

Religion: The Opium of Education?

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Abstract: *Although some anthropologists and philosophers of religion think that religion is man-made; we believe on our part that religion-especially the Christian religion-is God-made. That means Christianity is a revealed religion: God reveals Himself to humanity by becoming man so that the human person may be attracted by what is divine, sacred, pure and perfect. Within the milieu of God's self-manifestation and self-communication, the vocation of the human person is to obey God's call by serving God and one's neighbour. Therefore, religion seen as God-created aims at the human person's complete development and the development of all humankind. It strives to liberate humankind from whatever bondage alienates his/her integral growth. It makes humankind to realize that faith is eminently rational. Religion must struggle to liberate the human person from all forms of oppression and slavery. Religion, according to this logic, is the religion for the people and a good friend of education. "God-created religion" together with education is for service, for wisdom and for freedom. In contrast to "God-created religion", there is "man-made religion"; which is a veritable challenge and danger to our world. It is the religion that encapsulates fundamentalism, the talisman adored by the fanatics. In this "religion", faith is incompatible with reason. That is to say, faith is irrational. Education becomes a threat to this kind of religion. In order to spread freely a constellation of egocentric principles, "man-made religion" has developed a brainwashing strategy of terror and indoctrination. This strategy consists of fighting vigorously against education with the blunt refusal to accept education as the complete development of the human person and the development of all humankind. This "man-made religion" is the opium of the people as well as the opium of education. Such kind of 'religion' is adamantly against education: it propagates, as I said, a religion of terror, violence, and selfishness among other caprice-generated vices. It is this type of religion that corresponds to the truism that "religion is the opium of education".*

Keywords: Religion, God, created religion, Manmade religion, People, Education

1. Introduction

By just the sound of it, the topic of my paper *Religion is the Opium of Education* seems to be too provocative for those who are acquainted with philosophy. For those who hold beliefs anchored in the God-made religion, this saying reminds them of the notorious and unfortunate axiom of the Father of Marxism and communism, the German philosopher Karl Marx: *Religion is the opium of the people*.¹ For Marx, this means that religion is the

opium for the poor people because like a drug it lulls them into the euphoric feeling associated with the promise that religion gives them of a better life after their death. Hence, they lose the will and determination necessary to prepare themselves for a revolution in this world, a struggle for a better life here on earth.

For Marx, religion works as the morphine that puts the person in a stupor and so does not allow thinking. As Nietzsche expressed it in a letter to his young sister Elisabeth: "If you want peace of soul and happiness, then believe; but if you want to be a follower of truth, then seek".² That is to say 'faith is just an illusion which blocks the path of a liberated humanity to its future'. In this logic, Nietzsche opposes believing to thinking, faith to reason and we dare to add religion to education.

¹As a secondary-school student, Marx had a devoutly religious personality (like Engels, Lenin and Stalin). He wrote several religious poems. Later as a student of philosophy, he came under the influence of Bruno Bauer and the so-called "Young Hegelians" in Berlin, and then under the influence of the atheist Ludwig Feuerbach. He wrote the "Communist Manifesto" on the basis of an atheistic philosophy (a combination of Feuerbach's materialism and Hegel's dialectic) as the official program of the Communist League. Marx later wrote an *Essay Toward the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, where he used these words: "The struggle against religion is therefore immediately the fight against the other world, of which religion is the spiritual aroma. Religious distress is at the same time the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of the heartless world; just it is the spirit of an unspiritual situation. It is the opium of the people ... Criticism has plucked the imagery flowers from the chain ..." Marx was occupied with the task of preparing articles for the *New Yorker* about the British rule in India, so he studied also the social implications of the most important Indian religion, Hinduism, with its negative implications for the lower casts and the outcasts, the so-called "Harijans". THE REALITY: The Hinduism (with only a

few exceptions, such as Gandhism) is an asocial religion and an opium for the people, the poor people; as an opium, Hinduism promises the poor a better life after death and hence reduces their resolve to prepare and realize a revolution here on earth that would heartily improve their circumstances, a struggle for a better situation in this life. In emphasizing this point, Marx made the mistake of extrapolating the negative social implications of Hinduism to every other religion. Hence, he neglected to consider that Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the Baha'i are social religions that oblige their believers to help the marginalized, instead of ignoring them.

² *Brief an Elisabeth Nietzsche (11 June 1865)*, in *Werke in drei Bänden, München*, 1954, 953ff; Pope Francis, *Lumen Fidei*, n° 2.

