

After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity by Mirosalv Volf.
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Introduction:

1. Today, faith lived ecclesially is being replaced by faith lived individualistically. Process of 'congregationalisation' of all Christianity. Cf. differentiation of modern societies. Religion has become a commodity, with individuals determining their own social roles. Once, unbelief was a private matter, now belief is such. But the Church must not allow this culture to dominate its own culture. Those outside must be able to understand something of our language, but not determine it.

2. Postconfessional Christianity is emerging where old denominational labels are less significant. Plurality of models more acceptable - this is legitimate and desirable as sign of vitality of church, ever flexible and alive.

PART ONE

1. Ratzinger: Communion and the Whole

The Church is the communion between the human 'I' and the divine 'thou' in a universally communal 'we'.

1.1. Faith and Communion

The act of faith incorporates human beings into the community. Faith is sustained by that community. Trinity is social and invites us into fellowship - becoming community.

Faith is not a matter of individual and God, but the community. Individual allows self to be taken up.

1.2. Sacrament and Communion

We are corporeal, so Body of Christ constituted through the sacraments. Sacraments show that faith is of God and not subject to our control. Baptism steps us out of isolation to become ecclesial beings. The great universal Church is expressed in its local parts.

1.6. Trinitarian and Ecclesial Communion:

Purely relational understanding of human and divine personhood.

He maintains "an all embracing dominance of oneness" of substance.

So the perichoresis functions as model for ecclesial spirituality not ecclesial structures. So a monistic structure of Church emerges.

He understands God and the Church from the perspective of the *Whole* (substance) so structures are hierarchical. Father is pure, so hierarchs must be pure.

2. Zizioulas: Communion, One and Many

Eucharist stands at very centre.

2.1. The Ontology of Person

West understood 'One substance, three persons' to mean God first is the one God and then exists as three persons. This left them with monism. The Cappadocians said that **God's being coincides with God's personhood**. Cappadocians identified substance (*hypostasis, substantia*) with person (*prosopon, persona*). Being was not an absolute category in itself for them, but the person constitutes being and enables entities to be entities. The Person is relational and can only exist in communion. Human beings can only really become persons by participating in God's personhood.

BUT: Z. goes on to postulate that the person of the Father is monarch, source and constitutes the other persons. Without this postulate he fears the unity of the three persons would be lost unless that is he went back to the western notion and made essence the unifying feature. He

says, “the concept of hierarchy inheres in the idea of person.” But father cannot exist without So and HS.

2.2. Human Personhood

After the Fall, human beings are individuals and can only be persons when taken into communion with personal God through baptism, born again and the human hypostasis is altered by being born ‘from above’. Baptised *eis Christon* into Christ (Gal 3:27) as Christ is that corporate personality which Jesus is not. The Church can do this because it is pneumatically constituted as the Body of Christ, and because it does this to persons with an eschatological referent of becoming.. Person then lives through Eucharist and this relationship is ‘the truth’, is ‘salvation’. All this happens through grace and not from individual’s faith.

2.3. Community and Communities

Communion is the liturgical mode of life of the congregation. The many become one body. As Spirit prays so Christ and his Church are one. The fullness of the Church is to be found wherever the local congregation performs eucharist- where they “come together in one place” (ICor11:20) - so every local Church is the full Church in that place. It is an eschatological event of Catholicity - there is only One eucharist being celebrated. The local Church is the Catholic Church.

2.4. The Structure of the Communion

Local eucharist is identical with Heavenly liturgy of the one Eucharist. The bishop is ordained not to receive a charism but in order to become something within the eucharistic community. So the laity must answer “He is worthy Amen” to the ordaining bishops to show that all the Church places him. He functions as an *alter* Christ who unites the many within himself. SO the presence of the bishop is essential to Church. It is an asymmetrical relationship of communality that according to Z. attaches also to the Trinitarian persons.

All Bishops however are equal.

