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# **Christian Values in Corporate Communication**

## **Truth - Telling and Transparency**

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### Introduction

Corporate communication serves as a crucial bridge between an organization and its various stakeholders, encompassing employees, customers, investors, regulators, and the wider community. Within the Christian ethical framework, communication is not only a managerial or technical activity but a moral and spiritual responsibility grounded in divine principles of truth and integrity. Two essential Christian values that provide moral direction in this context are truth-telling and transparency. These virtues form the foundation for trust, credibility, and ethical witness in organizational communication. Of course in corporate communication, truth-telling aligns with both biblical principles and contemporary business ethics. It cultivates trust between organizations and stakeholders, reinforces accountability, and fosters long-term sustainability. Furthermore, Christian approach demands resisting the utilitarian temptation to manipulate communication for profit, instead viewing truth as a sacred obligation. “Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour, for we are all members of one body” (Eph. 4:25, NIV).

This paper explores how Christian ethical values specifically truth-telling and transparency should inform corporate communication practices. It aims to demonstrate that adherence to these values enhances both organizational performance and public trust while reflecting the moral

demands of the Christian faith, a moral framework for corporate communication rooted in Christian ethics.

## **Overview of Christian Values in Corporate Communication**

Truth-telling and transparency are core Christian moral commitments that translate directly into ethical requirements for corporate communication. When genuinely practiced they strengthen organisational trust, reduce information asymmetries, limit corruption, and promote long-term stakeholder flourishing but when used instrumentally as image management they produce moral hypocrisy and reputational collapse.<sup>387</sup> Furthermore, Biblical and Christian theological traditions treat truthfulness as intrinsic to human flourishing and covenantal witness: lying, false testimony, and manipulative speech are repeatedly condemned; truth serves both justice and trust among persons. The theological frame supports a corporate ethic that rejects deception in advertising, testimony, and reporting<sup>388</sup>

Transparency / stewardship: The idea of stewardship that leaders are trustees of resources and of other people's welfare makes openness about decisions and impacts an ethical duty, not merely a strategic option. Transparency is an expression of answerability (being prepared to give an account) rooted in Christian account-giving language<sup>389</sup>

## **The Concept of Ethics in Christian Business**

The idea of ethics within Christian business is firmly grounded in biblical teachings, which urge believers to conduct their enterprises according to moral standards that mirror God's

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<sup>387</sup>Emenogu, S. P. "False Testimonies and Religious Manipulations." *Amamihe: Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Vol. 23. No. 5, 2025

<sup>388</sup>Emenogu,

<sup>389</sup>Sixbert Sangwa & Placide Mutabazi, "Integrating Christian Faith and Ethics into Global Business" *Journal of Business Theology* Vol 3(2), 2025, pp1-53

nature and promote the good of others. Essentially, ethics involves applying moral values to one's behaviour, choices, and interactions in the pursuit of what is right and beneficial. In the Christian context, business ethics are shaped by God's revealed will in Scripture the ultimate authority for faith and practice. The goal of Christian business ethics is to glorify God by demonstrating theological virtues such as justice, compassion, honesty, and love in all business activities. This ethical outlook goes beyond personal actions to influence organizational systems, corporate culture, and the broader economic environment<sup>390</sup>.

### **Integration of ethical value into corporate communication in business-ethics**

Of course, incorporation of truth-telling and transparency as Christian business ethical personnel will go far in the area of business expansion and profit margin by embracing the following methods into the map of the business;

**Internal communication and whistleblowing:** A culture of honest upward feedback, protected whistleblowing channels, and leader responsiveness operationalises both truth-telling and transparency. Empirical work from Nigeria and other contexts links whistleblowing and whistleblower protections to reduced corruption and stronger accountability.<sup>391</sup>

**External disclosure and reporting:** Truth-telling requires accuracy in marketing, and financial reports; transparency requires accessible explanations of tradeoffs, limitations, and harms. Firms that adopt fuller disclosures align with both

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<sup>390</sup>Defllins, Sutrisno, Business Ethics from a Theological... Journal of Religious and Socio-Cultural Vol.6, No.1 (2025): 14-32  
<https://doi.org/10.46362/jrsc.v6i1.282>

<sup>391</sup>Ezeoha, A. E. "Nigeria and the Practice of Whistleblowing." *Journal* (2025).  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10999922.2025.2491254>

ethical duties (justice, non-maleficence) and long-term stakeholder trust.<sup>392</sup>

**Public witness and anti-corruption:** In many African Christian accounts, prophetic truth-telling involves calling out corrupt systems and requiring ethical governance; corporate communicators with faith-informed commitments may therefore be expected to prioritise anti-corruption disclosures and support reform.<sup>393</sup>

**Insurance Policy:** provision of insurance Premium is another factor that can as well enhance truth-telling in corporate communication which also in termed with Christian values that promote Truth -Telling and Transparency. Christian that involves in business should embrace picking up insurance policy which likely reduces the cost of lost in time of contingency in the business.

### **Benefits of Truth Telling and Transparency in corporate communication**

**Trust and organisational performance:** Studies and practitioner reports argue that transparent, honest communication builds stakeholder trust which supports cooperation, lowers transaction costs, and aids long-term value creation.<sup>394</sup> Of course, losing the trust of clients, partners in business, and employees are a few examples of these detrimental effects, as are potential financial losses from

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<sup>392</sup> Kara Dennison, On leadership transparency as a defining organisational success factor: *Forbes* (Jan 15, 2025).