It is only in this light that you can comprehend the topic of my article, *Religion: The Opium for Education!* The fulcrum of the discussion that ensues is the question: Is faith incompatible with seeking; with thinking; with reasoning; with education? Are we not here to learn about education for service, for wisdom, for freedom? How then is religion the opium that inhibits the quest for rational normalcy in our educational institutions?

1.1 Religion is Man-made

Our thesis from the very beginning is that “religion makes people and religion makes education.” With such an understanding, religion cannot and will never be the opium of the people or of education because religion aims at building bridges that unite people. Another way of saying this is that religion gives backbone to the schools because with the help of religion schools become places of listening, dialogue, respect and tolerance; places to learn the spirit of togetherness, the spirit of being with and for others. To put it succinctly, schools are the sacred places to learn the sacredness of life by implementing the knowledge of “faith in progress”. Religion gives schools their dignity.

Pope St. Paul VI put it this way: “Today we earnestly urge all men and women to pool their ideas and their activities for **man’s complete development and the development of all mankind.**”³ The development we speak of here cannot be restricted to economic growth alone. To be authentic, it must be well rounded; the vectors of development must reach out towards the total gestalt of the human person. They must extend towards every human person without exception. As an eminent specialist on this question has rightly said: “We cannot allow economics to be separated from human realities, nor development from the civilization in which it takes place. What counts for us is man—each individual man, each human group, and humanity as a whole.”⁴

Contrary to the “God-made religion”, there is “man-made religion”, which is molded by people in order to satisfy their own egocentric desires. Those who have invested themselves in man-made religion are more often than not fundamentalists. They have taken over God’s place and pretend to act on his behalf by manipulating the values upon which “God-made religion” has erected the human society. The fundamentalists often provoke a hostility between religion and the people and between religion and education as if religion does not march together with education and with being a good and committed citizen in the society. In the “man-made religion”, to kill in God’s name is a heroic act while in the “God-created religion”, to do such a thing in God’s name is a cruel and an abominable atrocity. It is simply an aberration and a diabolic deviation that true religions should denounce.

At this point, I adopt the strong declaration made by Pope Francis that “the most effective antidote to any form of violence is education in the discovery and acceptance of difference as richness and fruitfulness.”⁵ Indeed the civilized world is called to fight fundamentalism precisely by means of education. Just as the fundamentalists use faith and religion to fight education in order to spread terror and indoctrination, so the true believers activate educational and religious principles to sow the culture of life and togetherness, the civilization of freedom and service. Religion imbues education with a faith that is rational, i. e., a faith that is not incompatible with reason. No society, however developed it may be, can do without the religious vector of a fraternal service that is inspired by love. “Whoever wants to eliminate love is preparing to eliminate man as such.”⁶

In our world today, we have all witnessed the evidence that religion is in the wrong hands, that religion can become and indeed has become a terrifying religion that perpetrates evil. If religious piety is not matched by a corresponding dedication in man’s ethical formation, in man’s inner growth, then it is not religion at all, but a threat to man and to the world.⁷ All of us know that faith is God’s great gift to the human person. We know that reason is a precious gift that God has given the human person. The victory of rational faith-God-created religion-over irrational faith is also a goal of the Christian life.

But when does faith truly triumph? When it is detached from God? When it has become blind to God? Is faith as a motivator for action and as a capacity for action the whole of faith? Religion, in order to be real religion, needs moral growth on the part of the human person. The faith that motivates action and enhances the capacity for action is urgently in need of integration. It is through faith’s openness to the saving forces of reason and hence to the intelligent differentiation between good and evil that the spirit of togetherness and the love that brings forth service can actually prevail in the heart of the human person and in the heart of the global community.

Thus, when does faith become truly human? It becomes human only if it is capable of directing the will along the right path—the path that is chosen intelligently; and it is capable of this only if it looks beyond itself in order to reach the divine, the source of all faith and the source of all rationality. Otherwise, man’s situation becomes a threat for him and for creation.

1.2 A Very Challenging Question: Is Religion an Opium for Education?

Although the question seems in itself to carry an accusatory tone, courage requires a response that harmonizes with the truth of today’s circumstances and at the same time invites the changes in attitude and policy that are necessary to give both religion and education their proper importance in the everyday scheme of things in our

³ (ST.) PAUL VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 6.

⁴ D. MELÉ-M. SCHLAG (eds), *Humanism in Economics and Business: Perspectives of the Catholic Social Tradition*, New York: Springer, 130.

