing their part as a valiant fighter who is trying to defend its faith. This commonness of life-situation is the arena in which the letter has its base. The Letter to the Philippians should be read, understood and interpreted on the basis of this.

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Eucharistic Missiology: Mission Paradigm of the Orthodox Churches

Basil Paul¹

Introduction

The contours of the Orthodox Church history testify the fact that the word ‘mission’ has been haunting to the Orthodox Church due to its underlying contentions of proselytization. Over the centuries, the unwarranted penetration of foreign mission agencies with an intention to convert the Orthodox faith community has validated this fear. Ion Bria writes;

There are many martyrs and saints in the Orthodox calendar, for example, who suffered not only from persecution from early Roman Emperors and later under Ottoman domination,

¹ Rev. Dn. Basil Paul is a sub-deacon in the Syrian Orthodox Church who currently serves as an Intern in the Youth Concerns – NCCI.

but also from Roman Catholic Uniatism and Protestant proselytism, especially in the Balkan and Middle East countries.²

Thus the Orthodox Church rejects such corporate enterprise ideological framework of mission which focuses on conquering geographical frontiers by patronizing, colonizing, dominating and oppressing a faith community using the Gospel of Christ as pretense to legitimize certain political and economic vested interests. This refusal of the Orthodox Church to engage with the then prevailing conception of mission of extending the topographical territory has fetched the Church few titles viz. – “A non-missionary Church”; “Defenders of Faith”³ etc. David Bosch, concludes his chapter on the mission paradigm of the Eastern Church with a similar assessment;

The Church adapted to the existing world order, resulting in Church and Society penetrating and permeating each other. The role of religion – any religion – in society is that of both stabilizer and emancipator; it is both mythical and messianic. In the Eastern tradition the Church tended to express the former of each of these pairs rather than the latter. The emphasis was on conservation and restoration, rather than on embarking on a journey into the unknown. The key words were ‘tradition’, ‘orthodoxy’ and the ‘Fathers’ and the Church became the bulwark of the right doctrine. Orthodox Churches tended to become ingrown, excessively nationalistic and without a concern for those outside...The Church established itself in the world as an institute of almost exclusively other-worldly salvation.⁴

² Ion Bria ed. *Martyria/Mission: The Witness of the Orthodox Churches Today* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980), 3.

³ The Orthodox community in any particular place is “the defender of faith”, according to an expression used in the 1848 Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs.

⁴ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 212-13.

These misconstrued appellations are the result of improper and naïve appropriation of the mission of the Orthodox Church; there is much more to it than meets the eye. The Orthodox Church has never been at odds in fulfilling the fundamental apostolic vocation of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ to the world but the Church has her own way - a unique way - of executing the same. The Orthodox mission sprouts from a Eucharistic Ecclesiology. The Church is the outcome of mission and not vice-versa. To be precise, it is the ecclesiology that determines the missiology of the Orthodox Church and thus the most credible paradigm of mission for the Orthodox Church is Eucharistic Missiology. Before we venture into the overtures of Eucharistic Missiology it is imperative that we discern few principles of Orthodox Ecclesiology.

Principles of Orthodox Ecclesiology

1. The Living Tradition

Tradition is indeed prominent in our attempt to theologize thus it is one of the formative factors of theology. The Orthodox Church considers her tradition to be living thus the Church is not a petrified archival enterprise whose sole intention is to ‘conserve’ the past but she envisions continuing the legacy by constantly re-receiving it. This is known as the Reception of Tradition. John Zizioulas remarks;

What we have inherited from the Fathers, be it dogmas, ethos or liturgy, must be received and re-received all the time and in this process the past becomes existentially, and not simply mentally or ritually, present...The Orthodox are there in the Ecumenical Movement to remind us of the importance of Tradition but also its creative re-reception.⁵

In the erosion of faiths by the invasion of modernity, defending ones faith and ethnic identity is not to be exclusive

⁵ John Zizioulas, “The Self Understanding of the Orthodox and their Participation in the Ecumenical Movement” in Petros Vassiliadis ed. *Orthodox Perspectives on Mission* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013), 86.

