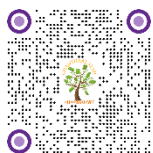


THE "CRY" OF THE STONES AS A TESTIMONY OF GOD (IN CHRIST) A PERSPECTIVE FOR WORLD EVANGELIZATION

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ABSTRACT

Man was created for a relationship with God (Guder (2023), p. 138). Through relational processes, in a succession of contextualized messages, communication takes place (WATZLAWICK, 1967 *apud* Mattelart & Mattelart (2012), p. 67-70). God communicates with humanity: indirectly (general revelation, in nature), or directly (special revelation) (Willmington (2015), p. 371-373). The Abrahamic covenant (with the imperative of blessing the peoples) refers to the special revelation (of God, in Christ Jesus) from the general revelation (Richardson (2008), p. 171 and 179). "According to Jesus, the 'end of the world' would not occur until the gospel had been 'preached' worldwide" (Richardson (2008), p. 203-204) – there is suspense about how this 'mission' (of the Church) will be completed. This study aims to analyze extreme divine actions as a message to humanity, in the historical-contextual eschatological perspective of signs (earthquakes as the "cry" of the stones). "By going beyond formal logic" (Magalhães Filho (2011), p. 17), one can imagine the expression of divine witness (and power) as "preaching" (evangelization), using "analogical language" (symbolic, from the stones) (Magalhães Filho (2011), p. 34). Initially, the character of the message will point to the Eternal-Creator, opening a "window to the Word" (Geisler (1998), p. 307 *apud* Willmington (2015), p. 258); and, for guaranteed meaning, the special revelation must be minimally presented (God, in Christ), by a 'written' or 'living' Word (Willmington (2015), p. 371-373). Such a perspective would contribute to world evangelization.

Keywords: Stones, Earthquakes, Communication, Testimony, Evangelization

1. INTRODUCTION

"The essence of God is 'being or existence' - beyond human comprehension¹" (Silva (2023), p. 139-143). "Through the relationship between God and man, which

¹ "In Tomás de Aquino the ways in which we can talk about God are: the way of 'negation' (because we don't know what he really is, but what he isn't); and the way of 'analogy' (God is pure existence, and natural things are existent - so natural things don't represent God perfectly, but imperfectly)" (Silva (2023), p. 142-144).

includes the response of the evangelized person (two-way communication²), faith is born" (Guder (2023), p. 138).

"In the space and manifestation of things, the concept of *revelation* is recognized" (Bentho (2023), p. 193), by "transcendence - that which goes beyond the immediate evidence of the experience of the world of life" (Luckmann (2014), p. 10).

Accessible to all, "*general revelation* [...] includes 'the testimony of God' through cosmic nature and human consciousness, and a residue of knowledge of original facts (creation, fall, flood, etc.) that has spread through tradition in cultures" (Ferreira (2022) *apud* Magalhães Filho (2011), p. 62 and 63).

"Through human history God reveals himself³" (Guder (2023), p. 138) - therefore, "the knowledge 'of God' (which he himself makes possible) is a special kind: it is the knowledge of the relationship experienced" (Guder (2023), p. 138).

It is understood that the 'Word' had to 'materialize' (literally), to the point of being firmly perceived - "the Word 'becomes flesh' so that we can hear it" (Guder (2023), p. 138 & Stern (2008), p. 179-180). "Jesus affirmed: 'truly, before Abraham existed, 'I Am' (John 8:57)' [...] 'I Am' was another name for God" (Richardson (2008), p. 183); in a reference to *special revelation*.

"In *special revelation*, God (in Christ Jesus) communicates directly by 'His Word' ('written', or 'living' - John 1:14)" (Willmington (2015), p. 371-373). And, in a continuum, "*general* (cosmic) revelation and *special revelation* come closer together" (Richardson (2008), p. 231).

On "revelation [...] it is not limited [...] but expanded through the world of the text and the new-being it unveils⁴" (Bentho (2023), p. 193) - "symbolic universes, for example, are objectified systems of meaning that relate everyday experiences to a 'transcendent' level of reality" (Luckmann (2014), p. 12).

"In the New Testament, the word 'sign' (in Greek, *semeion*) occurs about 70 times [...] in Revelation, *semeion* can refer to a natural event, however, it often refers more to some miraculous act that authenticates divine activity (action); or, to an eschatological sign that points to the culmination of History" (Brand et al. (2018), p. 1568) - earthquakes (analogously, "cry of the stones"), for example.

"The problem of divine action is one of the 'Gordian knots' in the relationship between religion and science" (Covolan (2023), p. 12). "In the contemporary debate, a distinction is accepted between 'general divine providence' (in relation to God's creation and sustenance of the universe) and 'special' (in relation to God's direct interventions in nature and in the development of history)" (Silva (2023), p. 18).

² The proclamation of the message (evangelization) "is a 4,000-year-old divine goal" (Richardson (2008), p. 179). "Modern Christians must engage in its fulfillment (Richardson (2008), p. 229). "The possibility of evangelization [...] will elicit response and will always be effective, but the effect can be rejection (hostility)" (Guder (2023), p. 135 and 137). "Part of the effectiveness of God's Word (communication) is that it moves people to respond favorably to it - however, it can be accepted or rejected (guarded or neglected)" (Champlin (2013), p. 24).

³ As for history, "the criticism falls on the totalizing aspects of knowledge disconnected from life (creative process). This ambiguity of history corresponds to the *pharmakon* of the *Phaedrus* (ambiguity of historical writing as medicine or poison) [...]. The Christian sense of history is based on concrete history (in dramas, decisions, crises, growth and decay - total existence) and not abstract history (progress, for example, is situated here)" (Bentho (2023), p. 195).

⁴ "An invitation that opens up to a new way of understanding oneself [...] which initially addresses the imagination (subjectivity)" (Bentho (2023), p. 193).

"For *Tomás de Aquino*, from an eschatological perspective, the goal of divine miraculous interventions is human salvation" (Silva (2023), p. 168 and 170).

The present study intends to analyze extreme divine actions (manifestations) (testimonies of God) as communication of a message ("preaching", by revelatory insight) to humanity, from the historical-contextual eschatological perspective of signs (earthquakes as the "cry of the stones").

In the first session, God (in Christ - by *special revelation*, from the Abrahamic revelation) will be addressed as being (somehow) perceived by all peoples; in the second, the Church of Christ, its witness, mission, and failures will be characterized. Divine actions in nature (testimonies of God) will be analyzed in the third session, in relation to communication by symbolism (via stones). The time frame of this work is broad, up to the period known as the 'end of the world' (Christian theological perspective).

1.1. METHODS

Based on a process of interrelated data collection and analysis activities, exploratory, applied and explanatory bibliographic research was carried out, seeking a broad interpretation using a qualitative method.

From biblical intertextual echoes that point to 'stones', and relate them to seismic shocks (in the context of 'signs of the coming of Jesus and the end of the world'; by association and analogy, the 'cry of the stones' (earthquakes) provides the meaning of a message that points to the Creator.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. THE EARTH AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GLORY OF THE "AGNOSTO" THEO

According to (Richardson (2008), p. 21), just as Gideon (biblical hero - Old Testament) sought to know God's will through prayers (obtaining answers through a piece of wool), there is a historical record of a tradition (written by the Greek author Diogenes Laertius, from the third century AD), in which a Cretan hero (Epimenides) advised the Athenian citizens on how to get rid of a plague, by crying out to an (unknown) 'god-helper'.