⁵ POPE FRANCIS www.zenit.org (26 January 2015).

⁶ *Africae Munus*, 29.

⁷ BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Spe Salvi* 22.

modern world. Two components of the religious dimension have to be taken into consideration: on the one hand, the content of one's faith; and, on the other, the expression of that faith in daily life. Furthermore, if we want to understand whether religion is the opium of education or not, it is imperative for us to wade into the mindset of those who would pose the question and try to understand the agenda behind their inquiry. In other words, we must attempt a systematic way of understanding the cognitive process behind the question, "Is religion the opium of education?"

A first observation is that those who raise the question about the adverse influence of religion on education often align themselves with the position that religion is the opium of the people. In other words, religion cannot be the opium of education, without being at the same time the opium of the people. The inverse holds similar weight as well: Religion is the opium of the people only if it is the opium of education. I do not think the two realities can be dissociated from each other. That is to say, the way religion *is* for people is the very same way that it *is* for education. To put it differently, "what religion *is* for people, it should be for education." This manner of phrasing the thesis obviously inserts into our discussion the idea of the "ought", that is to say, the idea of what "should be".

This way of reasoning leads us to another way of formulating our proposition: "Just as religion serves to form people, it should equally serve to form education." In this context, however, it is not only religion that serves as a formative influence. Our discussion readily admits the insight that education serves to form people, too. If religion serves to form the people, it will never be the opium of education because, together with education, it works for the integral development of the human being. When we speak of formative influences, whether it is religion or education, we can grant that religion is in fact "God-made religion" which abides with reason and so can help bring forth a system of education that helps the human person to breathe freedom, self-determination, a sense of togetherness with others, and consequently moral integrity.

1.2.1 Religion is the bridge between heaven and earth

When we look at the worldwide situation, we certainly can agree that the world is full of violence. Even if we take into account the tendency of the media to conflate good news and bad news so that one can hardly tell them apart, the apparent evidence suggests that what occasions the most havoc seems to be behavior arising from religious motives.⁸ The world is full of contradictions; and religions that originally profess to strive for peace include believers among their own ranks who act against the fundamental virtues of harmony between body and soul, faith and reason, belief and education. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to establish that from its etymological sense, the vision of religion is to work for love, peace, unity and togetherness.

⁸VATICAN II, *Inter Mirifica* 7.

What is religion?⁹ Many say that the etymology of religion lies with the Latin word *religare*, which means "to tie, to bind." Many seem to favor this meaning because it helps to explain the power religion has to bind people together and not provoke division. The Oxford English Dictionary points out, though, that the etymology of the word is doubtful. Earlier writers like Cicero connected the term with *relegere*, which means "to read over again".

Whatever definition one can give to this concept, the truth seems to correspond to the articulations of *Nostra Aetate*, a document issuing forth from the Second Vatican Council.

People look to their different religions for an answer to the unsolved riddles of human existence. The problems that weigh heavily on people's hearts are the same today as in past ages. What is humanity? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What is upright behavior, and what is sinful? Where does suffering originate, and what end does it serve? How can genuine happiness be found? What happens at death? Is there life after death? What is judgment? What reward follows death? And finally, what is the ultimate mystery, beyond human explanation, which embraces our entire existence, from which we take our origin and towards which we tend?¹⁰

Besides these ultimate questions of life; one has to know that religion bears in its bosom the mysteries of divinity and sacredness. By reason of their own origin, religions are vehicles of sacredness and bridges of unity and togetherness among people. They also serve as bridges between the earth and the heavens; between the human and the divine.

The Decree on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*) underscores the fact that "there is no basis either in theory or in practice for any discrimination between individual and individuals, or between people to people arising either from human dignity or from the rights which flow from it."¹¹ The Catholic Church is aware, however, that over the centuries, there were many quarrels and dissensions among religions. So, the Church urges that "a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding for the benefit of all. Let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values."¹² These words indicate that every religion ought to aim at peace, justice, freedom, love and harmony between individuals

⁹ Cf. F. LENOIR-Y. T. MASQUELIER, *Encyclopédie des religions*, Paris: Bayard 2000, xvii; R. LENNAN (ed.), *Introduction to Roman Catholicism*, New York: Paulist Press 1997, 50-52; E.V. GALLAGHER, *Religion in Primitive Culture in Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion*, Washington, DC: Corpus Publications 1978, 3005-3006; R. S. ELLWOOD-G. D. ALLES, *The Encyclopedia of World Religions*, Fact on File, Inc. 1998, 295-298; S. SANTINATH, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Indian Religion* (vol. 2), New Delhi: Cosmo Publications 2001.

