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THE CHARISM OF TEACHING AND THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN EVANGELIZATION, MISSION AND CULTURE (PAULINE PERSPECTIVES)

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Abstract

Facilitating the dialogue between evangelization, mission and culture ought to be one of the primary objectives of any inculturation attempt. For faith to be genuinely and effectively inculturated many indices would come into play. This study from a Pauline Perspective proposes the charism of didaskalia (teaching), a very important Pauline charism for the modern-day Church, a charism that has been somewhat neglected as one of the gifts crucial in facilitating the ongoing inculturation dialogue. True missionaries and evangelizers on the African soil should be apt to teach. When these are true teachers, they will be able to efficiently engage their host cultures in a bit to evangelize them following the Pauline model. Such a proposition while not claiming to be an auto-sufficient response to the needs of mission and evangelization in its dialogue with culture aims to be an ongoing discussion.

Key words: Charism, Teaching, Doctrine, Dialogue, Evangelization, Mission, Inculturation.

Introduction

I recently completed my doctoral dissertation in which I argued the case of teaching as a very important Pauline charism for the modern-day Church, a charism that has received less attention

and emphasis. In the present study, the idea is to understand the role of the charism of teaching in facilitating the dialogue between evangelization, mission and culture following the Pauline model.

To facilitate the dialogue between evangelization, mission and culture, one should first question the idea of true teaching and its distinction from false teaching. Is teaching false because it is against the Christian culture? Does evangelization consist in teaching western models in the garb of Christianity? Are true mission and evangelization the ones that supplant the African cultural beliefs?

To answer these questions, we have to appreciate the charism of teaching in the Apostle Paul and then examine how Paul carried out his evangelization and mission in the gentile culture. Although the Pauline model may not be an exact paradigm for mission in Africa, it could help us better appreciate the intricacies in inculturation as a phenomenon and reality in evangelizing Africa.

Teaching as a Charism

When considering the Pauline theology of *charismata*, three texts are crucial namely: Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4.¹ When placed side by side with other texts, one sees some

¹ The charismatics will acknowledge only the second, that is, 1 Cor 12, especially for Paul's supposed emphasis on Prophecy and other "coveted" gifts. The writer chooses to use the term "charismatics" to refer to the fanatics of the various strands of the Charismatic Movements. "The Charismatic

similarities as well as variances in Paul's list of charismata. In all of these, teaching - *didaskalia*² is mentioned at least three times in the four lists that Paul presents in his writings. This makes teaching an equally important and relevant charism just like prophecy, speaking in tongues, miracles, healing, etc. But why not much is written about this important charism when compared to others in the Pauline lists of charisms still throws open the

Movement is the international trend of historically mainstream Christian congregations adopting beliefs and practices similar to Pentecostalism. Fundamental to the movement is the use of spiritual gifts (charismata). Among Protestants, the movement began around 1960. Among Roman Catholics, it originated around 1967.”

For details see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charismatic_Movement. Their distinguishing element lies on the emphasis they placed over “some” gifts such as gifts as prophecy, faith healing, and glossolalia. As such, although the Bible lists many gifts from God through His Holy Spirit, there are nine specific gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10 which according to them are “Supernatural in nature” and have become the focus of and distinguishing feature of the Charismatic Movement. These include: Word of Wisdom, Word of Knowledge, Faith, Gifts of Healing, Miraculous Powers, Prophecy, distinguishing between Spirits, Speaking in different Tongues (Languages), and Interpretation of Tongues. These “fanatics” do not consider neither other Pauline list of charismata nor accept other charisms as genuine except these underlisted nine.

² For a better understanding of διδασκαλία (*didaskalia*) and its related terms in the teaching semantic field from the classical Greek down to the NT Pauline usage especially in the case of the charism or the gift of teaching see UMOH, Valentine, *The Gift of Διδασκαλία in Pauline Writings*, Ikot Ekpene: VU_Biblia Academia, 2023, pp. 27-77. Studies highlight διδασκαλία as the preferred term for teaching in the *corpus paulinum*. Also teaching can take on various forms: it becomes educating (παιδεύω - *paideūō*), instructing-catechesis-informing (κατηχέω - *katecheō*) and transmitting (παραδίδωμι - *paradidōmi*). This makes the gift of teaching (*didaskalia*) indispensable for any community of faith.

possibility of what this writer considers as the question of a rhetoric of conspiracy against the charism of teaching.³

