

EXPLORING THE SUBSTANCE OF SILENCE IN CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract:

Pencarian dan penemuan arti keheningan dalam pengalaman hidup orang Kristiani sangat mendesak untuk melahirkan komunikasi yang otentik. Komunikasi yang otentik bermula, lahir, dan ditemukan dalam keheningan. Temuan arti hening yang akurat membebaskan penafsir/komunikator dari interpretasi superfisial, sempit dan ambigu.

Keywords:

Keheningan, Substansi, Komunikasi, Pengalaman, Kristiani

Beginning is Born out from Silence

Every authentic and any Christian communication is born and begins in and from silence.¹ Divine communication is born, prepared, and starts in silence and in the secrecy of God. It is a “revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past” (Rom 16: 25), it is a mystery, “which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things (Eph 3:9).² God’s true silence issues from His perfection and Holiness. God is love and silence is the perfect communication of the Father and His Son through the Holy Spirit.

God’s communication, spoken from all eternity, is spoken perfectly. God could not improve by repeating Himself, as St. Paul declares, “because God wanted all perfection to be found in Him and all things to be reconciled through Him and for Him, everything in Heaven

¹ Carlo M. MARTINI, *Christ to the World*, (trans. Thomas M. LUCAS), Claretian Publication, Quezon City 1996, 39.

² Franz-Josef EILERS, *Communicating in Community. An Introduction to Social Communication*, 4th Updated Edition, Logos (Divine Word) Publication, Inc. Manila 2009, 53.

and everything on earth...” (Col 1:19-20).³ St. Augustine of Hippo (*Confessions: Book 11, Chap. 3*) says that God made all things through His Word. His word speaks within us, in the inner house of our thought without any instrument of mouth or tongue, and without the sound of any syllables.⁴

The Judaeo-Christian tradition affirms that before the beginning of creation there was the silence which allowed the word to be formed and heard. That silence we identify with God, who is eternal and infinite, and who, as silence, is the primordial and generative ground, enabling God’s own and subsequently all human speech.⁵ In the incarnation and paschal mystery, “the Word proceeding from silence.” It is he in whom the Father – The Silence, the hidden mystery that is the origin of communication – expresses himself and makes himself known: “I have revealed your name to men” (Jn 17:6).⁶ As Word proceeding from the Father, Jesus communicates himself to men and women of every age even up to today, sending the Spirit. The Spirit can be called “The Encounter”: the encounter of the Word and Silence, the encounter of the Triune God with humanity. Through the Spirit we mysteriously encounter the eternal, silence love that the Father has for us and that he manifests to us in time in his Son.⁷

In a forceful expression which cannot but awaken profound echoes in every contemplative soul, St. John of Cross enunciates this divine requirement. He states that the heavenly Father has uttered only one word: it is His Son. He says it eternally and in an eternal silence. It is in the silence of the soul that it makes itself heard. St. John of the Cross adds that God works His divine operations in silence. Silence is a law of the highest divine operations: the eternal generation of the Word, and the production in time of grace, which is a participation of the Word (The Living Flame of Love, Stanza I, 15).⁸

³ George MALONEY, *Inward Stillness*, Dimension Books, Inc., Denville, New Jersey (NJ) 1975, 9-10.

⁴ AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *The Confession* (trans. J.M. LELLEN), Catholic Book Publishing Corp., New Jersey (NJ) 1997, 57-59.

⁵ Oliver DAVIES (ed.), *Silence and the Word, Negative Theology and Incarnation*, Cambridge University Press, London 2004, 203.

⁶ Meister ECKHART, *Selected Writing*, (trans. Oliver DAVIES), Penguin Group Publishing, New York (NY), 1994, 26.

⁷ Carlo M. MARTINI, *Communicating Christ to the World. The Pastoral Letters: ‘Ephata, Be Opened!’, ‘The Hem of His Garment’ and ‘Letters to a Family about TV’*, Claretians, Manila 1996, 29.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 647.

