

## THE USE OF *VERBAL REPERTOIRE* IN THE HUMAN STATUS AS THE *IMAGO DEI* AND GOD'S KINGDOM COMMUNITY

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### Abstract

*Originally, Christians are created according to God's image - imago dei – which indicates that God's attributes also live and exist in the life of His people. Furthermore, while living here on earth, Christians have two status. The First is the status as a citizen in this world. The Second is the status as the citizen of the Kingdom of God. As this world's citizen, human beings have rights and responsibilities toward the government in which they live. Their citizenship has been arranged according to the rule of the specific country. As the citizen of the Kingdom of God through the grace of God that has chosen His people, human beings have to pay attention to their communication ability especially the ability to use the language and its variations, known as verbal repertoire. The usage of verbal repertoire is expected to glorify God in the communication individually and collectively as a community. Moreover, human beings, as imago dei and the people of God's Kingdom, have to use verbal repertoire to be a blessing for other people and draw to God those who live far from Him through their verbal testimonies.*

Key words: *Imago Dei, verbal repertoire, people of the Kingdom of God.*

### Introduction

In the social context, a person as an individual cannot be separated one from the other. Every individual has freedom of place and time to express his ideas or thoughts to a community where he belongs. This creates a probability that the community is not always able to receive the ideas or thoughts easily. For this reason, one needs to create a good way of communication.

In the context of communication, there are at least three factors that must be fulfilled in order to produce a good communication - communicator, communicant, and content. A communicator sends content, a communicant receives content, and content is the message or the effect of communication between the communicator and the communicant. In other words, communication may take place when there is a bound relationship between these three factors. However, communication will still be difficult if there is no adequate medium, in this case, the medium is language.

Furthermore, in the linguistic context, communication can be divided into two big categories, that is verbal communication and non verbal communication. Verbal communication is a form of communication that uses language as the medium in order to be meaningful. Non verbal communication is the form of communication without using language as a medium, but using sign communication. It is also common as sign language.

These two forms of communication can be used by human beings as individuals and also as members of a society to express their ideas. The verbal communication certainly needs a language – orally or writtenly so that there is no misinterpretation between the communicator and the communicant. It becomes more critical when the communication involves a certain community. Therefore, language plays a very important role. Furthermore, as an individual and communal, a person must have a good language skill that other individuals or communities would be able to accept. This ability is often called verbal repertoire or *repertorium*.

The context of language usage individually and in a society from the science point of view is usually studied in *sociolinguistics*. Sociolinguistics is the study of language as a result of a combination between sociology and linguistics. The emphasis is on how individuals as a part of a society have different level of language skill – which is often named as *variety of language*.

In the field of the variety of language, different way of understanding becomes natural because the way people express their ideas is also various. As a result, it can give different interpretations. This can happen because the words used might be ambiguous (have more than one meaning). The result is that communication does not go smoothly and the assumption is that communication fails. Whereas Gorys Keraf (1997:3) once said that one of the functions of language is a tool to communicate between one person to another person.

Furthermore, in the Christian worldview, especially in the doctrine of creation and doctrine of church, a man as an individual and a member of a community (communal) is created according to God's image or *imago dei*, and as communal, a man is also considered as the *citizen of God's kingdom*. The Bible notes other similar terms such as *God's chosen people*, *citizens of the Kingdom of God*, and *a chosen generation*. All of these terms refer to the status of men as the member of God's Kingdom.

Referring to this concept, the thesis of this paper is how human beings created as *imago dei* and as members of the Kingdom of God, should apply *verbal repertoire* that God

gives to men. In other words, because human being has the status of being created in God's image, how a language used in communication can reveal human's status as *imago dei*. In a deeper context, how we can be certain and show the guarantee that God has given us as *imago dei* and the citizen of God's Kingdom through the use of *verbal repertoire*, toward another individuals as well as other people in God's Kingdom. That is the essence of this paper, which will be explored further.

## **Discussion**

### **Human Being as a Language Creature**

One theory related to the existence of human being is his language ability. This ability makes human beings the only creation of God who are the most noble, especially compared to animals or other creations. The language that human being possess helps them to create or develop ideas in their minds. Because of language, human beings are able to develop cultures and civilizations. When compared to animals, they do not have this ability because there is no evidence that explains that animals also have the ability to develop their civilization.

In contrast, using language, human beings have the ability to develop ideas and civilizations in the earth. There are many amazing inventions done by human beings. For instance, the development of gadget that takes place in our world today. Those gadgets exist because they contain language features so that we can understand and operate them smoothly and successfully.