Romans 12:6-8 is considered the clearest and perhaps the most important context of *didaskalia* in Pauline texts: *εἴτε ὁ διδάσκων ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ* (*eite ho didaskōn en tē didaskalia* – he who teaches, in his teaching).⁴ It is curious to note that among all the occurrences of the *didaskalia* in the NT, only in Rom 12:7 does

³ It could be disappointing to find out as the present writer did that there is a poverty of bibliography on the charism of teaching. To date, the most extensive materials on *didaskalia* are only found as dictionary voices for example that of K. H. Rengstorf (TDNT), H. F. Weiss (EDNT) and K. Wegenast (The New International Dictionary of the New Testament). Then, one finds David Johnson's article "On the meaning of Didaskalia" (*Didaskalia*, Vol 4, No 2, April 1993) written as a general introduction to the journal which bears that name "Didaskalia." In all these, the treatment of *didaskalia* as a Pauline charism is not their primary concern. Such silence, for this writer is nothing short of a rhetoric of conspiracy. On the other hand, a catalog search into prophecy, glossolalia, healings, miracles, as Pauline charisms will lead one to an innumerable volume of materials. Commentators like Gordon Fee will attribute such negligence to Paul himself. According to him, "all attempts to define this ministry from the Pauline perspective are less than convincing since the evidence is so meagre." It is rather ridiculous to read such comment even amidst the abundance of the practice of the ministry of teaching both in the time of Christ, Paul himself and the early Church. Cf. FEE, Gordon, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, (NICNT), Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987, p. 621.

⁴ The limited space and the specific focus of this article does not permit a detailed background information on Rom 12:6-8 but suffice it to mention that when placed in synopsis with 1 Cor 12, one sees in Rom 12 a similar context of style and content. For instance, there is a treatment of the body of Christ using the metaphor of the body and its members (cf. 1 Cor 12: 12-27, Rom 12: 4-5) as well as a statement on love as a remote context (cf. 1 Cor 13, Rom 12: 9-13). These perfectly situates all the charisms in Paul's list in the context of the body of Christ (the Church, the community of faith) and the virtue of love and Christian charity. Outside these two contexts, the charisms no matter how "potent" and "extraordinary" they may appear is meaningless and useless.

the KJV translate the term as “teaching.” In all other occurrences it translates as “doctrine” making it difficult to differentiate between teaching as content and teaching as an act (activity). Rom 12:7 refers to the activity of teaching. It is teaching (*didaskalia*) in the active sense that is a charism. While *ὁ διδάσκων ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ* of Rom 12:7 has continued to occupy many exegetes and commentators especially as regards the change of construction,⁵ it is compelling to accept the submission of Douglas Moo that the change from abstract nouns in describing the first two gifts – “prophecy,” “service” – to personal designations for the last four is not clear.⁶ Paul refers to “the teacher” rather than to the gift of teaching.

Paul exhorts that the one who has the gift (charism) of teaching, or the one who has the office or ministry of teaching is to exercise and carry it out in his teaching with the sole aim of building up the body of Christ. Charles Talbert notes clearly that the gifts which Christ gives to the Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers are clearly to equip the saints (the other Christians) for the work of ministry helping them to activate their own proper charisms so that together everyone can contribute to the building up of the body of Christ. In other words, teaching together with

⁵ For instance, Cranfield holds that εἴτε διδασκαλίαν was avoided because (ἔχοντες) διδασκαλίαν would not have expressed Paul’s meaning at all clearly. Cf. CRANFIELD, C., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, (ICC), Vol 2, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975, p. 622, Sanday and Headlam say that “ἔχειν διδασκαλίαν” would mean, not to impart, but to receive instruction. Cf. SANDAY, W., and HEADLAM, A., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, (ICC) Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1902, p. 357.

⁶ MOO, Douglas, *The Epistle to the Romans*, (NICNT), Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996, p. 767.

others in that list become facilitating and animating charisms helping to boost or fan into flame the gifts others have received (cf. 2 Tim 1: 6).⁷ Barbara Bowe notes that whatever the gift, for instance teaching or prophecy, its value is measured by the degree to which the gift builds up the one body of Christ.⁸

But why does Paul refer to “the teacher” rather than to the gift of teaching? While many commentators will agree that “teaching” involves the passing on of the truth of the gospel as it has been preserved in the Church,⁹ there is a suggestion here that teaching involved much more than this and as such explains why it has occupied a special place in Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus. As such, in the Pastoral Letters, the concept of the gift of teaching is developed and amplified not only as charism but also a special ministry. Faced with the problems of false doctrines, and the propensity of believers to abandon the already received faith and practice (*depositum fidei*), teaching became a very important element in the Pauline churches.¹⁰

⁷ Cf. TALBERT, Charles, *Ephesians and Colossians*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007, p. 115.

