

Tanya Yik-pui Au

## The Eucharist as a Cultural Critique: A Construction Based on the Eucharistic Theology of John D. Zizioulas

### Abstract

This article is a construction of the performance of the Eucharist as a cultural critique countering the issues of individualism, marginalization, consumerism and ecological abuse, based on the Eucharistic theology of John D. Zizioulas. First, the Eucharist is a “communion of otherness” to address the individualism which excludes others and fears otherness. Second, the Eucharist embodies a subversive asymmetry of power in the Trinity which challenges the derogatory asymmetric power relationship causing marginalization in the secular world. Third, the Eucharist is the *anphora*, the lifting up of the creation to counter the consumerist culture and ecological abuse. This work is part of the effort to establish a new relationship between the long tradition of the Eucharist and the existing cultural context.



Tanya Yik-pui Au is PhD Student at the Department of Religious Studies, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, China, Master in Theology at Emory University, Winner of Claude H. Thompson Award of the Emory University, United States of America

## Keywords

Eucharist, Zizioulas, Culture, Liturgy, Individualism, Marginalization, Consumerism, Ecological crisis

## Introduction

The Eucharist is a long received tradition of the Church. The inception of the Church and the Eucharist are inseparable. In the Orthodox tradition, the Eucharist “...was not the act of a pre-existing Church; it is an event *constitutive* of the being of the Church, *enabling* the Church to *be*. The Eucharist constituted the Church’s being.”<sup>1</sup> The Eucharist is the “life of *communion* with God” within the Trinity and is actualized in the eucharistic community;<sup>2</sup> it is the icon of the *eschaton*.<sup>3</sup> The Eucharist is a pre-eminent event or liturgy of the Church. However, how is this pre-eminent and long received tradition of the Church relevant to the existential situations in the culture? John D. Zizioulas has voiced out the need that:

Orthodoxy must begin to answer cultural questions not with ethics but with dogmas; that is, it must interpret its dogmatics existentially. The Orthodox Church must draw more and more its liturgical life, particularly the Eucharist. The Eucharist is not one sacrament among many.... We have to bring our Liturgy more into the discussion of the new cultural problems.<sup>4</sup>

Zizioulas raises a challenge to re-examine and re-connect the liturgy of the Eucharist to the new context. In the same vein, Lieven Boeve, in *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context*,

---

<sup>1</sup> John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993), 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>3</sup> John D. Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, ed. Luke Ben Tallon (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 39.

<sup>4</sup> John D. Zizioulas, *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church, and the World Today*, ed. Gregory Edwards Fr (Alhambra: Sebastian Press, 2010), 400.

also urges the effort to re-contextualize the Christian narrative and “look for a new relation between the received tradition and the changed context.”<sup>5</sup>

In this endeavor, people may be inspired to further the search for “integration and orientation” in the changed context.<sup>6</sup>

This paper intends to be part of this effort to seek the new relationship between the long received liturgy of the Eucharist and the current cultural problems. The aim of this paper is to explain that the liturgy of the Eucharist is a critique and “counter-formation” to the culture problems.<sup>7</sup> In this research, we will focus particularly on the Eucharist of the Orthodox Church and will develop the cultural critique primarily based the theology of Zizioulas on the Eucharist. We will explicate how the liturgy of the Eucharist is a cultural critique and “counter-formation” to the cultural issues, viz. individualism, marginalization, consumerism and ecological abuse. These cultural issues will be scrutinized under the lens of the liturgy of the Eucharist brought by Zizioulas in the patristic tradition.

---

<sup>5</sup> Lieven Boeve, “Thinking Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context,” in *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context*, ed. L. Boeve and L. Leijssen (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 17.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>7</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 88. The term “counter-formation” is adapted from James K. A. Smith’s idea of the counter-pedagogy of the Christian liturgies to encounter the “mis-formations” of “secular liturgies.” Likewise, Debra Dean Murphy asserts the Eucharist as an imaginative act images the paradigm of the Christian faith against the existing world. As such, the Eucharist is not a cerebral critique to but also a counter to the “mis-forming” culture. See Debra Dean Murphy, “Worship as Catechesis: Knowledge, Desire, and Christian Formation,” *Theology Today* 58, no. 3 (Oct 2001): 327.

## 1. Counter-formation to Individualism: The Eucharist is the Communion of Otherness.

### An Exegesis of Individualism

Upon the publication of *The Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, the discussion on individualism received heightened attention.<sup>8</sup> The mission of this book was to restore the values of common good in the Americans by resolving to the biblical resources and republican tradition.<sup>9</sup> Phenomenally speaking, individualism is worldwide. Theologically speaking, according to Zizioulas, individualism has its embryonic origin in Adam who thought he needed no God, and used his freedom to turn his back to the Creator. In the patristic terms, Adam rejected God who is constitutive of his being. He then put himself as the sole reference of his existence. Then Adam became a self and ceased to be a person. This beginning of the overarching self was the beginning of individualization.<sup>10</sup> This ancient problem has been augmented by the rapidly changing context in which the globalization of economy has caused individualism to sprawl around the world. Discerning the sprawling of individualism which has been eroding the community spirit for the common good, Robert Bellah differentiates the three types of individualism, viz. the utilitarian individualism, the expressive individualism, and bureaucratic individualism which are roaming in the society.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Robert Neelly Bellah, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986; 1985), 355.

<sup>9</sup> Robert L. Conrad, "A Book Worth Discussing: Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 13, no. 3 (Jun 1986): 171

<sup>10</sup> John D. Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, ed. Paul McPartlan (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 43.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Neelly Bellah, "The Return of Religion: The Second Noble Lecture," *Religion and Intellectual Life* 1, no. 2 (Dec 1984): 41-42.

He also points out that the individualistic culture has the characteristic of immediacy. It focuses on the immediate desires and anxieties, and the means to get relief from them. In other words, the individualistic culture demands instant gratification. This culture of immediacy is “hostile to both the past and future.<sup>12</sup> It is tantamount to the idolatry of the “present” moment as Graham Ward names it. He also describes that the living led by the individualism is all about instant gratification of the present—the present needs, wants and anxieties of the individual which pay no heed to neighbors.<sup>13</sup> Above all, individualism dislikes and fears all kinds of otherness. Individuals can be characterized as those who are interested in themselves only even in the presence of others.<sup>14</sup>

### **A Call to Return to Worship and Liturgy**

Facing the individualistic culture of immediacy, Bellah neither advocates a new belief system nor ideology. He advocates the returning to a practice, i.e. worship and liturgy.<sup>15</sup> Worship and liturgy are not instant correction for the idolization of the present moment but a formation process which transforms a community who performs them. It is because worship or liturgy *creates* the community.<sup>16</sup> Bellah further argues that the “biblical strands” of the tradition have their roots in those practices and

---

Utilitarian individualism means that the society has no “organic value.” What really matters to the people is to further their own wants. Expressive individualism puts overarching emphasis on individual’s heart and feelings to the extent of excluding other people’s regards and interests. Bureaucratic individualism consults no one to make decision. Only the technical experts are qualified to make decisions.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>13</sup> Graham Ward, “The Church as the Erotic Community,” in L. Boeve and L. Leijssen, ed., *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context*, 170.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Neelly Bellah, “Individualism and the Crisis of Civic Membership,” *Christian Century* 113, no. 16 (May 1996): 510.

