



CHINA EVANGELICAL SEMINARY

MASTER OF THEOLOGY THESIS

**THE CHURCH AS A LOCAL
CHARISMATIC FELLOWSHIP:**

Miroslav Volf's Trinitarian and Pneumatological Ecclesial Structure

HUNG-EN TIEN

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To my love

Jui-Mei (Jennifer)

ABSTRACT

The thesis accesses Miroslav Volf's ecclesiology from the aspect of the structure of the church and the work of the Holy Spirit in this structure. In the introductory chapter of this thesis, through a survey of literature it is demonstrated that it is necessary to study Volf's ecclesiology for today's church. In chapter 1, three major approaches to construct ecclesiology are surveyed, and it shows the importance of Volf's ecclesiology from the methodological perspective. In chapter 2, differences of Trinitarian and ecclesial structures between Western and Eastern Churches is reviewed, and the theme that the church as the image of the Trinitarian communion is discussed. It shows Volf's polycentric and relational structure of the church, which leads to equal status of the clergies and the laities. The thesis suggests that the ecclesial structure corresponds to the economic Trinity. The "*Perichoresis*" in John 17:20-23 is accessed, and this leads to the conclusion that the church is for the world, and the purpose of the church is to bring people into the communion with the triune God.

In chapter 3, the interactive church structure is discussed, which shows that church members participate in church life through their *Charismata*. The reciprocity of believers is surveyed, which presents as the unlegislated relationships and actions of church members. Volf proposed the pneumatological structure and the localisation of the church, and he comprehends the church as a local charismatic fellowship. The thesis disagrees that the fellowship is confined locally, and the offices and church order in the "pneumatic anarchy" ecclesial structure are discussed.

In chapter 4, four applications of this research are provided. The ecclesial structure should be mission centred rather than function focused, and the communion of churches is also important to the structure of the church. It is necessary for us to leave more rooms for the Holy Spirit in the ecclesial structure, and the participation of the laities is also encouraged.

Key Words: Ecclesiology, Miroslav Volf, Trinity, Ecclesial Structure, Pneumatology

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INTRODUCTION

I. Ecclesial Structure and the Relationship between the Works of the Holy Spirit in the Church Become Issues

Ecclesiology became an important theological issue and progressed promptly in the sixteenth century.¹ Protestant Reformers made an effort in the development of ecclesiology to fight against Roman Catholic ecclesiology, and ecclesiology has turned into an important issue in Christianity from that time. Reformers and their successors not only rethought the nature of the church, but also dedicated themselves to changing the structure of the church. For example, John Knox followed John Calvin's ecclesiology and established the Presbyterian Church in Scotland, which is the prototype of Presbyterian churches all over the world. Separatists and those who agreed with Anabaptists set up Baptist and independent churches, which are institutionally different from traditional Episcopal Churches. John Wesley kept most of the structure of the Anglican Church, however, the annual conference has the highest authority of decision making, and the role of a bishop in the Methodist Church is quite different to ones in the Anglican, Catholic, and Eastern Orthodoxy Church. Therefore, from Martin Luther, John Calvin, Thomas Cramer, John Wesley to the leaders of "the third wave" in the twentieth century, ecclesiology is not a theological topic with secondary priority like it was in the early church, and the structure of the church is also essential and sensible. From the ecumenical movement, such as the setup of World Council of Churches and the Second Vatican Council, the view of the church changes,² and ecclesial structure and institution becomes a crucial issue.

In recent development of ecclesiology, it is worthy to address that the Holy Spirit plays an important role in it;³ however, it was not main stream in ecclesiology before. Contrary,

¹ Cf. Roger Haight, S. J., *Christian Community in History*, 2 Vols., (New York: Continuum, 2005), Vol. 2: *Comparative Ecclesiology*, pp. 2-3.

² For example, *Orientalium ecclesiarum* (Decree on eastern catholic churches) of Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), especially the section "safeguarding the Spiritual heritage of the eastern churches". Cf. Norman P. Tanner, S. J. (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol. 2: *Trent to Vatican II* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990), pp. 900-907, esp. 902.

³ For example, Hans Küng, *The Church*, trans. by Ray and Rosaleen Ockenden (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1967); Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution of Messianic Ecclesiology*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The*

there is a tension between the works of the Holy Spirit in the church and the structures of the church. Alasdair I. C. Heron, a scholar from the Reform Church, mentions that the pneumatic manifestation and the lively feeling of the Holy Spirit declined in the second century, and it is possible for the structured churches to not be open to the Holy Spirit as it used to.⁴ He concludes that the order and the institution of the church may *obstruct* the Holy Spirit working in the church.⁵ Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, belonging to Anglican churches, sees that the sacramental churches have a tendency to “*replace*” or “*control*” the work of the Holy Spirit in their institution and ministration. Sacramental churches are not comfortable with “*the liberty of the Spirit to blow where it will*” (John 3:8),⁶ and regard themselves as administrators of the grace of God; however, the result of it is that the Lord of the church now “*is gone*”.⁷ The status of the Holy Spirit in the church is also an issue in the Catholic Church. Vatican II has some articles concerning pneumatology in Catholic ecclesiology. Ecclesial structure is also a key issue among Pentecostal, charismatic and independent churches; although their discussions may not be as deep as scholars mentioned above. Many publications regarding church growth argued that changes of ecclesial structure bring back the work of the Holy Spirit.⁸ Some of them even testifies that after transitioning ecclesial structure into a cell church structure, *there was “a visitation of the Holy Spirit”*.⁹

Coming of Global Christianity, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁴ Alasdair I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit*, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), pp. 58-64.

⁵ Heron, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 63-64.

⁶ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God* (London: SCM Press, 1953), p. 93.

⁷ Newbigin, *The Household of God*, p. 83.

⁸ For example, C. Peter Wagner advocates that “the New Apostle Reformation” has come in the 1990’s. In this “Reformation”, some churches are restructured into “Apostle-Prophet” leadership model. He quotes Ephesians 2:20 to establish that the ecclesial leadership is laid on apostles and prophets, and the authority of decision making should be released from the hands of “administrators” of denominations into apostles’. Wagner thinks this church model is more biblical and a superior structure for “*spiritual warfare*”. Cf. C. Peter Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets: The Foundation of the Church* (Ventura: Regal, 2000), pp. 21-22; 6-7, 9-11; 8, 23; 97-98, 107-120.

⁹ Lawrence Khong, *The Apostolic Cell Church: Practical Strategies for Growth and Outreach; from the Story of Faith Community Baptist Church* (Singapore: TOUCH Ministries International, 2000), p. 182. Lawrence Khong promotes “an apostle centred, five-fold offices teamwork, and cell group backbone” ecclesial structure, which he thinks that the Holy Spirit works better in than other types of local church structures. He alludes to Ephesians 4:11-13 to support the idea that local churches have apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and

Facing the changes of the face of the church and its structure, do we have an ecclesiology to handle it? If we consider the question in the field of the traditional evangelical circle, the answer may not be satisfied.¹⁰ No wonder Stanley J. Grenz says that ecclesiology is “*the neglected stepchild of the evangelical theology*”.¹¹ Therefore, ecclesial structure and the works of the Holy Spirit in it is a topic worthy to be addressed by today’s church.

II. The Approach of This Research

There are theologians who devote themselves to the topic of ecclesial structure and the role of the Holy Spirit in ecclesiology, such as Hans Küng,¹² Miguel M. Garijo-Guembe,¹³ Jean-Marie Roger Tillard,¹⁴ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger,¹⁵ Jürgen Moltmann,¹⁶ Wolfhart Pannenberg,¹⁷ and John D. Zizioulas.¹⁸ Garijo-Guembe is a French Catholic scholar who

teachers, so called five-fold ministries, which were “restored” “in recent decades”. Khong argues that the “*Spirit-filled*” cell church movement is God’s work “to complete the task of world evangelization”. He even testifies that after transitioning his church FCBC in Singapore into a cell church structure, *there was “a visitation of the Holy Spirit”*. Cf. Khong, *The Apostolic Cell Church*, pp. 31, 46, 65, 99, 109-110, 129-130, 181-182.

¹⁰ For example, Millard J. Erickson’s “*Christian Theology*”, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), a textbook widely used in many evangelical seminaries, only has *six* chapters for ecclesiology and *two* chapters for pneumatology. In the chapter discussing church structure and government, only few paragraphs mention the role of the Holy Spirit. However, it is happy to see some evangelical scholars begin to focus on ecclesiology recently, such as Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994); and Donald G. Bloesch, *The Church: Sacraments, Worship, Ministry, Mission* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

¹¹ Stanley J. Grenz, *Revision Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 165.

¹² Hans Küng, *Structures of the Church*, trans. Salvator Attanasio (New York: T. Nelson, 1964); *ibid.*, *The Church*, translated by Ray and Rosaleen Ockenden (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1967).