⁸ BOWE, Barbara, “Spiritual Gifts” in FREEDMAN, D., and MYERS, A., (eds.), *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000. This is a very important point emphasized by many other commentators.

⁹ For Cranfield, the teacher based his teaching upon the OT scriptures, the tradition of Jesus and the catechetical material current in the Christian community.

¹⁰ Cf. 1 Tim 1:10, 2:7, 4:6, 13, 16, 5:17, 6:1, 3, 2 Tim 1:11, 3: 10, 16, 4:2, 3, Titus 1: 9, 2:1, 7, 10. In the Pastoral Letters the gift (charism) of teaching was to be put to good use in combating heresies and false teachings that arose in the Early Church preserving sound teaching that are faithful to the sound words of Jesus Christ and the Apostolic teachings.

Yes! teaching involves something more, and so Paul prefers to focus on “the teacher” that he be faithful, consistent and resolute in his teaching. This *something more* is revealed in a plethora of relationships “the teacher” or “teaching” has with other “gifts” and “ministries.” In Eph 4:11 for instance, teacher (διδάσκαλος - didaskalos) is closely related and associated with pastor (ποιμήν - poimēn) - both nouns sharing the same article τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους (tous de poimenas kai didaskalous) – so that teachers and pastors could be regarded as belonging to the same group. On the other hand, in the list of 1 Cor 12:28 διδάσκαλοι (didaskaloi) is mentioned in the third place in the list (after apostles and prophets) and in Rom 12: 3-8 teaching is also mentioned alongside prophecy among other gifts and ministries. This persistent literary relationship between prophecy (prophets), apostolate (apostles), pastoring (pastors, shepherds) and teaching (teachers) in the Pauline theology of Charismata brings in a crucial dynamism.

Teaching becomes fundamental and foundational for both Prophecy and Apostolate. It is easier to think of a teacher who is not a prophet nor an apostle or a pastor, but it would be absurd to think of a prophet, an apostle or a pastor who is not a teacher. For instance, in listing the criteria for one to become an ἐπίσκοπος – episkopos (a bishop, overseer), Paul stated clearly that the candidate must be “apt to teach” (cf. 1 Tim 3:2). Teaching becomes the most important mode of expression for these three. Paul boasted being an apostle and as well a teacher.¹¹

¹¹ Cf. 1 Tim 2:7, 2 Tim 1:11.

So within the concept of his discourse on the diversity of gifts in the united body of Christ, Paul exhorts that “teachers,” that is, whoever has the gift (charism), whoever has the duty or function of teaching, whoever is called upon to teach, to give moral instruction, to explain the Christian faith, morals and practice, should do so by teaching these things diligently and faithfully.¹² The Angelic Doctor, Thomas Aquinas, uses these two adverbs to qualify how teachers are to teach. He says: “*Quantum ergo ad speculativam primo dicit sive qui docet, id est habet officium vel gratiam docendi, utatur doctrina, id est ut studiose et fideliter doceat.*”¹³ Thus, in his teaching, a teacher must do so diligently and faithfully.

Thus, those who have the gift of teaching far from making themselves superior and better than others must put their gifts at the service of the unity of the community by teaching faithfully and diligently. Teachers called and gifted to minister should therefore recognize that they too are disciples and students in the School of Christ and thus in humility lay down their gifts and talents in service to the Church.¹⁴

¹² AQUINAS, Thomas, *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Romans*, in MORTENSEN, J., and ALARCÓN, E., (eds.) *Biblical Commentaries*, Vol 37, Trans by F. R. Larcher, Lander: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012, C. 12, L. 2, p. 334.

¹³ AQUINAS, Thomas, *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Romans*, p. 334.

¹⁴ GUERRA, Anthony, *Romans and the Apologetic Tradition: The Purpose, Genre and Audience of Paul's Letter*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 159.