"Epimenides apparent purpose with this was to give any god possibly connected with the plague issue an opportunity to reveal his willingness to help" (Richardson (2008), p. 21) - the prayer was indeed miraculously answered⁵, the plague was stopped and sacrifices were offered on altars to the agnosto Theo (in Greek, unknown God). "The fact that such an inscription was found on an altar in Athens was confirmed by Paul (Acts 17:17)" (Richardson (2008), p. 22-23).

(Richardson (2008), p. 23-24) cites that the apostle Paul's speech (an attempt to argue against idolatry) pointed to Theos (a general term, familiar to Greek philosophers - used for any deity); however, it was related to Jesus. A typical case of cross-cultural communication - Jesus himself (Acts 26:17-18), in impeccable logic, had provided the master formula for tackling such a problem: it would be necessary for the eyes (minds and hearts) of the local people (even the scholars) to be opened,

⁵ "Epimenides conducted an unusual experiment in prayer: hungry sheep in abundant pasture, which, however, had to lie down on the grass - this would indicate the answer and the choice of animals for the sacrifice to the *agnosto Theo*" (Richardson (2008), p. 13-21).

so that they could 'turn from darkness to light', by distinguishing the difference between the two – as presented in (Richardson (2008), p. 24-25).

Through an admirable cross-cultural perception (which captivated the attention of men accustomed to the logic of Plato, Aristotle and others), the God proclaimed by Paul at the Areopagus was neither 'strange' nor 'distant' - "according to reasoning, the Judeo-Christian God (YHWH, the Eternal) was represented by the altar of Epimenides" (Richardson (2008), p. 26).

According to (Richardson (2008), p. 27), Paul's success in his speech followed a 'continuous logic' (logical sequence in communication), by reasoning without gaps (a rule of local philosophical education) - until the subject of the 'resurrection of the dead' (not widely believed) was broached in relation to Jesus Christ. Here, (Richardson (2008), p. 28) considered a technical flaw, citing that it would have been necessary to first 'explain how and why Jesus had to die'.

It should be noted that, from the perspective of the testimony of the Christian community about the facts (possible at the time), the message of the 'resurrection of Christ' deserved to be at least investigated – Paul made it clear that "the resurrection of Christ gave him credit as the anointed of God" (Richardson (2008), p. 29).

The strategy regarding the recognition and identification of a God (the Lord, the Creator, the Sovereign, the Most High, the Eternal) and his actions among diverse peoples was first employed by the patriarch Abraham, as presented in (Richardson (2008), p. 30): the covenantal one to God (the Eternal, later known as Yahweh) initiates a surprising Creator-creature relational development, through a special revelation based on promises and blessings (on a temporal scale), from a determined geographical region (Canaan), with the specific purpose of "making him a blessing for all the families of the earth" (Richardson (2008), p. 31).

Regarding the Abrahamic covenant, the "happy surprise about the special revelation was to perceive God (the Sovereign) through the person of Melchizedek (head of a Canaanite clan in the city of Salem)" (Richardson (2008), p. 32) – then, there was a righteous one among the Canaanites, who also cultivated a relationship with the Most High Creator (only in *El Elyon*, which is Yahweh⁶), as discussed in (Richardson (2008), p. 33).

From this perspective, (Richardson (2008), p. 35) stands out that Melchizedek points to a 'symbol' or type of God's general revelation to mankind; and Abraham, the special revelation also to all mankind, on the basis of a covenant (recorded in the canon) - "God's general revelation is superior to his special revelation in two ways: i) it is older; and, ii) it has influenced one hundred percent of mankind (Ps. 19; Rom. 10:18)" (Richardson (2008), p. 35).

In Richardson (2008, p. 36), the special revelation of the Lord (Yahweh) is the Abraham factor - which "has continued to extend into the world throughout the ages" (Richardson (2008), p. 36) - and the general revelation of the Lord (Yahweh) is the Melchizedek factor - which, being prior, has always been on the scene (receptive, friendly to the special revelation and in magnificent interaction), "bringing the bread, the wine, and the blessing of welcome!" (Richardson (2008), p. 36).

Interestingly, (Richardson (2008), p. 36-37) also highlights a third revelation (the Sodom factor), which does not refer to the Lord (Yahweh) - Abraham obtained

⁶ "Melchizedek (*melchi* - 'king', and *zadok* - 'justice') also acted as 'priest of *El Elyon*' (Gen 14:18) [...] Both *El* and *Elyon* were Canaanite names for *Yahweh* himself" (Richardson (2008), p. 32-33).

it through discernment⁷ - due to an unclear ("apparently" friendly) relationship with another Canaanite king, of a hidden nature (Bera, king of Sodom⁸).

The fundamental idea in (Richardson (2008), p. 37) is about the early witness of God's existence (and action) among the peoples of the earth, which prepares them for the acceptance of the gospel (of Jesus Christ) - the assumption that it is not possible to reach them being false⁹.

In fact, God (the Creator) does make Himself known by His own (permanent and powerful) testimony, as well as His glory. Finally, God's plan to bless all peoples will be achieved¹⁰, as highlighted in (Richardson (2008), p. 211) - "there is a final suspense: who among the sons (and daughters) of men will recognize (and not despise) the day of divine privilege when it approaches them?" (Richardson (2008), p. 211).

2.2. THE MISSION OVER PETRUS (KEPHA) CONCERNING PETRA (KEPHA)

"The God of the Bible makes himself knowable: a central affirmation of both the Jewish and Christian faith¹¹ [...] by the capacity for perception and response to His self-revelation¹²" (Guder (2023), p. 19).

"God's purposes are universal" (Guder (2023), p. 24) - "in Christ Jesus (*Mashiach*), God entered human history and built the final bridge (Creator-creature¹³)" (Guder (2023), p. 28-29) - the Church being necessary for the implementation of the witness of the gospel of salvation, according to Guder (2023, p. 30), and its public significance" (Guder (2023), p. 53 & Benthó (2023), p. 194).

⁷ In fact, "spiritual counterfeits, satanic falsehoods and distortions have been introduced into the world" (Richardson (2008), p. 57).

⁸ "Bera showed kindness to Abraham, offering him the spoils taken from Chedorlaomer, which had originally been the product of looting in Sodom" (Richardson (2008), p. 36).

⁹ "There is (extra-biblical) evidence of the authenticity of the Bible as a revelation of the true and universal God [...] God has not left himself without witness" (Richardson (2008), p. 55-56). However, "as to the hope of salvation [...] human free choice is considered [...] which involves the ability to reject the persuasion (and not, imposition) employed by God (in centuries of history)" (Richardson (2008), p. 210-211).

¹⁰ "By the 'immutability of his purpose' (Heb 6:13-19) - there will be success (Rev 5:9-10; Rev 7:9; Rev 10:11; Rev 14:6); for the name and character of the Lord remain committed to the fulfillment of this imperative [...] God is at work in history" (Richardson (2008), p. 197-198).

¹¹ "An 'informed faith' - which is truly a response to God's actions and Words - and not a conviction that we impose on ourselves to meet our needs" (Guder (2023), p. 23).