¹³ Miguel M. Garijo-Guembe, *Communion of the Saints: Foundation, Nature, and Structure of the Church*, Trans. Patrick Madigan (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994).

¹⁴ Jean-Marie Roger Tillard, *Church of Churches: The Ecclesiology of Communion*, trans. by R. C. De Peaux (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992); *idem.*, *Flesh of the Church, Flesh of Christ: At the Source of the Ecclesiology of Communion*, trans. by Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2001).

¹⁵ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press: 1996).

¹⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution of Messianic Ecclesiology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

¹⁷ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *The Church*, trans. Keith Crim (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983); *ibid.*, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 1-526.

access ecclesiology from New Testament and traditional Catholic way, such as the concept of “the body of Christ”, Eucharist and hierarchical structure. He also interprets the teaching of *Lumen gentium*, a Decree on the doctrine of the Church from the second council of Vatican. From this analysis, Garijo-Guembe supports traditional roles of a Pope, bishops and other offices in the church. Similarly, Tillard, as a scholar from French Catholic Church, approaches ecclesiology from the perspective of “communion”, and especially stresses on Eucharist in the ecclesial structure. Although Küng is a German Catholic scholar, he comprehends ecclesiology from the angles of councils and charismatic nature of the church. Moltmann is from German Reform Church, and considers that the church is in the movement of triune God. To Moltmann, the church is viewed from eschaton and with the power of the Holy Spirit who vivifies the church and the world. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, a well known scholar, who was the head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of the Roman Catholic Church, and acts as Pope Benedict XVI now. He stresses the importance of communion and unity under Petrine reign. John D. Zizioulas, who was a professor at Glasgow University in Great Britain, has been consecrated as Metropolitan of Pergamon since 1986 and has great influenced Eastern Orthodoxy. He first tries to define the “person”, and then use it to construct his ecclesiology from the aspect of “being as communion”.

It is noticeable that Miroslav Volf¹⁹ dialogues with Ratzinger and Zizioulas, the two important representatives of the two churches, in his book “*After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*”²⁰ to present his ideas. This is the first reason one should notice Volf: few scholar deal with two of the largest churches with tradition and longest-history, and propose their own ecclesiologies from another aspect. Secondary, most of ecclesiologies are from “Christological” approach, which start their point from “the church as the body of Christ”.²¹ However, Volf sketches his ecclesiology from Trinitarian and pneumatological

¹⁸ John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002).

¹⁹ Cf. Appendix for an induction of Miroslav Volf.

²⁰ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

²¹ Cf. the discussion in I.A and I.B of this paper.

approaches, which are totally different from traditional ecclesiology. Furthermore, Volf's background is from Pentecostal and Independent Churches,²² and from which he seems to establish a "Pentecostal" free church model of the church. Comparing to other publishers from the Pentecostal-Charismatic circle, Volf focuses more on the nature of the church rather than the "function" of the church.²³ He provides deeper theological root of that the church as the image of the communion of Trinity,²⁴ from which he deduces a "polycentric", status equal²⁵ and participative church.²⁶ It will result a church that everyone involves him/herself in the church life through his/her own *Charismata*, and there is only reciprocal relationship rather than power between members of a local church. From Volf's ecclesiology, this kind of church reflects the image of the Trinity, and it fulfills the charges and the tasks that designated to the church. It offers a fresh understanding of the structure of the church, and incorporates the ecclesial structure to the work of the Holy Spirit in the church. These are the reasons that Miroslav Volf's ecclesiology is not to be neglected.

If one wants to access Volf's ecclesiology from the angle of ecclesial structure, it is necessary to access his "After Our Likeness" and "The Nature of the Church"²⁷ to understand his concepts regarding the ecclesial structure and the works of the Holy Spirit in the church. This paper will focus on his ecclesiology presented in these two texts, and will allude to his other works if it is necessary. There will be an analysis on his theory mainly from theological perspectives. First it will present three approaches of ecclesiology to see Volf's importance, and then summarise and examine Volf's idea toward Ratzinger and Zizioulas. Secondly, it will focus on Volf's idea that "the church is the image of Trinity", and provide understanding of his pneumatological ecclesial structure. It will also have dialogues with Volf's idea of participation and localisation of the church from the aspect of ecclesial structure. Furthermore,

²² Cf. Appendix.

²³ Cf. 4.I of this paper.

²⁴ Cf. 2.II.A of this paper.

²⁵ Cf. 2.II.B.2 of this paper.

²⁶ Cf. 3.I.B and 3.I.C of this paper.

²⁷ Miroslav Volf, "The Nature of the Church", *Evangelical Review of Theology*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2002), pp. 68-75. There is another ecclesiological paper coauthored by Volf. Cf. Miroslav Volf & Maurice Lee, "The Spirit and the Church", *Conrad Grebel Review*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (2000), pp. 20-66.

it will have some reflections and applications for the church from the aspects of Volf's ecclesial concepts and the discussions of this paper, and it may give us some insights and directions for our churches.

CHAPTER 1

METHODOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF MIROSLAV VOLF ON CONSTRUCTING ECCLESIOLOGY

Before accessing Mirsolav Volf's ideas regarding ecclesial and the work of the Holy Spirit in it, it is helpful for us to understand three dimensions of ecclesiology, and the background of his dialogues with Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) and John D. Zizioulas. It will be beneficial to understand Volf's approach to construct ecclesiology and his argument of ecclesial structure.

Traditionally, there are three approaches to construct ecclesiology: "Christological", "pneumatological", and "congregational".¹ They will be briefly explained as followings.

I. Three Approaches to Construct Ecclesiology

A. Christological Ecclesiology: Church as the Body of Christ

The reason to construct ecclesiology from the "Christological" approach is obvious, since the church is called "the body of Christ".² The scriptures regarding "the body of Christ" usually stress the *oneness*,³ *offices* and *ministries*.⁴ Therefore, the Christological approach stresses that the historical Jesus Christ has given His office to the Apostles, and it focuses on the hierarchical system of offices of the church. Both Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches follow this approach;⁵ however, Christology is more dominative in the Catholic Church,⁶ and the Catholic Church has a tendency to address the hierarchy more than the Eastern Orthodox Church does.⁷ The Orthodox Church sees that the Christological and the pneumatological approaches are not able to be divided.⁸

¹ This paper basically follows Newbigin's classification of the church. Cf. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (London: SCM Press, 1953).

² 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:3; Eph. 1:23; 4:4, 12, 16; Col. 1:24.

³ 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:5; Eph. 4:4.

⁴ 1 Cor. 12:5; Eph 4:11-16.

⁵ However, it is worthy to address that Zizioulas mentions the attitude of Eastern Orthodoxy regarding to "pneumatological ecclesiology": "In general, it was felt that in comparison with Christology, Pneumatology did not play as important role in the council's teaching on the church." Cf. John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), p. 123.

⁶ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, p. 129.

⁷ Cf. II.A – II.C of this paper.

⁸ Miguel M. Garijo-Guembe, *Communion of the Saints: Foundation, Nature, and Structure of the Church*, trans. by Patrick Madigan (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994), p. 4.

B. Pneumatological Ecclesiology: Church as the Continuing Extension of Pentecost

Pneumatology is also a foundation of ecclesiology. There are many scriptures supporting “pneumatological ecclesiology”; for example, in the final disclosure to the disciples, Jesus said:

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; [Even] the Spirit of truth; . . . but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.⁹

After resurrection, Jesus Christ sent His disciples with the Holy Spirit:

. . . as [my] Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on [them], and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; [and] whose soever [sins] ye retain, they are retained.¹⁰

Jesus Christ is regarded as a bearer of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit defines who Jesus Christ is.¹¹ Since the church continues Jesus Christ’s work in the world, the church “is described as the continuing extension of Pentecost.”¹² Furthermore, because “*sanctam Ecclesiam catholicam*” (I believe in the holy catholic Church) is behind “*Credo in Spiritum Sanctum*” (I believe in the Holy Spirit), it is clear that the early church sees the church closely connecting to the Holy Spirit.

C. Congregational Ecclesiology: Church as the Fellowship of Faithful Believers

⁹ Jn. 14:16-17.

¹⁰ Jn. 20:21-23.

¹¹ Zizioulas even says:

. . . the view that there is, so to say, *no Christ* until the Spirit is at Work, not only as a *forerunner* announcing his coming, but also as the one who *constitutes his very identity as Christ*, either at his baptism (Mark) or at his very biological conception (Matthew and Luke).

Cf. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, pp. 127-128.

¹² Garijo-Guembe, *Communion of the Saints*, p. 4.