Didaskalia, like any other charism, is equally relevant in the Christian community of faith, especially at this time whereby there is a gross loss of a sense of faith among the faithful. Gifted teachers of the faith, should be encouraged at all levels to put to use effectively the gift (charism) they received according to the grace of God, so that doubts and errors about Christian faith, morals, practices and religion as a whole be cleared from the hands of sceptics and those who find every little opportunity to repudiate the Christian Faith and the Church. However, the metaphor of the body used by Paul to explain the charisms makes it clear that no one charism no matter how sublime and exceptional is auto-sufficient for the Church. In other words, all charisms function in collaboration and relation with others. One could then conclude with James Dunn, for instance, “teaching preserves continuity, but prophecy gives life; with teaching a community will not die, but without prophecy it will not live.”¹⁵ This means there is a need for interrelationship and intercommunication among the gifts and charisms in the Church. In this post-modernist era, the relevance of the charism of *didaskalia* for the Church in the modern world cannot be overstated.

Teaching Sound Doctrine

In the Pauline Letters now widely known as the Pastorals, for instance, there arises a greater need to distinguish between true/good/sound teaching from false teachings that were fast

¹⁵ DUNN, James, *Jesus and the Spirit*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975, p. 284.

intruding into the Christian communities.¹⁶ So, what was supposed to be the paradigm or criteria for making such discernment? Such a paradigm becomes the thrust of these three letters of Paul to his collaborators, Timothy, and Titus. Ernesto Della Corte notes that the term teaching (*didaskalia*) is widely used in the Pastorals (15 out of a total of 20 in the NT), just because of their concern for orthodoxy and the genuineness of

¹⁶ On healthy/sound teaching: As so often in the Pauline correspondence, diction concerning teaching is unevenly distributed. The three letters to Paul's delegates display a rich use of such language: *didaskalos* (teacher) in 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11; 4:3; *didaskein* (to teach) in 1 Tim 2:12; 4:11; 6:2; 2 Tim 2:2; Tit 1:11; *didachē* (teaching) in 2 Tim 4:2; Tit 1:9; *didaskalia* (teaching) in 1 Tim 1:10; 4:1, 6, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1, 3; 2 Tim 3:10, 16; 4:3; Tit 1:9; 2:1, 7, 10. In all, there are twenty-five instances in these three letters. Paul employs such language otherwise in only six other letters, amounting to twenty-two uses: *didaskalos* in Rom 2:20; 1 Cor 12:28, 29; *didaskein* in Rom 2:21; 12:7; 1 Cor 4:17; 11:14; Gal 1:12; 2 Thess 2:15; Col 1:28; 2:7; 3:16; Eph 4:21; *didachē* in Rom 6:17; 16:17; 1 Cor 14:6, 26; *didaskalia* in Rom 12:7; 15:4; Col 2:22; Eph 4:14. The fact that these letters are written to delegates whose main function is to represent Paul's teachings in the community (1 Cor 4:17) makes the proportionately higher use intelligible. More striking is the use of "healthy" as a modifier of teaching, something that is not found in any Pauline letters except the Pastorals: *hygiēs* appears in Tit 2:8, and the attributive participle of *hygiainein* in 1 Tim 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3; Tit 1:9, 13; 2:1, 2. Here is a case in which the medical metaphor dominating ancient moral discourse is abundantly evident. The verb *hygiainein* referred first to physical conditions of well-being (Plato, *Gorgias* 495E; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1032B; Herodotus, *Persian War* 1:153). It extended to include soundness of mind (Aristophanes, *The Clouds* 1275) and political affairs (Herodotus, *Persian War* 7:157). But by the time of Paul, it was used widely both for conditions of virtue and for the teaching that cultivated such conditions, among both Greco-Roman moral teachers (Plutarch, *On the Study of Poetry* 4 [Mor. 20F]; Herodotus, *Persian War* 1:153; Maximus of Tyre, *Discourses* 36:5a; Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.12.4; 12.5; 3.9.5) and Hellenistic Jewish moralists (Philo, *On Abraham* 223; *Special Laws* 2:164; *Letter of Aristeas* 250; Josephus, *Against Apion* 1:222). Cf. JOHNSON, Luke, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, (AB, 35A), New York: Doubleday, 2001, pp. 171-172.

faith. In the same vein, the expression “sound doctrine” occurs four times in the NT and most of those in the Pastoral letters.¹⁷ This suggests that fidelity to the teachings of Jesus Christ through the teachings of the Apostles (apostolic tradition) guided by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit would form the two pillars to establish orthodoxy not only in the Pauline communities but in the Church of all ages.¹⁸

Using the *via negativa* and/or the elimination method to know what consists of orthodoxy, one will need to know what does not belong to orthodoxy, that is, what are the false/erroneous teachings. The Apostle used this method in the three Pastoral letters. While carrying out his ministry as a teacher teaching sound doctrine, he was conscious to point out trends that do not qualify as sound doctrine.