Shannon Craigo-Sneel (*Silence, Love, and Death: In the Theology of Karl Rahner*, 2008) describes Jesus Christ as the Word of God, with images of silence. He names Jesus as the hidden, silent, sacrificed God. He imagines Jesus as following him down the wandering path of his life constantly and silently, leaving bloody footprints behind. Jesus is the silent, hidden God. In Jesus, God communicates God-self to us in radical intimacy through the hypostatic union. Craigo also portrays the act of being silent as clearing away distractions and offering space, time, and attention to the mysterious other. He describes persons and acts as silent insofar as they embody such openness to the other and acknowledgement of mystery.⁹

Within Rahner's various fascination of silence, there is a strong coherence. Silence the reality and acknowledgement of distance, difference, and otherness between persons, as reality that is both painful and necessary for freedom, love, faith, and community. Openness to other between persons is ultimately grounded in humanity's connection to the radical other, the mystery, the Silent One, God. Craigo uses silence in his portrayal of the relationship of God and humanity to emphasize the reality of otherness, its acceptance in openness, and the centrality of mystery. Craigo also employs images of silence - stillness, listening, quiet, - often in describing the relationship between God and humanity. He invokes the image of silence to capture the character of the infinite horizon of our knowledge and love, calling it "silent immensity."

Rahner invokes images of silence in describing both God and our experience of God. He depicts our transcendental experience as "beyond words" and writes of "God's silent incomprehensibility" (1982, 126; 1983, 201). This reflects the content of Rahner's theology, in which our experience of God is given as grace, and this gracious experience is fitting to our created nature. In transcendence, humanity does not grasp and comprehend God in accordance with our ways of knowing, but rather our spiritual nature opens up to the infinity that disposes of us, to that which creates, sustains, and ultimately shatters all of our knowing. For Rahner, silence becomes a medium for communication of content that cannot be categorized. It is capable of communicating mystery as mystery, without reduction. The great silence is not empty, or filled with our words, but resounds with God's Word. Silence is not the opposite of speech; God's silence can tell us God is there and our silence can say "yes" to God.

⁹ Shannon CRAIGO-SNELL, *Silence, Love, and Death: Saying "Yes" to God in the Theology of Karl Rahner*, Marquette University Press, Milwaukee (WI) 1995, 53.

Offering silence is a way of saying “yes” of being open to God as God has been open to us.¹⁰

Josef Pieper wrote that (*The Silence of St. Thomas*) St. Thomas Aquinas had a deep silence experience in his life. This experience does not mean that he had frequent ecstasies or visions or that he is a little introvert or overly concerned about his own experiences. There seems to be nothing of this in his writings. Yet Thomas was a mystic. He knew about "the hidden Godhead," *Adoro te devote, latens deitas* (Devoutly I adore thee, hidden Deity).¹¹ He knew the hidden God. He spoke of the God who pervades and determines everything in silence. He spoke of a God beyond everything theology could say about him. He spoke of the God he loved as inconceivable. And he knew about these things not only from theology but from the experience of his heart. He knew and experienced so much that in the end he substituted silence for theological words. He no longer wrote, and considered all that he had written to be "straw." As he lay dying, he spoke a little about the Canticle of Canticles, that great song of love, and then was silent. He became silent because he wanted to let God alone be heard in lieu of those human words he had spoken for us.¹²

Meister Eckhart, the 14th century of Dominican mystic, speaks of the experience common to all mystics when they have entered into the “cave of the heart”: “It may be asked whether this birth is best accomplished in man when he does the work and forms and thinks himself into God, or when he keeps himself in silence, stillness, and peace, so that God may speak and work in him...” The best and noblest way in which you may come into this work and life is by keeping silence and letting God work and speak. When all the powers are withdrawn from their work and images, there is this word spoke. Furthermore Eckhart states that the noblest attainment in this life is to be silent and let God work and speak within.¹³

Jesus Christ is the Model for Christian Silence

Jesus’ communication is not just passing on of information and message. It is more a deep personal commitment to the Father and his

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹¹ Josef PIEPER, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, Three Essays, (trans. John MURRAY – Daniel O’CONNOR), St. Augustine’s Press South Bend, Indiana 1999, 38-40.

¹² Josef PIEPER, *The Silence of St. Thomas...*, 1999, 42.