<sup>15</sup> Bellah, “The Return of Religion: The Second Noble Lecture,” 48.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 49.

“reappropriation of those practices” can make it possible for the people to live a human life that is capable to commit in one another, the nature and God.<sup>17</sup> In other words, these practices of liturgy can be “counter-formation” to individualism by “creating” a communion of people, the nature and God. Put it into the patristic way, the practice of liturgy creates a communion of *otherness*. This is the patristic response to individualism which has no room for neighbors, the nature and the Other. The attitude of exclusiveness to otherness in individualism is in sharp contrast to the biblical lifestyle of Christian.<sup>18</sup> However, the liturgy of the Eucharist, as explained by Zizioulas, nurtures the eucharistic ethos of inclusiveness and sacrifice,<sup>19</sup> which is a critique and “counter-formation” to individualism.

## **2. Patristic Response to Individualism - a Communion of Otherness**

*The Eucharist is a communion of Otherness*

In the patristic tradition, the most “anti-individualistic act of the Church” is to live in the Eucharist which is a “true path towards the neighbor.”<sup>20</sup> Put it into another way, this is a true path to *otherness*. Like Bellah, Zizioulas also postulates that the Eucharist offers the world not a system of ideology or moral rules, but a “transfigured and sanctified society,” i.e. a communion.<sup>21</sup> Drawing upon the patristic tradition, Zizioulas asserts that the Eucharist is the heart of the Church in which the communion and the otherness meet and coincide.<sup>22</sup> This

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Neil F. Pembroke, “From Tourist to Pilgrim: Individualization, Christianization, and the Sacraments,” *Worship* 84, no. 5 (Sep 2010): 403.

<sup>19</sup> Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, 91-92.

<sup>20</sup> Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, 128.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, 7.

meeting of the communion and otherness in the Eucharist helps the recovery of the humankind from the individualism. The ground of making this recovery possible in the Eucharist lies in the communion of otherness in the Eucharist, which is based on the communion of the persons in the Trinity and the hypostasization of the person of Christ to bring the whole creation into communion with the Father.

### *Otherness and the Trinity*

In the patristic tradition, the Father is the person (*hypostasis*) who is the cause of the Trinity. In his perfect freedom, the Father “wills” the persons of the Son and the Holy Spirit into being and communion with him. However, the causality of the person of the Son and the Holy Spirit is outside of the concept of time.<sup>23</sup> This causality is relational. It means that it is inconceivable to speak of the Father ontologically without the Son and the Spirit automatically. Therefore, God is one and three simultaneously. Zizioulas explains that the oneness of God is safeguarded by the *monarchia* of the Father who is one of the Trinity. The Trinity caused by the Father is the primordial communion.<sup>24</sup> In this primordial communion, the three persons exist as the absolute otherness to each other and yet they are in communion with each other. The three persons are unique and particular while in communion. In other words, the communion is constitutive of otherness; it generates otherness and does not jeopardize it.<sup>25</sup> Zizioulas explains in the patristic terms that the communion of Trinity is a communion of otherness.

The event of the Eucharist is the “ontological affirmation of otherness and particularity” given by the communion of otherness of the persons in the Trinity.<sup>26</sup> In the Eucharist,

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 79.

which is also named communion by the Church, is a full embodiment of communion. In the Eucharist that, the *eros* of the Father which is shared within the Trinity, is offered to humanity as the unique hypostasis through the hypostasization in the Son. Zizioulas explains:

In the Christological version of existence, there can be no hypostases without their hypostasization in the one and unique *hypostasis* of the Son, who is the unique hypostasis of the Father (Heb. 1.3). Love as *eros* hypostasizes beings, that is, makes them exist as particular, by incorporating them into a unique (a uniquely loved) *hypostasis*. Not only does uniqueness not exclude other particular beings, it establishes their otherness in and through communion.<sup>27</sup>

Zizioulas summarizes this paragraph succinctly: the Other that affirms others.<sup>28</sup> This affirmation by the Other is love. Love constitutes communion. In the unique hypostasis of the Son, all the hypostases obtain their otherness and uniqueness in love and perfect freedom. Uniqueness does not exclude other particular beings. In fact, uniqueness establishes and affirms their uniqueness in and through communion.<sup>29</sup>

#### *Otherness and the Eucharist*

In the Eucharist, it is not just communion is affirmed but otherness is also “sanctified.”<sup>30</sup> Diversity and otherness are assured in the Eucharist. Otherness is *diaphora* but not *diairesis* (difference but not separation). According to Zizioulas, in the Eucharist, *diaphora* does not cause *diairesis*. Difference is not divisive but is essential for communion.<sup>31</sup> In this way, the Eucharist is exactly the opposite of individualism which divides

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

and separates the fabric of relationships. As such, the liturgy of the Eucharist is a critique and also counter-formation to individualism.

*Individualism and exclusiveness*

Individualism causes social disintegration and breakdown due to the secular freedom embedded in it. However, the freedom in the Eucharist constitutes communion. A common definition of individualism can reveal its impact on social relationships. Individualism is “habit of being independent and self-reliant; behavior that can lead to self-centered feeling or conduct.”<sup>32</sup> Such an autonomous, self-reliant, and self-centered individual is able to “walk away” from other people or situations that do not fit one’s own values, desires, needs and wants.<sup>33</sup> Bellah calls this radical secular freedom “solipsism,”—the Self is the overwhelming reference, if not the only reference of the reality.<sup>34</sup> Such secular freedom is responsible for the lack of commitment in relationships and institutions. This lack is one of the characteristics of the postmodern persons—avoidance of commitment, relationships and fixed identity.<sup>35</sup> As this secular freedom seeks nothing but the fulfillment of the desires of the self, it is innately exclusive. Exclusiveness is one of the characteristics of the individualism. This exclusiveness can be reflected in the overwhelming protection of one’s rights and also the realization of those rights in fear and against others. The pursuit of one’s radical freedom in protecting one’s rights

---

<sup>32</sup> Paul Hopper, *Rebuilding Communities in an Age of Individualism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 213, quoted in Pembroke, “From Tourist to Pilgrim,” 403.

<sup>33</sup> Bellah, “The Return of Religion: The Second Noble Lecture,” 44.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>35</sup> Georges De Schrijver s.j., “Postmodernity and the Withdrawal of the Divine: A Challenge for Theology,” in *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context*, 54.

causes the dilution or even strains to the social relations. As such, communion or community has been shattered.