The “congregational ecclesiology” sees the church as “people of God” and as “the fellowship of faithful believers”,¹³ since the scriptures also portray church as “people of God”.¹⁴ Many Protestant churches construct their ecclesiologies from this perspective. It is helpful to diagram these three approaches to ecclesiology, shown in the following diagram:¹⁵

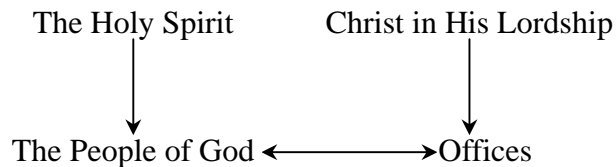


Figure 1 The Relation between the Three Approaches of Ecclesiology

II. Different Churches and Theologians Have Dissimilar Preferences of Three Dimensions of Ecclesiology

Traditionally, the church is mainly discussed from these three perspectives: the people of God, the body of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. None of these approaches are mutually exclusive. However, each denomination and theologian has his/her own preference. For example, the Roman Catholic Church is seen as a representative of the “institution” model. It stresses “governing” the people of God or the body of Christ,¹⁶ which emphasises the importance of the “offices”. Therefore, it is better to understand the Catholic ecclesiology from the Christological approach.¹⁷ The Orthodox Church is usually regarded as a typical example of the “mystical communion” model.¹⁸ The Eastern Orthodox Church

¹³ Cf. Newbigin, *The Household of God*, pp. 32-59, esp. 45, 49, 59.

¹⁴ Rom. 9:25-26; 2 Cor. 6:16; Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:9-10; Rev. 21:3.

¹⁵ This diagram is from Garijo-Guembe, *Communion of the Saints*, p. 4.

¹⁶ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, expended edition (New York: Image Books, 2002), pp. 26-38.

¹⁷ Garijo-Guembe, *Communion of the Saints*, p. xi.

¹⁸ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), pp. 95-102.

stresses that the church as a mystical communion as an icon of Trinity,¹⁹ and it aims to have a “union with God” in the Christian life.²⁰ The centre of life of the Eastern Orthodox Church is the Eucharist,²¹ which is also derived from the idea of the body of Christ. Therefore, it is also appropriate to comprehend it from Christological and pneumatological approaches.

The Lutheran Church is considered as the “Herald” model of the church, since it highlights on proclaiming the Word of God.²² It pictures the church from the aspect of “the assembly of the people of God”,²³ and interprets the authority of ministry of a local church is from “the communion of saints, acting under Christ’s commission”.²⁴ However, Lutheran ecclesiology should not be regarded as “congregational”, since it puts the Word and faith before the community.²⁵ It centres the ministry of the Word and sees sacrament as another form of the Word, therefore, Christological approach is fitted for us to figure out Lutheran Ecclesiology. The Reform Church proposes the church as the “Covenant”, which is from the angle of the people of God.²⁶ The church receives all the benefits from God in the Eucharist.²⁷ Like Lutheran Church, Reform Church also puts attention on the Word and the sacrament. It is still better to understand it from both the Christological and the congregation approaches.

The “servant” model of the church constructed by the modern Catholic Church, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and other theologians argue “that the Church must be the body of Christ, the suffering servant, and hence the servant Church.”²⁸ The “sacrament” church model, chiefly proposed by Henri de Lubac and others, lays emphasis on the aspect of the sacraments and

¹⁹ Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, pp. 17-25.

²⁰ Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, p. 18.

²¹ Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, pp. 20-22.

²² Dulles, *Models of the Church*, pp. 69-70; Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, pp. 40-41.

²³ Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, pp. 39-42; Roger Haight, S. J., *Christian Community in History*, 2 Vols., (New York: Continuum, 2005), Vol. 2: *Comparative Ecclesiology*, pp. 39-41.

²⁴ Brian A. Gerrish, *The Old Protestantism and New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1982), p. 101.

²⁵ Dulles, *Models of the Church*, p. 68.

²⁶ Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, pp. 50-58.

²⁷ Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, pp. 53-54.

²⁸ Dulles, *Models of the Church*, p. 85.

the “incarnation” of the church.²⁹ Therefore, it is most appropriate to comprehend these two models of the church from the Christological aspect.

Anabaptist Churches and the separatists view the church mainly from the dimension of the “congregation”.³⁰ They point out that the church as an assembly of God or the fellowship of believers. Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches centre the power of the Holy Spirit, and see the church as the agent of the continuing work of the Spirit.³¹ However, it is worthy to mention that Pentecostal and Charismatic ecclesiologies also see the church from the “congregational” aspect,³² although they put the Holy Spirit over the community.

From the analysis above, it is clear that the Christological approach dominates the methodology of ecclesiology. However, Volf presents his ecclesiology from the Trinitarian and the pneumatological approaches from his free church and Pentecostal traditions, which were not seen before. Therefore, the methodology that Volf utilises, and his ecclesiology from the angle of ecclesial structure and the works of the Holy Spirit are worthy to be addressed.

²⁹ Dulles, *Models of the Church*, pp. 60-65.

³⁰ Haight, *Christian Community in History*, Vol. 2: *Comparative Ecclesiology*, pp. 219-260; Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, pp. 59-67.

³¹ Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, pp. 68-78.

³² Cf. Keith W. Clements, “Moltmann on the Congregation”, *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 28 No.3 (1979), pp. 101-109.

CHAPTER 2

THE ECCLESIAL STRUCTURE CORRESPONDS TO THE TRINITARIAN MODEL

I. Differences of Trinitarian Models Result in Different Ecclesial Structures: Differences of Trinitarian and Ecclesial Structures between Western and Eastern Churches

What is the reason that Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches have their preferences toward three dimensions of ecclesiology and have different structures? The answer provided by Volf is associated with the model of the Trinity: ecclesial structures are different according to the distinctive perceptions of the Trinity in the Western and the Eastern Churches. The following section will summarise one of the main points that Volf argues with Ratzinger and Zizioulas, and Volf's opinion regarding the Trinitarian and the ecclesial structures in these two churches. When mentioning Volf's opinion to Ratzinger and Zizioulas in the following sections, it will basically cite Volf rather than their own original texts.

Volf thinks that both the Western and the Eastern Church traditions relate to *imago Dei* ("the image of God");¹ i.e. the church is the image of God. Therefore, different understandings of the image of the Trinity lead to different ecclesial structures.² The Western and the Eastern Churches understand the Trinity in different ways. The Western Church utilises one "*substantia*" (substance) and three "*personae*" (persons) to describe the Trinity; the Eastern Church understands the Trinity by employing three "*hypostaseis*" (hypostasis) and one "*ousia*" (essence). Generally speaking, the Eastern Church focuses on *three hypostaseis* more than *one ousia*; however, the Western Church stresses *one substantia* more than *three personae*.³

A. Western Trinitarian and Ecclesial Model:

The Unity Is Primary; A Hierarchical Trinitarian Structure

Volf adopts Dorothea Wendebourg's idea that the Western Church utilises psychological

¹ The idea is from Hermenegild Biedermann; cf. Hermenegild Biedermann, "Gotteslehre und Kirchenverständnis: Zugang der orthodoxen und der katholischen Theologie", *Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift*, 129 (1981), pp.135, 139; cited from Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 196 fn. 25. Ratzinger also thinks that the church is the image of Trinity; cf., Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche*, Münchener theologische Studien 2/7, (Munich: Zink, 1954), p. 75, cited from Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 197 fn. 36.

² Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 196.

³ Alasdair I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), p. 83.

analogies, and “the unity of the divine essence is primary”.⁴ For example, Ratzinger starts his position from the “dominance of unity”.⁵ Ratzinger thinks that the universal church is before many local churches, for the relationship between the universal church and the local churches is analogue to the relationship between God’s essence and His three persons. Volf, therefore, agrees with Biedermann to conclude that the Catholic ecclesiology comprehends one universal church is the foundation of many local churches because the unity of the nature of God is the base of His three persons.⁶

It is correct that Volf’s observation about that the Catholic ecclesiology emphasises the unity of the church and one universal church. It is supported from the western understanding of the Trinity, and it is helpful to access it from the definition of a Trinitarian “person”. In the western pattern of the Trinity, the “*persona*” equals to the “*relatio*” (relation). The Western Church has a tendency to see that the economy of the Trinity equals to the immanent Trinity. Augustin says:

But if the Father, in that He is called the Father, were so called in relation to Himself, not to the Son; and the Son, in that He is called the Son, were so called in relation to Himself, not to the Father; then both the one would be called Father, and the other Son, according to substance. But because the Father is not called the Father except in that He has a Son, and the Son is not called Son except in that He has a Father, these things are *not* said according to *substance*; because each of them is not so called in relation to Himself, but the terms are used *reciprocally* and in *relation each to the other*; nor yet according to accident, because both the being called the Father, and the being called the Son, is *eternal* and *unchangeable* to them.⁷

⁴ Dorothea Wendebourg, “Person und Hypostase: Zur Trinitätslehre der neueren orthodoxen Theologie” in *Vernunft des Glaubens: Wissenschaftliche Theologie und kirchliche Lehre. Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag von Wolfhart Pannenberg*, edited by J. Rohls and G. Wenz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), pp. 503ff; cited from Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 200 fn. 44.