¹³ Bernard MCGINN, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart*, The Herder Books Publishing Company, New York (NY) 2001, 83.

message, which demands the whole person. Jesus communicates with his whole being up to the death on the cross. He goes far beyond just ‘talking’ which finally leads him into the silence on the cross in the total commitment of his life. This also shows how his communication is not finished in this life but points to a deeper reality beyond.¹⁴ The Christian practice of silence must be rooted in the life of Christ himself. The fulfillment of silence is only fully in Jesus Christ.¹⁵

In several places the Gospel narrations illuminate aspects of silence modeled on that of Christ: The most important example given here is Jesus who had an inward heart for solitude. Jesus started His ministry with forty days of silence in the desert and spent an entire night alone before choosing His disciples (Mrk 3: 13-19; Mt10:1-4). He passed this discipline to His disciples when they returned from a mission’s trip, as well as withdrawing from ministry for several other rest periods. On the eve His Greatest mission, Jesus sought the solitude of the garden of Gethsemane, where he spent time alone with His Father (Mat 26; 36-46).

Jesus moved into desert to pray to God, to fathom God’s will, and to experience temptation. His consent to God’s will be become especially clear when Jesus found himself on mountaintop, tempted to throw himself into earthly power and prestige (Matt 4:8-10). Luke tells us that Jesus habitually withdrew into isolated spots to pray, after tending to the needs of the crowds. We read that he prayed in solitude during the night (Mark 1:35), or even throughout the night (Luk 6:12). In Solitude Jesus could contemplate God’s presence and will with concentrated effort. Jesus’ solitary prayer nourished and strengthen him for his ministry to the crowds coming to be fed, nourished, healed, cured and made whole.¹⁶

Silence in Scripture

Scripture expresses that original silence, in the father’s first expression of love, which then, becomes the obediential word of the Son, and, hence, the Spirit of love as a new silence going beyond the word and, within itself, containing the mystery of the Trinity. From the silence is born

¹⁴ Franz-Josef EILERS (ed.), *Social Communication Formation in Priestly Ministry: Some Considerations in Social Communication Formation in Priestly Ministry*, FABC-OSC, vol. 2, Logos Publication, Inc. Manila, 2002, 16.

¹⁵ William L. BROWNSBERGER, “Silence”, in *Communio*, vol. 36, *International Catholic Review*, Washington (DC) 2009, 586-606.

¹⁶ Peter Damian BELISHLE, *The Language of Silenc. The Changing Face of Monastic Solitude*, Traditions of Christian Spirituality Series, Maryknoll, New York (NY) 2003, 38-39.

revelation, which then, becomes the historical and prophetic word, and hence the final word in the incarnation of the Son, but which in turn fades into a new silence as contemplation and responding faith. The Scripture is the first great witness to the grandeur of silence; not only does it treat it as a fact for human beings and natural world, but makes it the background against which to situate the mystery of the revelation of God.¹⁷

In the Old Testament (OT), the theme of God's silence emerges as linked to his hiddenness. The people beg God not to hide, not to forsake them, for otherwise history would come to an end and there would be no more people (Dt 13:17; Jer 33:5-6; Is 54:7; Ez 24:33); the Psalms bear witness to the same ideas, converting the sense of fear into prayerful invocation (Pss 30:8; 104:28; 69:18).¹⁸ The First Book of Kings tells of Elijah's search for God and what happened when he reached Horeb, the mountain of God (19:11-13). What exactly is the nature of the Lord's silence? It cannot be the absence of the wind, earthquake, or fire, since absence signifies the absence of something. The silence Elijah experiences is not the absence of noise. From the point of view of metaphysics and focus Aquinas places on the primacy of Elijah's silence is an experience of Divine presence. Elijah experiences the root of the possibility of presence and absence, the uttermost possibility of presence.¹⁹ Fashioning of a listening heart which Salomon prayed: the gift of a listening heart so that he may give God's people and discern between good and evil (1Kings 3:9).²⁰

A passage in Isaiah, however, would seem to be an attempt to treat of the theme of human silence before the mystery of God. "Truly, thou art a hidden God" (Is 45:25; 8:17) at once conveys the mystery and the hope that it arouses in the believer Likewise, Ezekiel, adopts an impressive symbolism with silence: his silence becomes a sign of Yahweh's reproach for a people who are not prepared to listen. Those who will listen, like those who will not, are to take note of the prophet's silence, for this becomes the content of revelation and sign of discernment (Ez 3:26-27).²¹ People are prepared to wait in silence until those whom they consider to be wise (Wisdom 8:12).