*Otherness and inclusiveness in the Eucharist*

In a sharp contrast to the exclusiveness of individualism, the Eucharist is the communion in which inclusiveness rings. The communion of otherness is inclusive but not exclusive. The Eucharist signifies the ethos of otherness that the otherness and uniqueness of others have to be respected because of their “ontological particularity and integrity.”<sup>36</sup> This “ontological particularity and integrity” is based on the fact that the Father is absolutely free. The person created by the Father has personhood which is inseparable with this absolute freedom. This freedom is the freedom of being other, i.e. to be others or to be yourself, and not just freedom of having different qualities.<sup>37</sup> The freedom embodied by the Eucharist is not to be *free from* (exclusive) but *free for* (inclusive) others.<sup>38</sup> This freedom for others leads to the ethos of otherness in the Eucharist. The ethos of otherness means that no one should be weighted against her or his qualities for rejection or acceptance. The otherness of everyone has to be upheld and respected due to the ontological freedom to be others.<sup>39</sup> Likewise, John Dominic Crossan describes that the Kingdom of God is a “process of open commensality.”<sup>40</sup> All are welcome at the table of communion in God’s Kingdom. As such, the Eucharist table is inclusive and it welcomes otherness. The ethos of otherness is inclusiveness in the Eucharist *vis-à-vis* exclusiveness in individualism.

---

<sup>36</sup> Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, 86.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 9.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>40</sup> John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 68-70.

In opposition of the individualism which upholds the self, the ethos of otherness in the Eucharist breeds an ascetic life which says “no” to self-love or the attitude of exclusiveness. It is also the ethos of self-giving, *sacrifice* in the Eucharist.<sup>41</sup> Zizioulas explains that the sacrifice ethos in the Eucharist is the placing the other over the self. It means the subject of one’s conscience to that of the other.<sup>42</sup> Neil F. Pembroke puts the similar idea in a way of “dinning.” Inasmuch as Christ’s life is a life of sacrifice, the gathering of the participants around the Eucharist table is the sharing of Christ’s life who gave himself for all others.<sup>43</sup> This participation in the Eucharist is also the participation in the ethos of self-giving to others. This is a critique to the contemporary culture which is overwhelmingly interested in the self and its desires.

#### *The ethos of otherness in the Eucharist*

The liturgy of the Eucharist is a “counter-formation” to individualism not just by providing a symbolized unity by taking bread and wine together. The actual sharing of the bread and the wine as a *community* is already an overcoming of individualism.<sup>44</sup> The performance of the liturgy of the Eucharist constitutes a people of communion that excludes exclusiveness, and includes inclusiveness. The self-giving and inclusiveness to others are shaped by the liturgy of the Eucharist. Zizioulas explains that this eucharistic ethos of self-giving and inclusiveness to otherness “culminates in the Eucharist.”<sup>45</sup> He stresses that eucharistic ethos means an attitude of a way of life. This transformation of life toward inclusiveness and self-giving is “counter-formation” to the contemporary world of

---

<sup>41</sup> Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, 91.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>43</sup> Pembroke, “From Tourist to Pilgrim,” 417.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, 83-84.

individualism. This communion of otherness *vis-à-vis* individualism is an ethos shaped by the “sacramental transformation” in the liturgy of the Eucharist.<sup>46</sup> It is not just as a cerebral critique. This goes back to Bellah again that he offers no systems of ideology, but practices of liturgy to recover the potential of the humankind to commitment again in relationships, i.e. to be persons but not individuals. Thus, Zizioulas’ exposition on the communion of otherness based on the patristic tradition coincides with Bellah’s diagnosis of the individualism and his agenda of going back to the liturgy for change. This intersection of these two scholars’ expositions illustrates how religion and liturgy are not “obsolete” but a way to deal with “recurrent and existential” challenges.<sup>47</sup>

### **3. Counter-formation to Marginalization: The Eucharist is a Subversive Asymmetry**

#### **An Exegesis of Marginalization—An Asymmetry of Power**

Once upon a time, the imagery of “global village” gave an attractive hope that the peoples of the world could come and join a family or communion regardless transcending the racial, ethnic, and cultural differences.<sup>48</sup> Globalization once looked promising in shortening distances between nations and peoples. There are surely virtues of globalization. Yet, it is not without vices. One of its vices is the penetration into and dominance of a “universal corporate culture” over local cultures worldwide.<sup>49</sup> “McDonaldization of Society” is the classic

---

<sup>46</sup> John D. Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Douglas H. Knight (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 129.

<sup>47</sup> Bellah, “The Return of Religion: The Second Noble Lecture,” 56.

<sup>48</sup> William T. Cavanaugh, “The World in a Wafer: A Geography of the Eucharist as Resistance to Globalization,” *Modern Theology* 15, no. 2 (Apr 1999): 85.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

illustration of such infiltration into the local cultures by the transnational corporate cultures.<sup>50</sup> In the face of the powerful control over production and increased sensitivity to costs by the transnational corporations, the negotiating power of the governments and labor unions withers significantly. This power withering is even aggregated by the cultural imperatives of those enormous transnational corporations to hunt around the world for cheaper wages, natural resources and relaxed regulations due to the shortening of distances brought by globalization.<sup>51</sup>

However, another kind of distance has been widening, i.e. the power distance between those transnational corporations and the localities. The lowering of the negotiating power of the localities' control over wages, working conditions, resources, and environmental issues etc, leads to marginalization of the vulnerable in those localities.<sup>52</sup> They are made vulnerable by the *asymmetrical* power distance between the transnational corporations and the localities. The maneuvering of the cultural imperative of searching low production costs marginalizes the people of those localities by pinning down their wages, working conditions and also the environmental standards. Marginalization is a social justice issue because there is inadequate or even the absence of "just giving and receiving institutionalized in the society's structures."<sup>53</sup> Marginalization exists when people cannot receive their "appropriate share" of the wealth, materials, dignity, environment and social connections due to the unjust distribution in the society.<sup>54</sup> This

---

<sup>50</sup> George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society* (Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 2000), 278, quoted in William T. Cavanaugh, "The World in a Wafer," 185.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>53</sup> Christopher Kiesling, "Liturgy and Social Justice," *Worship* 51, no. 4 (Jul 1977): 352.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

unjust distribution is caused by the asymmetrical power relationship created by the globalization of economy.

What can the liturgy of the Eucharist respond to such asymmetric power relationship between the rich and the poor, the have's and the have-not's? What kind of "sacramental imagination" can be elicited by re-contextualizing this liturgy with the current situation so that the existing unjust structures and systems will be questioned and challenged?<sup>55</sup> How can the Eucharist be a critique and "counter-formation" to the issue of marginalization in the patristic tradition?

### **A Patristic Response--Another kind of Asymmetry of Power *Monarchia and Trinity***

In the patristic tradition, there is also an asymmetric relationship in the communion of the Trinity. The communion of the Trinity is not egalitarian. Zizioulas stresses that "There *is*, in fact, an ordering, *taxis* in the Trinity. The Father always comes first, the Son second, and the Spirit third in all biblical and patristic references to the Holy Trinity."<sup>56</sup> This *taxis* or asymmetrical relationship is due to the initial causation, the *monarchia* of the Father to the Trinity.<sup>57</sup> Zizioulas explains that, according to the understanding of the Cappadocians, the divine *monarchia* does not merely mean "rule" and "power." It mainly refers to the *personal ontological origination*, which means the Father is the ontological *arche* in causing the two other persons in the Trinity.<sup>58</sup> Gregory Nazianzen explains that Trinity is a "movement initiated by a person, the Father to the other persons," the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>59</sup> Zizioulas also

---

<sup>55</sup> James Dallen, "Liturgy and Justice for all," *Worship* 65, no. 4 (Jul 1991): 295.