rather the ethical imperative of one's survival. Tradition makes the past meet the present hence preserves the historical continuity. Re-remembering the past is essential for renewal and change. The past is not always regressive as thought about. There are subversive elements in the past whose embers need to be rekindled. For instance, the Order of Deaconess is one such tradition which was never abolished but thrown into the abyss of disuse. The Statement issued by the Orthodox Liturgists for the support of the Revival of the Order of Deaconess by the Patriarch of Alexandria states;

The reinstatement of the female diaconate does not constitute an innovation, as some would have us believe, but the revitalization of a once functional, vibrant, and effectual ministry in order to provide the opportunity for qualified women to offer in our era their unique and specific gifts in the service of God's people as publicly commissioned and authorized educators, evangelists, preachers, counselors, social workers, et.al.⁶

The Orthodox Church that considers a woman to be the Mother of God could possibly have no excuses for not ordaining women. The Orthodox Church could contribute immensely to the world if she re-remembers such revolutionary facets of her past. At the same time, we should not fall into the danger of being fixated on the past rather should consider it as a point of departure. Heed the words of Archbishop Lazar (Puhalo) - a retired hierarch in the Orthodox Church in America (OCA);

The Orthodox faith has the capacity to engage social transformations with dignity and peacefully. We must, however, be willing to accept that the past does not have all

⁶https://panorthodoxcemes.blogspot.com/2017/10/orthodox-liturgists-issued-statement-of.html?m=1&fbclid=IwAR0gHeyZN0mNn_J0AwQMqYFAnwi9k2Omyz30AAIYu8PoHkgwn_vFzbrygoA

the answers. The past may be a foundation, but it is not a destination.⁷

2. The ever - continuing Liturgy

One of the common comments the Orthodox Church faces is that the Church is extensively liturgy oriented. So what is wrong with that? In fact a Church ought to be Liturgy oriented. Liturgy as most people understand is not ritualism and the frenzy of ceremonies rather the etymology of the word leads us to the discernment that it is derived from the Greek words *laos* (people) and *ergon* (work). This, points to the fact that Liturgy is essentially the ‘work of the people.’ The priest cannot exercise monopoly over the Liturgy; both priest and people are the co-celebrants of the Liturgy. Moreover the Liturgy cannot be confined to the four walls of an establishment rather it is to be continued by the ecclesia in all walks of life. Thus the phrase “The liturgy after the Liturgy”⁸ becomes the subsistence and the living expression of the Orthodox Ecclesiology. Ion Bria reckons;

The Liturgy has to be continued in personal, everyday situations. Each of the faithful is called upon to continue a personal ‘liturgy’ on the secret altar of his own heart, to realize a living proclamation of the good news for the sake of the whole world. Without this continuation, the Liturgy remains incomplete. Since the Eucharistic event we are incorporated in Him who came to serve the world and to be sacrificed for it, we have to express in concrete diakonia, in

⁷ Archbishop Lazar (Puhalo), “A Brief Note: The Past is not our Destination, Fear is not the way.” https://orthodoxyindialogue.com/2018/07/13/a-brief-note-the-past-is-not-our-destination-fear-is-not-the-way-by-archbishop-lazar-uhalo/?fbclid=IwAR2P_1nW7KCbVq8tA_ZQECrJYCsjLSeQSztIvoSgzZgkTBdk4yr

⁸ In the discussion of the consultation organized by CWME Desk for Orthodox Studies and Relations in Etchmiadzine, Armenia, 16 – 21 September 1975, “the indispensable continuation” of the liturgical celebration was spoken. It was stated clearly that “the Liturgy must not be limited to the celebration in the Church but has to be continued in the life of the faithful in all dimensions of life.” See. “The Etchmiadzine Report, *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 64/256, 1975, 417-421.

community life, our new being in Christ, the servant of all. The sacrifice of the Eucharist must be extended in personal sacrifices for the people in need.⁹

Unless and until the liberation we experience through participating in the Liturgy, is manifested in tangible forms to our fellow human beings and to the entire cosmos, the Liturgy is incomplete. St. John Chrysostom stated;