⁵ Cf. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today*, trans. by Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press: 1996), pp. 47-74.

⁶ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 201.

⁷ Augustin, *De Trinitate libri quindecim (On the Trinity)*, V.5; emphasis added by the author of this paper. The English translation is from Philip Schaff (ed.), *Early Church Fathers: Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, Series I*, 14 Vols., (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1989), Vol. 3: *Augustin: On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, Moral*

Thomas Aquinas also understands the *persona* as subsisting in the *relation*.⁸ However, since both the Holy Spirit and the Son come from God, why is the Holy Spirit not named the Son? They must have *relation*, a “relation of *origin* and *opposition*”.⁹ The Father is origin, the unbegotten one, and Son is begotten,¹⁰ and “the Holy Spirit is the Spirit *both* of the Father and of the Son”.¹¹ Augustin addresses that “*the Son was born of the Father first and then afterwards the Holy Spirit proceeded from both*; since the Holy Scripture calls Him the Spirit of both.”¹²

Treatise, p. 89.

⁸ Thomas Aquinas says:

This word *person* is said in respect of itself, not to another; forasmuch as it signifies relation as much, but by way of substance — which is a hypostasis.

The different sense of the less common term does not produce equivocation in the more common. Although a horse and an ass have their own proper definitions, nevertheless they agree univocally in animal, because the common definition of animal applies to both. So it does not follow that, although relation is contained in the signification of divine person, but not in that of an angelic or a human person, the word *person* is used in an equivocal sense. Though neither is it applied univocally, since nothing can be said univocally of God and creatures.

Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, (*Summa Theologica, Summaries of Theology*), Pt. I, Q. 29, Art. 4. The English translation is from St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica: Complete English Edition*, 5 Vols., trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster: Christian Classics, 1981), Vol. 1, pp. 159-160.

⁹ Heron, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 92; emphasis added by the author of this paper.

¹⁰ Augustin says:

• • • the Father indeed is so called in relation to the Son, and the Son in relation to the Father, but that they are said to *be unbegotten and begotten in relation to themselves*, not in relation each to the other; for that it is not the same thing to call Him unbegotten as it is to call Him the Father, because there would be nothing to hinder our calling Him unbegotten even if He had not begotten the Son; and if any one beget a son, he is not therefore himself unbegotten, for men, who are begotten by other men, themselves also beget others; and therefore they say the Father is called Father in relation to the Son, and the Son is called Son in relation to the Father, but *unbegotten is said in relation to Himself*, and *begotten in relation to Himself*; and therefore, if whatever is said in relation to oneself is said according to substance, while to be unbegotten and to be begotten are different, then the substance is different • • •

Cf. Augustin, *De Trinitate*, V.6; emphasis added by the author of this paper. The English translation is from Schaff (ed.), *Early Church Fathers: Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1*, Vol. 3: *Augustin*, pp. 89-90.

¹¹ Augustin, *De Trinitate*, V.11; emphasis added by the author of this paper. The English translation is from Schaff (ed.), *Early Church Fathers: Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1*, Vol. 3: *Augustin*, p. 93.

¹² Augustin says:

There we shall see the truth without any difficulty, and shall enjoy it to the full, most clear and most certain. Nor shall we be inquiring into anything by a mind that reasons, but shall discern by a mind

If one stresses that the Father is the source of both the Son and the Holy Spirit, it may be difficult to tell between them.¹³ Although there may be confusion of the difference between the Son and the Holy Spirit, Augustin insists that the relation between the three persons still is able to distinguish the Son and the Holy Spirit;¹⁴ the Eleventh Council of Toledo (675) also tries to solve the problem.¹⁵ In addition, the idea that “the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of both the Father and the Son” causes other problems: it confounds the difference between the Father and the Son. If one distinguishes the Father and the Son, then one may deduce a wrong doctrine that there are “two” Spirits from the Father and the Son respectively. If there is only

that contemplates, why the Holy Spirit is not a Son, although He proceeds from the Father.

Further, in that Highest Trinity which is God, there are no intervals of time, by which it could be shown, or at least inquired, whether *the Son was born of the Father first and then afterwards the Holy Spirit proceeded from both*; since Holy Scripture calls Him the Spirit of both. For it is He of whom the apostle says, “But because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts:” and it is He of whom the same Son says, “For it is not ye who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaketh in you.” And it is proved by many other testimonies of the Divine Word, that the Spirit, who is specially called in the Trinity the Holy Spirit, is of the Father and of the Son: of whom likewise the Son Himself says, “Whom I will send unto you from the Father;” and in another place, “Whom the Father will send in my name.” And we are so taught that He proceeds from both, because the Son Himself says, He proceeds from the Father. And when He had risen from the dead, and had appeared to His disciples, “He breathed upon them, and said, Receive the Holy Ghost,” so as to show that He proceeded also from Himself. And Itself is that very “power that went out from Him,” as we read in the Gospel, “and healed them all.”

Cf. Augustin, *De Trinitate*, XV.24-25; emphasis added by the author of this paper. The English translation is from Schaff (ed.), *Early Church Fathers: Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers. Series 1*, Vol. 3: *Augustin*, pp. 223-224. Aquinas has similar idea; he says:

And some said that there are two principle of creation, one of good things and the other of evil things, against which *In the beginning* is expounded — *in the Son*. For as the efficient principle is appropriated to the Father by reason of power, so the exemplar principle is appropriated to the Son by reason of wisdom . . .

Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Pt. I, Q. 46 Art.3. The English translation is from St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica: Complete English Edition*, Vol. 1, p. 244.

¹³ Cf. Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p. 340.

¹⁴ Augustin says:

. . . we speak of the Holy Spirit of the Father; but, on the other hand, *we do not speak of the Father of the Holy Spirit*, lest the Holy Spirit should be understood to be His Son. So also we speak of the Holy Spirit of the Son; but *we do not speak of the Son of the Holy Spirit*, lest the Holy Spirit be understood to be His Father. For it is the case in many relatives, that no designation is to be found by which those things which bear relation to each other may [in name] mutually correspond to each other.

Cf. Augustin, *De Trinitate*, V.12; emphasis added by the author of this paper. The English translation is from Schaff (ed.), *Early Church Fathers: Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1*, Vol. 3: *Augustin*, pp. 93-94.

¹⁵ Cf. McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p. 342.

one Holy Spirit, how is it from two sources at the same time? If the Holy Spirit only proceeded from one source mentioned in the Council of Lyons (1274),¹⁶ how does it work? If the Son was begotten by the Father, and the Father and the Son, who is in Him (Father), proceed the Holy Spirit together,¹⁷ there is still a “logical” sequence or “hierarchy”: the Father, the Son and then the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Trinitarian model in the Western Church is *hierarchical* and not as balanced as the one in the Eastern Church.

From the argument mentioned above, it is clear that the Western model of the Trinity highlights *origin* and *relation*, which makes a *hierarchical* Trinitarian structure. In the Western model of the Trinity, the Son subordinates to the Father, and the Holy Spirit is subordinates to the Father and the Son *economically*. That is so called “*the Trinity of Sending*”,¹⁸ which sees the relationships between the three persons from the aspect of “sending”. Therefore, the Western Church supports inserting the “*filioque*” into the Nicene Creed.

If the structure of the church is the image of the Trinity, there is a logical sequence and hierarchy in the ecclesial structure. Therefore, the Western Church structure is a strictly *hierarchical* “Pope – Bishops – Priests – Deacons – Laypeople” structure according to its “Father – Son – the Holy Spirit” logic relation. In addition, the Catholic Church stresses the “*one*” substance of God and the unity of the Trinity, and it emphasises the oneness and the unity of the church. These are the reasons that the Western Church develops the theology of the papacy. “The ‘ministry of unity’ is derived from the representative sequence: *one church – one Pope – one Peter – one Christ – one God*”.¹⁹ Therefore, the rationale of the Catholic hierarchical ecclesial structure which lead by Pope are: (1) one essence of Godhead

¹⁶ Cf. McGrath, *Christian Theology*, pp. 342-343.

¹⁷ It is suggested by Augustin; cf. Augustin, *De Trinitate*, XV.45.

¹⁸ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), p. 294.

¹⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1981), p. 201; emphasis added by the author of this paper.

(unity) before three divine persons; (2) logical sequence and hierarchy in the Trinitarian structure; and (3) “ministry of unity” developed from the representative sequence.²⁰

The logical sequence or hierarchy within the Trinity is closely associated with the unity of the church. Similarly, the scriptures which mention the church as “Christological” stress the unity of the church.²¹ What does the unity of the church mean? It is helpful to think about the models of the unity of the Trinity and that of the church.