¹⁷ Rino FISICHELLA, "Silence", in Rene LATOURELLE – Rino FISICHELLA (eds.), *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, St Paul Crossroad Publishing Company, New York (NY) 1994, 1001-1007.

¹⁸ Kenneth BRYSON, "Silence Metaphysical Road to God", in *Theology and Philosophy Journal*, New York 2007, 112-124.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Vincent NICHOLAS, "Formation of the Human Heart", in *Tablet Lecture*, Good Shepherd, England 2011.

²¹ BELISHLE, *The Language of Silence...*, 45.

In the New Testament, silence is an experiential reality rather than an abstract concept and this reality is no more obvious than in the four Gospels that tell the story of Jesus Christ. In the Jesus of Nazareth, God's silence gives way to a definitive word about his life. He is the Word of God, the silence seems to stop; and yet many passages in the Gospels show that in this word there is still the silence of revelation. Jesus' speech is his silence too; in this he reveals himself most deeply. To be the definitive Word of God, Jesus before all else has been able to express the Father's silence: that which gives rise to triune love.²² Christ's own silence is grounded in that intratrinitarian obedience which initially consents to be uttered by the father. Mark describes that Jesus spends the night, alone, in prayer (Mk 1:35, Mt 14:23). Night and solitude automatically evoke the concept and fact of silence, and the prayer of Jesus to the Father on these intimate occasions could only be the silence of loving adoration. Yet the other passages allow us to see Jesus' attitude to silence.²³

The Church Fathers Teaching and Experience of Silence

Silence is also an important part of the Church fathers teaching. They place silence as basic for Christian activities. Gregory the Great emphasizes the importance of silence for the pastoral communicator. It is interesting to note that Gregory uses of a type of language that would later be employed by the hesychasts. In Part I of his book, the 'Pastoral Rule' Gregory demands from the pastoral communicator in the pursuit of personal silence. Gregory notes, "and so there those, as we have said, that are enriched by many gifts and because they prefer contemplative study they decline to make themselves useful by preaching to their neighbors, and preferring the mystery of silence they take refuge in the solitude of spiritual investigation. Furthermore, he accentuates that every priest, bishop, theologian, every Christian is called to preach, but their word must be born out of prayer, and his prayer, from silence. Gregory convinces that a purified word, a word about what is beyond word, reason and hearing cannot be born but from silence."²⁴

St. Augustine maintains that preaching and the Church communication has to start from silence prayer (*Doctrina Christiana Nos*.

²² René LATOURELLE, "Solitude", in René LATOURELLE – Rino Fisichella, *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology...*, 1008.

²³ Oliver DAVIES (ed.), *Silence and the Word...*, 206.

²⁴ GREGORY THE GREAT, *The Book of Pastoral Rule, Popular Patristics Series*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crossroad, New York (NY) 2007, 22-23.

32. f). Silence of mind is needed for speaker as well as for the listener.²⁵ In his Confession St. Augustine goes so far as to say that the discovery of the various levels of silence is what it means to “Enter into the joy experience of our Lord (Mat 25:21) and he adds that the finest thing that we can say of God is to be silent concerning him from the wisdom of inner riches (Confession IX, 10).²⁶

St. Ignatius of Antioch emphasizes that silence helps us to draw nearer to the fullness of life and silence is an extraordinarily creative thing. We need silence to give God’s word space to bear fruit in our lives: He states:

“It is better to be silent than speak and have an unreal existence. It is a fine thing to teach, so long as the speaker practices what he preaches. Well there is one teacher (he who spoke and it came to be) and what he did in silence is worthy of the Father. The person who has got a hold on the word of Jesus is, in fact, able to listen even to his silence, so that he is perfect, and so that he lives out what he says, and through his silence is recognized for what he is. Nothing is hidden from the Lord, even the secret place of our heart is close to him (St. Ignatius of Antioch Letter to the Ephesians Chap. 15, 3).²⁷