Human's capacity to own a language makes human being a symbolic creature. It means, men have symbols which can be interpreted by them selves. The symbols meant here are symbols to recognize or name something. However, according to Henry Guntur Tarigan (in Hidayat, 2006: 24-25), we have to remember that all the symbols which men can understand do not happen naturally. Instead, there are agreements made among human beings that give meanings to the symbols. Therefore, there will be no meaning of a certain thing which is represented by a symbol if there is no agreement about the meaning of that symbol. This is the situation in which a communication that consists of a communicator, a communicant, and a context takes place.

Communication among human beings will involve certain symbols that can be used as a vehicle to express ideas and thoughts. As mentioned by Ferdinand de Saussure (in Muhadjir,

2014:29), these symbols serve as concept (petanda) and visual (penanda) which will be used in a specific community. This understanding is called the essence of a language.

Moreover, human beings are also called as *homogramaticus*, which means creatures who own languages. It means human beings are able to understand the structure of their language and also the structure of other languages. Men are able not only to understand but also to create very complicated language structures. This is a clear distinction between men and animals, because a man has a brain with a very sophisticated ability to produce and comprehend complex language structures. This ability is identified by the proof that men are able to study other language structures. In *psicolinguistics* (a combination of psychology and linguistics), this concept is called as *language acquisition* – either first acquisition, second acquisition, and so on.

Besides that, one evidence that men are called as language creature is because men are able to cultivate the language variation in every layer of life as an individual and social creature. This ability is called *verbal repertoire*. This is the ability that may differentiate one's language capability with other people's capability. It is these differences that result in the production of terms or jargons in *sociolinguistics* (a study of language behavior and the behavior of the social community) such as idiolects, dialects, and sociolects.

In practice, *verbal repertoire* makes it easier for people as an individual and communal entity to form communication that is relevant for him, especially to transform abstract messages to become concrete so that other people may understand them.

The definition of *verbal repertoire* was given by an Indonesian linguist, Harimurti Kridalaksana (2008:210). He gave three definitions related to *verbal repertoire* or *repertorium* which have a connection with sociolinguistics, i.e (1) languages or their variations that a person has which enables him to carry out his social role, (2) the communication ability of a speaker or the listener in an exchanging information, and (3) all language varieties in a language community. From these three definitions, we can limit the scope of *verbal repertoire*, that there are three factors to focus, they are (1) the form of language variety, (2) the ability to communicate (performan), (3) and a language community or the user of the language.

In relation with the language variety, there are indeed rich variations in a language. Language variety is the variations of a language that are formed because a particular language

is used actively or there is a community who uses that language. Language user can mean individuals but also a form of agreement among the users in a community.

When dealing with the ability to communicate (performan), individually or as a community, there is a mixed ability among the people. There is a person, who can use his language variation really well in order to build a good communication, but there are other people who are very difficult to use his language varieties and the result is poor communication. Therefore, the best thing is before someone has a good language performance, it is necessary for that person to develop his competence about the language he uses. The ability mentioned here includes correct dictions and language varieties which are needed in communication.

A language community means a form of community that uses the language. Therefore, a language community will always have to deal with the social status of the language users in a community – whether it is influenced by age, education, position, et cetera.

Another factor in a language community is the ethnic background. It is not surprising if we find different language expressions in the community. Furthermore, a language society will choose the correct forms of linguistics among other forms (Cahyono, 1995:389). In other words, it is possible that two or more language variations exist in the same community. This situation is called *diglosia*.

### **Human Being as an *Imago Dei* Creation**

For us Christians, the doctrine of a man who is created as *imago dei* is not a new concept in our ears. In our faith, a man was created according to the image of God, or is famous as *imago dei*.

The meaning of *imago dei* can be traced to the time when God created a man. Genesis 1:26 clearly explains that after God created the heaven and the earth, He had a plan to create a man according to God's image as the Creator. This is the beginning of how the first man was created in God's image. The Bible then confirmed that God made two genders: man and woman (Gen 1:27).

In further explanation, the concept of a man created in God's image was also explained by a theologian, Rick Warren (2015:187-188) who stated that only man is created in the image of God, whose purpose will never be understood completely by men. However, it does not mean that we can never understand His purpose. At the least, we can understand some of God's aspects or attributes that we see in ourselves as His image. Rick Warren then continued that knowing a part of the aspect of human being is our status as a *spiritual creature*, which is eternal, more than our physical body. We are *intellectual creatures* – who can think, give arguments, and solve problems. We are *relational creatures* – who are able to give and receive love, and we are a creation who has *moral consciousness* – who can differentiate the right and wrong and force us to give our responsibility to God. The concept of 'eternity' which Rick Warren explained does not mean that human being receives it automatically, but it is a result of an intimate relationship with God.