The ancient church is no doubt an “*episcopate*” church with “*unity*”. Apostolic father Ignatius proposes that Christians have fellowship with a bishop spiritually is “joined to him as the Church is to Jesus Christ, and as Jesus Christ is to the Father, that so all things may agree in unity!”²² A person who rejects the bishop is “deprived of the bread of God” and “may be subject to God”,²³ and the church “should look upon the bishop even as we would upon the Lord Himself”.²⁴ The unity of the church is crucial to the early church, for:

• • • her head is one, her source one; and she is one mother, plentiful in the results of fruitfulness: from her womb we are born, by her milk we are nourished, by her spirit we are animated.²⁵

Moltmann, however, has a different interpretation of the phenomenon that the ancient church stresses the unity in “*episcopate*”. He advocates that the *episcopate* comes from the concept of the “*divine monarchy*” of the Trinity. It is because that the Roman Empire emphasises that the whole realm of Roman only has one emperor, and the church copies the

²⁰ Cf. Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, pp. 47-74.

²¹ 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:5; Eph. 4:4.

²² Ignatius, *Epistula ad Ephesios* (Πρὸς Ἐφεσίου ἐπιστολή, *Epistle to the Ephesians*), 5. The English translation is from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *Early Church Father: Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10 Vols., (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), Vol. 1: *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 51.

²³ Ignatius, *Epistula ad Ephesios*, 5. The English translation is from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *Early Church Father: Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1: *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 51.

²⁴ Ignatius, *Epistula ad Ephesios*, 6. The English translation is from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *Early Church Father: Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1: *The Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 51-52.

²⁵ Cyprian, *De ecclesiae catholicae unitate* (*On the Unity of the Church*), 5. The English translation is from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *Early Church Father: Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 5: *Fathers of The Third And Fourth Centuries*, p. 423.

idea from the structure of the Roman Empire. Since there is only one emperor who governs the Roman Empire, there is only one God who reigns the universe. Western Christianity puts emphasis on the oneness of God, and this phenomenon is named “political monotheism” by Moltmann. He also points out that the church applies the principle of “political monotheism” to the structure of the church. As there is only one God in the universe, there is only one head, Christ, in the church. Therefore, the ancient ecclesial structure also corresponds to the Roman political order, which highlights that Christ is the only one ruler of the church. In the ancient church, a bishop, which represent Christ in a local church, acts as the head and the governor of the very church.²⁶ Moltmann thinks that episcopate is not theologically correct and also harmful to the work of the Holy Spirit in the church:

The bishop represents Christ to his church just as Christ represents God. This representative derivation of divine authority is obviously monarchical monotheism. The church’s hierarchy is supposed to correspond to and represent the divine monarchy. The doctrine of the monarchical episcopate certainly brought unity into Christian churches, but it did so at the cost of eliminating the charismatic prophets. The Spirit was office.²⁷

Moltmann considers that “one God, one Christ, one bishop, one church” is a limited concept of the church in only “one-sided way from Christ to the Office and from the Office to the Christian fellowship”.²⁸ The “clerical monotheism” arises, and it divides the ministry and the congregation and takes away the right of decision making from the laities. It has a conflict with “the Trinitarian understanding of God and his people”.²⁹ The development of “clerical monotheism” not only damages the work of the Holy Spirit in the ecclesial structure but also suspends the ministry and the charge of the church:

²⁶ Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, pp. 192-200, esp. 195.

²⁷ Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, p. 200.

²⁸ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution of Messianic Ecclesiology*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 305.

²⁹ Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, p. 305.

The Development of monarchical episcopate led to a quenching of the Spirit and was an impediment to the charismatic church. It is no wonder that at the same time as this hierarchical official church developed, Christian spiritualism grew up parallel to it. It spread, and is spreading still, in the church's 'underground' of sects, movements and brotherhoods. The growth of monarchical episcopate broke up the genetic relationship between the commissioned church and its special commissions in a way that was one-sided. . . . A democratic justification of the ministry is undoubtedly conceivable and would certainly be in accord with people in general, but hardly to the people of God.³⁰

From the analysis above, it is clear that Western Church has a tendency of "monotheism", which emphasises "*oneness* of origin". If the church structure corresponds to the Trinity, it is not unexpected that the West Church structure is hierarchical. The Pope, the vicar of the only *one origin* of the church, is *opposite* to the bishops and the clergies are *opposite* to the laities, whilst the laities subordinate to the clergies and the bishops subordinate to the Pope.³¹ Therefore, it is correct that Volf's observation of the characters of the Trinitarian model and the hierarchical ecclesiology in the Catholic Church.

B. Eastern Trinitarian and Ecclesial Model:

Communion within One (Father); A Hierarchical Reciprocally Trinitarian Structure

Volf considers that the Eastern Church adopts the social analogies to comprehend the Trinity, and follows Wendebourg's opinion that the Eastern Church stresses the three different persons before one divine nature.³² For example, Zizioulas considers that the unity of God is based on the person of the Holy Father rather than the essence of God. Zizioulas comprehends that "God's being coincides with his personhood, which is always realised³³ in communion"; therefore, "the substance exists *only as persons*."³⁴ Since the church is the

³⁰ Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, p. 305.

³¹ Cf. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, p. 294.

³² Wendebourg, "Person und Hypostase", pp. 503ff; cited from Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 200 fn. 44.

³³ The word "realised" in original quotation is "realized". It is changed to British spelling for the convenience of reading. The paper will change all American spelling in quotation into British spelling without further notice.

³⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 201.

image of God, if there is no one essence behind the three divine persons, there is no universal church behind many local churches. Each local church is the universal church because each divine person is the truly God. For the reason that the being of God is comprehended as communion, every local church should have communion with other churches. Therefore, the universal church is not the presuppositions of the local churches.³⁵

It is correct that Volf's observation about that the Eastern Orthodox ecclesiology emphasises the "three" divine persons and the local churches rather than one essence and the universal church. The Eastern Church has a different view to the Trinitarian structure from the Western Church, and so as to the ecclesial structure. For example, Basil the Great thinks that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are three persons sharing one essence.³⁶ Gregory of Nyssa uses the three persons sharing one common nature as an analogy to the Trinity.³⁷

³⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 201.

³⁶ Basil the Great the Great says:

• • • Every one of us both shares in existence by the common term of *essence (ousia)* and by his own properties is such an one and such an one. In the same manner, in the matter in question, the term *ousia* is common, like goodness, or Godhead, or any similar attribute; while hypostasis is contemplated in the special property of Fatherhood, Sonship, or the power to sanctify. If then they describe the Persons as being without hypostasis, the statement is *per se* absurd; but if they concede that the Persons exist in real hypostasis, as they acknowledge, let them so reckon them that the principle of the homoousion may be preserved in the unity of the Godhead, and that the doctrine preached may be the recognition of true religion, of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the perfect and complete hypostasis of each of the Persons named.

Cf. Basil the Great the Great, *Epistulae (Ἐπιστολαί, Letters)*, 214.4 (To Count Terentius). The English translation is from Philip Schaff (ed.), *Early Church Fathers: Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers. Series 2*, 14 Vols., (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), Vol. 8: *St. Basil: The Treatise De Spiritu Sancto, The Nine Homilies of The Hexaemeron, and The Letters*, pp. 254.

³⁷ Gregory of Nyssa argues:

The argument which you state is something like this: - Peter, James, and John, being in one human nature, are called three men: and there is no absurdity in describing those who are united in nature, if they are more than one, by the plural number of the name derived from their nature. If, then, • • • when we say that the Godhead of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is one, and yet forbid men to say "there are three Gods"? . . .

When we address any one, we do not call him by the name of his nature, in order that no confusion may result from the community of the name, as would happen if every one of those who hear it were to think that he himself was the person addressed, because the call is made not by the proper appellation but by the *common name of their nature*: but we separate him from the multitude by using that name which belongs to him as his own; - that, I mean, which signifies the particular subject. Thus there are many who have shared in the nature - many disciples, say, or apostles, or martyrs - but the man in them all is one; since, as has been said, the term "man" does not belong to the nature of the individual as such, but to that which is common.

The Eastern Church disagrees with the concept that “person equals relation” in the Western Church,³⁸ and the word “*hypostaseis*” is in the “*ontological*” sense rather than a “*relational*” one. Therefore, in the eyes of the Western Church, the Eastern model of Trinity is very close to the “Tri-theism”.