St. John Chrysostom points out the importance of silent heart as a spiritual treasure for Christians to hear the fullness of the word of the Jesus, which is nothing other than salvation: “The experience of silence of the heart is not the silence of emptiness or a state of nothingness. The silence of the heart is the sound of fullness of the word of Jesus. It is silent because no word, no image is sufficient. Augustine (*Confession Book 9, Chap 10*) underlines that silence is the language of the heart, is no mere natural silence, but an inherent part of the word of God. The silence of the word of God speaks to the silence of the heart, even becomes the silence of the heart: “Deep calls unto deep” (Psalm 42:7). The silence of the heart becomes that necessary condition to hear the voice of God and others.²⁸

St. Gregory of Nyssa also stresses (*On Virginity; PG. 46, 452 CD*) that we realize that God cannot be manipulated any longer by ourselves. He must be approached with fear and trembling. Poverty and silence coalesce before the awesome presence of the Lord that is revealed to the empty-hearted. Silence teaches us that God must reveal Himself to us and we must

²⁵Franz-Josef EILERS, *Communicating Church: Social Communication Documents. An Introduction*, Logos Publications, Inc., Manila 2011, 39-41.

²⁶ST. AUGUSTINE, *The Confession* (ed. by J.M. LELEN), Catholic Publishing Corp., New Jersey (NJ) 1997.

²⁷Oliver DAVIES (ed.), *Silence and the Word...*, 188.

²⁸ST. AUGUSTINE, *The Confession...*, 252.

wait for Him to speak. “Speak, Yahweh, Your servant is listening” (I Sam 3:9). “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word” (Lk 1:38) Furthermore, he states that, “human speech finds it impossible to express that reality which transcends all thought and every concept.” Any real experience of God’s presence happens in the dark cloud of incomprehensibility where words fail and it is necessary to be absolutely still.

Silence in Church Documents

Silence is an integral element of Christian communication. The Church is frequently teaches silence to the people/faithful through Church Documents. These documents point out the value and importance of silence to establish total commitment to serve God and world. In the Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of Religious life, Pope Paul VI, *Evangelica Testificatio*, June 29, 1971, (No. 55-56) says: “The interior man is aware that times of silence are demanded by love of God...the search for intimacy with God involves the truly vital need of a silence embracing the whole being, both for those who must find God in the midst of noise and confusion and for contemplatives. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that contemplative prayer is silence, the “symbol the world to come” or “silent love. Word in this kind of prayer are not speeches; they are like kindling that feeds the fire of love. In this silence, unbearable to the “outer” man, the Father communicates to us his incarnate Word, who suffered, died, and rose; in this silence the spirit of adoption enables us to share in the prayer of Jesus (Part IV, Section I, Chapter III, Article 2717).

The *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (Spiritual Formation In Seminary) on Education of Priests of Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1970, 1985 no. 57) points out the importance the exterior and interior silence in priestly formation. When inner silence exists it calls forth external silence. On the other hand, where internal silence has been deepened, the demand for material silence is all the stronger and more vigorous. A discovery of the importance of silence is one of the secrets of practicing contemplation and meditation. One drawback of a society dominated by technology and the media is the fact that silence becomes increasingly difficult to achieve. Just as moments of silence are recommended in the Liturgy, so too in the recitation of the Rosary it is fitting to pause briefly after listening to the word of God, while the mind focuses on the content of a particular mystery *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*: (Apostolic Letter, John Paul II (October 16, 2002).

Pope John Paul II On Sacred Liturgy at the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of “*Sacrosanctum Concilium*” (December 12, 2003, no. 13) shows the importance of the experience of silence in a society that lives ever more frenetically, bewildered by rumors and distracted in the ephemeral, it is vital to rediscover the value of silence. He states that: “One aspect that we must foster in our communities with greater commitment is *the experience of silence*. We need silence “if we are to accept in our hearts the full resonance of the voice of the Holy Spirit and to unite our personal prayer more closely to the Word of God and the public voice of the Church.