¹² Such a perception "is not a mere historical fact" (Guder (2023), p. 19); however, it depends on the perspective (which can be blurred). For example, "in the Old Covenant, God rewards/castigates the observance of the commandments; however, Christian theology considers the New Covenant, through the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:11-21) (the work of God, in Christ Jesus, in man, from the heart)" (Richards (2021), p. 376-377 and 379): "it is an emphasis that is in stark contrast to (modern-day, post-Christian era) Judaism [...] Judaism has a defined creed [...] expressed in the 'Thirteen Principles of Faith', expounded by Moses Maimonides (1135-1204 AD) [...] by principle 09, there is no 'New Covenant' [...] Judaism is basically a ritual system" (Richards (2021), p. 379).

¹³ Through the revelation of the "incarnational ministry of Jesus: life, suffering, death and resurrection" (Guder (2023), p. 37 & Stern (2008), p. 179-180). "In Ricoeur, revelation does not contradict the autonomy and transparency of modern reason [...] through the intelligence of faith [...] revelation becomes an invitation, rather than an imperative (a non-imposing appeal) - a call (without coercion) to critique and assess the truth" (Benthó (2023), p. 191 and 193).

"Witnesses experience events (self-revelations) from God" (Guder (2023), p. 53¹⁴). "The exercise of witnessing can be passive (when the person is present as a spectator) or active (when the person provides evidence as a witness)" (Brand et al. (2018), p. 1634).

Reliable witnesses (and not, good communicators) are people who, "with the wholeness of their lives, make their communication authentic and powerful"¹⁵ (Guder (2023), p. 39).

Regarding the Church's mission of evangelization, (Guder (2023), p. 21) draws on the basic assumptions (summarized in creeds and confessions), and reaffirmed from the traditions of Christian interpretation - "the gospel, then, is the good news of a (loving) God's desire that his (rebellious) creation be reconciled to him, as well as the action he has initiated (and is now carrying out) regarding that reconciliation" (Guder (2023), p. 21).

According to (Guder (2023), p. 42 and 143), one cannot neglect parts of the proclamation (Christ as model) - "one must respond to the 'total gospel (proclamation of the whole counsel of God¹⁶)'" (Guder (2023), p. 42).

In a systematic and historical treatise on ecclesiology, (Bentho (2010), p. 16) analyzes the term *ekklēsia*¹⁷ (according to the New Testament) in relation to the Old Testament and the Septuagint text in Greek.

"Before the early Christian community organized itself as a group distinct from Judaism, Christians took part in Jewish assemblies in the Temple, in the synagogues [...] little by little they began to organize themselves in homes (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15)" (Bentho (2010), p. 66).

As cited in (Brand et al. (2018), p. 821-822), Jesus speaks about the building up of the Church (Matt 16:18,19); and in the event known as 'Pentecost' (Acts 2:2), the apostles recognized the birth of the Church as the work of Christ himself. "The apostle Peter¹⁸ led the disciples and occupied a prominent place in the early Church¹⁹ (Acts 1-5)" (Brand et al. (2018), p. 1291).

"In the New Testament, Matthew 16:18 is considered the *locus classicus* of biblical criticism concerning the founding of the Church" (Bentho (2010), p. 82) - "there is a verbal paralogism (between the Greek words *petros* and *Petra*; and *kepha*,

¹⁴ "According to Ricoeur, testimony is placed as a category for verifying any spiritual experience (and the Absolute); fulfilling three hermeneutic functions linked to the *hybris* of modern reason: i) it breaks with the autonomy of the subject (forcing them to refer to something/someone external); ii) it introduces the dimension of historical contingency (with respect to the manifestations of the divine); iii) it opens up to the dialectic of interiority-exteriority, given the historical intervention experienced" (Bentho (2010), p. 194).

¹⁵ "Jesus came to testify of the light (John 1:7) - this seems strange: why would someone have to 'testify' (*marturesei*, bear witness, clarify) about a light? One obvious thing, in a dark place, is a light shining there. However, the light (shining in the dark) is only obvious to those who can see it - the blind cannot see it (no matter how clearly it shines)" (Richards (2021), p. 196). From the perspective of 'spiritual blindness', revelation is necessary for "eyes" to be opened (Isa 29:18; Isa 35:5; Isa 44:18).

¹⁶ "Evangelizing means 'proclaiming the Good News with power [...] it implies activity and process, in a continuous aspect of life" (Guder (2023); p. 133).

¹⁷ "One should translate *ekklēsia* not by church, but by people of God" (BROADUS, 1949, p. 255 *apud* Bentho (2010), p. 89-90).

¹⁸ "From the Greek, *Petros*, which means 'stone' [...] Simon was his name properly - Peter is a nickname given by Jesus (Matt 16:18) [...] he was also known by other names such as *Kepha* (Cephas), the Aramaic word for 'stone'" (Brand et al. (2018), p. 1290).

¹⁹ "Despite Peter's leadership and his prominent position, James (Jesus' brother) took over the leadership of the Church (Acts 15) [...] even though Peter was active [...] Paul became the 'apostle to the Gentiles' (Acts 14; 16-28) [...] Peter died as a martyr in Rome under Nero, probably in the year 64 or 65 of the Christian era (1Clement 5:1-6.1)" (Brand et al. (2018), p. 1291).

in Aramaic²⁰) that has dominated biblical interpretation, and still resists today" (Bentho (2010), p. 89).

According to (Bentho (2010), p. 84), the emphasis is not on the identity of the Church, but mainly on Peter's position in early Christianity - "there are three currents still established: i) Jesus being the Stone (traditional interpretation); ii) the stone being Peter's confession (reformed interpretation); iii) Peter being the stone (modern interpretation)" (Bentho (2010), p. 84).

The author observes that "the exegetical problem of Matthew 16:18 is not solved through dogma, but through analysis, hermeneutics and exegesis" (Bentho (2010), p. 84) - "it is accepted as an unquestionable foundation that Christ Jesus is the Builder of the Church and the Rock on which the Church is founded" (Bentho (2010), p. 85).

As quoted in (Bentho (2010), p. 90-91), Jesus presents the *ekklēsia* as His congregation, community or people. He Himself, being compared to a builder - "the metaphor is that of a builder (*oikodimos*) or owner who builds his house; and (this builder) is called *oikodespotēs*; that is, the administrator of the building (*oikodomia*)" (Bentho (2010), p. 90-91) - or, to a head of household *oikodespotēs*, the owner of the house; which is the 'house of God' (*bayît*, in reference to *bayît Israēl*²¹) (Heb 3:1-6)" (Bentho (2010), p. 91-92); and, "God, the builder of all things (Heb 3:4)" (Bentho (2010), p. 93).

Unfortunately, the Christian Church of the present day has focused on proclaiming the gospel by 'incomplete' message (which regards personal salvation as an end in itself), according to (Guder (2023), p. 25-26) - however, there are more far-reaching purposes of God²².

Also pointed out in (Guder (2023), p.20), divine self-revelation (a central emphasis in Christian thought) has been ignored (undervalued) since the beginning of modern critical thought (Enlightenment, 18th century) - "many Christian thinkers drastically reformulated the Christian faith (erroneously)" (Guder (2023), p. 20). Such churchmen were "unable to continue to accept the claim that God is personally involved in human history and can be known" (Guder (2023), p. 20) - a "(threatening) flaw" (Guder (2023), p. 21).

²⁰ "The word *petros* generally referred to a fragment of stone, separated from a solid stone (*petra*)" (TAYLOR, 1943, p. 258-259 *apud* Bentho (2010), p. 89); however, "the Peshito (Western Aramaic) translates, 'you are *kepha*, and on this *kepha*'" (BROADUS, 1949, p. 87 *apud* Bentho (2010), p. 89).