<sup>393</sup> Sixbert Sangwa and Placide Mutabazi, African Business Ethics in an Age of ESG and Surveillance Capitalism, *Journal of Business Theology* Vol 3(2), 2025, pp1-25

<sup>394</sup> Stavros Kalogiannidis, Examining the Role of Ethical Communication in Building Organizational Trust.” *International Journal of Innovative Research and Scientific Studies*, 8(3) 2025, pages: 1770-1783

litigation. It is crucial that businesses owner understand and appropriately implement corporate communication ethics.

**Reduced corruption and detection:** Strong internal reporting and whistleblower schemes improve detection and deterrence of fraud and corruption in contexts with governance gaps.<sup>395</sup>

### **Concept of True-Telling in corporate communication**

Truth-telling is the ethical obligation of speaking and communicating truthfully without deception, distortion, or manipulation. It emphasizes accuracy, honesty, and integrity in verbal and non-verbal communication. In moral philosophy, true-telling is often treated as a universal ethical duty; while in theology it is tied to the divine nature of God as Truth (John 14:6). Furthermore, Classical philosophy emphasizes truth-telling as a virtue. Aristotle described *aletheia* (truthfulness) as the mean between boastfulness and false modesty, an essential component of virtuous character<sup>396</sup>. Immanuel Kant later advanced this into a categorical imperative, insisting that truth-telling is a universal duty, never to be compromised, since lies undermine human dignity and rational autonomy.<sup>397</sup> On the other hand, utilitarian approaches evaluate truth-telling pragmatically, sometimes justifying deception if it maximizes overall well-being.<sup>398</sup> Hence, truth-telling should be a universal embodiment of truth without compromising or manipulation at any life situation.

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<sup>395</sup> Ezeoha, A. E. "Nigeria and the Practice of Whistleblowing." Contextual study linking whistleblowing practices and anti-corruption outcomes in Nigeria; practical implications for corporate transparency. Published online: 02 May 2025 <https://doi.org/10.1080/10999922.2025.2491254>

<sup>396</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), 1127a

<sup>397</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. and trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 30–35.

<sup>398</sup> John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ed. Roger Crisp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 55.

However, Truth-telling is grounded in the nature of God, who is Truth (John 14:6). Scripture consistently affirms the moral necessity of truthfulness: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour” (Exod. 20:16), and “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour” (Eph. 4:25). Augustine argued that all lies, regardless of intention, are sinful because they contradict God’s nature.<sup>5</sup> Contemporary theological ethicists stress that truth-telling is not only about factual correctness but also about embodying integrity, justice, and love in speech.<sup>399</sup>

### **Concept of Transparency in Corporate communication**

Transparency is the principle of openness, clarity, and accessibility in communication, decision-making, and governance. It entails making relevant information available to stakeholders in an honest, timely, and understandable manner. In ethics, transparency is considered essential for accountability and trust, while in Christian thought it is closely tied to integrity and truthfulness (John 3:21).<sup>400</sup> From a secular perspective, transparency has been linked to the Enlightenment ideal of rationality and openness in public discourse.<sup>401</sup> In organizational and business ethics, transparency functions as a corrective against corruption, misuse of power, and manipulation.<sup>402</sup> Contemporary ethicists argue that transparency fosters justice, participation, and responsibility in pluralistic societies.<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 72–74

<sup>400</sup> Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2011), 92.

<sup>401</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 57.

<sup>402</sup> Mark Bovens, “Analysing and Assessing Accountability: A Conceptual Framework,” *European Law Journal* 13, no. 4 (2007): 447–468.

<sup>403</sup> Christopher McMahon, *Public Capitalism: The Political Authority of Corporate Executives* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 136.

Furthermore, in Christian ethics, transparency flows from the call to live in the light of God's truth. Scripture emphasizes that "nothing is hidden that will not be disclosed" (Luke 8:17) and that believers are to walk "in the light" (1 John 1:7).<sup>404</sup> Transparency is not merely disclosure of information but also integrity of life, where actions align with words. It represents an ethical witness to God's holiness and cultivates trust within the faith community.<sup>405</sup> Of course, transparency complements truth-telling by ensuring that communication is not only honest but also accessible and comprehensible. In biblical theology, light symbolizes divine revelation: "But everything exposed by the light becomes visible and everything that is illuminated becomes a light" (Eph. 5:13). Transparency, therefore, reflects the Christian call to live "as children of light" (Eph. 5:8). Transparency in corporate communication means openness in reporting, clarity in messaging, and willingness to admit mistakes. Scholars argue that transparency builds resilience in organizational reputation by preventing information irregularity and enhancing public trust.<sup>406</sup> From a Christian point of view, it is an expression of humility and service, recognizing that organizations are accountable not only to shareholders but to God and society at large.<sup>407</sup> A Christian understanding of transparency balances openness with love, justice, and discretion. Transparency is not absolute disclosure but an integrity-driven openness that promotes trust, accountability, and communal flourishing.<sup>408</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church: The Challenge of Luke-Acts to Contemporary Christians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 45.

<sup>405</sup> Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells, *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 215.

<sup>406</sup> Michael B. Goodman, *Corporate Communication: Strategic Adaptation for Global Practice* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 88–90.

<sup>407</sup> Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 271–273.

<sup>408</sup> Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *Justice in Love*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011.