¹⁰VATICAN II, *Nostra Aetate* (NA), 1.

¹¹NA 5.

¹²NA 2.

and among peoples, even if in practice religions do not seem to conduct themselves this way. Therefore, to act contrary to these precious values is to disqualify oneself from being an authentic believer.

The Catholic Church is clear on this matter when she reproves “any discrimination against people or any harassment of them on the basis of their race, color, condition in life or religion.”¹³ At the same time, she rejects nothing of what is true and holy in all religions.¹⁴ The Church, on the other hand, does reject what is not true; what is not holy; what is not human, what is not conducive to peace; what is not social justice; what is immoral.

In short, she totally rejects violence which is the opposite of peace and instead promotes education because the Church is well aware that only education can liberate human beings and the society and solidify the foundation of that society on a peace that lasts. Education is a right and as a fundamental right, the Church has the role to promote it since the Church is an expert in humanism. As we read: “The Church, which has long experience in human affairs and has no desire to be involved in the political activities of any nation, seeks but one goal: to carry forward the work of Christ under the lead of the befriending Spirit. And Christ entered this world to give witness to the truth; to save, not to judge; to serve, not to be served.”

1.2.2 Why do People Say that Religion is the Opium of Education?

Nowadays, we live in a world full of contradictions. Some people surprisingly find it “normal” to kill while smiling in God’s name even though God created the human person in a manner that establishes his or her sacredness. A few years ago, there was a terrorist attack in one of the press buildings in France where seventeen persons died. Most of them were journalists. While killing the victims, the executioners publicly declared that God is great. Is this not fraught with contradiction? Here in Africa, we are aware of the terrorist group Boko Haram in Nigeria, which decimates entire villages and has kidnapped teenage girls as recently as some years ago. Nobody knew exactly where most of the girls were hidden.¹⁵ Boko Haram has established a reign of terror using the name of the Almighty. The name “Boko Haram” itself means ‘western education is forbidden’ because according to them, it perverts and destroys their local human values. Those who say that western education is forbidden are those who use western weapons, technology, and other means in order to kill their fellow human beings.¹⁶ Does this not sound ironic?

¹³ NA 5.

¹⁴ Cf. NA 2.

¹⁵ The Nigerian Army has succeeded to liberate some of the victims.

¹⁶ <https://www.nber.org/digest/sep02/poverty-and-low-education-dont-cause-terrorism>. Members of Hezbollah’s militant wing who were killed in action in the 1980s and early 1990s were at least as likely to come from

Once they have made religion to be a totalitarian ideology with the intent to spread it easily, the fundamentalists¹⁷ use deprivation of education as if it were a nuclear weapon. They are well aware that without education people cannot revolt against their regime; education helps a person to be critical towards what he/she hears and can even oppose what is being said. Education opens the eyes of people and enlarges their horizon. Hence, to deprive people of education is to deprive them of human dignity. Using a Shakespearean expression, education makes one to be or not to be. Lack of education is one of the most degrading forms of poverty that one can experience in life.

Terrorists who tactically deprive others of education develop instead strategies of terror, indoctrination and brainwashing. How is it possible, for instance, to find a Ph. D. holder or a professor at the University praising and praying to God naked together with his children because his *Mchungaji*¹⁸ who is actually standard seven has told him to do it like that because at the creation, says the *Mchungaji*, “God created without any piece of cloth”? How come such a man with a Cartesian mind becomes unable to question what he/she hears? How is it that in God’s name a white glass can be said to be a green one by a teacher of physics and chemistry only because his *Mchungaji* asks him to say so? How are people able to kill others using God’s name who created life to be sacred? How and why are schools being used to nourish hatred and violence among people? How does religion make a believer fall in love with violence while knowing that both religion and education are the most effective antidotes to violence?

