

LOGOS – COMMUNICATION OF THE FATHER

By Fr. Dr. Charles Ndhlovu
Communication Theologian

Fr. Charles Ndhlovu, PhD, studied and graduated with a Doctorate in Social Communication specializing in Communication Theology at the Pontifical University of Salesianum in Rome – Italy. Some of his publications can be found on his website: *charlesndhlovu.wordpress.com*; he is also on *Youtube* (Fr. Charles Ndhlovu – Mkhahirachiuta; *www.linkedin*, and *www.academia*. This paper basically establishes and affirms the important connection between Sacramental and *Dei-Verbum* communication.

The concept of symbol is important in explaining some theological themes. This is the case because “the concept of symbol [...] is an essential key-concept in all theological treatises, without which it is impossible to have a correct understanding of the subject-matter of the various treaties in them and in relation to other treatises.”¹ The basic characteristic of theology is that it is a theology of the symbol. The symbols constitute theology. On its own, theology is incomprehensible because it deals with dogmatic assertions that may be difficult to understand but they become comprehensible through the use of symbols.² “The importance of the concept of symbols becomes clear when one discovers that “God’s salvific action on man, from its foundation to its completion, always take place in such a way that God himself is the reality of salvation because it is given to man and grasped by him in the symbol, which does not represent an absent and merely promised reality but exhibits this reality as something present, by means of the symbol formed by it.”³

The concept of symbol is indispensable especially for the fact that God has given and communicated himself to human beings in symbols. That is why, the theology of the symbol is unavoidable for a theologian, and no one can do theology and write on Christian history of salvation, without having recourse to the theology of the symbol. In fact, “no adequate treatise can be written ‘*De Gratia*’, unless it contributes to the theology of the symbol in the Christian history of salvation.”⁴

One of the important themes in the theology of the symbol is that of the Logos. The theology of Logos is a theology of the symbol and “indeed the supreme form of it, if we keep to the meaning of the word, which we have already worked out, and do not give the term quite derivative meanings, such as the ordinary language of popular speech attributes to it.”⁵

¹ Karl RAHNER, *The theology of the symbol*, in Karl RAHNER, “Theological investigations, Volume four, More recent writings,” in Karl RAHNER, London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974, 245.

² Cf. RAHNER, *The theology of the symbol*, 235.

³ RAHNER, *The theology of the symbol*, 245.

⁴ RAHNER, *The theology of the symbol*, 242.

⁵ RAHNER, *The theology of the symbol*, 236.

The *Logos* refers to the *Word* of the Father. *Logos* is also the perfect image, imprint, radiance, and self-expression of God. But we can conclude that the *Logos* is the word of the Father and the Father through the *Logos* expresses and possesses himself.⁶ This discourse of the relationship between *Logos* and the Father, ultimately leads us to ask questions about the meaning of the concept that the Father expresses and possesses himself through the *Logos*. God expresses himself inwardly, that is why He can utter Himself outwardly, and He has done so through the *Logos*. “It is because God ‘must’ ‘express’ himself inwardly that he can also utter himself outwardly; the finite, created utterance *ad extra* is a continuation of the immanent constitution of ‘image and likeness’-free continuation.”⁷

The doctrine of the Incarnation also referred to as Christology, tells us a lot about the theology of the symbol and this doctrine of the Incarnation of the Word, should, and is more than just the exegesis of John 14:9 in which Jesus said that he, who sees Him, sees the Father. Christology is more than just concentrating on the fact that Jesus is the image or likeness of the Father. “There is no need to dwell here on the fact that the *Logos* is image, likeness, reflection, representation, and presence-filled with all the fullness of the Godhead.”⁸

However, when we talk about the doctrine of the Incarnation of the Word, we have to dwell and concentrate on the fact that the Absolute Symbol of God in the world is Jesus, as the incarnate word. He is the Absolute Symbol of God in the world because he is the presence and revelation of what God is in Himself. Jesus is so much filled with what He symbolises as nothing else can be.⁹ Most importantly, Jesus as the incarnate word, is the “expressive presence of what-or rather, who-God wished to be, in free grace, to the world, in such a way that this divine attitude, once so expressed, can never be reversed, but is and remains final and unsurpassable.¹⁰ When we say that the *Logos* took on the human nature, we mean that Jesus is the revelation of the Father.¹¹ The humanity of Jesus is not just an instance in which God came down and then dressed himself up in our humanity and then *masqueraded*. Christ’s humanity is not just a mere signal or instrument that God used in order to utter something audible about the *Logos*. But the *Logos* disclosed itself through the humanity of Christ and expressed himself and exteriorised himself and it was an existence that was real – with a real human body but still divine.¹² In simpler terms, we can say that the humanity of the *Logos*

⁶ Cf. RAHNER, *The theology of the symbol*, 236.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ RAHNER, *The theology of the symbol*, 237.

⁹ RAHNER, *The theology of the symbol*, 236-237.

¹⁰ RAHNER, *The theology of the symbol*, 236.

¹¹ Cf. RAHNER, *The theology of the symbol*, 238.

¹² Ibid.

appeared, as a result, of the self-expression and self-exteriorisation of God. The self-exteriorisation of God happens “when God goes out of himself into that which is other than He.”¹³

There is thus a link between the doctrine of Incarnation and the doctrine of God Himself because the doctrine of the Incarnation depicts the humanity of the Logos, which “appears” when God expresses himself and exteriorises himself. The Logos in this sense, as Son of the Father, is the Absolute Symbol that reveals and renders present the Father in the world.¹⁴ “It follows from what has been said that the Logos, as Son of the Father, is truly, in his humanity as such, the revelatory symbol in which the Father enunciates himself, in this Son, to the world-revelatory, because the symbol renders present what is revealed. But in saying this, we are really only at the beginning of a theology of the symbol, in the light of the incarnation, not at the end.”¹⁵ In view of this, truth that the Logos, as Son of the Father, has rendered the Father present in the world, there is a consequence namely, “that the natural depth of the symbolic reality of all things that is of itself restricted to the world or has a merely natural transcendence towards God-has now in ontological reality received an infinite extension by the fact that this reality has become also a determination of the Logos himself or of his milieu.”¹⁶

It is in this context that we can say that the Logos is the communication, expression, rendering and manifestation of God, the Father. The Logos is the word – a word of the Father – a word that communicates about the Father. The Word is the symbol of the Father – He is that communication, that message – that medium that communicates about God!

¹³ RAHNER, *The theology of the symbol*, 238.

¹⁴ Cf. RAHNER, *The theology of the symbol*, 238-239.

¹⁵ RAHNER, *The theology of the symbol*, 239.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*