Secondarily, the Father begets the Son and proceeds the Holy Spirit, Son and the Holy Spirit are subordinated to the Father in this scene. Therefore, the Eastern Church sees the Father as the “*ground*” of unity of the three “*hypostaseis*”, rather than one divine nature as the foundation of the unity of the three divine persons, which is the Western model of the Trinity. Zizioulas explains the rationale and the importance of the Trinitarian model in the Eastern Church:

This identification of God’s ultimate being with a person rather than with *ousia* not only makes possible a biblical doctrine of God (= the Father, in the Bible), but also resolves problems such as those inherent in the *homoousion* concerning, for example, the relation of the Son to the Father. In making the Father the “*ground*” of God’s being – or the ultimate reason for existence – theology accepted a kind of subordination of the Son to the Father without being obliged to downgrade the *Logos* into something created.³⁹

Therefore, the Eastern Church sees the person Father as the *origin* of the person Son and the person Holy Spirit.⁴⁰ The latter two persons come from, and are subordinated to the person Father from this perspective. Therefore, the Father is “*one*” (*ground*), and the Son and the Holy Spirit are “*many*” in the Trinity. Since the church is the image of the Trinity, a

Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Ablabium: Quod non sint tres dii*, (*Πρὸς Ἀβλάβιον περὶ τοῦ μὴ ἄεσθαι λέγειν τρεῖς θεούς; To Ablabius: On “Not Three Gods”*), in *Dogmatic Treatises*, Book 12; emphasis added by the author of this paper. The English translation is from Schaff (ed.), *Early Church Fathers: Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2*, Vol. 5: *Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, etc.*, pp. 331-332.

³⁸ Cf. Augustin, *De Trinitate*, V.5.

³⁹ John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002), pp. 88-89.

⁴⁰ Cf. Vladimir Lossky, “Apophysis and Trinitarian Theology” in *Eastern Orthodox Theology: A Contemporary Reader*, 2nd edition, ed. by Daniel B. Clendenin (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), p. 151; *idem.*, “The Procession of the Holy Spirit in Orthodox Trinitarian Theology” in *Eastern Orthodox Theology*, pp. 168-172.

bishop in a local church, as the Father in the Trinity, is origin of the priests, the deacons and the laities. A bishop is “one” (origin), and the other people are “many” in the church.⁴¹ That is the so called “one and many” model of the Eastern Orthodoxy ecclesiology. Because the Son and the Holy Spirit are subordinated to the Father in the actions of sending and proceeding, laypersons are subordinated to the bishop in the ecclesial structure accordingly. However, there is no one bishop to whom other bishops should subordinate; there is no pope in the Eastern Church. The Eastern Orthodox Church is less hierarchical than the Catholic Church.

Furthermore, the Eastern Church also sees the church from the aspect of communion in the Eucharist. Therefore, it stresses the importance of the role of a bishop in the Eucharist held in a local church.⁴² That is the reason a bishop is so crucial in a local church.

The ancient ecclesial structure and order seems to follow *hierarchical “one and many”* model; Christians “have but one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup to [show forth] the unity of His blood; one altar; as there is *one bishop, along with the presbytery and deacons.*”⁴³ Cyprian also supports the concept of “one and many”:

He (Jesus Christ)⁴⁴ might set forth unity, He arranged by His authority the origin of that unity, as beginning from one. Assuredly the rest of the apostles were also the same as was Peter, endowed with a like partnership both of honor and power; but the beginning proceeds from unity.⁴⁵

• • •

The episcopate is one, each part of which is held by each one for the whole. The Church also is one, which is spread abroad far and wide into a multitude by an increase of fruitfulness. As there are *many* rays of the sun, but *one* light; and *many*

⁴¹ Cf. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, pp. 143-169.

⁴² Cf. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, pp. 15-17.

⁴³ Ignatius, *Epistula ad Philadelphenses* (*Πρὸς Φιλαδέλφεις ἐπιστολή*, *The Epistle to the Philadelphians*), 4. The English translation is from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *Early Church Father: Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1: *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 81.

⁴⁴ Added by the author of this paper.

⁴⁵ Cyprian, *De ecclesiae catholicae unitate*, (*On the Unity of the Church*), 4. The English translation is from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *Early Church Father: Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 5: *Fathers of The Third And Fourth Centuries*, p. 422.

branches of a tree, but *one* strength based in its tenacious root; and since from one spring flow [sic. flows] many streams, although the multiplicity seems diffused in the liberality of an overflowing abundance, yet the unity is still preserved in the source. Separate a ray of the sun from its body of light, its unity does not allow a division of light; break a branch from a tree, — when broken, it will not be able to bud; cut off the stream from its fountain, and that which is cut off dries up.⁴⁶

C. Comparison of Western and Eastern Trinitarian and Ecclesial Models

The difference of the Western and the Eastern Trinitarian models results in two different ecclesial structures. The diagram which follows is the comparison and summary of the two models of the Trinity and the structures of these two churches.

⁴⁶ Cyprian, *De ecclesiae catholicae unitate*, 5. The English translation is from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *Early Church Father: Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 5: *Fathers of The Third And Fourth Centuries*, p. 423.

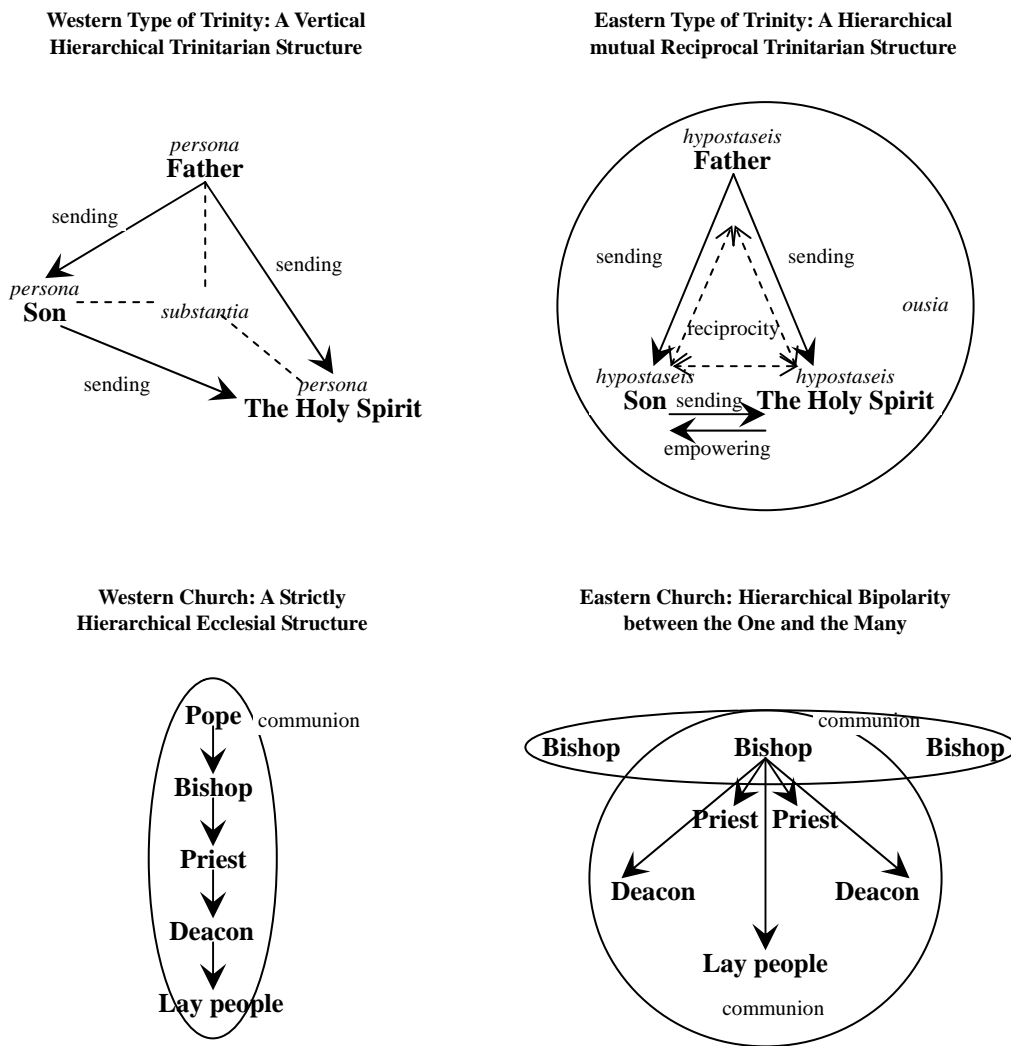


Figure 2 Comparison of the Western and Eastern Trinitarian Models and Ecclesial Structures

D. Volf's Critique to These Two Models

Volf argues that it will jeopardise the Trinity of God if one insists the primacy of one God before three divine persons.⁴⁷ Volf accepts Moltmann's idea that "the persons themselves constitute both their differences and their unity"⁴⁸ and has the same opinion with Zizioulas's basic idea regarding Trinity. Volf also resorts to the idea that the Trinity is that "the common divine nature arises not by the way 'collection' of the divine persons, but rather

⁴⁷ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 202.