Another tactic that terrorists use is to deny the right to education for all. Women, for example, may be deprived of this right. Denying education to women, however, is equivalent to destroying their capacity to be mothers. Are mothers not the first educators of their children? There is a well-known quote attributed to the Ghanaian scholar James Emmanuel Kwegyir: “If you educate a man, you

economically advantaged families and have a relatively high level of education as they were to come from impoverished families without educational opportunities (accessed on 19th, November 2020); A. Lee, “Who becomes a terrorist? Poverty, Education, and the Origins of Political Violence”, in *World Politics*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (April 2011), 203-245. Cambridge University Press <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23018785> (accessed 19th November 2020). “Many scholars have agreed that poverty and lack of education play a role in participating in political violence”. On my side, I do not accept such a statement because many terrorist militants have currently high level of education mainly in practical area such as Physics, Chemistry, Biology, etc. A.B. Krueger-J. Maleckova, “Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?”, in *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 17, No.4(March,2003), 119-144. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3216934> (accessed the 19th November 2020).

¹⁷ B. E. BRASHER, *Encyclopedia of Fundamentalism*, New York: Routledge 2001.

¹⁸ Swahili word for a Pastor.

educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation.”¹⁹ Kwegyir, without doubt, used this saying to convince African parents to allow female children to have access to education which, up to his time, was strictly and exclusively reserved for male children. Considering the importance of education in one’s life, it was a righteous struggle for Kwegyir to ensure that both boys and girls would have the same opportunities for access to education. He was against any kind of gender discrimination vis-à-vis education.

A woman is a wonderful multiplier in the development exercise. As John Paul II said: “The woman is the one in whom the order of love in the created world of persons first takes root.” The Church and society need women to take their full place in the world “so that the human race can live in the world without completely losing its humanity.”²⁰ Women are a kind of backbone for the society.²¹ That is why when peace is under threat, when justice is flouted, when poverty increases, the one who stands up to defend human dignity, the family and the values of religion is going to be the very same person who stands up for the rights of women.²² Education should be a primary forum for protecting the rights of woman.²³

One question pertinent to the discussion is, what is education? Some ideologues will specify the issue and ask, what is western education? How can one claim to be a religious, a believer and at the same time be ready to kill in the name of the Sacred? Can religion be a sleeping pill for an effective educational system?

Education is always universal but its application is local. Education is a right; and nobody has any right to deny it to others in the name of whatever religious ideology.

¹⁹ James Emmanuel Kwegyir Aggrey (1875-1927) was in the Gold Coast, now known as Ghana. He is one of the last century’s greatest educators. In 1920 he joined a research expedition to Africa to study educational needs, and over two years he gathered and analyzed data to that end in what are now 10 African countries. As minister of African Methodists Zion Church, he probably used this proverb to convince African parents who were more willing to allow their male children to attend missionary schools than their daughters. Like other proverbs, this one makes its point by unqualified exaggeration to capture our attention. The message is that once we know the value of education for men in society, we should also allow women to have equal access to it. Cf. www.afriprov/african-proverb-of-the-month/25 (accessed 10 February 2020). This quote is wrongly attributed to Mahatma Gandhi, though he talked also of Women’s Education in his Speeches and Writings.

²⁰ BENEDICT XVI, Post-Synodal Exhortation, *Africae Munus*, (AM) 55 ; JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (15 August 1988), 29: AAS 80 (1988), 1722; cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Meeting with Catholic Movements for the Promotion of Women* (Luanda, 22 March 2009): *Insegnamenti* V/1 (2009), 484.

²¹ AM 57-58.

²² AM 57-58.

²³ AM 57-58.

Therefore, religion is the opium both of the people and of education only when people fashion it as mere ideology.

1.3 Education: an inalienable human right

Vatican II declares: “All people of whatever race, condition or age, in virtue of their dignity as human persons, have an inalienable right to education.”²⁴ The task of imparting education belongs primarily to the family, but it requires the help of society as a whole.”²⁵ The same idea is elaborated upon by Antonio Rosmini: “Education is a complex art whereby various parties work together to bring to full development all the faculties of the human subject, parents, teachers, society, and religion. It is a noble art that carries with it the hopes of generations, but it is also a most difficult and controversial endeavor.”²⁶ In order to educate others to their full perfection one needs to have a profound understanding of what a human being is, and of what constitutes the essential faculties and capacities of human beings. There cannot be a sound education without a true anthropology and epistemology.²⁷

A panoramic scan of religious networks in the world of today would lead one to believe that many religions have been confiscated by some fundamentalists who pretend to hold the key for the interpretation of their revealed books by denying to their followers any right to a personal or communal hermeneutics, to reasoning according to the content of the sacred books, according to the cultural milieu within which the sacred books were written, and according to the interrelationships between the valid interpretations of the sacred books and the cultural understandings that today’s believers have of God, the human person, and the universe. In many of these religious denominations where fundamentalists have established themselves as authorities, it is forbidden to think or to develop any kind of thinking that might be contrary to the overall denominational claims as if thinking were a mortal sin and would be contrary to pure faith.