## **Biblical Foundations for Truth-Telling, and Transparency**

The biblical foundation for Christian ethics in business rests on several essential principles, among which truth-telling and transparency play a central role. A core element of this foundation is the concept of justice, which demands fairness, honesty, and openness in all business dealings. Scripture repeatedly states the need for integrity and truthful conduct in both private and public life. In the Old Testament, God's law to Israel includes clear commands designed to uphold justice and transparency in commercial activities. For instance, *Leviticus 19:35–36* instructs, "Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight, or quantity. Use honest scales and honest weights." This directive underscores the divine expectation of true-telling and transparency in every transaction, ensuring that all parties are treated with fairness and respect. Business leaders and workers alike are thus called to maintain integrity, fostering trust and equity within the marketplace. Of course, the integration of Christian ethics into business practices finds its strongest basis in Scripture's consistent call to truth, justice, and stewardship. Business, as a domain of human responsibility, is not exempt from divine moral standards. The Bible presents truth-telling, transparency, and accountability as integral components of righteous conduct, all of which have direct implications for ethical business behaviour.

### **Truth-Telling in Business Integrity**

Biblically, truth-telling is rooted in the divine nature of God, who is described as the "God of truth" (Deut. 32:4). His commands, therefore, call His people to honesty and faithfulness in all dealings. Proverbs 12:22 declares, "The Lord detests lying lips, but He delights in people who are trustworthy." This ethical imperative extends to commercial transactions and professional communication. Of course, in the New Testament, Jesus emphasizes that truthful speech flows from an undivided heart (Matt. 5:37). For business ethics, this

principle underscores integrity conducting transactions without deceit, false advertising, or manipulation. Ogbonnaya, argues that truth-telling in business is a form of divine witness, demonstrating that faith-based integrity sustains trust and corporate credibility rather than undermining profit.<sup>409</sup> Similarly, Nyuyki, observes that the Christian entrepreneur must view truth not as a strategic tool but as a covenantal obligation before God and the community.<sup>410</sup>

### **Transparency as Ethical Stewardship**

Transparency in Scripture relates to walking in the light and living openly before God. 1 John 1:7 exhorts believers to “walk in the light, as He is in the light,” implying honesty, clarity, and sincerity in all engagements. In business, transparency demands clear communication, responsible reporting, and openness in governance. Luke 16:10–12 portrays faithful stewardship as essential to divine trust: “*Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much.*” Transparency is therefore not merely procedural but spiritual revealing integrity of heart. Kanyoro, notes, transparent leadership mirrors divine truth by ensuring accountability to both God and stakeholders.<sup>411</sup> Within corporate communication, this theological vision of transparency calls for clear disclosure of information and avoidance of deceptive public relations or “image management” ethics.

### **Implications for Christian corporate Business Ethics**

Truth-telling, and transparency, are interdependent virtues that define the moral foundation of Christian business ethics. A truthful business builds credibility; transparency maintains

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<sup>409</sup>John C. Ogbonnaya, “Truth-Telling as Divine Witness in Christian Communication,” *African Journal of Biblical Ethics* 4, no. 2 (2022): 35–48.

<sup>410</sup>Charles Nyuyki, *Truth as Witness: Christian Ethics of Communication in Africa* (Nairobi: Pauline Publications, 2021).

<sup>411</sup>Musimbi Kanyoro, “Transparency and Christian Leadership in Africa,” *The Ecumenical Review* 71, no. 4 (2019): 542–556.

relational trust; and accountability ensures long-term integrity. Collectively, they reflect God's moral nature and transform business from a profit-driven endeavour into a vocation of stewardship and witness. Meyer, emphasizes, the Christian vision of business ethics seeks not only to obey regulations but to embody righteousness in communication and decision-making processes.<sup>412</sup> Hence, Christian business leaders are called to practice ethical communication as a reflection of divine truth in the marketplace.

Christians in corporate leadership are called to resist the culture of twist, exaggeration, and selective disclosure. Practically, organizations that embed these values in their communication strategies demonstrate a commitment to justice, fairness, and dignity of all persons created in the image of God. Furthermore, Christian witness in corporate communication extends beyond compliance to intentional modelling of Christ-like integrity. This requires developing communication policies rooted in biblical ethics, training employees in value-driven practices, and prioritizing honesty even at the cost of short-term profit. However, in contemporary relevance transparency view from different profession or organisational liens such as corporate governance view transparency strengthens accountability, investor confidence, and long-term sustainability.<sup>413</sup>Public administration, transparency in government combats corruption and promotes citizen trust.<sup>414</sup>Healthcare and research, transparent communication ensures ethical consent and strengthens trust between practitioners and patients.<sup>415</sup>Church and ministry,

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<sup>412</sup>Matthew A. Meyer, "Faith and Integrity in Business Communication: Theological Perspectives," *Journal of Religion and Business Ethics* 12, no. 1 (2021): 22–39.

<sup>413</sup>Daniel Nyberg, Christopher Wright, and Vanessa Bowden, *Climate Change, Capitalism, and Corporations: Processes of Creative Self-Destruction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 102.

<sup>414</sup>Jeremy Pope, *Confronting Corruption: The Elements of a National Integrity System* (London: Transparency International, 2020), 34.

<sup>415</sup>Beauchamp, Tom L., and James F. Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 8th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 131

transparency in financial stewardship and leadership fosters credibility and counters the misuse of authority.<sup>416</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Applying Christian business ethics is vital for developing organizations that reflect God's character and uphold the values of truth-telling and transparency in corporate communication. Such ethics foster workplaces that honour God, serve people, and promote justice, integrity, and compassion in all business interactions. When Christian leaders integrate theological virtues like honesty, fairness, stewardship, humility, love, and accountability into their communication and operations, their organizations become instruments of God's kingdom in the marketplace. These principles are not abstract ideals but practical standards that shape ethical decision-making, transparent leadership, and open communication benefiting employees, customers, and the wider community alike.