Furthermore, Pope Benedict XVI at occasion of the 46th World Communications Day (Silence and Word: Path of Evangelization, no .2, May 20, 2012) argues that in silence, we are better able to listen to and understand ourselves; ideas come to birth and acquire depth; we understand with greater clarity what it is we want to say and what we expect from others; and we choose how to express ourselves. By remaining silence we allow the other person to speak, to express him or herself; and we avoid being tied simply to our own words and ideas without them being adequately tested. In this way, space is created for mutual listening, and deeper human relationships become possible.

Constitutive Elements of Silence in Christian Experience

Base on Christian experiences there are three constitutive elements to cultivate silence that is solitude, recollection, and listening. They become abutment and bring us to enter in depth of silence. Without them, we will not be able to grow in the practice of silence.

SOLITUDE

Rene Latourelle states that only true solitude leads to authentic friendship and love. Solitude teaches us to see others with purified eye, not as indifferent shadows nor as objects to be possessed. Exclusivism and totalitarianism are the enemies of genuine solitude. Human solitude then resembles the divine solitude, which is at once infinite plenitude and infinite self-surrender. Finally, true solitude leads to self-renewal. Latourelle emphasizes that genuine solitude is a source of progress, creativity, and integration. The dialectic proper to human life is a dialectic

of solitude and communion; it has a two-phase rhythm. There is no real fruitfulness, intellectual or spiritual, without solitude.²⁹

John of the Cross (*collected works of John of the Cross, 1991*) emphasizes the importance of solitude for interiorization for human beings. For John of the Cross solitude marks the individual's withdrawal from society and (the crowd): which is necessary for inward reflection and self-development and leads people to a deep inner silence and communion with God.³⁰ From point of view of Meister Eckhart solitude is closely connected to the practice of silence. In fact, we can say that solitude is the indispensable condition for silence. In other words, without spending at least some time in solitude, we will not be able to grow in the practice of silence. For Eckhart, solitude should be seen as a friend and as a companion and the precious means by which we can find God and listen to his voice.³¹

RECOLLECTION

Recollection is a drawing of the person together to focus in God. To the degree that God is not thematically present as the object of this focus and does not present determined perceptions, recollection is a stillness in the open and undetermined. The recollected mind does not go out in the production of thoughts fill up that which is lacking in its experience, but of its nature it gives way to silence.³²

Francisco Osuna (*Spanish mystic in sixteenth-century*) describes the recollection as a specific mode of contemplation in which every thought that can be encompassed in language is dismissed. The forces of the soul, emotive and intellectual are "collected" and concentrated into one focus.³³ Saturnino Lopez Santidrian, commenting on texts from Osuna's 3 and 5 *Abecedario* states that recollection, according to whether it is understood as a disposition or as act, is called 'general' or 'special.' General recollection is a continual vigilance to maintain a calm and free heart. Special

²⁹ René LATOURELLE, "Solitude", in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, second edition, Thomson Gale Publications, New York (NY) 1998, 1008-1010.

³⁰ Kieran KAVANAUGH (trans.), *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, ICS Publications, Inc., Washington, D.C. 1991, 642.

³¹ Martin LAIRD, *Into Silence Land. A Guide to the Christian Practice of Contemplation*, Oxford University Press, Madison Avenue, New York (NY) 2006, 27.

³² William L. BROWNSBERGER, "Silence", in *Communio*, vol. 36, International Catholic Review, Washington (DC) 2009, 589-606.

³³ Francisco DE OSUNA, *The Third Spiritual Alphabet* (trans. by Mary E. GILES), The Classics of Western Spirituality, Paulist Press, New York (NY) 1981, 165.

recollection is a particular act or exercise, in an out of the way place and at specific times, which, after having reduced disturbances to unity, reaches by desire a union with God without intermediaries.