In these religions, there seems to be an overriding tendency to brainwashing by stealing the faithful’s basic right to think and to decide on their own. Fundamentalists express the belief that everything that is written in the bible is literally true; but then their explanations of what literal truth means often results in circular thinking. One might hear them quoting by heart the following words of Saint Paul: “Our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor 3: 6). For the fundamentalist, however, intellectual activity seems to mean precisely learning the letter and then denying the Spirit his place in a more profound inquiry into the mystery that the letter is intended to penetrate. They degrade Spirit in order to

²⁴ VATICAN II, *Gravissimum Educationis* (GV) 1.

²⁵ GV 3.

²⁶ A. BELSITO, *Blessed Antonio Rosmini*, Leicester: Rosmini Center (without date), 99-104.

²⁷ Cf. A. BELSITO, *Blessed Antonio Rosmini*, 100.

make a show of their knowledge of the letter; they degrade reason in order to propagate their own brand of faith; they degrade understanding in their insistence that belief means citing the Scriptures without exercising the understanding to explore its deeper meanings; they degrade education so that one might adhere to the dictums of the religion without allowing the heart to expose itself to the God who wishes to be found in the interior of the human soul.

In a talk I published entitled, *What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?*²⁸ I illustrated the danger of irrational faith in this way:

I have a friend of mine who is a *Mchungaji* in one of the Neo-Charismatic movements in Dar-es-Salaam. In his so-called *Kanisa la Upako* (Charismatic church), they believe only in the force of prayer in each and everything. Whenever they are sick, they do not go to consult a physician. You may strive to convince but in vain the wife of my friend to take her sick children to the hospital. Surprisingly, my friend wears spectacles. Unless he wears them, he cannot either read or see far. The question is, how did he get these spectacles? For sure, from the physician! Where? From the hospital! Let us listen to this syllogism:²⁹

All who wear spectacles have consulted the ophthalmologist.

The *Mchungaji* wears spectacles.

Therefore, the *Mchungaji* has consulted the ophthalmologist.

If this is the case, why is he forbidding his faithful to consult physicians when they are suffering from a variety of physical diseases? What does this mean?

No religious tenet is important unless reason shows it to be so; no one can believe what he/she cannot understand, unless the one communicating the content of the belief is absolutely credible as a communicator.

What I am referring to are judgments of value. It is to be remembered that a judgment of fact is the affirmation that something is true because it coincides with my experience, does not contradict my experience, and answers all relevant questions that I may have had in order to understand the experience. Judgments of value, on the other hand, are beliefs that I may reasonably accept without understanding them. Indeed, I may not understand the content of a certain message or a certain revealed truth, especially if that truth is fundamentally a mystery. Nevertheless, I can understand that if the communicator of the message is credible-and if the communicator is God, then he is credible-and I can understand that the message he has communicated to me really is from Him and that it has come to me accurately-in other words, no one has tampered with the message when it was on route from God to me-then I can certainly reach the reasonable

conclusion that I can believe it even if I do not understand it. This would be true, for example, of the universal redemption of the human race by means of Jesus' death on the cross. It would also be true for our belief that there are three Persons in one God. We don't understand these mysteries but we believe them because the one communicating them to us is trustworthy-God Himself. And we can be sure that he understands what he is communicating: his very identity is that of the *unrestricted act of understanding*.

Many theological doctrines are nothing more than opinions which happen to be held by bodies of human beings. We have the rational capacity to distinguish between those opinions arrived at by theologians who ponder the data of revelation and try to draw their own personal conclusions about the content of those data. Doctrine, on the other hand, is more than theological opinion particularly if it is coming directly from the Revealer, God himself. We can summarize this thought using Saint Anselm of Canterbury's definition of theology: *Fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding). This corresponds to the more ancient expression of Saint Augustine: *Crede³⁰ ut intellegas; intellege ut credas*. Believe in order to understand; understand in order to believe.

As in Newman's essential vision, there is no dichotomy between cognition and the religious imperative, no tension between faith and reason: "Faith must be a reasoning faith, and reason must be understood more deeply than by either rationalism or religion of the heart."³¹ Newman's life and work can best be understood as the working out of a concern for the reasonable character of faith. Religious doctrine is a source of knowledge in as full a sense as Newton's doctrine is a source of knowledge. When the source of knowledge is divine-"God-made religion"-it is entirely compatible with the intellectual capacities and operations of the human being.