Commentators agree that the Pastoral letters are the crystallization or summary of the sound doctrine of Jesus Christ as presented or taught by the Apostle Paul as evidenced in 1 Tim 1:15, 17, 2:3-4, 5-6, 4:8b, 10b; 6:15-16.¹⁹ It is these

¹⁷ CORTE, Ernesto, “Carisma e Ministeri nelle Lettere Pastorali”, in Giuseppe De Virgilio (ed), *Il deposito della fede. Timoteo e Tito*, Rivista Biblica 34, EDB, Bologna 1998, p. 184.

¹⁸ Cf. 1 Tim 6:3, 2 Tim 3:16, Titus 1:9 and 2 Tim 4:2.

¹⁹ There are many theories and hypotheses for and against the authenticity of Paul’s authorship of the Pastoral Letters, however, this study goes with the traditional position of Pauline authorship as presented by LOCK, Walter, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, (ICC), Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1924, pp. xxv-xxxii. Also see, TOWNER, Philip, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, (NICNT), Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006, pp. 83-88. He writes “Paul is the author of these three letters however much or little others contributed to their messages and composition.” (p. 88).

sound/healthy teachings that are threatened by false teachers who are trying to draw the members of the community away from the faith (1 Tim 1:3b, 6-7; 4:1b-3b; 6:3-5).

In the face of such dangers of false teachings, the Apostle often reiterated the principles of sound teaching while commanding his faithful collaborators, Timothy, for instance, to “Command and teach these things” (1 Tim 4:11), “Teach and urge these duties” (1 Tim 6:2b), “Remind them of this and charge them before the Lord...” (2 Tim 2:14). And to Titus: “Declare these things...” (Titus 2:15), “Remind them” (Titus 3:1).

A closer look at 2 Tim 6:3 for instance shows that the Apostle also pointed out another two group of false teachers: *those who teach otherwise* and *those who do not agree with the true teaching of Christ*. Here there seems no room for indifference. But experience shows that there are those who while not agreeing with the true teaching keep it to themselves and do not project or teach a contrary version. This second group are not dangerous to the community because in the end, one can say that “faith is personal.” But the first group - those who out rightly reject the true teachings and go ahead to teach others a different version - constitutes the venoms against sound doctrine in the community.²⁰ Paul’s collaborators, Timothy and Titus, on various occasions, receive the instruction from Paul to silence this

²⁰ This is precisely where heretics belong. Jesus seem to have hinted about this in Matt 5:19 “whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.” (RSV). Here the one not only relaxes the true teachings and commandments, but also teaches men this relaxed version instead of the true version. This is heresy. It is false teaching.

set of persons. The command to Titus is a clear example, thus: “For there are many insubordinate men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially the circumcision party; they must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for base gain what they have no right to teach” (Titus 1:10-11 RSV).²¹

Commenting on 1 Tim 6:3-10, Thomas Aquinas points out three marks to identify false teachings when he writes: “If you wish to know whether a doctrine is erroneous, you can tell from three marks: first, it is against the doctrine of the Church; hence he says, *if any man teach otherwise* than I teach and the other apostles. This is the first mark: if any man preach to you a gospel, besides that which I have received, let him be anathema (Gal 1:9). For the doctrine of the apostles and prophets is called canonical, because it is, as it were, the rule of the intellect: you shall not add to the word that I speak to you, neither shall you take away from it (Deut 4:2); if any man shall add to these things, God shall add unto him the plagues written in this book (Apoc. 22:18). In regard to the second mark he says, *and consent not to the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ*. For the Lord came to give testimony to the truth: for this was I born and for this came I into the world,

²¹ The Greek word used for silence here is ἐπιστομίζω which mean to strictly apply a muzzle or bridle; hence, of false teachers, silence, prevent from teaching, stop the mouth. It is only used in Titus 1:11 in the NT. (cf. Friberg 11051). In 1 Tim 2:11-12 for instance where Paul advises that Women not teach in the assembly, another word is used for silence namely, ἡσυχία, ας, ἡ (1) as characterized by inward calm tranquility, quietness (2 Thess 3:12); (2) of giving calm attention silence, quietness (Acts 22:2) cf. Friberg 13264. The two Greek terms although translated as silence in most English translations, express very different concepts.