⁴⁸ Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, p. 175.

is identical with latter.”⁴⁹ Therefore, he denies the Western formula that “divine nature – divine persons” correspond to “universal church – local churches”. It is that the “*relation*” between the divine persons corresponds to the “*relation*” between the local churches.⁵⁰

Although agreeing with Zizioulas that God’s being is simultaneous to the communion of three persons, Volf rejects Zizioulas’s “one and many” ecclesiology deduced from this idea.⁵¹ Volf argues this point by refuting “the coincidence of person and substance in God corresponds to simultaneity of the universal and local church.” What is the connection and relation between local churches and the universal church? Volf thinks that local churches “are *historical* anticipations of the eschatological gathering of the entire people of God.”⁵² Volf argues that the universal church is consisted of local churches linked by the Holy Spirit:

The universal church arises *by way of* the local churches, just as the local churches themselves arise through the pneumatic anticipatory connection to the yet outstanding gathering of the whole eschatological people of God, that is to the *eschatological* universal church.⁵³

The universal church can be seen as the collection of the local churches from this perspective. However, the divine nature is not the preposition of the divine persons, but “rather exists concretely as three persons”.⁵⁴ The divinity is not “the ‘collection’ of the divine persons”,⁵⁵ therefore, the correspondence between “divine nature – universal church” and “divine persons – local churches” is rejected.⁵⁶ Volf argues that if the divine nature corresponds to the universal church, and each local church is identical to the universal church, it will confuse the difference between the divine persons.⁵⁷ For the reason of protecting the completeness of

⁴⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 202.

⁵⁰ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 202.

⁵¹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 202.

⁵² Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 202.

⁵³ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 202.

⁵⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 202. Volf utilises Moltmann’s idea here.

⁵⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 202.

⁵⁶ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 202-203.

⁵⁷ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 203.

each divine person of the Trinity, Volf rejects Zizioulas's ecclesiology that "divine nature – universal church" corresponds to "divine persons – local churches". Volf thinks that "the one universal church enjoys no precedence before the many local churches, but rather exists precisely *as* these churched, and does so as the one and whole church in each local church that itself stands in communion with other local churches".⁵⁸

II. Trinitarian: The Church as the Image of Trinitarian Communion

The main idea of Miroslav Volf regarding the church is that ecclesial structure corresponds to Trinitarian communion. From this Trinitarian approach, Volf proposes an equal, polycentric, reciprocal and participative ecclesiology. This section will focus on Volf's concept of the ecclesial equality and the polycentricity in this chapter, and his reciprocal and participative characters of the ecclesiology will be presented in chapter Three.

A. The Rationale of the Church as the Image of Trinitarian Communion

1. The Church is Trinitarian

The church is regarded as "the body of Christ", and ecclesiologies of many churches are constructed from the Christological approach.⁵⁹ "The church is Christological" is without any question; however, does the church only belong to Christ? Volf starts his argument from a different approach: the church is not only Christological, but also Trinitarian. He quotes Matthew 20:18 to show that baptism makes believers go into the communion of church as well as the communion of the Trinity.⁶⁰ He also gets support from two of Tertullian's works.⁶¹ Volf cites Origen and Boris Bobriusky to conclude that "the church is full of the holy Trinity".⁶² Therefore, the church belongs to the Trinity.

⁵⁸ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 201-202.

⁵⁹ Cf. 1.I.B and 1.I.C of this paper.

⁶⁰ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 194-195.

⁶¹ Tertullian, *De Pudicitia (On Modesty)*, 21; *idem.*, *De Baptismo (On Baptism)*. Tertullian wrote *De Pudicitia* when he had become a Montanist; cf. Alexander Robert & James Donaldson (eds.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3: *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 11.

⁶² Boris Bobriusky, *Le Mystère de la Trinité: Cours de Théologie Orthodoxe* (Paris: Cerf, 1986), pp. 147-197; cited from Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 195 fn. 23.

The following section is going to examine Volf’s argument. Is “the church is Trinitarian” a better description to clarify the identity of the church? From the angle of identity of the church, Christians are baptised “in the name of the *Father*, and of the *Son*, and of the *Holy Ghost*”.⁶³ The Trinitarian doxology is important in the Sunday service, and the Apostolic benediction also relates the church to the Trinity: “the grace of the Lord *Jesus Christ*, and the love of *God*, and the communion of the *Holy Ghost*, [be] with you all. Amen.”⁶⁴ In the ancient church, it is the Holy Spirit teaches the church through the Scripture.⁶⁵ The Apostles proclaim the kingdom of God by “being fully assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and established in the word of God, with full assurance of the Holy Ghost”.⁶⁶ The church worships God (the Father), Christ and is poured out by the Holy Spirit,⁶⁷ and obey God’s command because that “as God lives and the Lord Jesus Christ lives and the Holy Spirit”.⁶⁸ The faith of the church is associated to the Trinity,⁶⁹ and Christian life also connects

⁶³ Matt. 28:19; emphasis added by the author of this paper.

⁶⁴ 2 Cor. 13:14; emphasis added by the author of this paper.

⁶⁵ Clement says:

For He Himself by the Holy Ghost thus addresses us: “Come, ye children, hearken unto Me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord”

Cf. Clement, *Epistula ad Corinthios* (*Πρὸς Κορινθίους ἐπιστολή*, *Letter to the Corinthians*), 21. The English translation is from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *Early Church Father: Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1: *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 11.

⁶⁶ Clement, *Epistula ad Corinthios*, 42. The English translation is from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *Early Church Father: Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1: *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 16.

⁶⁷ Clement says:

Why are there strifes, and tumults, and divisions, and schisms, and wars among you? Have we not [all] one God and one Christ? Is there not one Spirit of grace poured out upon us?

Cf. Clement, *Epistula ad Corinthios*, 46. The English translation is from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *Early Church Father: Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1: *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 17.

⁶⁸ Clement says:

Let us, then, obey His all-holy and glorious name, and escape the threats which have been spoken by wisdom long ago against the disobedient, that we may encamp in confidence in the most sacred name of His majesty. Take Our advice, and there will be nothing for you to regret. For, as God lives and the Lord Jesus Christ lives and the Holy Spirit, the faith and hope of the elect, so shall he who with humility of mind, and ready gentleness, and without turning back, has performed the decrees and commandments given by God be enrolled and chosen among the number of those who are saved through Jesus Christ, through whom is the glory to Him forever and ever. Amen.

Cf. Clement, *Epistula ad Corinthios*, 58. The English translation is from Hermigild Dressler et. al. (eds.), *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1962-), Vol.

to the Trinity closely.⁷⁰ Therefore, Tertullian says: “*Ubi tres, Ecclesia est, licet Laici*” (wherever there are three [divine persons],⁷¹ there is the Church).⁷² The church is not only the body of Christ, it is “a body of *three*”⁷³ divine persons. Therefore, Volf’s idea that “the church is Trinitarian” is correct according to the Scripture and the Christian tradition.

2. The Relationship between Trinitarian and Ecclesial Structures:

Ontological Correspondence

Furthermore, Volf considers that there is a correspondence between the Trinity and the church. Volf begins his point from faith, for faith links Christians to the communion of the church and the communion of the Trinity. How does faith work? The Individualism proposes that the salvation only links individuals to God; however, Volf rejects this kind of individualism, “for the Christian God is not a private deity”.⁷⁴ Since the faith brings an individual into the community, “a person cannot be fully initiated into Christian faith without being *socialised* into a Christian church.”⁷⁵ Volf argues that:

The concrete ecclesial community is the *form* . . . in which this communion with God is lived concretely . . . This is why life in the congregation is not something added to faith and its confession, faith that always occurs with and in the church. faith . . . is . . . confessed through life *in* the fellowship of believers. In this

1: *The Apostolic Fathers* (1981), pp. 53-54.

⁶⁹ 1 Jn. 4:1-2

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the *Spirit* of God: Every spirit that confesseth that *Jesus Christ* is come in the flesh is of *God*.

Emphasis added by the author of this paper.

⁷⁰ Rom. 8:1-17.

⁷¹ Added by the author of the paper.

⁷² Tertullian, *De Baptismo*, 6. The English translation is from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *Early Church Father: Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10 Vols., (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), Vol. 3: *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, p. 672.

⁷³ Tertullian, *De Baptismo*, 6. The English translation is from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *Early Church Father: Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3: *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, p. 672.

⁷⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 173.

⁷⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 173; emphasis added by the author of this paper.

sense, faith *means* entering in *communion*, *communion* with the triune God and with other Christian.⁷⁶

For Volf, faith is “a simultaneous incorporation into both Trinitarian and ecclesial communion”; therefore, the church is “more than just a fellowship based on will can one arrive at the notion that the fellowship of Christians should reflect the Trinitarian unity of God.”⁷⁷ Additionally, according to John 1:3-4 and Revelation 21-22, Volf thinks that the church has “form” communion with the Trinitarian God, because the Holy Spirit brings Christians into the ecclesial and the Trinitarian communion.⁷⁸

Based on this position and John 17:21, Volf comprehends the correspondence between the ecclesial and the Trinitarian communion is not merely formal but “ontological”, for it is “soteriological grounded”⁷⁹ and “a consequence of God’s redemptive and creative relationship with us”.⁸⁰ Therefore, the “many” of “one and many” model⁸¹ in the church should reflect mutual love between the three persons of God.⁸² From the serial logical arguments: (1) the church is Trinitarian; (2) faith and the Holy Spirit bring Christians into the communion of the triune God and the communion of the church; and (3) John 17:21 says there is a correspondence between the relations within the church and ontological Trinity; Volf demonstrates that the ecclesial structure corresponds to the Trinitarian Communion.