University teaching without theology is simply non-philosophical, i. e., unwise. Theology has at least as good a right to claim a place as any of the natural sciences.³² Truth is the object of knowledge of whatever kind.³³

³⁰ K. PATHIL, *An Introduction to Theology*, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India 2007, 8-21; A. DULLES, *Models of Revelation*, Image Books: New York 1985, 3-35; G. O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology*, New York: Paulist Press 1993, 6-47; GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology*, New York: Paulist Press 1981, 5-31; M. SCHMAUS, *Dogma 1 God in Revelation*, Sheed and Ward: New York 1968, 3-52.

³¹J. R. BARTH, *The symbolic imagination: Coleridge and the Romantic Tradition*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1977, 5-7. J. L. POWEL, *Three Uses of Christian Discourse in John Henry Newman: An Example of Nonreductive Reflection on the Christian Faith*, American Academy of Religion Dissertation Series, 10 (Missoula, MT.: Scholars, 1975), 6.

³²J. H. NEWMAN, *The Idea of a University*, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press 1960, 31-32.

³³J. H. NEWMAN, *The Idea of a University*, 33.

²⁸ S. C. SOOSAI-J. GIBSON (ed.), *Faith and Reason in the African Context*, Morogoro: Salvatorianum 2014, 112.

²⁹ S. C. SOOSAI-J. GIBSON ((ed.), *Faith and Reason*, 112.

Newman considers religion or theology to be a science as much as any other science and “the single, visual, image” that governs *The Idea of a University* is that “all knowledge forms one whole” or “circle,” from which the various branches of learning abstract this or that “segment”. He highlights his thought by saying:

Religious knowledge is not merely a code of agenda or credenda, a summary of articles, or a manual of devotion. It is intimately connected with the whole course of ancient history, with philosophy and criticism, with the study of the learned languages, with moral and metaphysical philosophy. It runs parallel with this progress of the human mind in every liberal pursuit ... If indeed the mind be carefully instructed in every other branch of liberal knowledge, without a corresponding acquaintance with that which is the most momentous of all, an undue bias must be given to the judgment; the topic which is not expounded in proportion to the rest will virtually shrink into insignificance and be despised; its track will be forsaken. ... We cannot, therefore, too earnestly insist upon the incompleteness of any system of education in which this main ingredient is wanting.³⁴

1.4 The School is an Outstanding Organ of Education

The first school for every human being is the family. Education is not, however, confined to the family. The parents seek the invaluable assistance of the schools that provide teachers qualified to help in the social, intellectual, moral, physical, and spiritual development of the children. For the Church, “among the various organs of education the school is of outstanding importance.”³⁵ From the Church’s point of view, to nurture the intellectual faculties is the special mission of the school. The school develops a capacity for sound judgment and introduces the students to the cultural heritage bequeathed to them by former generations. It fosters a sense of values and prepares them for professional life. By providing for friendly contacts between students of diverse characters and backgrounds it encourages mutual understanding. Furthermore, it constitutes a center in whose activity and growth not only the families and teachers but also the various associations for the promotion of cultural, civil and religious life, civic society, and the entire community should take part.³⁶

The Church has never failed to nourish the human progress to which she brings faith in Christ. Besides erecting sacred edifices, her missionaries have also promoted construction of hospitals, sanitariums, schools and universities...³⁷ Paul VI spotlights the role of education:

³⁴J. H. NEWMAN, *The Idea of a University*, xviii.

³⁵GV 5.

³⁶Cf. GV 5.

³⁷Paul VI, Encyclical Letter, *Populorum Progressio* (PP) 12. The world’s first known public hospital where people suffering affliction of any kind could receive free, holistic treatment by a complete staff of nurses, doctors, rehabilitation experts, sisters and priests was actually a

Education is the first objective for any nation seeking to develop itself. Lack of education is as serious as lack of food; the illiterate is a starved spirit. When someone learns how to read and write, he is equipped to do a job and to shoulder a profession, to develop self-confidence and realize that he can progress along with others. Education is the first and most basic tool for personal enrichment and social integration; and it is society’s most valuable tool for furthering development and economic progress.³⁸

Education is the other name for development and for the liberation of the human person. In other words, it is the first agent of development because it enables the human being to act for himself/herself.