The Christian values of truth-telling and transparency are essential for maintaining ethical corporate communication in today's business environment. Rooted in Scripture and shaped by theological conviction, these virtues call organizations to uphold honesty, openness, and accountability in all interactions. Practicing true-telling and transparency builds trust, strengthens relationships, and advances justice both within the organization and in the broader society. In this context, the corporate communicator serves as a moral representative and a steward of truth, reflecting God's faithfulness and integrity in the marketplace. Embracing these values, Christian organizations can help transform the moral fabric of society, standing as beacons of integrity, credibility,

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<sup>416</sup> David Gushee and Glen Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 317.

and divine witness in a world often clouded by deceit and misinformation.

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# **Enhancing Creative Thought Through the Synectic Model of Teaching**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Creative thought is not a gift distributed only to the exceptional; it is a capacity latent in every human mind, one that formal education can either develop through deliberate practice or suppress through the relentless privileging of rote reproduction and convergent reasoning. This paper argues that the Synectics Model of Teaching, developed by William J. J. Gordon in 1961, offers one of the most carefully theorized frameworks available for the deliberate cultivation of creative thinking in educational settings and that its application deserves far wider serious attention in African schools, seminaries, and church education programs than it has received to date. This paper examines the theoretical assumptions, operational mechanisms, biblical foundations of the model. The model is based on three assumptions: creativity is not mysterious but accessible; the emotional dimension of thought matters as much as the rational; and that the deliberate, conscious use of metaphor and analogy can substantially expand the range of ideas available to the individual or group facing a problem. Three types of analogical activity form the model's pedagogical core are personal analogy, direct analogy, and compressed conflict, each designed to interrupt habitual patterns of thought and open new conceptual territory. The paper situates this framework within the broader history of African education, arguing that the metaphor-saturated oral traditions of African pedagogy represent an underused and theoretically significant resource for synectics-based instruction. The paper concludes with specific, practical implications for classroom teachers,

Sunday school instructors, and seminary educators committed to forming thinking societies.

## INTRODUCTION

The question of how human beings generate new ideas is older than the discipline of psychology and formal schooling. Philosophers have speculated about it, rhetoricians have theorized it, and artists have practiced it without being able to fully explain it. What the twentieth century added to this ancient conversation was the beginning of a science, the attempts under experimental conditions and with sustained theoretical reflection, to understand what happens in the mind and the social group when a new idea is born, and to ask whether that process can be taught. The answer that emerged from several decades of creativity research is, creative capacity can be developed, and the educational environment plays a decisive role in determining whether it is developed or foreclosed.

The Synectic Model of Teaching stands as one of its most practically elaborated contributions. Gordon, a researcher who worked with industrial creativity groups before applying his findings to educational settings, was convinced that the process by which creative breakthroughs occur in engineering, the arts, science, and everyday problem-solving shared certain identifiable psychological and social characteristics, and that if those characteristics could be understood clearly enough, they could be deliberately induced.<sup>417</sup> This conviction contradicts the assumption that creativity is fundamentally mysterious, available only to genius, and ruined by analysis. Gordon argue that the analysis of creative process actually amplifies it and bringing the emotional and irrational elements of creativity to

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<sup>417</sup>William J. J. Gordon, *Synectics: The Development of Creative Capacity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 3.

conscious awareness increases rather than diminishes their productive force.

This paper argues that the model offers something that many competing pedagogical frameworks do not, that is a structured procedure for generating new ideas that is applicable across subjects, age groups, and cultural contexts. Thus, the paper discusses the theoretical foundations of creative thought; explores the Synectics Model's assumptions and mechanisms; analyzes three types of analogical activity; examines the model's relevance to African educational context; provides a biblical and theological grounding for the cultivation of creative thought; and provides a concluding set of implications for practice.

## **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CREATIVE THOUGHT**

Any serious pedagogical engagement with creativity must reckon with the prior question of what creative thought is. The word "creativity" is used in educational discourse, to cover everything from finger-painting in kindergarten to scientific. For the purposes of this paper, creativity will be understood as the generation of ideas, products, or solutions that are both novel and appropriate to the problem or context they address. This definition distinguishes creativity from mere novelty (which may be bizarre rather than useful) and from mere competence (which may be technically adequate but generates nothing new).<sup>418</sup>

E. Paul Torrance asserts that creative thinking encompasses the abilities to produce many ideas in response to a stimulus (fluency), to generate ideas that belong to different categories (flexibility), to produce ideas that are ly uncommon (originality), and to elaborate or develop ideas with detail and precision.<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>418</sup>Robert J. Sternberg, ed., *Handbook of Creativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3.

<sup>419</sup>E. Paul Torrance, *Guiding Creative Talent* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 6.

These four dimensions, fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration are the standard operational measures of creative capacity, and are relevant to the Synectics Model because each of its three core analogical activities can be directly mapped onto them: personal analogy drives originality and flexibility; direct analogy promotes fluency and elaboration; compressed conflict forces the kind of conceptual stretching that generates uncommon ideas.