<sup>56</sup> Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, 137.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

emphasizes this order cannot be reversed or changed by putting any of the other persons before the Father.<sup>60</sup> The significance of this hierarchy in the Trinity is that this order is not functional or moral but ontological. In sum, the Father, the divine *monarchia* is causative in initiating the other two persons to be “distinctive hypostases.”<sup>61</sup> According to Zizioulas, this ontological causation of the *monarchia* gives the asymmetrical relationship or a hierarchy in the Trinity.

Given the asymmetrical relationship in the Trinity accounted by Zizioulas, one must ask the following questions: (a) Is this asymmetry in the Trinity caused by the difference in the nature of the three persons in the Trinity? If so, how could there be communion in this asymmetrical relationship? (b) How can this asymmetry have implications to the anthropology and society? (c) How can the liturgy of the Eucharist embody this asymmetrical relationship and be a critique and “counter-formation” to marginalization?

#### *The nature of the persons in the asymmetry in the Trinity*

According to ordinary minds, any asymmetrical relationships means there is inequality in natures and qualities existing among the persons or parties involved. Marginalization due to the disparity between the powerful and the vulnerable has illustrated this way of thinking. One may easily read this kind of relationship into the three persons in the Trinity. According to the “pejorative sense in our modern minds”<sup>62</sup> concerning any asymmetrical relationships, the *monarchia* of the Father may induce people to think in the following way: since the Father caused the other two persons, or he was “before” them timewise, therefore his nature is “bigger” or “higher” than the other two. If the disparity in nature in the three persons was

---

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 143.

true, the three persons would not be equal in their nature in the Trinity. Then, one may doubt such unequal nature could give any true communion in the Trinity. As an extension of this doubt, one may also doubt whether it is possible at all to have communion where the relationships are not equal. However, Zizioulas explains that in the patristic tradition, this causality is not tied with time. This causality is only at the personhood level, but not of nature or substance.<sup>63</sup> Relationship constitutes the Trinity, not substance. When one speaks of the Father, it is always said in the presence of the Son and the Holy Spirit. As Zizioulas reiterates numerous times in his works that it would be inconceivable for the Father to be the Father without the Son and the Holy Spirit. As such, the causation of the *monarchia* is not tied with time. The hierarchy in the Trinity is not caused by the time of coming into being. Nor is it caused by difference in nature, *ousia*.

In fact, the nature of the three persons is common. In the hierarchy of the Trinity, the equality of the nature of the three persons is safeguarded by *monarchia*. Zizioulas defends for the employment of causality of the Trinity by the Cappadocians because it maintains the same nature, *ousia* by distinguishing it from “person or hypostasis in divine being.”<sup>64</sup> Zizioulas explains that in giving the existence of the Son by the Father, the hypostasization of *ousia* “was and is simultaneous with the personal differentiation,” meaning the coming into being of the Son and the Holy Spirit from the Father.<sup>65</sup> It is imperative to

---

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 129-130.

<sup>65</sup> Zizioulas explains at length that in the Second Ecumenical Council, the saying that “the Son came from the *ousia* of the Father” first appeared in the Nicaea was changed to be “he came from the Father.” It is important to understand that *ousia* is always common to the three persons. Thus, the Father did not give his *ousia* to the Son and the Holy Spirit as if the Father was the “original possessor.” See Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 129, footnote 52.

note that the Father causes or transmits not the *ousia* but the hypostasis (the personal otherness), meaning the “how” or the mode of being. The *ousia* of the three persons is common and the Father is the ground of unity. In other words, the Father is the divine cause of the hypostasization which gives persons and otherness, i.e. the “how” of being, not the “what” of being (*ousia*). Based on the above explanation, the asymmetrical relationship in the Trinity is not due to the difference in the nature of the three persons but by the way of their relating to each other in the Trinity (the “how” of being).

Though the Father is *monarchia* over the Son and the Holy Spirit in this asymmetry, the eternal response of the Son to the Father’s love is obedience. It is because the Father caused the Son into being out of love and freedom. In Zizioulas’ account, the “how” of being between the Father and the Son is an unbroken filial relationship.<sup>66</sup> The “how” of being in the asymmetrical relationship in the Trinity is *love* and *freedom*. In this asymmetrical relationship, there should be no projection of the human experiences about fatherhood or hierarchy which may be individualistic or even coercive. Being *monarchia* does not automatically means a “hierarchy of value or importance” which is a moral or functional term.<sup>67</sup> In fact, the Father, being *monarchia* causes the person of the Son and that of the Holy Spirit in freedom and love, generates “otherness in communion and communion in otherness.” Love and freedom produces and accepts otherness.<sup>68</sup> According to Zizioulas, the asymmetrical relationship in the Trinity is completely different from or even subversive to what the ordinary minds have for any hierarchy that usually leads to overpowering or marginalization because

---

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 130.

of differences in nature, power or qualities. Instead, it causes communion of otherness.<sup>69</sup>

*Implications of the asymmetrical relationship in the Trinity to anthropology and society*

Zizioulas raises two points. Firstly, ontologically speaking, hierarchy in person or personal otherness is inevitable in personhood and it cannot be eradicated. The *taxis* in the Trinity is self-explanatory. Secondly, someone could be “greater” or “higher” than another. In other words, personal otherness can be asymmetrical.<sup>70</sup> This is an ontological reality, not moral. These two implications mean that not all kinds of asymmetrical relationships or hierarchical ordering in the real world ought to be removed (for it cannot be so according to Zizioulas’ ontological account on otherness). It is debatable whether egalitarianism must mean the vanishing of otherness and personhood, and how far it is applicable that relationship is always hierarchical. Yet, the asymmetry in the Trinity in love and freedom according to Zizioulas can challenge people their existing ways in relating to each other in their asymmetrical relationships. Zizioulas pinpoints that asymmetrical

---

<sup>69</sup> Though Zizioulas, based on his patristic tradition, believes that ontological causation of the *monarchia*, causes the asymmetry in the Trinity, it is not necessarily so because of the following arguments. Inasmuch as the Son cannot be the Son without the Father, the Father cannot be the Father without the Son. There can be mutual causation. The personhoods of the Father and the Son contribute to each other’s personhood mutually and reciprocally. Besides, even if the Father first “caused” the Son, it could not mean that the cause should be “greater” than the effect, meaning the Son. If these arguments are sustainable against Zizioulas’ idea of the asymmetry in the Trinity, then a more egalitarian doctrine of the Trinity may stand well too.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

relationship is not ontologically evil when the “greater” one let the “inferior” one to be fully other, meaning equal in nature and “whole of the whole.” Just like in the Trinity, the Father who is “greater” causes others to have equal ontological status with him.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, asymmetry of power *per se* is not evil. The determinant is whether the “upper” one allows the “lower” one in this asymmetry to be fully other, acknowledging that they have the same ontological nature from God.