Do you want to honour Christ's body? Then do not honour him here in the Church with silken garments while neglecting him outside where he is cold and naked...or what use it is to weigh down Christ's table with golden cups when he himself is dying of hunger? First fill him when he is hungry; then use the means you have left to adorn his table.¹⁰

Liturgy and mission are intertwined in the Orthodox tradition. One cannot exist without the other. Emmanuel Clapsis states;

Liturgy without social concern is reduced to ritualism and leads to introversion. It is equally true that mission apart from worship reduces Christianity to a religious ideology, either of the left or of the right. It becomes a subject of human pride and self-will and may not serve Christ but its proprietor. Worship as a communal and God-centred event can help mission to recover its true nature as participation in

⁹ Ion Bria, "The liturgy after the Liturgy" in Ion Bria ed. *Martyria/Mission: The Witness of the Orthodox Churches Today* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980), 67.

¹⁰ St. John Chrysostom. *Homily 50*.

Christians must remember that the Christ who is really, truly and substantially present in the Eucharist is the same Christ who is also personally present in the poor and downtrodden of this world. These two presences of Christ must be kept together and understood as complementing each other. We cannot consistently choose the comfortable real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and ignore the disturbing personal presence of Christ in the poor and downtrodden. – See Emmanuel Clapsis, "The Eucharist as Missionary Event in a Suffering World" in Petros Vassiliadis ed. *Orthodox Perspectives on Mission* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013), 65, footnote 7.

God's mission. More specifically, the Eucharist is the unique liturgical act that brings together in a creative but disturbing unity the vertical and horizontal dimensions of Christian mission and living.¹¹

3. The Church as the Realized Eschatology

Species survive only when they learn to live in a community and humans are no different. The basis of all theological propositions of the Orthodox Church is Trinitarian. The *perichoresis* (mutually indwelling) embedded in the Trinity makes the Orthodox Church affirm the cosmic dimension of salvation where the entire cosmos becomes the ecclesia, the church, the body of Christ. Church is thus the beloved community of Christ unceasingly 'becoming' in Christ through perpetual repentance and transformation. The Orthodox ecclesiology considers church as the historical expression and the foretaste of the reign of God on earth hence the realized eschatology. The church is an eschatological Eucharistic Community¹² where it is not the past but the *eschaton* that becomes the beginning of the church. Petros Vassiliadis opines;

In Orthodox theology and liturgical praxis the Church does not draw her identity from what 'she is' in the present or what 'was' given to her as institution in the past but from what she 'will be' in the future, that is from the *eschaton*.¹³

Since the Orthodox Church affirms church as a 'becoming community' she perceives Church in a Pneumatological sense. Christ has never occupied the kernel of Orthodox ecclesiology

¹¹ Emmanuel Clapsis, "The Eucharist as Missionary Event in a Suffering World" in Petros Vassiliadis ed. *Orthodox Perspectives on Mission* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013), 62.

¹² This is an Ignatian concept. Church is a Eucharistic community with the Bishop as the image of Christ. Thus a Bishop is not just to identify with Christ but bound to be identical to Christ.

¹³ Petros Vassiliadis ed. *Orthodox Perspectives on Mission* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013), 5.

rather it is the Spirit which has been the breath of the church. John Zizoulas explicates;

The Spirit is not something that ‘animates’ a Church which already somehow exists. The Spirit makes the Church ‘be’. Pneumatology does not refer to the well-being but to the very being of the Church. It is not about a dynamism which is added to the essence of the Church. It is the very essence of the Church.¹⁴

He further elucidates this point;

In a Christological perspective alone we can speak of the Church as in-stituted (by Christ) but in a pneumatological perspective we have to speak of it as con-stituted (by the Spirit). Christ in-stitutes and the Spirit con-stitutes. The difference between these two prepositions: in- and con- can be enormous ecclesiologically. The ‘in-stitution’ is something presented to us as a fact. As such it is a provocation to our freedom. The con-stitution is something that involves us in its very being, something we accept freely, because we take part in its very emergence. Authority in the first case is something imposed on us whereas in the latter it is something that springs from amongst us.¹⁵

Spirit is the disruptive and transformative being of the Church which urges her to dismantle and breach the existing order which is contrary to the divine order. A church is never built rather is born. Today when the Church is validated in terms of assets and jurisprudential constitutions we relegate the Church into a bare ecclesial institution devoid of the Spirit of disruption and transformation i.e. its very being. Here occurs the demise of Ecclesiology. K. M. George writes;

The Mission of the Church is an act of *epiclesis*, calling the Holy Spirit to descend upon the whole creation. It constitutes

¹⁴ John D. Zizoulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York: SVS Press, 1985), 132.