Also, creativity from the standpoint of a psychologist, places particular emphasis on the role of the social and environmental context in determining whether individual creative potential is actually expressed.<sup>420</sup> This implies creativity is not simply a function of a person's cognitive endowment; it is the product of the interaction between an individual with certain dispositions, a domain of knowledge and practice that provides the standards by which new contributions are assessed, and a field of gatekeepers and peers who recognize and validate new work. This view of creativity has important implications for education; a classroom environment that consistently rewards reproductive thinking and penalizes unconventional responses is not simply failing to nurture creative thought, it is actively suppressing it. In addition, drawing on evidence from a range of industrial and organizational contexts the global educational system has been systematically calibrated to produce graduates suited to the demands of a nineteenth-century industrial economy, with its premium on conformity, standardization, and the reliable reproduction of established procedures that is now catastrophically mismatched with the demands of a twenty-first-century world in which the capacity to generate new ideas, adapt to novel situations, and think across disciplinary

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<sup>420</sup>Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 1.

boundaries is the primary driver of individual and collective flourishing.<sup>421</sup>

John Dewey argues that the mind is not a receptacle into which information is deposited but an active agent that constructs knowledge through its engagement with problems and provides the epistemological foundation for any pedagogy of creative thought.<sup>422</sup> In other words learning is experiential not feeding the mind with information only. Similarly, Lev Vygotsky posits that the concept of the space between what a learner can accomplish independently and what she can accomplish with the guidance of a more experienced collaborator establishes the social and interactive character of intellectual growth that the Synectics Model presupposes.<sup>423</sup> In assertion, Paulo Freire views student as a passive repository into which the teacher deposits pre-formed knowledge and insists on a dialogical pedagogy that treats learners as active co-constructors of meaning, provides the political and ethical framework within which a pedagogy of creativity must operate.<sup>424</sup>

Finally, Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences further complicates the standard educational picture of intelligence as a single, measurable capacity, demonstrating that human beings display cognitive strengths across at least eight distinct domains; linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic; and that the school's habitual privileging of linguistic and logical-mathematical performance excludes from recognition the

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<sup>421</sup>Ken Robinson, *Out of Our Minds: Learning to Be Creative*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Capstone, 2011), 73.

<sup>422</sup>John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1938), 17.

<sup>423</sup>Lev S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 86.

<sup>424</sup>Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1970), 72.

intellectual gifts of learners whose strengths lie elsewhere.<sup>425</sup> The Synectics Model is, among other things, a response to this diversity as its use of metaphor, physical analogy, and paradox engages spatial, bodily, and interpersonal intelligences that conventional lesson formats systematically ignore.

## **BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CREATIVE THOUGHT**

The idea of cultivation of creative thought is biblical observed practically in the creation account. The opening chapters of Genesis do not simply record the fact that God made the world; they present the act of creation as the originating act of the universe and as the definitive form of productive action. God speaks, and what did not exist comes into being. He sees what He has made and pronounces it good. He assigns to the creature made in His image the task of naming, specifically of categorizing, distinguishing, and thereby in some sense completing the rest of the created order. From the beginning, the biblical narrative presents creative engagement with the world as a vocation given to human beings precisely because they bear the image of God.

The most immediate and recognizable sense in which human beings bear the divine image is their creative capacity. The artist who generates a work did not pre-exist in raw materials but emerges from the creative act itself, just as the universe did not pre-exist in any of the elements from which God formed it.<sup>426</sup> This is a careful distinguish between this human creativity and divine creativity *ex nihilo*, although it stands that the impulse to make something new, to bring into existence an idea or an artifact or a solution that was not there before, is not a secular

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<sup>425</sup>Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), xi.

<sup>426</sup> Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Mind of the Maker* (London: Methuen, 1941), 17.

luxury but a reflection of the character of God inscribed into the human constitution.<sup>427</sup>

In addition, the command to exercise dominion over the created order (Genesis 1:28) is not primarily a mandate for exploitation but for cultivation, for the development of the world's latent possibilities in ways that bring its goodness more fully into expression.<sup>428</sup> The creative mandate, applies to every domain of human activity, including the classroom; the teacher who cultivates the creative capacities of her students is participating, however modestly, in the fulfilment of the vocation for which human beings were made.

Furthermore, the artistic and creative making is not a peripheral decoration of human existence but one of the primary means by which human beings engage with and respond to the created order.<sup>429</sup> In other words, the arts and by extension, the full range of creative human activity are not expressions of autonomous human self-sufficiency but responses to a world already laden with the creative presence of God, a world that calls forth from its inhabitants to cultivate the inventive, analogical, metaphor-making engagement. Therefore, Christians of all people ought to be free to be creative, because they serve a God who is himself the supreme creative act, and because their redemption has restored to them the creative dignity that sin obscured. A Christianity that produces only derivative, imitative, safe work, whether in art, in thought, or in education has misunderstood its own theological resources.<sup>430</sup> The church that teaches its people only to reproduce inherited answers, rather than to engage their own

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<sup>427</sup>Ibid.

<sup>428</sup>Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 23.

<sup>429</sup>Jeremy Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise: Towards a Theology of the Arts* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 4.

<sup>430</sup>Francis A. Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 16.

creative capacity in the service of fresh questions, is not fulfilling the educational mandate that the doctrine of the imago Dei places on it.

More so, African theologians and educators must bring their creative theological imagination to the task of thinking through the meaning of the gospel for the African situation that the mere replication of Western theological conclusions in African contexts is, in the deepest sense, a failure of intellectual fidelity to the gospel itself, which is always news rather than archive, always addressing the specific person in her specific situation rather than delivering pre-packaged conclusions.<sup>431</sup> This insistence on the willingness to ask old questions in new ways, to find analogies between the gospel story and the African story that Western interpreters had not seen is itself an application of the analogical, metaphor-making intelligence that the Synectics Model seeks to develop. By implication, African scholars must bring their interpretive traditions, oral epistemologies, and cultural experiences to the reading of Scripture rather than simply receiving Western interpretations as authoritative is another form of the same claim.<sup>432</sup> The cultivation of creative thought in African educational and church settings is not, from this perspective, a concession to cultural pride or an exercise in intellectual nationalism; it is a theological necessity, demanded by the nature of the gospel as a word that must be freshly heard, freshly thought, and freshly applied in every generation and every context.