The laity

Baptism is accompanied by laying on of hands and so assigned a place in order in the Church. Ordination assigns a different place.

PART II

3. The Ecclesiality of the Church

1. Where is the Church

Orthodox episcopocentric since he alone can ensure presence of Christ in eucharist.

Free church says presence of Christ mediated through all members.

Church as Assembly where “**two or three are gathered**”.

Ratzinger prioritises the universal Church, Zizioulas the local. Surely both are Church by virtue of Spirit who makes them both into an anticipation of the Whole Church?

“in my name”

the Church gathers because it has some common understanding to proclaim.. that to which the apostles held fast. (Acts2:42) The name and commitment.

4. Faith, Person and Church

Protestant individualism or Catholic collectivism?

Whilst it is human being who believe, faith is not rooted in them alone, but God’s influence, either direct [protestants] or through community[catholics]

Free Church - from below; Catholic- from above. Surely HS and human being together?

God calls all generally but each specifically. Yet we are social beings who have to be with other beings. Without a human being, even God cannot create another human being.

Because God addresses us so we are 'addressed beings' and so can be social beings addressing other human beings and God. We become a Christian just as we become a human being from God.

5. Trinity and Church

Because we are fallen, our relationships cannot be as God's, and yet we are called to reflect the Glory of God and so should strive to live in accordance with the revealed Godhead. We cannot just model from God to us but Baptism relates us.

To think trinitarian terms is to escape dichotomy between universalisation and pluralisation.

God is the ground of both unity and multiplicity..

We are baptised into the Triune name as new persons, in anticipation.

John 17:21 presupposes communion with triune God.

The 'this-worldly' character of God's self-revelation makes it possible to convert trinitarian ideas into ecclesiological ideas. For a sojourning Church only a dynamic understanding of its correspondence to the Trinity is meaningful.

5.2. Trinity, Universal Church and local Church

Ratzinger: Substance of God over persons = universal Church over local.

Zizioulas: Just as in God's own being there is no substance behind the persons, so also in ecclesial being there is no universal church behind the local churches. Unity of God grounded in monarchy of Father: bishop as the communion factor in the local personal Church, since he guarantees the eucharist and so the presence of Christ.

Moltmann: "the persons themselves constitute both their differences and their unity."

5.3. Trinitarian Persons and the Church

R: Personhood is pure relationality. But the three persons dissolve into relations - Father becomes fatherhood etc. But each person must be a subject in its own right. Humans likewise are more than relations.

5.3.2. Perichoretic Personhood

John 10:38 etc: "the Father is in me and I am in the Father"

Pseudo-Cyril: Mutual internal abiding and interpenetration. determines the character of both the persons and their unity. One divine person carries also the others. The indwelling of other persons is the exclusive prerogative of God. But we can likewise become catholic persons and be in God if the Son allows it. It is not human beings who enter into communion of themselves however but always the HS who indwells them.

So, the structure of trinitarian relations is characterised neither by a pyramidal dominance of the one (R) nor by a hierarchical bipolarity between the one and the many (Z), but rather by a polycentric and symmetrical reciprocity of the many.

When Paul admonishes Church to unity (ICor:12:4-6) differing divine persons distribute gifts to all Christians. The gifts are nevertheless to the good of all (ICor12:7) and the same triune God is active in all the gifts. In the NT unity comes about through the activity of the one Spirit (and so trinity) in every person. Not till Ignatius does it become the task of the bishop.

6. Structures of the Church

6.1. Bishop or everyone?

Church is polycentric community: not a single object but a communion of interdependent subjects; mediation of grace not only through office holders but all members; church constituted not as institution but by communal confession.

Call comes to all in church, but which particular ministry determined by gifts given at any particular time. There are no members without charisma, the office holders/leaders must animate members to perform their charismatic activities and then coordinate them. Leaders are also responsible for a mature church.