¹⁵ John D. Zizoulas, *Being as Communion*, 140.

an act of creative unification. The priestly gesture at the moment of *epiclesis* in the Syrian Orthodox liturgy is especially significant. In the fluttering and cyclic movements symbolizing the Spirit, the priest invokes the Spirit to hover over the elements and to dwell within the Holy Eucharist, thus infusing the whole created reality. If the Church's historical existence can become an act of *epiclesis*, calling upon the Spirit to descend and dwell within our world, to transfigure it, then the Church's mission is accomplished.¹⁶

Having succinctly comprehended the few (of the many) basic principles of Orthodox Ecclesiology we now try to understand the mission paradigm of the Orthodox Church which is Eucharistic Missiology.

Eucharistic Missiology

Christianity in a nutshell is a story of a boy being born in the House of Bread (Bethlehem) eventually becoming the bread to be broken for the cosmic redemption. The Liturgy of Eucharist commemorates this breaking of bread. The Eucharist is considered so sacred in the Orthodox Church that it is known as the Queen of Sacraments. Eucharist consummates all the sacraments of the Orthodox Church. Thus Eucharist is the heart of the Orthodox Liturgy. Church is first and foremost a worshipping community; the doctrines fall secondary to worship. George Florovsky emphasises the fact that *lex orandi* has a privileged priority over *lex credenti*.¹⁷ Metropolitan George Khodre of Mount Lebanon throws light on this;

In the Eucharistic act the church is a witness and calls for witnessing outside the sanctuary. There is no wall of partition between the altar and the cosmos; the Eucharist is

¹⁶ K. M. George, "Mission for Unity Or Unity for Mission: An Ecclesiological/ Ecumenical Perspective" in Petros Vassiliadis ed. *Orthodox Perspectives on Mission* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013), 113.

¹⁷ George Flosovsky, "The Elements of Liturgy" in C Patelos ed. *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC, 1978), 172.

the meeting point of the fallen world with the world to come. It is its beginning, the sign of transfigured time. The Eucharist is that which should be carried and transmitted with all its implications outside the Temple.¹⁸

In Latin, the word ‘companion’ literally means to “break bread”. Food fellowship is the most powerful form of companionship. Jesus resorted to this impactful form of fellowship. Jesus compared his body with bread. What else could he have compared his body with in a poverty-stricken world? How else could he have conveyed his conviction in a world where people were and are impoverished by the dominant? Mahatma Gandhi reckoned, “There are people in the world so hungry that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread.”

Food fellowship is gaining huge prominence today and is one of the thriving models for sustaining Churches especially in America where the churches are closing at an alarming rate. In the modern parlance this is known as the “Dinner Churches”. The backdrop of this model is a book written by Verlon Fosner - “Dinner Church: Building Bridges by Breaking Bread.” Verlon and Melodee Fosner are the founders of Dinner Church Collective. Chris Morton writes on this. He opines;

Dinner Church is inspired by Jesus’ words in Revelation 3:20, “Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” As Fosner says, “The only question remaining is, ‘Who is going to set his table?’” Could it be that setting a table for sinners, seculars, and strangers to have dinner with Jesus might be one of the great callings of the church? What if when Jesus was telling Peter

¹⁸ Metropolitan George Khodre, “The Church as the Privileged Witness of God” in Ion Bria ed. *Martyria/Mission: The Witness of the Orthodox Churches Today* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980), 31.

to “feed his sheep,” he wasn’t speaking metaphorically, but was actually directing him to a physical table?”¹⁹