²¹ "Christ gave priority to proclaiming to the Jews. Thus, "the early Church was primarily Jewish and existed within Judaism (practiced at the time)" (Cairns (2008), p. 48). "The early Christians struggled to preserve their existence (their very life) and doctrinal purity" (Cairns (2008), p. 82). During 'the age of the Church', unfortunately, many peoples (some even called "Christians") began to discriminate against the Jewish people (giving in to brutality, cruelty, and evil) - "in the period from 70 AD to the present day, more than 13,000,000 Jews have lost their lives in wars and persecutions [...] in the period from 1939 to 1945 alone, 6,000,000 Jews were killed" (LIEBI, 2018, p. 99 and 114). "In Ricoeur's view, the Christian meaning of history does not lie in guilt, but on the plane of hope [...] because of the historical character of the 'invitation to revelation' (to all humanity), based on the manifestation of God's signs" (Bentho (2010), p. 192, 193, 197 and 198).

²² "The church is mystical, spiritual, but also human, anthropological. Its presence and nature are both divine and earthly [...] being made up of sinners (redeemed by Jesus)" (Bentho (2010), p. 48). As for "salvation, it is an ongoing event [...] awaiting its consummation in the fact that God brings all of history together in the completion of his purposes" (Guder (2023), p. 27).

"The Church can never forget its limitations and weaknesses²³ - sin is still a latent reality (Eph 4:13)" (Bentho (2010), p. 49) - but "the anthropological identity of the *ekklēsia* does not reduce its greatness²⁴, on the contrary, it translates it²⁵" (Bentho (2010), p. 49).

2.3. GOD IN THE TESTIMONY (AND HOMILETICS) OF THE STONES

"Rocks abound in biblical lands" (Champlin (2013), p. 718). "Stones are pieces of rock [...] like fragments of small size" (Champlin (2013), p. 156) - their importance to the people who lived in that region being "perfectly understandable" (Champlin (2013), p. 156).

"Stones served as important memorials [...] a memorial consists of something by which people have their memory jogged about some event or personality²⁶" (Champlin (2013), p. 216) - in Hebrew, the word is *azakarrah* (whose root means 'to sting', 'to thorn'), initially associated with sacrifices (in the sense of bringing to mind the essence of religious worship, like 'thorns', which 'thorn, penetrate or stimulate' the mind, as a reminder), according to (Champlin (2013), p. 216).

As cited in (Champlin (2013), p. 216), another word used for 'memorial' in Hebrew is *moemosunon*; which in the Septuagint, can have the meaning of 'simple memory' (I Clement 45:8; Ps 34:16) - "a cognate Greek word is *mnēma* (tomb), because it recalls, in a special way, some deceased²⁷ person [...] or *mneme* (memory)" (Champlin (2013), p. 216). "The stacking of stones in tombs referred to a ritual meaning of ancient peoples" (Lennox (2017), p. 199).

"The book of Joshua is central to the biblical message [...], it clarifies divine action; and its stories illustrate how God brings salvation²⁸" (Lennox (2017), p. 37). "In Greek, the names Joshua and Jesus are identical (Lennox (2017), p. 39).

In the narrative of the crossing of the Jordan, the building of memorial stones stands out (Josh 4:1-9) - "because of the nature of God (someone who promises and

²³ "Fortunately, there were (and are) many articulate interpreters of Christian thought who did not join the exodus on the classical understanding of faith, who did not conclude that modern scientific insight must mean the rejection of what is divine, personal, and transcendent" (Guder (2023), p. 20-21).

²⁴ "According to Pascal, true religion is that which allows us to know our innermost nature, its greatness, insignificance and the reason for both; for the French scientist and theologian, the Christian faith is the only one that allows this knowledge" (PASCAL, 2007, p. 173 *apud* Bentho (2010), p. 49-50).

²⁵ Even though "only a small minority of Christians have obeyed the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8) in every generation" (Richardson (2008), p. 228), "this small minority has been, for two thousand years, the most powerful factor in all of history" (Richardson (2008), p. 228).

²⁶ "Memorials served [...] to inspire men to acts of justice; to preserve the memory of things that God approves (aiming at learning) [...]. In addition to the stones, there were memorials: books (Exod 17:14), festivities (Exod 12:14 and 1Cor 11:24), and 'special days' (the Saturday served as a memorial, Exod 20:8)" (Champlin (2013), p. 216).

²⁷ "The tombs were memorials [...] they recalled the fact that man is an immortal being" (Champlin (2013), p. 216).

²⁸ There is criticism - "many readers [...] shudder at the violence present in it" (Lennox (2017), p. 37). However, the characterization of Israel is that of a group of nomads in the desert, an inferior people (Lennox (2017), p. 45-46) - which exalts and characterizes: the God of this people; His theological complexity (God, good or bad?); and His supernaturally-miraculous and historical-interventionist power (Lennox (2017), p. 47-49 and 58). (Lennox (2017), p. 49, 52, 67 and 74-77) also notes that the Bible cannot be read in a cultural vacuum, nor outside of a redemptive plan (fallen world). As for God's goodness (expressed in long-suffering and mercy, before the 'foretold' tragedy), the prostitute character-Raab (and her family) is an example of conversion to the God of Israel (Lennox (2017), p. 101-103).

fulfills), it was important for Israel to have a good memory²⁹" (Lennox (2017), p. 116 and 123) - "the use of stones as a 'sign' means much more (than just stones³⁰)" (ALDEN, 1980, p. 18 *apud* Lennox (2017), p. 117).

In the conquest and colonization of Canaan, a specific 'role' in which stones were used was that of 'witness' (of the renewal of the covenant in relation to God) (Josh 24:26-27), according to (Lennox (2017), p. 348-349) - since, "the Lord had heard all that had been promised" (Lennox (2017), p. 349), the presence of the great stone (silent at that moment) would testify against the people of Israel about the breaking of the promise - as if the stone were 'endowed with personality' in order to play this role, according to (Champlin (2001), p. 987). In fact, it's an interesting³¹ association.

"In a number of cases in the Old Testament, the word 'testimony' (in the Septuagint, *marturía*³²) refers to the decalogue, as a clear affirmation of God's will (Exod 25:16,21)" (Champlin (2013), p. 407).

According to the biblical collection, all creation listens (not just stones) - "being created by a command" (Spurgeon (2020), p. 1108), and can express itself - "for it must express praise" (Spurgeon (2020), p. 1109) (Ps 148:5; Ps 19:1-4; Gen 1:1). The act of 'expressing oneself' points to the idea of communication (in this case, from creation³³) - "communication is a process [...] in which the analysis of context is superimposed on content" (Mattelart & Mattelart (2012), p. 70). "By describing the functioning of different modes of behavior in a given context, the emergence of meaning³⁴ is apprehended" (Mattelart & Mattelart (2012), p. 70).

As quoted in (Stott (2006), p. 146 and 361) communication (transmission of a message) given by God to people 'builds bridges' [...] between 'chasms of mutual incomprehension' (for example, between divine revelation and human experience).

²⁹ "As well as serving as a memorial, the stones also visibly represent the new owners of the land (flags planted in the conquered territory)" (Lennox (2017), p. 117).