that I should give testimony to the truth (John 18:37). Therefore, he was sent by the Father to be a teacher and master: give ear to him always, and he shall be a father to you (1 Macc 2:65). Consequently, anyone who does not consent to his teachings is in error: it is like the sin of witchcraft to rebel: and like the crime of idolatry to refuse to obey (1 Kgs 15:23). And he says, *sound*, because in Christ's sayings there is nothing corrupt, nothing false or perverse, because they are the words of divine wisdom: all my words are just; there is nothing wicked or perverse in them: they are right to those who understand, and just to those who find knowledge (Prov 8:8). As to the third mark: my son, keep the commandments of your father, and forsake not the law of your mother (Prov 6:20); hence he says, and *to that doctrine*, namely, of the Church, *which is according to godliness*. This godliness is shown in the worship of God: and the acknowledging of the truth which is according to godliness (Titus 1:1).”²²

Thomas Aquinas goes on to identify the root of this error in teaching as twofold: pride and lack of understanding. This complements Paul’s description of these false teachers in 1 Tim 1:7 for “desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions.”

²² AQUINAS, Thomas, *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, (Biblical Commentaries, 40), Trans by F. R. Larcher and Edited by J. Mortensen and E. Alarcón, Lander: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012, p. 325.

In 1 Tim 4:11 and 1 Tim 6:2, the Apostle Paul charges Timothy to “*Command and teach* these things.” In the light of this, it is pertinent to pay attention to what Paul considers as the paradigm or model of the true, sound and healthy teacher which seems to be the major point in Paul’s command to Timothy in 1 Tim 4:11-16.²³ The Apostle writes: Command and teach these things (v. 11 RSV); Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity (v. 12 RSV); Till I come, attend to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching (v.13); Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophetic utterance when the council of elders laid their hands upon you (v. 14); Practice these duties, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. (v.15); Be conscientious about what you do and what you teach; persevere in this, and in this way, you will save both yourself and those who listen to you. (v.16 NJB)

In 1 Tim 1:9-10, we are presented with vices which are a possible result of the false teachings by false teachers. Most of these vices have to do with the decalogue,²⁴ these affirm the theory that the

²³ TOWNER, Philip, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, (NICNT), pp. 312- 328.

²⁴ JOHNSON, Luke, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, (AB, 35A), New York: Doubleday, 2001, pp. 168-171. The lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, immoral persons, sodomites, kidnapers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine are all categorized by various commentators as pointing to sins against the Decalogue. And because Paul discusses about the goodness of the law in this text gives credence to such interpretations. For the “the law is good, if anyone uses it lawfully” (1 Tim 1:8) can readily be applicable both to the decalogue and other resultant laws that are beneficial for piety and the good of human society.

pastoral epistles are more concerned with a proper interpretation of the law and encourage true believers to take the Decalogue seriously as such find the contemporary relevance of these laws according to the ever-abiding will of God. This means that true teaching today cannot neglect contemporary social ethics: enslavement, sex abuse of migrants, women, and children, kidnapping and trafficking of children, perjury and falsification of reports in business, financial institutions, and politics. When ecclesial teaching and preaching ignore these themes, teachers then become false for presenting half-truths and when these teachings are ignored or belittled or teachers suffer hostility on account of these teachings, then it shows that we are in an era of “people having itching ears,” as prophesied by Paul thus “accumulating for themselves teachers to suit their designs (2 Tim 4:3).” The Church must insist on sound, true and wholistic teachings at all times and for all people using all the available arsenals at her disposal. This is the only way to combat the sporadic eruption of contrary teachings that lead to vices.

In the Letters to Timothy and Titus, there arises a greater need to distinguish between the true/good/sound teaching of God from false teachings. On four occasions Paul explicitly warns against false teachings (1 Tim 4:1, 6:3, 2 Tim 4:3 and Titus 1:9) and on five other occasions Paul explicitly commands sound/true/good teaching (1 Tim 1:10, 4:6, 2 Tim 4:3, Titus 1:9, 2:1). On two occasions using the imperative verbal forms, Paul commands Timothy thus: “teach and urge”, “command and teach” these things (1 Tim 4:11, 6:2, also 2 Tim 4:2). In 1 Tim 6:3, Paul warns against false teachings by indicating the principles of sound

teaching. Paul commands Titus to silence the false teachers (Titus 1:11).

So, what was supposed to be the paradigm or template that will guide such a discernment? According to these Letters – The Holy Spirit, the teachings of the Apostles and Apostolic Tradition – are determinants. Sound/good teaching will then consist in the true instructions (teachings) – didaskalia - that agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ, teaching which accords with godliness. If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree with this, such is false and should be rejected outrightly (1 Tim 6:3).