The founders of the Dinner Church initiative Verlon and Fosner describe;

The Apostolic Era used the dinner table as their primary form of church for the first three centuries. That historic sociology of church is making a strong comeback in the past decade. Interestingly, secularized populations are again flocking to these Agape dinner tables to eat & talk about Jesus.²⁰

The Orthodox Church perceives mission as an extension of the love of the Triune God. Mission is conceptualized as ‘coming together’ rather than ‘going forth’. This framework has its roots in Didache which says; “Just as this loaf was scattered all over the mountains and having been brought together was made one, so let your church be gathered from the ends of the earth in your kingdom”.²¹ This also reverberates in the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus states; “Whoever does not gather with me scatters.”²²

Eucharist is not only about breaking bread or a fellowship of food but also a divine praxis which disturbs us with the anamnesis of Jesus by the re-enactment of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ. Eucharist is the bread of pilgrims and this is made known through the benediction of the Orthodox Church where the faithful are commissioned to continue the liturgy outside the Temple by gaining energy from the bread and having been nourished in the mind, body and soul. The Eucharist also teaches us the difference between need and greed. The sacrament encourages us to shatter our complacency and educates us not to satisfy our wants at the expense of usurping the needs of our

¹⁹ Chris Morton, “Churches are Closing: These Four Models are Thriving”, <https://www.missioalliance.org/churches-are-closing-these-four-models-are-thriving/?fbclid=IwAR1gSCd5PD6oj1U1Gl6uurIGIZwb94gxIdlYZVNX4hRwMat4h5hFuiivF>

²⁰ Chris Morton, “Churches are Closing”

²¹ Didache 9:4

²² Matt 12:30 - NRSV

fellow humans and other creations. That is what monasticism enlightens us too and thus could also be considered a genuine missional model of the Orthodox Church. Metropolitan Emilianos Timiadis of Sylibria argues;

Monks practice poverty not because the administration of wealth is an evil in itself – if this were so, how could Christ have worked as a carpenter? – but on the contrary because the existence in society of a group of devoted men and women, who have freely given up the right to possess wealth, may help others in that society to escape from a life which makes the acquisition of wealth its supreme end. Monks are called to celibacy, not to despise conjugal life or marriage but on the contrary to give a witness to the transfiguration of the sexual instinct in marriage and in celibacy so that people can serve higher goals and become servants of the spirit. Monks are called to obedience, not in order to escape their responsibilities of adulthood but in order to help man escape the instinct of self-centeredness and self-dependence so that he increasingly depends on the will of God and less and less on his own.²³

To conclude, the mission for the Orthodox Church stems from her most sacred sacrament i.e. Eucharist. There exists no mission without worship; both complement each other. Any attempt to disunite these two is detrimental to the fundamental missiological affirmation of the church. Church is not a corporate enterprise that salvages few rather she is a cosmic presence of healing and *koinonia* realized by the scattered ecclesia in their coming together to celebrate the foundation of mission i.e. Eucharist.

Where a people are being harshly oppressed, the Eucharist speaks of the exodus or deliverance from bondage. Where

²³ Metropolitan Emilianos Timiadis, “The Missionary Dimension of Monasticism” in Ion Bria ed. *Martyria/Mission: The Witness of the Orthodox Churches Today* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980), 43.

Christians are rejected or imprisoned for their faith, the bread and the wine become the life of the Lord who was rejected by men but has become 'the chief stone of the corner'. Where the church sees a diminishing membership and its budgets are depressing, the Eucharist declares that there are no limits to God's giving and no end to hope in him. Where discrimination by race, sex or class is a danger for the community, the Eucharist enables people of all sorts to partake of the one food and to be made one people. Where people are affluent and ease with life, the Eucharist says, 'As Christ shares his life, share what you have with the hungry'. Where a congregation is isolated by politics or war or geography, the Eucharist unites us with all God's people in all places and all ages. Where a sister or brother is near death, the Eucharist becomes a doorway into the kingdom of our loving Father.²⁴

²⁴ *Your Kingdom Come: Report on the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism*, (Geneva: WCC, 1980), 206.

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