³⁰ "The Hebrew word for 'sign' is used to describe God's miracles, particularly those worked during the exodus (Exod 7:3; Deut 6:22; Josh 24:17; Ps 78:43)" (Lennox (2017), p. 117).

³¹ "The supernatural appeals to the imagination" (Magalhães Filho (2011), p. 27). "Those who speak of things that cannot be known by the senses will have to use metaphors to make their discourse intelligible" (Magalhães Filho (2011), p. 29). "Metaphor is a linguistic phenomenon common to all mankind" (Magalhães Filho (2011), p. 32).

³² "There is a certain variety of meanings in the Bible for the word testimony and its verbal cognates - in the Old Testament there are three Hebrew words involved: i) *edah* (used twenty-six times); ii) *ed* (used sixty-nine times); iii) *teudah* (occurs three times) - in the New Testament, there are three Greek words cited: i) *martúron* ('testimony', a Greek noun used twenty times); ii) *diamartúromai* ('testify widely', a Greek verb used fifteen times); and iii) *epimarturéo* ('testify beyond', a Greek verb used only once)" (Champlin (2013), p. 406-407).

³³ "Enlightenment rationalism restricted the imaginary in theology [...] only the restoration of the role of the imaginary will make it possible for God to be recognized once again as the One who causes us astonishment and fascination" (Magalhães Filho (2011), p. 11).

³⁴ "According to Pierce, there are three types of signs: the icon, the index and the symbol. The first resembles its object (like a model or a map). It is a sign that would possess the character that makes it significant, even if its object had no existence (just as a pencil scratch represents a geometric line). The index, on the other hand, is a sign that would lose everything that makes it a sign if its object were removed, but would not lose this character if there were no interpreter. Example: a license plate with the mark of a bullet impact as a sign of a gunshot. For without the shot there would be no impact. But there was indeed an impact, whether or not anyone had the idea of attributing it to a gunshot. A symbol is a sign that is conventionally associated with its object, just like words or traffic signs - it would lose the character that makes it a symbol if there were no interpreter. From this perspective, thought or knowledge consists of a network of signs capable of self-production *ad infinitum*" (PEIRCE, 1991 *apud* Mattelart & Mattelart (2012), p. 34-35).

By approaching the technique, Shannon considered the 'communication process' to respond to a linear scheme (mathematical theory of communication³⁵) - however, "his theory absolutely failed to take into account the significance of signals, the meaning attributed to them by the recipient and the intention behind their emission" (SHANNON, 1948 *apud* Mattelart & Mattelart (2012), p. 58-61). "The essence of communication lies in relational and interactional processes [...] through a succession of messages (logic of communication)" (WATZLAWICK, 1967 *apud* Mattelart & Mattelart (2012), p. 69-70). (Guinda (2003), p. 224-233) cites Watzlawick's (1967) model of communication in five rules³⁶.

"Communication is a characteristic aspect of preaching" (Guinda (2003), p. 234) - and homiletics³⁷ should show the ways to improve the 'art of preaching': *who* preaches, and *what* (the role of the preacher), *to whom* (the role of the community of listeners), *for what* (the purpose), and *how* (verbal, non-verbal or paraverbal language), according to Guinda (Guinda (2003), p. 14).

(Gonçalves (2023), p. 15) considers it necessary to understand the concept of preaching as the Word of God - "God speaks [...] and communicates His will" (Champlin (2013), p. 16 and 18).

Regarding divine statements: "what God has said will have fulfillment, given His power to make what has been said come true" (Champlin (2013), p. 18-19); that is, "the Word of God is historical [...] in the dynamic sense (makes history)" (Champlin (2013), p. 19).

The New Testament presents a new revelation of "God in Christ Jesus man" (Stern (2008), p. 181-182).

There is a concept referring to the expression 'Word of the Lord' - *dabar*, in Hebrew, from the root *dbar* (*deu*); *logos* and *rêma*, in Greek - according to (Champlin (2013), p. 18): "the root of the word refers to the idea of 'that which is behind' [...] involving both a noetic (thought) and a dynamic (power) element" (Champlin (2013), p. 18) - by "the link between a thought and its power (or action), one considers not only what is written (the words), but also the actions they represent" (Champlin (2013), p. 18).

Regarding God's action, "His power to act is communicated to creatures [...] and thus we recognize it in nature" (Silva (2023), p. 38). Attributing the idea of a *superactive power* to God³⁸, Tomás de Aquino argues that the human mind cannot approach God, except by resembling His effects, as (Silva (2023), p. 149) discusses -

³⁵In reality, communication is a stochastic process, affected by random phenomena, between a sender and a recipient, according to (Mattelart & Mattelart (2012), p. 59-60).

³⁶ These are: "i) it is impossible not to communicate (communication also encompasses non-verbal messages and paralinguistic phenomena); ii) the content having meaning in the message, considering the aspect of this relationship - by intersubjectivity/metacommunication (expression of feelings for the understanding of the content, depending on the intention of the sender); iii) communication can be analog and digital (in digital mode, by verbal language; and in analog mode, the information is coded in signs that allow only an approximate, indirect or figurative presentation (non-verbal and paraverbal communication); iv) symmetrical and complementary communication (it deals with the power and influence that the interlocutors have); v) self-revelation and demand (through non-verbal clues, the sender gradually communicates their identity)" (Guinda (2003), p. 224-233).

³⁷ "Homiletics is the theology of ecclesial preaching. To the didactic function of preaching is also added a soteriological function: it is the word of salvation (not just the bearer of knowledge)" (Guinda (2003), p. 13).

³⁸ Power in relation to act [...] understood as active potency (which corresponds to the way in which a 'thing' operates - a principle of action), or as passive potency (which provides 'the thing' to reach its perfection, through its material cause), as quoted in (Silva (2023), p. 147-148) - "as the superactive power (of God) belongs to the Being that is 'existence itself', it has no limit, that is, this Being is omnipotent" (Silva (2023), p. 150). "There is nothing that God cannot do [...] God's power is expressed/defined with the object itself, which is everything" (Silva (2023), p. 152).

"God can do what is impossible [...] logical possibility should not be taken as the real possibility (and does not limit the real power) for God" (Silva (2023), p. 151).

In order to understand the "universal creative action of God" (Silva (2023), p. 21), the author considered analyzing the concepts of cause and causality³⁹ in this matter, arguing that "God depends on the natural order to act, yes, but he also acts as natural⁴⁰ causes" (Silva (2023), p. 19). "As for the actions that God performs, some are immanent (the direct actions of God's will and intellect) and others are transitory (indirect or direct, which can be understood as *ad extra Dei*⁴¹)" (Silva (2023), p. 152-167).

Given the contemporary⁴² debate, a group of scholars (philosophers, theologians, physicists, cosmologists, biologists, neuroscientists, etc.) dedicated themselves to the problem of providential divine action in nature, starting with the *Divine Action Project*⁴³, in which the notions of general and special divine action were clearly defined - a) General Divine Action (GDA): refers to God's actions that pertain to all creation universally and simultaneously (initial creation and the maintenance of scientific regularity and the laws of nature); and, b) Special Divine Action (SDA): refers to God's actions that pertain to specific times and places in the world (including the traditional understanding of miracles, the notion of particular providence, answers to prayers of intercession, etc.⁴⁴) - as quoted in (Silva (2023), p. 62-64).