### **THE SYNECTIC MODEL: ORIGINS, ASSUMPTIONS, AND FRAMEWORK**

Gordon first developed the approach to creative group work in industrial research during the 1950s, studying teams of engineers, designers, and scientists as they worked on

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<sup>431</sup>Bediako, *Theology and Identity*, 232.

<sup>432</sup>Tokunboh Adeyemo, ed., *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), vii.

problems. Gordon's main finding was that the moments of creative breakthrough in these groups were consistently associated with certain kinds of mental activity; the use of analogy, the deliberate displacement of the familiar into unfamiliar conceptual territory, and a willingness to entertain apparently absurd or irrational ideas as provisional starting points for more disciplined thinking.<sup>433</sup> He codified these observations into a teachable procedure and published his findings in 1961 under the title *Synectics: The Development of Creative Capacity*, a title that translates his conviction that the creative capacity is not fixed at birth but developable through practice and instruction.

The word "synectics" means the joining together of different and apparently unrelated elements. This definition highlights that creative thought, in Gordon's view, proceeds not by the orderly progression from premises to conclusions that formal logic describes, but by the unexpected connection of elements drawn from separate domains of experience. The scientist who sees a structural solution in a biological phenomenon, the theologian who illuminates an abstract doctrine through a metaphor, the teacher who explains a mathematical principle through a physical gesture.<sup>434</sup> Gordon identified three assumptions that underlie the synectics process. First, the creative process is not all mysterious and is, in fact, describable. This does not mean that creativity can be reduced to a mechanical algorithm, but that its characteristic psychological moves can be identified, named, and taught. This assumption is the enabling premise of the entire enterprise; without it, the project of a pedagogy of creativity collapses into the view that nothing useful can be said about where ideas come from.<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>433</sup>Gordon, *Synectics*, 5.

<sup>435</sup>Gordon, *Synectics*, 7.

Second, the emotional component of creative thought is at least as important as the intellectual. This claim is less intuitive than the first, and it runs against the grain of educational traditions that treat rigor and emotion as opposites. Gordon's point, however, is not that rigorous thinking is unimportant but that the initial generation of ly new ideas draws on affective and imaginative resources that purely rational analysis cannot access. The creative process requires what he called a willingness to tolerate apparent irrationality to hold ideas in suspension before subjecting them to critical evaluation, to allow the imagination to make connections that logical analysis would prematurely foreclose.<sup>436</sup>

Third, the emotional and irrational elements of the creative process must be understood and consciously engaged if creative capacity is to increase. The deliberate use of metaphor and analogy is the primary means by which this engagement is structured. Metaphor does not merely decorate an idea; it does cognitive work. When Gordon asked industrial design teams to think of a problem in terms of its analogy in nature, he was not asking them to play word games; he was asking them to import into the problem-space the structural knowledge embedded in a different domain, knowledge that the mind had not previously brought to bear on the problem at hand.<sup>437</sup>

Joyce and Weil, in surveying models of teaching, identify two distinct strategies within the Synectics Model. First, "creating something new" is designed to help learners make the familiar strange. Its purpose is to disrupt the habituation that prevents people from seeing familiar problems or concepts with fresh eyes. A student who has learned to recite the doctrine of the Trinity but has never been asked to find a physical analogy for perichoretic mutual indwelling has not yet thought about that doctrine; the student has only memorized it.<sup>438</sup> The synectic

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<sup>436</sup>Joyce and Weil, *Models of Teaching*, 163.

<sup>437</sup>Ibid., 165.

<sup>438</sup>Joyce and Weil, *Models of Teaching*, 165–166.

strategy of making the familiar strange forces the students to think, because it demands that the students find a new cognitive vehicle for an already-known content. Second, "making the strange familiar" runs in the opposite direction. It uses analogical thinking to make new and initially inaccessible concepts comprehensible by connecting them to structures the learner already understands. When a teacher of biology invites students to think of the human heart as a water pump, or when a theology professor asks students to think of the divine act of creation as analogous to a jazz musician improvising within a musical key, the unfamiliar is rendered accessible through its structural relationship to the familiar.<sup>439</sup> Neither strategy replaces careful analytical thinking; both are designed to prepare the ground for it by ensuring that the learner has a conceptual grip on the material before the analytical work begins.

## **THE ANALOGIES OF THE SYNECTIC MODEL**

### **Personal Analogy**

The most striking and surprising of Gordon's three analogical activities is the personal analogy. In a personal analogy, the learner is asked not merely to compare herself to an object or idea, but to *become* that object or idea. The student is to describe how it feels to be the thing in question, speak from its perspective, and inhabit its experience. Gordon identified four levels of personal analogy, moving from the relatively shallow (first-person description of facts about the object) through increasing degrees of identification, to the most demanding level which is the empathetic identification with a non-living object, in which the learner is asked to describe the experience of being, say, a water molecule moving through a membrane, or a musical chord resolving from dissonance to consonance.<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>439</sup>Starko, *Creativity in the Classroom*, 192.

<sup>440</sup>Gordon, *Synectics*, 37.

The rationale for this seemingly eccentric procedure is based on “the introduction of conceptual distance between the student and the object or subject matter.”<sup>441</sup> Paradoxically, the forced identification of the personal analogy creates a kind of creative alienation by requiring the student to occupy the perspective of the thing under studies, it disrupts the comfortable distance of the conventional observer-subject relationship and forces a new quality of attention. A student asked to describe how it feels to be the persecuted church of the book of Revelation, or to speak as a nitrogen atom entering the soil cycle, is not doing what she does when she reads about these things; she is engaging them with a different cognitive instrument, one that may reach parts of the problem that analytical reading cannot.