Teaching and the Dialogue with Mission, Evangelization and Inculturation

So, what then is the role of the charism of teaching in facilitating the dialogue between evangelization, mission and culture following the Pauline model of separating false teaching from true teaching? Is a teaching false because it is against the Christian culture? Does evangelization consist in teaching western models in the garb of Christianity? Are true mission and evangelization the ones that supplant the African cultural beliefs?

Since the publication of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* by Pope Paul VI, there has been an urgency in the evangelizing mission of the Church. A theme reinforced in the *Redemptoris Missio* of Pope John Paul II. The Second Vatican Council's document, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, promoted and encouraged the celebration of the liturgy (Divine mysteries) in the vernacular and indigenous languages, with a corresponding translation of the

liturgical texts (the Missal) and of course the Bible into the indigenous languages.²⁵ Since then, there has been an opening for the inculturation of the gospel in the indigenous cultures. Unfortunately, when such waves came to Africa, it had a bad interpretation of replacing African culture with Western culture in what Chinua Achebe depicted in his literary masterpiece *Things Fall Apart* as “cultural supremacy”.

After many years, Achebe’s work in the context of the reality of foreign missionaries’ presence in Africa keeps challenging the Church towards a proper dialogue between mission, evangelization and culture. *Things Fall Apart* presents two contrasting models or proto-types of the evangelizing mission of cultures exemplified in the personalities of Mr Brown and Mr Smith. The former, culturally aware of his host community was calm, observant, open, humble and docile. Through dialogue, he made friends and created bridges that led to the heart of the people he was to evangelize. In modern terms, one could say that he was a true “diplomat.” He preached in his sermons: “everything was possible but everything was not expedient.” He preached against the excess of zeal. He will not judge the culture for their practices, rather he tried to understand them so he could further help them in learning the truth. The second model, Mr Smith was the exact opposite of the values and approach of Mr Brown as depicted by the author. Where Mr Brown was

²⁵ Although, there are calls for new translation or re-translation of some of the versions, for instance, the case of the Efik Bible (EB), as advocated by James Akpan, accusing colonialism of influencing the present translation, with a strong call for a greater participation of the local people in a new translation. Cf. AKPAN, James, *The Bible Comes to Nigeria: Colonialism and the Politics of Translation*, Carrolton, GA: The Wi-Fi House, 2021.

understanding and calm, Mr. Smith was tyrannically quick to impose verdict and judgement upon the culture of the people he was supposed to be nurturing. His harsh and rash attitude did not allow him to create bridges of relationship whatsoever with the indigenes. He did not connect with them at all. He presumed to have the monopoly of truth, every other person was wrong and in falsehood. For him everything was black and white. And black was evil. For him the world was a battlefield in which the children of light were locked in mortal combat with those of darkness. He condemned publicly his predecessor's policy of compromise and accommodation.²⁶

Cultural awareness highlights that one could not bombard their way into another's culture but rather should try to understand their rituals so they could further understand the humans and souls who were part of the culture. Cultural awareness leads to building connections and bridges with the people that make up the culture. One cannot evangelize a culture that one is not aware of. Evangelization means inserting Christ – gospel values into the culture and not replacing the culture.²⁷

²⁶ Some scholars have noted that many things some of those European missionaries failed to understand about African culture and tradition, they treated as “superstitious and backward” as such valorized Europe at Africa's expense, as if they needed to downgrade traditional African culture in order to demonstrate European efficacy. Cf. CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF IKOT EKPENE, *History of the Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene (1963-2013)*, Ikot Ekpene: Ritman Press, 2013, p. 1.

²⁷ Mention is often made of some exemplary missionaries such as Frs. Joseph Lutz, Alexandre Léjeune, Joseph Shanahan, Charles Heerey, James Moynagh who were culturally aware of their various communities, they like the example of Mr. Brown in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, moved quite close to the people in attempts to build some links and connection with them, knowing their problems and trying to help them as much as they could. It was this approach

Thanks to the Vatican II, the Liturgy, the Mass and the Bible could be heard in the indigenous languages. Up till today, many people are still insisting on the Tridentine Latin Mass/Liturgy saying that the New Roman Rites have watered down the liturgy. I am imagining a liturgy whereby no one understands what is going on because Latin is used and the priest-celebrant backs the people etc.