*A Subversive asymmetry—the ethos of kenosis and justice*

The breaking of bread in the liturgy of the Eucharist embodies the asymmetrical relationship in the communion of the Trinity. On behalf of the Father who is the *monarchia* of the asymmetry, the Son empties himself for the “inferior” to embrace them and let them be themselves in love and freedom in the Eucharist. This is *kenosis*. The *kenosis* of Christ is re-enacted in the “void-for-other” in the broken bread, in which a “void” is created from the bread to share with those “inferior”.<sup>72</sup> This emptying of the “greater” signified by the breaking of bread for the “inferior” is *subversive* to the derogatory asymmetrical power relationships in the world, including marginalization.

In the liturgy of the Eucharist, “the sacramental contact with the asymmetrical God”<sup>73</sup> in the broken bread can nudge one to imagine or think “otherwise.” This thinking or imagining “otherwise” means how to respond to contemporary situations and search the “new possibilities” for the present situations which demand a critical examination.<sup>74</sup> This sacramental contact awakens one to treat asymmetrical relations in society seriously and to act in integrity. This would mean to have

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>72</sup> Boeve and Leijssen, *Sacramental Presence*, 260-61.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>74</sup> Kearney, *Ethics and the Postmodern Imagination*, 44. See also Boeve and Leijssen, *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context*, 63.

communion and solidarity with the dispossessed or marginalized which is a social issue.<sup>75</sup>

One might think such sacramental imagination sparked out by the Eucharist to respond to an enormous social issue like marginalization is exaggerated. The liturgy of the Church should first concern with the Church. It was true that when the early Christians celebrated the Eucharist, they were a small community which was concerned with their own “just fellowship” by living according to faith; they showed hospitality to strangers and helped the poor. They probably did not know and did not do anything significant in contributing to the greater justice in the society.<sup>76</sup> However, the contemporary world has been changed continuously and tremendously. It demands the Church to re-contextualize the liturgy to respond to current issues. This re-contextualization of the liturgy by the Church enhances her power of critique to the current culture. Therefore, the Church has to re-contextualize the liturgy of the Eucharist to explore a “greater justice” in the global socio-economic and cultural situation, and see what part of the Church can work with others to realize it.<sup>77</sup> Marginalization is certainly one of the situations that demands such a “eucharistic ethos,” from those who partake in it.

This ethos stems from the contact with the asymmetrical God in the Eucharist. The response is subversive in the face of those disparaging asymmetrical power relationships in the world. It is because God is subversive in his asymmetry of power. While the secular powers hunt and divide the vulnerable marginalized people, the “almighty” Father “*embraces and contains*, that is, *to*

---

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 63-64.

<sup>76</sup> David Noel Power, “Eucharistic Justice,” *Theological Studies* 67, no. 4 (Dec 2006): 863.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 864.

establish a relationship of communion and love."<sup>78</sup> At the table of the Eucharist, it can be a school to learn and practice love and embrace in the sharing of bread and wine.<sup>79</sup> After all, what constitutes the offering at the Eucharist table is not just the bread and the wine, but the *koinoia*.<sup>80</sup> This learning and practice should go beyond the table and extend to the interactions in the ordinary world. This way of life includes the *diakonia* of the poor and the *koinonia* with them.<sup>81</sup> This is precisely what the "counter-formation" to marginalization meant in the asymmetrical Eucharist.<sup>82</sup>

#### **4. Counter-formation to Consumerism and Ecological Abuse: The Eucharist is *Anaphora***

##### **An Exegesis of Consumerism and Ecological Abuse**

Consumerism is a close associate of individualism. Enquiring the root of consumerism, the theology of personhood in the patristic tradition gives an ontological account that discerns the association between individualism and consumerism. Personhood stems from the communion of the persons in the Trinity in which the Father created out of perfect freedom and love. Before the Fall, the *ek-stasis* of personhood was meant to move toward the creation and unite the nature in personhood. The nature and the humankind were the part and parcel of the existence of each other are in communion. After the Fall, however, the *ek-stasis* of personhood becomes *apo-stasis* between person and nature.<sup>83</sup> By the introversion and moving

---

<sup>78</sup> Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, 116. Zizioulas explains that the "almighty" can mean to embrace and contain.

<sup>79</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 203.

<sup>80</sup> Dallen, "Liturgy and Justice for all," 298.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 295.

<sup>82</sup> Kiesling, "Liturgy and Social Justice," 354.

<sup>83</sup> Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, 229.

away from the Creator, humankind's *ek-stasis* is thwarted, and its ability to unite the nature to person is thus lost. As a result, fragmentation of nature from humankind and individualization of beings happen. The individualization of beings leads to individuals who acquire and affirm their identities in contrast and opposition to other beings.<sup>84</sup> Thus, humankind stops to respect and refer the integrity and diversity of the nature and others to the ultimate reference, the Creator. Instead, humankind, as individuals, refers the nature to himself and becomes the ultimate reference. This is primarily individualism. Individualization due to introverting away from the Creator diminishes personhood and causes persons to be individuals, who *take and use* the nature for the sake of acquisition and affirmation of their own identities, without paying due care and respect to the creation in accordance to the Creator's will. This *taking* and *using* for one's own sake is primarily consumerism. Individualism leads to consumerism. Consumerism manifests itself in different degrees in different societies. In those highly consumerist societies, the manifestation of consumerism is rather subtle but powerful.

In *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, James Smith offers a cultural exegesis of such kind of subtle but powerful "secular liturgy" of shopping at the mall. The section sub-titled "Consuming Transcendence: Worship at the Mall" is a vivid illustration of consumerism.<sup>85</sup> In a lively language, Smith unfolds how the fragmented and broken individuals hope to acquire their identity and security through the shopping liturgy at the mall, seeking the "hope of redemption in consumption."<sup>86</sup> They hope to redeem their

---

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>85</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 93-103.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 96.

identities in buying and consuming. For example, *I am broken, therefore I shop; I shop (and shop and shop), therefore I am.*<sup>87</sup>

The illustration of Smith is amusing but yet “contemporary apocalyptic,” meaning it is an alarm to the powerful consumerism made subtle in the “secular liturgy,” i.e. shopping at the mall.<sup>88</sup> It is liturgy because it involves icons, symbols, gestures, and texts in the mall that can shape persons to be those whom the mall enterprises want them to be converted to, i.e. “devout” consumers. It is secular because this kind of liturgy leads people away from the Creator God who desires the humankind to find the integrity and the purpose of themselves and the creation in communion, but not to have undue consumption of it.