6.2 The Trinity and Ecclesial Institutions

The argument runs that spirit is free, office is transmitted sacramentally and institutionally. If an institution is a 'stable structure of social interaction' then Trinity itself is institution. The Church should be characterised by symmetrical and decentralised distribution of power and freely affirmed interaction so as to be perichoretic. But love demands some structure in society. Love and Law can stand together in the church against lovelessness and lawlessness. The Church of Law is the pre-eschatological form of the Church of Love. Differences of church order must be expected as outcome of ecclesial enculturation.

Gifts and their reception: Church law must be structured so that all, one by one, may speak and be heard and in which others can test and thus all learn and be encouraged (ICor 14:29,33) The HS is unpredictable and our human knowledge limited so we can never be sure in our discernment of gifts. There is no infallible interpretation "for we know only in part" (I Cor 13:9-10), yet the divine revelation itself is not subject to revision.

6.3. Ordination: (NT is not much help)

Baptism makes us all priests, each realising their priesthood dependant upon specifically given charismata. All therefore equal. In every officeholder a certain dimension of the unity of the whole church comes to expression, and all together are signs of Church's unity. It is a threefold (not tri-level) ministry.

The charismata are gifts of the Spirit so depend neither on congregational delegation nor episcopal sacraments. Nevertheless, charisma of office, like all charismata, needs acknowledgement of the congregation in order to function as the charisma of office. Ordination is therefore a public and solemn conclusion of long ecclesial process of reception of the charismata given by God and focused on the local church as a whole. Ordination is not lifelong task necessarily since the charismata is revocable by the freely acting HS.

6.4. Ordination and election [selection]

"Never only from above and always also from below." We must assume that HS rules in the Church *both* through bishops (catholic order) and whole people (free church order)

Successful enculturation may demand hierarchical church (no other valid reason) but Ratzinger says democracy incompatible with discerning orders since HS is 'from above'. But this supposes that God gives gifts without human mediation and also that divine 'from above' equates with human 'from above'.

Since gifts are given to specific local church then local people should elect/select. They have that responsibility and authority through baptism. The sense of rightness should impose itself during the election and it should all be a God-led interaction with selectors. Single out those whom God has already chosen (cf. Acts 13:2) It must never be that the sacrament is offered as divine seal upon human choice. It must be performed with fasting and prayer.

This proves that polycentric model of Church will not be realised through structural changes but through vivifying presence of the HS.

7. The Catholicity of the Church

"All Churches want to be catholic, but each in their own way."

Free Church sins:

1. their unity lacks concrete form of unity (episcopate)
2. their holiness is exclusive of those who do not act and believe as they would wish.
3. their apostolicity lacks historic connection to whole church.

Catholic sins:

1. their unity lacks since they do not accept other churches.
2. their holiness is impaired since they will not admit fault
3. their apostolicity is faulty since it binds it to traditional formulae.

They deny their own particularity and so deny catholicity to other churches.

They should acknowledge “differentiated unity”.

Pluralisation or the priority of the One?

7.2. Catholic and New Creation:

‘Catholic’ came to mean spatial universality and then ‘correct’ faith.

Rev.21-22: Mutual indwelling of triune God in new heaven and earth. Salvation for one must include salvation for all. Salvation for humanity must include salvation for creation. The new Kingdom is not just redeemed Church, and the Church is only anticipatory, not arrived.

Pentecost (Acts 2) is primal catholic event removing the communication breach caused by language confusion - they did not return to speaking same one language (megalomaniacal Tower of Babel) but speaking *many languages*.

7.3. Catholicity and the local church

Catholicity of concrete visible churches is the point!

Marks will include:

relations to other churches; openness to difference; loyalty to apostolic tradition;

Catholicity and creation:

New creation does not require destruction of the old order as *ex nihilo* but through the latter’s rebirth.

Individuals become catholic as does the Church, for ‘if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation’. (2Cor5:17) One cannot be catholic alone, for salvation is social and saved human being is relational person.