In the theological and church context, the personal analogy has particular power. Asking a student to describe how it feels to be the prodigal son at the moment he sees his father running toward him, or to speak as the woman who has just found her lost coin, is not merely a dramatic exercise; it is a disciplined act of theological imagination that may produce deep insight into the text. Biblical narrative is not propositional; it is dramatic. The invitation to inhabit it personally is not a deviation from rigorous interpretation but a different form of it.<sup>442</sup>

### **Direct Analogy**

Direct analogy is the most immediately accessible of the three analogical activities: it asks learners to identify structural similarities between two different objects, ideas, or situations.<sup>443</sup> Unlike the personal analogy, which requires imaginative self-displacement, the direct analogy proceeds through careful comparative observation. Its function is to

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<sup>441</sup>Ibid., 38.

<sup>442</sup>Starko, *Creativity in the Classroom*, 193.

<sup>443</sup> Gordon, *Synergetics*, 42.

transfer the conditions of a real problem or topic into a different situation, thereby generating a new view of the original.<sup>444</sup>

In the classroom, direct analogy works at every level of abstraction. Younger children can be asked to find parallels between the qualities of familiar animals and human character traits. For instance, how patience is like a tortoise, how courage is like a honey badger refusing to retreat. Older students can be asked to find structural analogies between historical events and contemporary situations, between chemical processes and social dynamics, between narrative structures. At each level, the cognitive demand is the same, that is, to look carefully enough at two different things to see a structural relationship between them, rather than a merely superficial resemblance.<sup>445</sup>

### **Compressed Conflict**

Compressed conflict is the most intellectually demanding of the three analogical activities, and arguably the most generative. It consists in a two-word description of a subject in which the two words are in tension with each other, not simply unusual in combination, but ly paradoxical, pointing toward a real contradiction or tension within the thing being described. Gordon's examples from industrial creativity research include phrases such as “dependable irregularity” and “living death.” This has generated many others, including “organized chaos,” “gentle force,” and “sorrowful ecstasy.”<sup>446</sup>

The compressed conflict stands on the fact that the most generative creative moments in Gordon's research groups were those in which participants were forced to hold two apparently contradictory ideas simultaneously, without resolving the contradiction prematurely.<sup>447</sup> The mind's attempt to find a

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<sup>444</sup>Ibid.

<sup>445</sup>Joyce and Weil, *Models of Teaching*, 167.

<sup>446</sup>Gordon, *Synectics*, 54.

<sup>447</sup> Starko, *Creativity in the Classroom*, 195.

conceptual space in which both terms can be true generates ideas that neither term would have produced on its own. A student asked to characterize the cross of Christ in a compressed conflict might produce "victorious defeat," "gracious condemnation," or "death-giving life;" each of which captures a dimension of the theology of atonement that straightforward propositional description tends to flatten.<sup>448</sup> The compressed conflict is not a poetic embellishment of theological content; it is a device for accessing dimensions of that content that resist the neat categories of analytical language.

Starko notes that compressed conflict works particularly well in encouraging students to examine natural paradoxes and tensions within complex concepts, and that the activity consistently produces more original and more conceptually precise responses than conventional question-and-answer approaches to the same material.<sup>449</sup> The reason for this is not mysterious. The requirement of paradox forces the student to think past the obvious answer, past the first response that presents itself, to a level of the concept where things are complicated. And it is at precisely that level – the level at which the comfortable familiar suddenly becomes productively strange, that creative thought begins.

## **SYNECTICS AND AFRICAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS**

A persistent weakness in the literature on the Synectics Model is its almost exclusive engagement with Western educational contexts. Gordon's original research was conducted with American industrial teams; the pedagogical literature that has followed it has been generated overwhelmingly in North American and European settings. This is not, in itself, a reason to dismiss the model's applicability elsewhere; but it does

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<sup>448</sup> Ibid.

require that its application to African contexts be made with some care and with attention to what those contexts look like.

A. Babs Fafunwa points out that Long before the arrival of the missionary school, African communities had developed elaborate systems for transmitting knowledge, values, and practical skills across generations, more precisely, systems that made extensive use of proverbs, riddles, fables, communal narrative, and apprenticeship-based learning.<sup>450</sup> These are not pedagogical backwaters; they are responses to the challenge of forming human beings for productive participation in social and natural environments. And they share, in ways that have not been sufficiently remarked in the creativity discussions, several of the fundamental characteristics of synectics-based teaching.

The Yoruba proverb, for example, is not merely a pithy summary of accumulated wisdom; it is a compressed analogy that asks the hearer to apply a structural observation from one domain such as animal behavior, domestic experience, agricultural practice to a human situation in another domain. When an elder says to a young person, in the Yoruba tradition, that “the child who is not taught will later sell the house that was not built for sale,” the educational move being made is precisely the direct analogy: a structural parallel between two different situations is being drawn, and the cognitive work of applying it to the present case is left to the learner. This is not a lesser form of pedagogy; it is a more demanding one, because it requires the hearer to do the analogical work rather than having it done for her.<sup>451</sup>

Contrarily, Pai Obanya argues that the crisis of African education is partly a crisis of method that the uncritical importation of didactic, transmission-based teaching models from the Western educational tradition has displaced

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<sup>450</sup>A. Babs Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974), 17.

<sup>451</sup>Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria*, 20.

indigenous pedagogical practices that were better suited to the social and cultural contexts of African learners, without replacing them with anything of comparable effectiveness.<sup>452</sup> Obanya's argument is consistent with the argument of this paper that the Synectics Model, if properly adapted, represents not a foreign imposition on African educational practice but a theoretically articulation of educational principles that African oral traditions have long embodied, and that the dialogue between the two traditions might produce a richer educational practice than either has achieved alone.