As a creation that is *imago dei*, it is further explained that the similarity between God's image and man's image will appear identically through the attributes that dwell in human being and God. However, it is necessary to mention here that being identical does not mean that all of God's attributes are exactly the same as man's attributes. On the contrary, a human being may never be the same as his Creator. One attribute here is the fact that human being has the ability to speak a language, same as God who speaks to human being. This is confirmed by Poytrees (2009: 272) that the implication of God created men according to His image are that men have the capacity to learn and use languages.

Furthermore, Plaisier (2000:109-110) also stated that man was created in 'God's language.' What is the implication of this statement? That means that human beings are able to use languages because man is created in God's language. He even stated that a man is born in the network of language that he becomes a language creature who can create words which then create a new world around him. In other words, the existence of a language in human's life is so meaningful in supporting the communication with other individuals.

Another theologian, Crampton (2000: 19-20) gave two other distinctions of *imago dei*, the broad and narrow definition. According to the narrow definition, *imago dei* means that human beings consist of moral/ethical aspects of human character. In a broader view, *imago dei* is the nature or basic metaphysics which of a man as 'a man.' From the two classifications, we can conclude that human being got all his characteristics from God,

especially the ability to use a language. It is given freely by God because man is created according to His image.

### **Human Being as the Citizen of The Kingdom of God**

Besides being created in God's image, *imago dei* individually, human being has a communal status as the citizen of the Kingdom of God. We understand that in general, every human being in the earth has a citizenship. Citizenship can be drawn through the political perspective of a nation. In other words, one factor is mentioned together with a country because there are people who live in that country, beside another two factors like the geography of the country and the existence of a government. From this fact we can conclude that human being has a status as a world citizen.

Nevertheless, human being should not forget the fact that besides this world status, he has another status, individually and communally. That other status is as the citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven. From this fact we can see that human being is the only creature who has a privilege of a double status.

The privileges of being a world citizen is managed or arranged by the government by making rules or regulations. The privilege of being the citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven has been arranged in God's words, that is the Bible. It is clearly stated in Paul's letter to the Phillipians 3:20 *for our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ*. This confirmation gives a guarantee to men that we are called to be the member of the Kingdom of God.

If we see for a smaller scale, men's status as God's citizens is also called as the family of God. Rick Warren (2015: 123-128) explained that it is indeed God's grace if a man can become the member of God's family – more important than having a biological family. The essence of this explanation is that even though God has stated that human being has the status of the citizen of the Kingdom of God, a person does not automatically become the citizen. Rick Warren continued by saying that the invitation to become the member of the family of God is given to every man who has accepted Jesus Christ as the head of God's family and heaven.

Furthermore, as a citizen of this world, especially in Indonesia, a person is considered as Indonesian citizen because that person lives in Indonesia and has been declared by the

Indonesian law. A foreigner can apply to have an Indonesian citizenship if that person has lived in Indonesia for at least five years consecutively or ten years not consecutively. In other words, the government's acknowledgement that a person carries an Indonesian citizenship is based on the duration that person live in Indonesia.

This is not the case of becoming the citizen of the Kingdom of God. How long we have lived in this world does not guarantee that we have become the citizens of the Kingdom of God. This status is truly God's grace for those who have faith in Jesus Christ. In this aspect, faith is not merely a statement, but more of real application in our daily life as the citizen of the Kingdom of God – people who are striving to be more like God.

Furthermore, the confirmation that we are human beings is the status of God's Kingdom that we are His chosen people, as stated in 1 Peter 2:9 “*But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*” The meaning of this verse is that from the beginning God has chosen us to become God's people. However, on the other side, we have a responsibility of proclaiming Christ who is the Word of God.

### **The Use of *Verbal Repertoire* as a Creation who has *Imago Dei* and the Citizens of God's Kingdom**

After we get the concept of human being with *imago dei* and becoming the citizen of God's Kingdom, how then should human being apply his *verbal repertoire* ability? Surely it is man's responsibility to realize his status. This is what makes us different from people who do not place their faith in Jesus Christ as the Creator, Savior, Redeemer, and man's Transformator.

The use of *verbal repertoire* according to the doctrine of *imago dei* and the citizen of God's Kingdom must be seen in the use of the oral and written language. The choice of dictions and language variations describes our way of communication with other people, through which we can show ourselves as a noble creation and introduce the Creator.

In other words, as a creature who is equipped with a very complex language ability, we as human beings should use our language carefully. It is important to make sure that our language competence only shows our *arrogance* toward other people. If that happens, our



status as *imago dei* may challenge God's will. This kind of conduct will destroy God's work in us as the receiver of God's grace in language.