While Smith describes a lively illustration of consumerism, Christopher Kiesling gives a well-thought definition of consumerism:

...[1] an economic system which places an extremely high value on the incessant production and consumption of material goods and services at an even higher level of physical convenience and comfort; [2] an accompanying mentality which assumes that such a system is the best or only one possible; and [3] a related tendency or even drive to find much, sometimes most, though rarely all human fulfillment in providing and consuming these material goods and services.<sup>89</sup>

This definition is alarming to the world to the following impact of consumerism. Consumerism makes the “human flourishing” and the ecology unsustainable at all. The consumerist cultural propaganda fuels the pursuit of not just “what I need” but more strategically, “what I want.” These desires of “my wants” are augmented by the organized dissatisfaction which is

---

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 96-99.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>89</sup> Christopher Kiesling, “Liturgy and Consumerism,” *Worship* 52, no. 4 (Jul 1978): 359.

choreographed by the marketing businesses.<sup>90</sup> The understatement of this dissatisfaction is the “anxiety over supposed personal inadequacies,” or a theology of scarcity, which is actually doubting and challenging the goodness of God’s creation and also each human body.<sup>91</sup> This is the result of the *apo-stasis* of humankind breaking away from the communion with the Creator and the creation. The humankind has declined God as the ultimate reference for its own identity. These feelings of dissatisfaction and anxiety have driven and coupled with the pursuit of efficiency in consumerism to produce and consume more. This vicious cycle of production and consumption has already laid a plague on the ecosystem, resulting in enormous scale of land and habitat destruction, pollution, deforestation, fuels and energies exploitation, to mention just a few.<sup>92</sup> The bills to be paid are the climatic and natural catastrophes. However, one big question remains, i.e. who are actually paying these ecological bills caused by businesses and consumers? This issue of consumerism leads to another issue—ecological abuse.

Ecological abuse causes injustice. This injustice is three-fold. First, ecological abuses bring injustice to the earth. As Patrick C. Chibuko quotes B. Doppelfield’s saying that, the earth is understood in many ancient creation-myths that it actually belongs to the elements like fire, water, and air from which all other things are constituted.<sup>93</sup> The pollution and depletion of these bring injustice to these elements. In the creation-myth of Christianity, the earth has its integrity and it is a relational system. According to Gregory of Nyssa, the purpose and

---

<sup>90</sup> Timothy Brunk, "Consumer Culture and the Body: Chauvet's Perspective," *Worship* 82, no. 4 (Jul 2008): 294.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Patrick Chukwudezie Chibuko, "Forestation--Deforestation--Reforestation: Implications for Ecology and Liturgy in Dialogue," *AFER* 52, no. 2-3 (Jun 2010): 189.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 201

integrity of the creation is dependent upon the Creator God. All things in it are created to “exist in each other and to be mutually supportive of each other. Moreover, the world is good because God, who made it, is Good.”<sup>94</sup> Ecological abuses dismantle this mutual support and desacralize the nature created by God.

Second, ecological abuse has done injustice to God by jeopardizing the purpose and integrity of the earth meant by God. The creation-myth in Christianity has been replaced by “the myth of accumulation as progress.” In this “myth of accumulation as progress,” the results of production determines and justifies every human endeavor to accumulate value or money. This aspiration for more value and more money triumphs regardless of the “organic relation of the human within the nature”.<sup>95</sup>

Third, ecological abuse also causes injustice to other people at some corners of the world. They are those who have been disinherited of their rights of resources and the fruits of their labor gifted by the Creator God, due to the consumption which knows no end in the other parts of the world. Smith says the “liturgies of consumption induces in us a learned ignorance”—ignorance to the unmentionable processes of production and transportation in the other part of the world.<sup>96</sup> Put simply, the ecological abuse. The coupling of ecological abuse with the “liturgies of consumption” have in fact caused two asymmetries, viz. the unjust exploitation of labor and resources at the expense of the disprivileged, and the unjust distribution of goods and services in favor of the consumerist societies. The former asymmetry is aggregated by the latter. In those consumerist societies, the consumption of goods and services

---

<sup>94</sup> Issa J. Khalil, "Ecological Crisis : An Eastern Christian Perspective," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (Jan 1978): 203.

<sup>95</sup> VÍ Westhelle, "The Weeping Mask: Ecological Crisis and the View of Nature," *Word & World* 11, no. 2 (Mar 1991): 144.

<sup>96</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 101.

operates under the assumption of scarcity. Their supposed belief in scarcity has driven the consumer society to consume and accumulate more and more tangible and intangible commodities. While the actual scarcity is left to those who have to face death due to hunger and extreme deprivation (including the humankind and the nature).<sup>97</sup>

If the ecological abuse hiding behind the liturgies of consumption can blur the vision and mute the listening to the hungry and deprived, can the liturgy of the Eucharist be an alternative or even a “medicine” to restore the vision and hearing of the consumerist societies to the hungry and deprived? How can the liturgy of the Eucharist be a critique and a “counter-formation” to the consumerism and the ecological abuse?

### **A Patristic Response**

*Anaphora—The Eucharist is the positive and active acceptance of the material world*

The revisit to the patristic tradition of the Eucharist is instructive in underscoring the ecological attitudes of the Orthodox Church, which are counter-currents to the consumerist culture and ecological abuse.<sup>98</sup> In the Orthodox Church, the Eucharist is *anaphora*, meaning the “lifting up” and “offering back” to God his own creation.<sup>99</sup> It gives a theocentric world view of the relation of humankind and nature to God. Zizioulas asserts that “the vision of the world through the eucharistic experience leaves no possibility for dissociating the natural and the supernatural.”<sup>100</sup> The eucharistic world view of the Orthodox theology sees the entire creation the cosmic

---

<sup>97</sup> William T. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 91.

<sup>98</sup> Khalil, *Ecological Crisis*, 196.

<sup>99</sup> Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, 152.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

liturgy. In this cosmic liturgy, dualisms of sacred and profane, of spiritual and material do not exist. This holistic “cosmological outlook”<sup>101</sup> is embodied in the liturgy of the Eucharist which offers significant cultural critique to consumerism and ecological problem. How does the Eucharist have implications to ecological actions and life-styles?<sup>102</sup>

In the patristic tradition, the liturgy of the Eucharist embodies the holistic world view. In the liturgy, humankind and the creation are closely related to each other. Zizioulas explains that the Eucharist is acceptance of creation. He explicates that the liturgy is the “most positive and *active* acceptance of the world and creation (...). All the faithful who go to the liturgy bring the world with them” in a literal sense.<sup>103</sup> Zizioulas describes the liturgy as a *journey*, in which the faithful bring along their relations with the creation.<sup>104</sup> He gives an account of how the faithful in the ancient Church brought with them gifts of creation, like bread, wine and oil when they went to the Church. These gifts were paraded in the liturgical process and to be received by the hands of the Bishop, who was waiting at the entrance and who would offer them to God as Eucharist, *eucharistia* (thanksgiving).<sup>105</sup> The thanksgiving is two-fold. It is directed to the existence of God and the creation gifted by God. Zizioulas quotes from *Didache* (ch. 10) that the Eucharist is basically described as an act of thanksgiving, *eucharistia*, to “God the Father ‘for your holy name.’”<sup>106</sup> It refers to the fact that the existence of God is the most important gift given by God.<sup>107</sup> The thanksgiving is not only directed to God the Creator but

---

<sup>101</sup> Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 383.

<sup>102</sup> Denis Edwards, “Eucharist and Ecology: Keeping Memorial of Creation,” *Worship* 82, no. 3 (May 2008): 195.