Ogbu Kalu's analysis of African Christianity's educational and catechetical practices points to a similar convergence. Kalu states that the African church has consistently drawn on the oral and communal dimensions of African culture in its worship, its preaching, and its community formation, often more effectively than the missionary-founded educational institutions that accompanied it, precisely because these dimensions of African culture were not alien to the gospel but were already rich resources for the kind of participatory, analogy-saturated teaching that Jesus practiced.<sup>453</sup>

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SCHOOL AND CHURCH**

The practical implications of the Synectics Model for teachers and educators in both formal and church settings are worth drawing out with some specificity, since the model is sometimes introduced at a level of generality that makes it difficult to see how it would actually work in a classroom or a Sunday school lesson.

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<sup>452</sup>Pai Obanya, *Revitalizing Education in Africa* (Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers, 1999), 22.

<sup>453</sup>Ogbu U. Kalu, *African Christianity: An African Story* (Pretoria: University of Pretoria Press, 2005), 316.

For the classroom teacher at the secondary level, the most immediately applicable dimension of the model is the direct analogy. Almost any new concept in any discipline can be introduced through a carefully constructed analogy that connects it to something the students already understand. The biology teacher introducing the immune system can ask students to think of it as a national border security system, with passport control, quarantine facilities, and military response. The history teacher introducing the concept of imperialism can ask students to think about it through the analogy of a large family member who moves into a smaller relative's house and begins rearranging the furniture. These analogies do not replace careful conceptual exposition; they prepare for it by ensuring that the student has a structural handle on the new concept before the analytical work begins.<sup>454</sup>

For the Sunday school teacher working with children, the stretching exercise of using the personal analogy with biblical narrative offers particularly rich possibilities. Children asked to describe how they would feel to be Jonah in the belly of the fish, or to speak as the lost sheep in the moment of being found, are not merely imagining a Bible story; they are developing an empathetic and theological imagination that will shape their understanding of the text far more deeply than a recitation of its facts ever could. The imaginative engagement that the personal analogy demands is, in this context, a reading of the Bible with the whole self, not merely the cognitive surface.

For the seminary educator, the compressed conflict offers a demanding and productive tool for theological instruction. A student asked to find a compressed conflict that captures the meaning of the atonement, or the relationship between divine sovereignty and human freedom, or the tension between the already-inaugurated Kingdom of God and its not-yet-consummated fulfilment, is being asked to do something harder than reciting a doctrinal formula. The student is being asked to

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<sup>454</sup>Robinson, *Out of Our Minds*, 138.

grasp the intellectual tension that the formula is designed to manage. The compressed conflict does not resolve the tension; it names it with precision, and in doing so, it prepares the student for the analytical work of theological reasoning that follows.<sup>455</sup>

Since the quality of creative output from students is significantly higher when they are given explicit permission to explore, to be wrong, and to say unconventional thing, particularly when the social norms of the classroom are deliberately shifted to make intellectual risk-taking safe, this environmental dimension of creativity education is directly relevant to the synectics classroom. The model will not work in a setting where students fear ridicule or where convergent answers are consistently rewarded. The teacher who wishes to use synectics must first create the conditions of intellectual safety within which the model's activities can generate creative thought.

The educational systems in Africa should undergo a pedagogical reform. The rote, transmission-based teaching that dominates many African schools, a legacy of colonial educational policies designed to produce compliant clerks rather than creative thinkers is not simply educationally ineffective; it represents a kind of structural violence against the creative intelligence of African learners, who are capable of far more than it asks of them. The introduction of synectic activities into African classrooms and churches is, in this light, not merely a pedagogical improvement but a modest act of educational justice.

The Synectics Model can be used alongside other instructional models without contradiction since it is a specific set of procedures that can be inserted into a variety of instructional sequences. This compatibility with other approaches makes it less daunting to implement. A teacher does not need to

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<sup>455</sup>Joyce and Weil, *Models of Teaching*, 173.

abandon her existing practice to begin using synectics activities. She might introduce a single direct analogy as the opening move of a lesson on a difficult concept, or assign a compressed conflict as a creative writing prompt at the end of a unit, or use a brief personal analogy activity as a way of deepening student engagement with a biblical character. These are low-cost, high-return additions to existing practice, not a wholesale pedagogical revolution.

The implementation of Synectics in diverse educational contexts' most consistent benefit is not the generation of brilliant individual ideas, but the transformation of the classroom's social and intellectual culture. When students have repeated experience of being asked for ideas that are theirs, of having those ideas treated as worth exploring rather than as candidates for correction, and of discovering that unusual perspectives sometimes illuminate things that conventional perspectives miss, something shifts in the relationship between the learner and the learning. The student who has experienced this shift has been given something that no amount of information delivery can provide: a taste of her own intellectual agency, and some evidence that it is a reliable instrument.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Synectics Model of Teaching does not resolve the perennial difficulties of education. It does not guarantee creative output, eliminate the need for deep domain knowledge, or substitute for the patient work of instructional planning and classroom relationship-building that every good teacher must do. What it offers is more modest and more useful than a general solution to the educational problem. It is a specific, theoretically grounded set of procedures for interrupting the mental habits that prevent people from thinking new thoughts, and for creating the conditions under which new ideas are more likely to appear. This paper has argued that those procedures deserve wider application in African educational and church settings, for reasons that are simultaneously pedagogical and

theological. Pedagogically, the model's reliance on analogy, metaphor, and paradox resonates with the deep patterns of African

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