This noble aim is also pinpointed in *Ecclesia in Africa*: The Church should make its own contribution to the fostering of “education for all”. These contributions presuppose the human, cultural and religious formation of the educators themselves.³⁹ Thus, they are places of listening, dialogue, respect and tolerance; places to learn the spirit of togetherness, the spirit of being with and for others. In a word, schools are sacred places to learn the sacredness of life by implementing the knowledge of “faith in progress.”

2. Conclusion

In our world today where in some regions, violence seems rampant-just consider the statistics for the killing of the unborn-faith appears no more as an illusory light shining feebly within the darkness of the culture of death rather than as a springboard for the civilization of life that upholds the beacon of education as the first tool of integral human development. The letter of Frederic Nietzsche to his sister Elisabeth: “If you want peace of soul and happiness, then believe, but if you want to be a follower of truth, then seek”, could be read in our cotemporary world as follows: “If you want war, violence and unhappiness, then believe, but if you want peace of soul and happiness, then plunge yourself into the deceptions of the “man-made religions.”

The advocates of this type of religion back without knowing it the theory of Boko Haram: Education is prohibited while the prominent jihadists nowadays are surprisingly well trained and educated in various areas such as Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Geometry, Trigonometry, and Aeronautics. One of the deepest forms of poverty a person can experience is a lack of education. The problem of jihadists is that they shove the brainwashing method onto their victims in order to manipulate them in whatever way they want. They refuse them the right to think and to weigh their own judgement.

Fortunately, this brainwashing method cannot be applied to “God-created religions” which spread peace, unity,

contribution made to global culture by a Catholic bishop, namely, St. Basil the Great.

³⁸PP 35.

³⁹Cf. John PAUL II, Post-Synodal Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa* 102.

togetherness and harmony by cultivating the capacity for both faith and reason.⁴⁰ Faith without reason is disastrous for our planet. Such a faith oppresses and dehumanizes some categories of people, such as women to the extent that women seem sidelined when it comes to the category of human beings. Faith appears in such a context as an illusory light preventing mankind from wholeheartedly setting out in quest of knowledge. In other words, the catchphrase for diehard fundamentalists seems to be: "Faith is totally incompatible with seeking." Actually, the opposite is true.

No society, however developed it may be, can do without fraternal service inspired by love. "Whoever wants to eliminate love is preparing to eliminate man as such."⁴¹ Religion forms people. Likewise, it forms education. And then education forms people. Education in the God-made religion is for service, for freedom, for responsibility and for wisdom as we can see it in the example of the king Solomon in 1 Kings 3: 16-26.

Later two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. If it pleases you, my lord, one of the women said, this woman and I live in the same house, and while she was in the house, I gave birth to a child.

Now it happened on the third day after my delivery that this woman also gave birth to a child. We were alone together; there was no one else in the house with us; just the two of us in the house.

Now one night this woman's son died; she overlaid him. And in the middle of the night, she got up and took my son from beside me while your servant was asleep; she took him in her arms and put her own dead son in mine. When I got up to suckle my child, there he was, dead. But in the morning, I looked at him carefully, and he was not the child I had borne at all. Then the other woman spoke. "That is not true! My son is the live one, yours is the dead one; and the first retorted, that is not true! Your son is the dead one, mine is the live one. And so, they wrangled before the king.

This one says, the king observed, 'My son is the one who is alive; your son is dead,' while the other says, 'That is not true! Your son is the dead one, mine is the live one.'

Bring me a sword, said the king; and a sword was brought into the king's presence. Cut the living child in two, the king said, give half to one, half to the other.

At this the woman who was the mother of the living child addressed the king, for she felt acutely for her son. I beg you, my lord, she said, let them give her the live child; on no account let them kill him! But the other said, He shall belong to neither of us. Cut him in half!

Then the king gave his decision. Give the live child to the first woman, he said, and do not kill him. She is his mother.

All Israel came to hear of the judgment which the king had pronounced and held the king in awe, recognizing that he possessed divine wisdom for dispensing justice.

That is God-made religion whereby faith is rational and education the most effective antidote of violence; whereas the man-made religion is the opium of the people as well as the opium of education. This man-made religion is totally against education because it promulgates the religion of terror, violence, and selfishness among other thoughtless vices. It is this type of religion that deserves the appellation: "Religion is the opium of education". It really is no religion at all.

⁴⁰ *Fides et Ratio*. "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth".

⁴¹ *Africae Munus*, 29.