Romano Guardini explains four meanings of recollection. Firstly, recollectedness as composure and concentration. It means that man becomes composed and concentrated. To recollect oneself should free oneself from everything which is irrelevant, and to hold oneself at the disposal of God. Secondly, recollectedness as being present, unified, and awakenedness. Recollectedness as being present refers to place where we should be, namely, the here and the duty. This is the place where things really matter, where one must hold one's ground; the place where the living God calls to the self-the place of obedience.³⁴ Thirdly, recollection as unified is referred to the basic meaning of the word recollected is to be unified, gathered together. It enables one to distinguish the important from unimportant, the end from the means, and which puts actions and experiences into their proper order, something stable, unaffected by change and yet capable of development, which makes it clear to us who we are and how matters stand with us. Man in this state is not really a person who speaks or who can be spoken to, but merely an uncoordinated bundle of thought, feelings, and sensations. Recollectedness means that he who prays gathers himself together, directs his attention to what he is doing, draws in all thought – a painstaking task- so as to dedicate himself to prayer as a unified whole.³⁵ Fourth, recollectedness as awakenedness. It means that to recollect oneself is to awaken. A recollect enables one to concentrate, to become still, and to withdraw into himself, is inwardly awake. The states of quietness and inner alertness belong together, supporting and determining each other. Those anyone able to recollect himself, to be still and present, overcomes the inner brooding and heaviness. He lifts himself up and makes himself light, free, and clear. He awakens the inner attention so that it may focus itself on its object. He clears the inner eye so that it may see true. He calls upon the inner preparedness so that contact becomes possible.³⁶

LISTENING

The concept of listening is acknowledged as an essential component of effective communication by many disciplines. Listening has always been considered a crucial component of relationship, community and spiritual

³⁴ Romano GUARDINI, *The Art of Praying*, Sophia Institute Press, Manchester, New Hampshire (NH) 1985, 12.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

communication. It is an important element in Christian tradition in the Judaeo-Christian theology and philosophy. The German philosopher Martin Heidegger provides the platform for an exploration of the deeper nature of listening as a mode of active inner communication with others - one of profound significance not only in the 'helping professions' but in interpersonal life. For Heidegger, listening is no mere natural ability or technical communication skill. It is a basic dimension of what Heidegger called our human being present/*Da-sein* or (t)here-being. Activity of hearing is determined by our capacity to be fully present and here with ourselves, and at the same time fully there and "with" the other. Listening is not just a basic mode of *Da-sein*. It is also midwife to the word.³⁷

Listening as a *relational practice* is a practice of being with others in silence which requires the listener to be both fully 'there' (*Da-sein*) and to be fully *with* the other (*Mit-sein*). Yet being fully *there* and *with* the other requires not just the professional attention or personal empathy of the listener but their *fully embodied presence* as a human being. For it is only by listening with and from their whole body that the people can listen with and from their whole being and in this way be both fully there (*Da*) and 'all ear.' We understand listening therefore not simply as a relational practice but as a *bodily relational practice* – a relational activity of our whole body and whole being and not just the instrumental professional use of our ears and minds.³⁸

Karl Rahner (in his works, *Theosony: Towards a Theology of Listening*³⁹) highlights theosony as the phenomenon of a listening theology. On the one hand, it attempts to define the fact, occurrences and circumstances in which theosonic moments emerge; on the other, it refers to the sacred aural/hearing event as it appears and is constructed by the

³⁷ Peter WILBERG, "BEING AND LISTENING of Martin Heidegger: Philosophical Counseling as Listening Dialogue", in *Psychotherapy Journal* 12, vol. 24, 1992, 342-367.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 346.

³⁹ *Theosony*' refers to any number of factors that are implicated in a hearing relationship with God: for instance, listening, hearing, speaking, sonic language, memorization, reading aloud and silence. The 'theo' in theosony reflects the fact that all graced experiences (inclusive of the human listening experience) can be interpreted by a Christian sensibility. The 'sony' from the Latin 'sonans (sounding) reflects the fact that simply the world, created by God, is full of 'sounds.' In other words, 'theosony' is only the application to a classification of human listening of the traditional principle of grace building on nature. Nóirín Ní RIAIN, *Theosony: Towards a Theology of Listening*, Columbia Press, Columbia, Avenue 2011, 342.

human experience *per se* as distinguished from the noumenon, the objective listening itself.⁴⁰

Conclusion

Substance of silence in Christian communication and experience is giving us particular meaning of silence to draw nearer to the fullness of life and an extraordinarily creative thing. Various fascinations and practices of silence in Christian life establish total commitment to serve God and world. Discovery substance of silence in Christian experience and communication enable all Christian communicator to establish and create an authentic Christian communication for all layer of Christian life and ministry.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

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