<sup>103</sup> Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, 125.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Didache* 10.5.; Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, 90.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

also the “givenness” of the creation. Likewise, Denis Edwards in “Eucharist and Ecology: Keeping Memorial of Creation,”<sup>108</sup> also describes that the *anaphora* of St. Basil praises God of all creation, and the *anaphora* prayer of St. John Chrysostom “praises God who brings us out of non-existence into existence.”<sup>109</sup> Zizioulas also stresses that since in certain cases, for example, the eucharistic liturgy commented by St. Cyril of Jerusalem in his *Mystagogical Catecheses*, the *eucharistia* for creation seems to be the only point of the eucharistic teaching without mentioning the passion of Christ at all. He then suggests that, though not as a norm, the reference to the gift of creation in the liturgy of the Eucharist in the ancient Church was deemed to be central.<sup>110</sup> This may explain why the naming of the Eucharist as *eucharistia* (thanksgiving) and *anaphora* (lifting up and giving back) were both used in the ancient Church.<sup>111</sup>

Besides taking the gifts of creation with them and offer to the Creator God in the liturgy, the Christians were required to pray for weather, the harvest and for those who were far away or in need. At the altar, there is a communion of God, humankind and the nature, which is a foretaste of the *eschaton*. The faithful are then called and sent back to the world in peace.<sup>112</sup> As such, the liturgy of the Eucharist is a *journey*, a journey in which the faithful brings the nature to the Creator God in thanksgiving, for sanctification and prayer for it, for eating and drinking, and return to the world in peace not just with the fellows but also with the creation. This thanksgiving to God and lifting up the creation to him is the attitude of coming into, going through, and living out the Eucharist in the liturgy and also in the world.

---

<sup>108</sup> Edwards, *Eucharist and Ecology*, 205.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, 152.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

The above brief recount of the ancient liturgy of the Eucharist illustrates that in the Orthodox tradition, the liturgy of the Eucharist “accepts and sanctifies the material world and not undermining its importance.”<sup>113</sup> This is signified by the eating and drinking which involves the material elements and also labor of humankind in the Eucharist.<sup>114</sup> Being given to humankind by God, the nature depends on humankind’s effort of cultivation for its flourishing and attainment of its purpose of existence. This is signified by the *anaphora* prayer which is the central eucharistic prayer. *Anaphora*, this eucharistic vision of the creation embodied in the liturgy is a sharp contrast with the “liturgies of consumption,” in which the consumerist culture and ecological abuse objectify the nature and pay no respect to both creation and the Creator.

#### *“Priest of Creation”*

The Eucharist is the *anaphora* which upholds the mutual dependence of humankind and nature, and the ultimate reference to the Creator God. Seeing the significance of *anaphora* to the ecological concern of the world, Zizioulas further elaborates the idea of humankind as the “priest of creation” which was at first developed by St. Maximus the Confessor from the patristic teaching that humankind is the “prince of creation.”<sup>115</sup> The idea of “priest of creation” in nexus of the *anaphora* is a critique to the exploitation of the nature, and can be an alternative model of ecological attitude in complementing the model of steward, i.e. human being is the “steward of creation.”

Zizioulas sees the value of the model of “steward of creation” which has been a prevailing idea in discoursing the ecological

---

<sup>113</sup> Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 159.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>115</sup> Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, 137.

problems, especially among those religious ecologists. He acknowledges that the idea of stewardship is useful in defending against the charges that Christianity should be responsible for the exploitation of creation because humankind is the “lord and proprietor of creation.”<sup>116</sup> However, the idea of stewardship is not without inadequacies. The managerial mentality behind this model makes the steward close to a utilitarian in relation to the nature. Besides, the connotation of stewardship also implies a sense of “conservationist attitude to nature.”<sup>117</sup> However, it is doubtful that such conservation is the sake of future consumption by humankind. It would be still a managerial ethos responsible for exploitation. In this managerial ethos of stewardship, the nature receives not as much care and respect as intended in the *anaphora*.

For Zizioulas, *anaphora* signifying humankind as the “priest of creation” is a more adequate model of life than that of steward. As a “priest of creation,” humankind is capable for uniting the world. It is because humankind is personal *logos* and the image of God, which give the humankind the ability and freedom to collect and unify the diversified or even broken world to a wholesome *cosmos*.<sup>118</sup> Without the reference of creation back to God by the “priest of creation,” the creation will return to nothingness because it was created from nothingness. The created has to bridge with the uncreated God for its survival by the “priest of creation.” Zizioulas explains that when the First

---

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 134. For example, Lynn White, Jr. advocates that the ecological crisis has been long due to the “Christian attitudes toward man’s relation to nature.” In his well-known article “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” White advocates that Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion which favors human at the expense of nature. See Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Root of Our Ecological Crisis,” *Science*, 155 (1967): 1203-1207. See also Westhelle, *The Weeping Mask: Ecological Crisis and the View of Nature*, 141.

<sup>117</sup> Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, 134.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 137.

Adam rejected this “priesthood of creation” by introverting to himself, he made himself the ultimate point of reference. Since then, humankind denies the “givenness” of the creation as if it is from his own and at his disposal. Humankind, in “a God-like fashion”, treats the creation as *idia thelēmata*, “results of his own free will.”<sup>119</sup> Issa J. Khalil also comments on this denial that humankind, in his assertion of self-reliance and autonomy, is changed from a “mediator” (“priest of creation”) to a “manipulator” to aspire God’s power to control over the creation.<sup>120</sup> Denying the “givenness” of the creation, humankind has become a theft of creation, using the nature as if he has the ownership of him but not God. No matter humankind is called “manipulator” or theft of creation, the spirit behind is clearly a robbery one, but priestly.<sup>121</sup> This spirit explains the sprawling of consumerism and ecological crisis. On the contrary, when the Church is celebrating the Eucharist, *anphora*, the lifting up and referring back to God his creation in honoring and acknowledging God is the Creator, the liturgy itself is a critique to the poignant consumerist culture and ecological abuse which are strong violation to God’s will for his creation.

This critique is also a cure. Thanks to the Second Adam, Christ, who through his death and resurrection, recapitulated in his person the whole creation back to God in communion. Christ, the Second Adam is the priest of creation—a call that the First Adam declined.<sup>122</sup> Now this call of priesthood is passed by Christ to the Church who is his body.<sup>123</sup> The communion of God has to be extended to the creation through the Church.<sup>124</sup> When humankind brings bread and wine, elements of nature to the

---

<sup>119</sup> Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, 224.

<sup>120</sup> Khalil, *Ecological Crisis*, 200.

<sup>121</sup> Chibuko, *Forestation - Deforestation - Reforestation*, 201.

<sup>122</sup> Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, 138.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>124</sup> Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 132.

Eucharist, they bring the creation with them and put them into the hands of Christ for lifting up and referring to God in reverence and gratitude, i.e. *anaphora*. The *anaphora* prayer invokes the Holy Spirit to transform the gifts of creation and the *anaphora* community into the body of Christ, in the communion with the Trinity. The objectified, fragmented, and exploited creation is “cured” by the liturgy of the *anaphora*, the “medicine of immortality.”