"Regarding the miracle of the crossing of the Jordan, signaled by stones, Joshua considered it a demonstration of God's great power (Josh 4:24⁴⁵)" (Lennox (2017),

³⁹ "Current treatises and discourses on causality tend to be framed as metaphysical discourses" (Silva (2023), p. 26). "There are four metaphysical constants: i) the omnipotence of God; ii) the providential action of God in the created universe (by objective and direct action in nature); iii) the autonomy of nature in its activity (in an orderly and regular way, as can be known empirically); and iv) the success of natural reason and science (which can present them in some rational and naturalistic way)" (Silva (2023), p. 56) - "the plausible way of keeping these four principles together is by affirming divine omnipotence (radical omnipotence, in Tomás de Aquino)" (Silva (2023), p. 57).

⁴⁰ "God is present with his power in every natural event and in every natural process" (Silva (2023), p. 24) - also, "God's omnipotence does not challenge the possibility of real causality for creatures, thus rejecting any notion of divine withdrawal from the world" (Silva (2023), p. 25), since, "if God were to withdraw, everything that exists would cease to exist" (Silva (2023), p. 25).

⁴¹ Implied: "a) in 'creation' (in relation to the continuity of its existence in the Creator Himself, by total dependence - God is the essence of the creature, not only in a past moment, but in all time); b) by means of secondary causes, given that an action in nature refers to the acting of God Himself - the things that God creates receive a portion of His perfection, so there are 'created powers' (subordinate, but of free initiative) that fully operate; and, indirectly, God is working (allowing) in every operation of every created natural thing - the concept is complex, but the perspective is that of preserving the order of things in the end, by divine sovereignty; and, c) as miracles (actions that God performs in nature, without nature)" (Silva (2023), p. 152-167).

⁴² "The debate is guided by at least two convictions: a) the three great monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) affirm that God is present and providentially guides the universe (and does not withdraw from the history of the world); and, b) the natural world as described by science is an ordered world (every event seems to have a natural cause) - two assertions that seem to exclude each other" (Silva (2023), p. 18).

⁴³ "Co-sponsored by the Vatican Observatory and the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences (CTNS) in California. Led by the American theologian (and physicist) Robert John Russell" (Silva (2023), p. 61). "The basic idea among the proposals put forward is that nature offers, at least at some level of reality, indeterminacy, openness, potentiality and contingency available to God. This natural character means that nature offers insufficient events to cause new events in the future; or, on the contrary, events that are not sufficiently caused by previous events" (Silva (2023), p. 65).

⁴⁴ "They include: i) the expression of some revelatory insight (spiritual or moral) into the nature and meaning of reality; ii) miracles of an exceptional kind (physical results altered by suspending the laws of physics, or actions that directly influence physical conditions)" (Silva (2023), p. 63-64).

⁴⁵ "In the book of Joshua, the memorial of the twelve stones [...], invested with an explanation, would remind the future Israelites of the miraculous divine intervention. Without this explanation, the memorial was nothing more than a 'pile of stones'. While signs and memorials are crucial for us to remember God's work in our lives, their effectiveness depends on testimony" (Lennox (2017), p. 117-118).

p. 122-123). The incredible impact of this miracle generated fear, perhaps for salvation, taking the case of Rahab as a basis, who "became aware of God's great power and stopped following other gods to follow the Eternal (Josh 2:9-13)" (Lennox (2017), p. 123).

"God is continually active in the universe"⁴⁶ (Silva (2023), p. 197). However, "God's action remains hidden from science (ontological concealment of cause) [...] God himself being, for our senses, the most hidden and secret cause, who acts immanently in creation" (Silva (2023), p. 79 and 171).

"An earthquake is the shaking, shifting, eruption and vibration of the earth, in underground rocky areas, with corresponding reflections on the surface of the planet" (Champlin (2013), p. 389). Earthquakes always leave people perplexed (not knowing for sure their cause), because areas that everyone thought were free from this seismic activity suddenly, without the slightest explanation, produce some great tremor⁴⁷ (Champlin (2013), p. 389) - "an earthquake is mentioned in connection with the crucifixion of Jesus (Matt. 27:51-54), and another, the resurrection (Matt. 28:2)" (Champlin (2013), p. 390).

There may be a message to be communicated (Champlin (2013), p. 390) (for example, in a context of signs, in relation to the *parousia* or second coming of Christ)⁴⁸ - "the predictions concerning our time indicate that, as the end of our age draws near, earthquakes will become the horror of men [...] Christians for centuries have talked about the coming of the great Tribulation soon" (Champlin (2013), p. 390).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There is an account in Luke's gospel (New Testament) of what has traditionally been called the 'triumphal entry', according to (Neale (2015), p. 229) - "the people shouted an acclamation to Jesus as King: 'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! (Luke 19:38, quoting Ps 118:26)" (EVANS & SANDERS (1993), p. 140-154 *apud* Neale (2015), p. 229).

But in the same crowd, Pharisees admonished Jesus to rebuke his disciples (Luke 19:39) - "He replied that 'creation itself would speak' if they were silent: 'I tell you,' he replied, 'if they are silent, the stones will cry out' (Luke 19:40)" (Neale (2015), p. 229). "Jesus comment about stones 'speaking out' suggests that all

⁴⁶ "The importance of the special divine action approach in the current debate lies in these special divine actions being important" (Silva (2023), p. 204). "The signs of God are in the irreligiosity of a world that declares itself to be religious, despite being desacralized" (Benthó (2023), p. 192).

⁴⁷ "Seismic shocks can occur: i) without men feeling anything (the majority are never felt, otherwise, exclusively by scientists); ii) they can be felt, but without causing any material damage; or iii) can destroy both property and human life - "On average, every year there is a truly large earthquake, ten major ones, a hundred destructive ones, a thousand that produce some damage, ten thousand low-intensity shocks that produce negligible damage, and a hundred a thousand shocks that only scientific devices are capable of registering [...] In fact, the earth shakes all the time [...] there is no region on the planet that can be considered immune to this phenomenon" (Champlin (2013), p. 389-390 & Ferreira (2022)).

⁴⁸ Regarding the *Mashiach*, "the original author of the messianic prophecies is *YHWH*" (LIEBI, 2018, p. 16); that is, God knows who he is (by his foreknowledge, not predetermination). However, "the reality of prophecy does not exclude freedom of choice by will, and its corresponding responsibility" (Liebi (2018), p. 16). "The early Church saw in Jesus the revelation of the divine plan for obedient human life, for fidelity to God and His call, and for ministry from one person to another as representatives of God's care and gracious presence" (Guder (2023), p. 41). But God's revelation in Jesus is progressive (Stern (2008), p. 98-101 & Guthrie (2011), p. 50-51); thus, "it is historical, unfinished and irreligious, because history continues its march, even with the closing of the canon" (Benthó (2023), p. 190). It is important to note: "the beast (antichrist) will be given temporary authority to exercise dominion over every tribe, people, tongue and nation (Rev. 13:7)" (Richardson (2008), p. 181), (also Rev 13:16-18; Rev 14:9-11).

creation joined in recognizing His anointing as rightful King. If those whom God created in his image did not cry out, it would not change the fact that Jesus was King (creation itself would proclaim the truth⁴⁹)" (Neale (2015), p. 230).

In this passage, the expression used by Jesus about 'the cry of the stones' is only quoted in the Gospel of Luke⁵⁰ - a peculiar writing among the others⁵¹ - however, "the reference to 'stones' (Luke 19:40) offers intertextual echoes" (Neale (2015), p. 230⁵²); for example, in relation to seismic tremors (earthquakes), as signs of Christ's return (Christian theological perspective⁵³).