Therefore, when we communicate with a language, we have to consider who God is. A similar opinion was also addressed by Dan Allender and Tremper Longman (in Thomas, 2011:305) that stated "I must spread words like seeds that will bear fruit to glorify God . . . we must choose the words we are about to utter as if they would determine our lives...."

Referring to this statement, it is clear that we have a very big responsibility by having *verbal repertoire* as found in the doctrine of *imago dei*. It means that to realize it, we must make sure that the result of our communication is to glorify the Lord, whether we seem to be eloquent when we use various types of language or when we look wise because of our language capacity. In summary, *verbal repertoire* is not meant to glorify one self or others, but only to glorify God.

In the application, we are expected not to use or choose wrong dictions because those words will be fulfilled in our lives. The fulfillment in this case is not in the form of physical death, but more than that, it is the spiritual death if our language does not glorify God. Because of its importance, in his psalm, King David advised God's people to ask God to set a guard over our mouth and keep watch over the door of our lips (Psalm 141:3). The purpose of this prayer is that we can live as *imago dei* so that we do not end up making God grieve because of our way of communication.

In relation with words, Lord (2018:6-9) gave his opinion that words are man's vehicle in the interpersonal relation, and we have to try to present our lives clear. If we can see our status as *imago dei*, our humanity becomes real when we connect with other people and when we use good words, others can see who we are as God's creation.

Therefore, if we refer to this opinion, Christians should not use words to judge, abuse, discredit, or to do other negative conducts. This may become a big challenge for us especially in our situation today; it is very easy to produce thousands of negative words in a relatively short time. There are many evidences of this in the social media and television channels, where we often see and hear hate speeches which bring negative impacts toward the life of individual and community.

How easy it is for us to speak many words, that we are overflowed by words. Lord stated it by saying that our lips and the tip of our fingers make thousands of words. We must give our best attention that our words or variety of language that we use bring glory to God, and not to humiliate Him.

Furthermore, we should also give our attention to the use of *verbal repertoire* in men's status as the members of the Kingdom of God. When considering the double status of human being, (the term in sociology is *bipatride*), men must realize their existence in this world and also in the Kingdom of God.

As the world's citizens, our rights and responsibilities as citizens have been stated by the government in the regulation of using Indonesian Language. It is written in the constitution of the Indonesian Law number 24 2009 regarding the National Flag, Language, the National Symbol, and the National Anthem which regulated the function of the Indonesian language as the national and official language of Indonesia. It means that our language conduct, including all the language variations, in relation with our status as a citizen in Indonesia has been arranged by the government.

Now, how about our status as the members of the Kingdom of God? What are the regulations related to *verbal repertoires*? The answer is back to what is written in the Bible. The Bible explains clearly how we are to use the language in our status as an individual and as the members of God's kingdom.

Below are some verses of how we connect and use *verbal repertoire*.

- a) Collosians 4: 6 stated "*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.*",
- b) Matthew 5: 37 stated "*but let your ,Yes' be ,Yes' and your ,No', ,No'. For whatever is more than these is from the evil one,*
- c) Matthew 18:15-17 stated "*Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if refuses to hear them, tell it to the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.*"

Beside that, the use of *verbal repertoire* in our status as the member of God's Kingdom is to become the people who draw other people to God, the Giver of language. Our ability to use a language and its variations should become a medium to proclaim the gospel to those who live apart from God's mercy. It is further stated by Wright (2011: 162) that we have to be God's people who are willing to bless other people, to follow His way, to produce truth and justice, to redeem those who are

oppressed, and to represent God by living a holy life in this world while giving attention to our verbal testimonies.

### Closing

Being individual and communal, human being face situations which will create challenges that make him unable to communicate well with other people. While having

various ability in language, namely *verbal repertoire*, human being must always be aware of his status as an *imago deicreature* and also as the member of the Kingdom of God who always proclaim the existence of God and how God communicates with us as His creator.

For this reason, we certainly have to watch our own words and their variation so that we do not look for our own glory but more for the glory of the Lord. God is the one who grants us the ability to communicate through the medium of language. Men must strive in order to prove his status as *imago dei* and *the citizens of God's Kingdom* by using their full capacity to use the language and its variations. God gives us the ability to use a language with its variations to proclaim the Gospel. Dari kemampuan berbahasa itu, sesungguhnya Tuhan menginginkan kita untuk menggunakan sarana bahasa dan segala variasinya untuk memproklamasikan injil with a hope to draw the unbelievers to God at least through our verbal testimonies.

Let us use our *verbal repertoire* as a way of reference to the owner of languages, who has given them to us as individuals and a bigger community who are worthy in the eyes of the Lord. May the Holy Spirit continue to guide and direct us to apply *verbal repertoire* to glorify the Lord.

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