The liturgy of the Eucharist, *anaphora* is “counter-formation” to the “liturgies of consumption.” In *anaphora*, the liturgy itself mediates the self-understanding of the Church as the “priest of creation” to the participants. The contribution of Zizioulas’ idea of the “priest of creation” is that it can become an ecological ethos which is nurtured through and through this liturgy of ecological significance. The consumerist life-style has to be replaced by the life-style of “priest of creation,” which goes beyond the liturgy itself and extends to the world. The life-style of “priest of creation” commences with the “repentance of the intoxication of their dominance”<sup>125</sup> over nature and possession, and graduates into the “critical mindfulness.” This “critical mindfulness” means that humankind as priest and in kinship with creation should remember not just the suffering of Christ, but also the suffering of creation.<sup>126</sup> The vulnerability of the creation has to be remembered by humankind’s “critical mindfulness.” Inasmuch as the priest of Israel should remember the people of God, the “priest of creation” should also remember the nature. This remembering of creation is to *re-member* it into the humankind existence again. This care and solidarity with nature marks the ecological significance of the liturgical ethos of *anaphora*.

Zizioulas’ idea of “priest of creation” is by no means an answer to every practical problems caused by consumerism and

---

<sup>125</sup> Boeve and Leijssen, *Sacramental Presence*, 68.

<sup>126</sup> Edwards, *Eucharist and Ecology*, 206.

ecological abuse. However, he raises an ethos, a life-style to complement the model of steward which is not sufficient to respond to the ecological crisis. Douglas L. Chial in "The Ecological Crisis: A Survey of the WCC's Recent Responses" outlines the significant developments in the ecumenical discourse and movement concerning the theology and ecology from 1983-1995.<sup>127</sup> The findings of this work echos with the deficiency of stewardship and advocates that "the church must find ways to support and model alternative life-styles that challenge the consumerist pressures prevalent in our societies."<sup>128</sup> The model of "priest of creation" and the liturgy of *anaphora* as a practice, a theology of action and reflection, can be seen as one of the Church's support in seeking those alternative life-styles, to counter consumerist culture and ecological abuse.

### Conclusion

Unlike individualism which is exclusive in nature, the Eucharist is the communion of otherness which is the norm of the meal. The ethos of otherness and self-giving are called and nurtured through this liturgy. While marginalization operates along the derogatory power asymmetry, the asymmetrical but yet welcoming God in the Eucharist challenges us to imagine and act otherwise or subversively to seek justice and solidarity with those marginalized. The ethos of *kenosis* is shown in the Eucharist when a "void" is created in the broken bread for sharing with the dispossessed and marginalized. Those who partake into the Eucharist are called to be the "priest of creation" in *anaphora* to revere the earth, which is also under the Creator's providence. Let consumerism and ecological abuse have no claims on the earth. These are the eucharistic

---

<sup>127</sup> Douglas L. Chial, "The Ecological Crisis: A Survey of the WCC's Recent Responses," *Ecumenical Review* 48, no. 1 (Jan 1996): 53-61..

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

ethos embedded in the liturgy *vis-à-vis* the cultural problems in this capitalistic and consumerist world. In the patristic tradition, the Eucharist is the church, and the Church is the Eucharist. What the Eucharist is, so be the Church. To avoid being dualistic and culturally irrelevant, Church should order herself as a “counter-community” in and through the liturgy of the Eucharist, to live these ethoses both inside and outside the Eucharist and the Church. As such, the Eucharist is cultural critique and counter-formation *vis-à-vis* the world.

## **Bibliography**

### **Books**

Bell, Catherine M. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Bellah, Robert Neely. *Habits of the Heart : Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. New York: Harper & Row, 1985.

Boeve, L., and L. Leijssen ed., *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001.

Cavanaugh, William T. *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ*. Oxford; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1998.

Crossan, John Dominic. *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994.

Fowler, James. *Weaving the New Creation*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1991.

Hopper, Paul. *Rebuilding Communities in an Age of Individualism*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003.

Murphy, Debra Dean. *Teaching that Transforms: Worship as the Heart of Christian Education*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004.

Ritzer, George. *The McDonaldization of Society*. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 2000.

Smith, James K. A. *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009.

Zizioulas, John D. *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*. Edited by Luke Ben Tallon. London: T&T Clark, 2011.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church, and the World Today*. Edited by Gregory Edwards Fr. Alhambra: Sebastian Press, 2010.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*. Edited by Douglas H. Knight. London: T&T Clark, 2008.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Communion & Otherness*. Edited by Paul McPartlan. London: T&T Clark, 2006.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*. Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993.

### Articles

Bellah, Robert Neely. "Individualism and the Crisis of Civic Membership." *Christian Century* 113, no. 16 (May 1996): 510-515.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Return of Religion: The Second Noble Lecture." *Religion and Intellectual Life* 1, no. 2 (Dec 1984): 40-56.

Brunk, Timothy. "Consumer Culture and the Body: Chauvet's Perspective." *Worship* 82, no. 4 (Jul 2008): 290-310.

Cavanaugh, William T. "The World in a Wafer : A Geography of the Eucharist as Resistance to Globalization." *Modern Theology* 15, no. 2 (Apr 1999): 181-196.

Chial, Douglas L. "The Ecological Crisis: A Survey of the WCC's Recent Responses." *Ecumenical Review* 48, no. 1 (Jan 1996): 53-61.

Chibuko, Patrick Chukwudezie. "Forestation -- Deforestation -- Reforestation: Implications for Ecology and Liturgy in Dialogue." *AFER* 52, no. 2-3 (Jun 2010): 189-212.

Conrad, Robert L. "A Book Worth Discussing: Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 13, no. 3 (Jun 1986): 171-173.

Dallen, James. "Liturgy and Justice for all." *Worship* 65, no. 4 (Jul 1991): 290-306.

Edwards, Denis. "Eucharist and Ecology: Keeping Memorial of Creation." *Worship* 82, no. 3 (May 2008): 194-213.

- Kearney, Richard. "Ethics and the Postmodern Imagination." *Thought* 62, no. 1 (1987): 39.
- Khalil, Issa J. "Ecological Crisis : An Eastern Christian Perspective." *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (Jan 1978): 193-211.
- Kiesling, Christopher. "Liturgy and Consumerism." *Worship* 52, no. 4 (Jul 1978): 359-368.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Liturgy and Social Justice." *Worship* 51, no. 4 (Jul 1977): 351-361.
- Murphy, Debra Dean. "Worship as Catechesis: Knowledge, Desire, and Christian Formation." *Theology Today* 58, no. 3 (Oct 2001): 321-332.
- Pembroke, Neil F. "From Tourist to Pilgrim: Individualization, Christianization, and the Sacraments." *Worship* 84, no. 5 (Sep 2010): 403-419.
- Power, David Noel. "Eucharistic Justice." *Theological Studies* 67, no. 4 (Dec 2006): 856-879.
- Westhelle, Vi. "The Weeping Mask: Ecological Crisis and the View of Nature." *Word & World* 11, no. 2 (Mar 1991): 137-146.