"Jesus' teaching confused the crowd, especially about the future⁵⁴" (Richards (2021), p. 75-76) - based on Matthew's Gospel, the disciples raised important questions: i) 'what sign (semeion) will there be of the end of the world?' (answered in Matt 24:4-25); ii) about Jesus' return, 'what sign will there be of the coming?' (answered in Matt 24:26-35); and, iii) 'when will these things be?' (answered in Matt 24:36-41) - as quoted in (Richards (2021), p. 76). In better perspective (Table 1):

Table 1

Table 1 Attention - Last Divine Signs to Humanity (Isa 7:14; Luke 2:34; Matt 12:39-40).

Signs of <i>Jesus' coming and the end of the world</i>	- [...] (marked by suffering/loss) - earthquakes (plural, more than one) - worldwide reach in terms of preaching the Gospel ⁵⁵
Sign of the beginning of <i>the end of the world</i> (specifically)	"Will begin with the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 8:13; Dan. 9:27; Dan. 11:31; Dan. 11:36; Dan. 12:11), about 'the abomination of desolation' (Matt. 24:15)" (Richards (2021), p. 76 and 77).

⁴⁹ "If the moral and spiritual greatness of Jesus' actions surpassed that of any other man, his weakness (relative to his appearance, poverty and suffering) made it difficult to contemplate the omnipotent Being" (Magalhães Filho (2011), p. 26).

⁵⁰ "Verses 39 and 40 appear exclusively in Luke, although they are a reflection of similar occurrences, expressed in similar terms, in the passages of John 12:14 and Matt 21:15" (Champlin (2002), p. 189). With regard to the account of the 'triumphal entry', all four evangelists quote it (Matt 21:1-16; Mk 11:1-11; Lk 19:28-44; and, John 12:12-29).

⁵¹ "Luke makes a special statement: he himself had been 'thoroughly informed of everything [about Jesus' life] from the beginning (Lk 1:1-4) [...] Luke interviewed many informants who were eyewitnesses" (Richards (2021), p. 133). "An eyewitness is very important in cases where authentication is required" (Champlin (2013), p. 406).

⁵² Neale (2015; 230) deals more directly with the intertextual echo in relation to Isaiah: "On several occasions Luke refers to Isa 8:14,15 (Lk 7:23; 17:1-4 and 2:24)" (Neale (2015), p. 230).

⁵³ On this subject, Jesus' 'prophetic sermon' deals specifically with 'earthquakes' in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke (Matt 24:7; Mk 13:8; and Lk 21:11). And in the three gospels cited, the prelude to this sermon points to a comment about 'stones' (Matt 24:1-2; Mk 13:1-2; Lk 21:5-6). There is also intertextuality with the book of Revelation (Rev 6:12; Rev 11:13).

⁵⁴ "About a hidden realm of the heart, marked by a 'secret relationship' with God the Father ... [...] Jewish writings from the second century BC describe the 'present age' (*olam hazzeh*); and the following period, beginning with the 'days of the Messiah', as the 'age to come' (*atid labho*), leading to the 'world to come' (*olam habba*)" (Richards (2021), p. 75-76).

⁵⁵ Regarding the preaching of the Gospel (global reach): i) it is not specified *who* would perform this function, *how*, nor *when* it would take place/complete - it is understood that, until shortly 'before the end of the world', the particularity of this sign may have its fulfillment; and ii) there is no expectation of 'acceptance of the message' proclaimed (only that of its preaching, as a 'testimony' to the people). However, "what justifies the existence of the church in the world is the fulfillment of the mission that God delegated it to fulfill" (Bentho (2010), p. 16) - also, in Rev 11:3 two witnesses will proclaim the Word of the Lord. Regarding the effectiveness of preaching: "his proclamation includes the theme of repentance, therefore, the listening world may disregard the message. Faith cannot be produced as a manipulated result of the proclamation, just as the farmer cannot make the seed sprout once it is planted" (Guder (2023), p. 135).

Temporal sign (about the coming of Jesus) "The rest of chapter 24 and the whole of chapter 25 of Matthew develop a single theme. Until Jesus actually returns, God's people (Jews and Gentiles) must remain alert, always ready [...] it could be at any moment (Matt 24:42-44; Matt 24:45-51; Matt 25:1-13; Matt 25:14-30; Matt 25:31-46)" (Richards (2021), p. 76).

Source Adapted from (Richards (2021), p. 76-77 and 123-125).

"A sign is a symbol, action, or occurrence that points to something beyond itself" (Brand et al. (2018), p. 1568). However, although "signs can be a verification of God's presence and power at work [...] they can be falsified"⁵⁶ (Brand et al. (2018), p. 1569) - historical-contextual analysis is necessary for proper verification⁵⁷.

Considering the context of 'signs of the coming of Jesus and the end of the world' (on a temporal scale, with increasing frequency and intensity⁵⁸), the 'cry of the stones' (symbolic reference to earthquakes) provides the meaning of a message that points for the Creator Himself, for His testimony (and power⁵⁹) – for the plausibility of the event at a global level⁶⁰, such information would also be passed on to all people.

By analogy, there would be communication (like 'the speaking' of God) via stones⁶¹ – in fact, "language combines with ritual acts and symbols in the expression of a sacred cosmos" (Luckmann (2014), p. 82), according to comparative table (Table 2):

Table 2

Table 2 The Testimony and Homiletics of the Stones (Lk 19:39-40; Matt 24:7; Rev 6:12 & Rev 11:13)			
Someone said (<i>who</i>)	The preacher	The crowd (at the entrance to Jerusalem)	The stones
Something (<i>what</i>)	The content	Expression of praise "Hosanna to the Son of David" (Richards (2021), p. 68, 120, 184).	Expression of praise (Ps 148:5; Ps 19:1-4) (Spurgeon (2020), p. 1109).
To other (<i>to whom</i>)	Listener community	The crowd (at the entrance to Jerusalem)	For all people (a crowd)

⁵⁶ "About half of the references to signs in Revelation refer to those who will be executed by the 'beast from the earth' and the 'false prophet' (Rev 13:13,14; Rev 16:14; Rev 19:20)" (Brand et al. (2018), p. 1569).

⁵⁷ Another issue to note is the manipulation of the post-evangelization message: "the possibility of evangelization is, at the same time, the opportunity for the distortion, reduction or even heretical perversion of the gospel" (Guder (2023), p. 137).

⁵⁸ "The original expressions of *revelation* have the power of specific manifestation insofar as they are taken together" (Bentho (2010), p. 191).

⁵⁹ "Nature can show us what kinds of attributes God possesses (especially those of omnipotence and sovereignty)" (Magalhães Filho (2011), p. 40). However, a relevant observation about 'spiritual discernment' stands out: there may be, for example, a supernatural demonstration of "some power" for exhibitionism, or, mere destruction/deaths (not associated with cause-consequence of sin; not previously announced/prophesied), according to 1 Kings 19:11 ("... after the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake") and Job 1.19 ("... when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house").

⁶⁰ "A plausible description of divine providential action in nature is possible, without this being contrary to natural causality" (Silva (2023), p. 29).

⁶¹ In Tomás de Aquino, the way in which something must be said about God from natural things is by means of analogy or proportion, as presented by (Silva (2023), p. 144-145).