Teaching facilitates the dialogue that should take place between evangelization, mission and culture. How? Does the mission to evangelize cultures necessarily mean to change or substitute cultures? Does the mission to evangelize cultures or peoples who have not yet received the gospel mean demonizing their indigenous cultural practices? Does the mission to evangelize cultures imply a cultural superimposition or superiority? Are there cultures not compatible with the gospel values?²⁸ An entire culture (its people, language, food, ritual etc.) may not be totally

that led to the building of schools, hospitals and other centers of social welfare. Cf. *History of the Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene*, pp. 2-10.

²⁸ Although, the term *inculturation* is very much over used these days, its main objective is to make respective cultures respond to the *Christ message* and not the other way around. How a particular culture responds to the *Christ message* will be very much different from how the other culture responds. Conversion does not mean seizing to be an African, an Igbo, an Efik, an Annang or a Yoruba in order to be Catholic Christian for example, rather it means appreciating the *Christ message* (the faith) from my cultural standpoint. It entails doing away with practices that do not align with the Christ message while celebrating the *Christ message* from my own cultural stand point. John Baur tries to capture how the first missionaries (foreign and indigenous) made those first attempts at inculturation. A feat that should be consolidated in our time. Cf. BAUR, John, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: an African Church History*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2009, p. 394ff. This study is of the view that the charism of teaching can aid the inculturation process in our day.

incompatible with Christianity but some of its practices may. For instance, the cultural practice of killing twins is totally incompatible with the gospel values of the sanctity of human life. A culture that is polytheistic (worship of many gods) is against the monotheism of Christianity. A culture that objectifies women will find itself against the Christian value of the dignity of the human person. A culture that systematizes class distinction such as the popular Osu caste system is against the Christian gospel values of the equal dignity of every human person. The cultural practice of sacrificing (ritual killing) human beings in order to appease the gods or in order to bury a dead king as is still obtainable in some African societies is totally against the Christian gospel values.

Teaching should establish for missionaries in societies of such cultural practices, the best methods to go about evangelizing. While missionaries ought to respect the culture of their host communities, they should not shy away from denouncing practices that are contrary to the gospel values but use dialogue and mutual engagement with the culture. In so far as evangelizing makes the gospel present to a new culture and reality, evangelizers should listen to Paul's command to Timothy and Titus about true and false teachings in order not to present their "own" teachings and ideologies in the garb of Christ's teachings. One thing is sure, mission and evangelization are a process of communicating the truth and light of Christ to those who are yet to find it. It becomes a serious challenge to the evangelizer when this process encounters an indigenous culture with its own ritual practices and beliefs.

This was exactly what happened when the Apostle Paul first encountered the Athenian people and culture as narrated in the Acts of the Apostles 17:22-31. In what is now known as the *Areopagus Sermon*, the Apostle began by acknowledging the positive values in the Athenians, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, “To an unknown god” (Acts 17:22-23 RSV). By appreciating the positive values of the Athenian people, the Apostle gained their audience. He immediately linked or connected with them, and as such was well positioned for a critique of their religious-cultural practices. He continued: “What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.” From there, he introduces his sermon on the history of salvation highlighting four main points: 1. *The Greatness of God*²⁹ – “God made the world and everything in it” Acts 17:24; 2. *The Goodness of God* – “He himself gives to all men life and breath and everything” Acts 17:25; *The Government of God*³⁰ – “He determined allotted periods and the boundaries” Acts 17:26; and 4. *The Grace of God* – “The times of ignorance God overlooked,

²⁹ The Epicureans, who were atheists, held that everything was made of matter and matter always existed. The Stoics held that everything was God, The Spirit of the Universe, that God did not create anything; He only organized matter and impressed on it some law and order. But Paul boldly affirmed, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth!” God made the world and everything in it, and He is Lord of everything He has made. He is not a distant God, divorced from His creation; nor is He an imprisoned God, locked in creation. He is too great to be housed in man-made temples, but He is not too great to be concerned with man’s needs.

³⁰ The gods of the Greeks were distant beings who had no concern for the problems and needs of men. But the God of Creation is also the God of history and geography.

but now he commands all men everywhere to repent” Acts 17:30. This Pauline model is indispensable in the continuous dialogue between evangelization, mission and culture.

The evangelizer, like the Apostle Paul, instead of beginning to condemn every aspect of the culture, should rather in humility, distinguish through a process of discernment, aspects which are compatible from those which are incompatible with the gospel values. Missionaries and evangelizers should be apt to teach. They should be imbued with the gift and charism of teaching. Even when not every teacher of faith is a missionary in the technical sense of the word, missionaries and evangelizers ought to be teachers. The dialogue between mission, evangelization and culture is greatly enhanced when the stakeholders and key actors are teachers.