In a language	Intelligible ⁶² language	Acclamation (verbal)	Revelatory <i>insight</i> (symbolic acclamation)
With what intention (for what)	Purpose	"Jesus acclaimed as King" (Richards (2021), p. 68).	Signal the 2 nd coming of the King (God, in Christ) and the approaching end of the world

Source: Adapted from (Guinda (2003), p. 21).

4. CONCLUSION

"When God speaks, His word [...] actively intervenes in human activities" (Champlin (2013), p. 19 and 20) - "no one can be inattentive [...] and remain blameless" (Champlin (2013), p. 20).

However, through symbolic language, "through the expression of revelatory insight into the nature and meaning of reality" (Silva (2023), p. 63-64); considering the 'stones' (icon sign), and the 'actions of God - cry of the stones' (index sign); there may not be perfect signification⁶³, but the character of the message is guaranteed (there will be an idea about the expression of testimony), even if there is no interpreter (Mattelart & Mattelart (2012), p. 34-35).

"The analysis of symbolic systems is not an experimental science in search of laws, but an interpretative science in search of meanings" (GEERTZ, 1973 *apud* Mattelart & Mattelart (2012), p. 152) - God acting in human history (for some reason), in this case⁶⁴.

"The Abrahamic covenant did not mark the first time that God revealed himself to man through direct divine communication" (Richardson (2008), p. 171) - the relationship between Abraham and Jesus of Nazareth (his descendant, born 1,900 years after him) was reaffirmed by the same (God, in Christ), and continued the perspective of the Abrahamic covenant in world history (*special revelation*, now characterizing *general revelation*), according to (Richardson (2008), p. 183).

"If there is any testimony in *general revelation* about *special revelation*, there is a theoretical possibility of salvation by faith [...] Paul seems to be open to this possibility (Rom. 10:18,20) [...] but it is questionable" (ERICKSON, 1983, p. 170-173 *apud* Willmington (2015), p. 371-372).

However, witness (for example, of God 'in the stones') can "open a window onto the Word" (GEISLER, 1998, p. 307 *apud* Willmington (2015), p. 258) - a perspective that would contribute to world evangelization⁶⁵.

⁶² Regarding the 'cry of the stones': "God's intervention in nature is something that is completely intelligible and, *Aquino* would argue, almost necessary. It is intelligible because it is the order of nature that depends on God, and not God who depends on the created order. And it is almost necessary because, speaking eschatologically, the goal of these miraculous interventions is human salvation, which, for *Tomás de Aquino*, cannot be achieved by human means alone" (Silva (2023), p. 170).

⁶³ "Meaning is never a relationship between a sign and what the other sign means (its object). Meaning results from a triadic relationship (the sign, the object and the interpreter)" (Mattelart & Mattelart (2012), p. 34).

⁶⁴ For *Tomás de Aquino*, when God does something beyond the course (order of nature) [...] He does not set aside the whole order of the universe, but the order of some particular cause for its particular effect. And he does this only if this action is in the direction of a good that is in direct order, to achieve the salvation of some particular beings" (Silva (2023), p. 168).

⁶⁵ From this perspective, the method to be employed seems extreme - but, since it refers to the communication of a message of eternal salvation (Guder (2023), p. 83), plausible. "Jesus' concern for the future evangelization of Gentile peoples was incessant" (Richardson (2008), p. 204).

In fact, "since in *special revelation* God's direct communication takes place through His 'written' Word, and also through His 'living' Word" (Willmington (2015), p. 371-374) - there are many methods⁶⁶. "Communication, characteristic of preaching" (Guinda (2003), p. 234) "can be analogical (non-verbal or paraverbal)" (Guinda (2003), p. 229), for example - because "the concept of biblical preaching is not entirely clear [...] what is decisive is that it is in accordance with the Gospel" (Guinda (2003), p. 28 & Guinda (2003), p. 135) (Figure 1 and Figure 2)⁶⁷:

Figure 1



Figure 1 A "gaze" (Num 21:6-9).

Source Own authorship.

"God's history with his creation is mysterious beyond speculation [...] but crystal clear in its basic purpose [...] for a message of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:19-20)" (Guder (2023), p. 64). "The Holy Spirit has (untapped) resources for communicating the gospel" (Guder (2023), p. 85). "God is still completing salvation history" (Guder (2023), p. 82).

⁶⁶For example, God 'has already spoken' (living Word): "i) directly to men (to the patriarchs; to the great leaders; to the kings of Israel; to the prophets of Israel); ii) through a still, small voice (1 Kings 19:11-12); iii) through angels; iv) through signs and miracles (Exod 3:1-4; Judg 6:36-40; Isa 38:1-8); v) through dreams; vi) through visions; vii) through the Urim and Thummim; viii) through the casting of lots; ix) through the cloud of glory (*shekinah*); x) through a donkey (Num. 22:28); xi) through Christophanies in the Old Testament; xii) through the very incarnation of Jesus, the Christ (John 1:18; 12:45; 14:9-10; Heb 1:1-2)" (Willmington (2015), p. 371-373).

⁶⁷The analogy refers to 'salvation' (from separation from God/spiritual death) through a 'gaze' (universal symbol of 'cry for mercy') directed at 'Jesus' (spiritual dimension) - "just as the Israelites were saved from the plague of serpents (symbol of judgment) when they gazed upon the bronze serpent (symbol of salvation) raised by *Mosheh* (Num. 21:6-9)" (Stern (2008), p. 192-193; Richards (2021), p. 205 & FILLION, 2016, p. 107-108). "Images (metaphorical language) are always inferior to the reality dealt with [...] For example, biblical images of heaven/hell are characterized by a lack of vocabulary regarding transcendence. Heaven is more marvelous than it can be portrayed, just as hell is more terrible than it can be represented" (Magalhães Filho (2011), p. 23). The New Testament refers to 'heavens' (more than one - 2 Cor. 12:2) as well as, at the end of the eschatology, to the 'new heaven and new earth' (Rev 21:1).

Figure 2

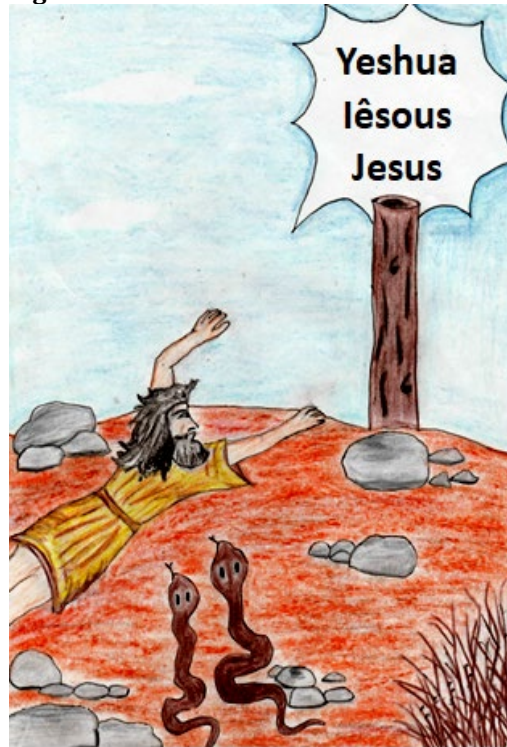


Figure 2 A "spiritual gaze" (John 3:12-21; Luke 23:38; & John 19:19-22).

Source Own authorship.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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