Volf’s argues the rationale of “the church as the image of Trinity” from a logical and deduced perspective rather than an exegetical way. His method, every step of his argument, and the result are correct, and it is appreciated that he presents this issues in detail. However, there is another way to demonstrate the rationale through the interpretation of John 17:20-23. It is also helpful to explain the reason of the correspondence between ecclesial structure (the

⁷⁶ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 173-174.

⁷⁷ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 197.

⁷⁸ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 195.

⁷⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 195.

⁸⁰ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 195 fn. 21.

⁸¹ The word “many” means church members; cf. 2.I.B and 2.I.C “one and many” model of the church in this paper.

⁸² Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 195.

relations within church) and the Trinitarian structure (ontological Trinity) through the exegesis of John 17:20-23. The following section will argue “the church as the image of Trinity” in an exegetical method.

In the High Priest’s Prayer of Jesus Christ, He says to the Father:

¹⁷Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; ¹⁸That they all may be one; as thou, Father, [art] *in* me, and I *in* thee, that they also may be one *in* us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. ¹⁹And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be *one*, even as we are *one*: ²⁰I *in* them, and thou *in* me, that they may be made perfect *in one*; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.⁸³

The clause ἵνα πάντες ἔν ὧσιν, καθὼς σύ, πάτερ, ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ ἐν σοὶ (that they all may be one; as thou, Father, [art] *in* me, and I *in* thee) is worthy to be addressed. From this clause, it is clear that the relationship *within* the church (ecclesial structure), is the same as that *within* the Father and the Son (partial Trinitarian structure). The phrase καθὼς σύ, πάτερ, ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ ἐν σοὶ (as thou, Father, [art] *in* me, and I *in* thee) shows the relation between the Father and the Son is “perichoretical”. In this section, that the phrases ἔν ὧσιν, ὧσιν ἔν, and ὧσιν εἰς ἔν (they may be one) repeats continuously⁸⁴ evidences that the *unity* of the church is also important. However, what does this unity mean? From the phrase καθὼς σύ, πάτερ, ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ ἐν σοὶ and καθὼς ἡμεῖς ἔν (as we are one), it is apparent that the unity should be interpreted from the aspect of “*perichoresis*”.

Furthermore, the clauses αὐτοὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ὧσιν (they may be one in us) and ἐγὼ ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ σὺ ἐν ἐμοί (I in them, and thou in me) point out the relation between the church and the Trinity. The purpose of this perichoretical relation between the church and Trinity⁸⁵ are ἵνα ὁ κόσμος πιστεύῃ ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας (that the world may believe

⁸³ Jn. 17:20-23; emphasis added by the author of this paper.

⁸⁴ Jn. 17:21, 22, 23.

⁸⁵ The perichoretical relation means “the church in the Trinity” and “Father in Christ and the Christ in the church”.

that thou hast sent me) and ἵνα γινώσκη ὁ κόσμος ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας (that the world may know that thou hast sent me). Therefore, the perichoretical relation between the church and the Trinity is “mission” oriented.⁸⁶ From the argument above, the interecclesial relationship should be perichoretical according to the Scripture.

3. The Church as Communion

According to “that they all may be *one*”⁸⁷ and “they may be made perfect in *one*”,⁸⁸ the structure of the church is focused on “*unity*”. Similarly, Paul also argues the *oneness* of the church:

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we [being] many are *one* bread, [and] *one* body: for we are all partakers of that *one* bread.⁸⁹

Concerning the passage above, the basic idea of the unity and oneness of the church is “*communion*”. In Eucharist, Christians are “*partakers*” and participants in the communion of Christ.

The idea that the church as communion is accepted by the church, because the article “*sanctam Ecclesiam catholicam, sanctorum communionem*” (I believe . . . the holy catholic church, the communion of saints) has appeared in the Apostles’ Creed from the fifth century.⁹⁰ The Catholic and the Eastern Orthodoxy churches now also preserve the concept. For example, Pontiff declares the importance of understanding the church as the communion in the letter “The Church as Communion”, which is from the Congregation for the Doctrine

⁸⁶ Cf. 2.II.E and 4.I of this paper.

⁸⁷ Jn 17:18.

⁸⁸ Jn 17:20.

⁸⁹ 1 Cor. 10:16-17; emphasis added by the author of this paper.

⁹⁰ “*Sanctorum communionem*” is absent in all versions of the Apostles’ Creed in Eastern Church; cf. Fernando Q. Gouvea, “Communion of Saints”, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), p. 277.

of the Faith of the Roman Catholic Church to its bishops.⁹¹ The “communion” is the core of the ecclesial structure, and it corresponds to the structure of the Trinity. Zizioulas, a theologian and also Metropolitan of Pergamon of the Eastern Orthodoxy Church, describes the ecclesial and Trinitarian structure very clearly:

In the first place, ecclesial being is bound to the very being of God. From the fact that the human being is a member of the Church, he becomes an “image of God”, he exists as God Himself exists, he takes on God’s “way of being.” . . . It is a way of *relationship* with the world, with other people and with God, an event of *communion*, . . .

. . .

. . . the Church to present this way of existence, she must herself be an image of the way in which God exists. Her entire structure, her ministries etc. must express this way of existence. And that means, above all else, that the Church must have a right, a correct vision with the respect to the being of God.⁹²

Therefore, “the church as communion” is widely recognised by the Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches, so as to Volf who represents Independent and Pentecostal Churches. From the argument mentioned above, the ecclesial structure is the image of Trinitarian communion.

B. The Trinitarian Model and Method of Correspondence between Ecclesial Structure and Trinity: The Trinitarian Model Volf Adopted

1. Polycentric and Symmetrical Reciprocity of the Many

If one understands that the perichoretical relation with the church and within the Trinity is communion, then what model of communion should the church have? As demonstrated in chapter two, the model of the ecclesial communion depends on the model of the Trinity

⁹¹ The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *The Church as Communion: Some Aspects of the Church as Communion*, (Rome: The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 28 May 1992), articles 1, 3 (pp. 761-762.). This document is reprinted in *Catholic International*, Vol. 3, No. 16 (September 1992) pp. 761-767.

⁹² Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, p. 15.

adopted by churches or theologians. Since different models of the Trinity bring about varied ecclesiologies, the model of the Trinity that Volf utilises also influences his ecclesiology.

The Trinitarian model that Volf adopts is the “social model of Trinitarian relations”, especially from Moltmann⁹³ and Pannenberg.⁹⁴ Moltmann, alluding to John 17:20-21, proposes a “*reciprocal participative*” model of the Trinity and the ecclesial structure:

• • • the unity of the Christian community is a Trinitarian unity. It *corresponds* to the indwelling of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Father. It participates in the divine triunity, since the community of believers is not only fellowship *with* God but in God too.

• • •

The doctrine of the Trinity constitutes the church as ‘a community free of dominion’. The Trinitarian principle replaces the principle of power by the principle of concord. Authority and obedience are replaced by dialogue, consensus and harmony. What stands at centre is not faith in God’s revelation on the basis of ecclesiastical authority, but faith on the basis of individual insight into the truth of revelation.⁹⁵

Volf suggests that one should understand the unity of God from the dimension of “*perichoresis*”,⁹⁶ which is similar to Moltmann.⁹⁷ Volf insists that “each persons [*sic* person]

⁹³ Jürgen Moltmann, *Trinität und Reich Gottes* (Munich: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1980), pp. 145-194; *idem.*, “Die einladende Einheit des dreieinigen Gottes” in *In der Geschichte des dreieinigen Gottes: Beiträge zur trinitarischen Theologie* (Munich: Kaiser, 1991), pp. 11-21; *idem.*, *Geist des Lebens: Ganzheitliche Pneumatologie* (Munich: Kaiser, 1991); cited from Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 203 fn. 37.

⁹⁴ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 259-336, 422-432; *idem.*, “Person und Subjekt”, “Die subjektivität Gottes und die Trinitätslehre: Ein Beitrag zur Beziehung zwischen Karl Barth und der Philosophie Hegels” and “Der Gott der Geschichte: Der trinitarische Gott und die Wahrheit der Geschichte” in *Grundfragen Systematischer Theologie: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980); cited from Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 198 fn. 38. It is worthy to address that Volf agrees with Pannenberg’s “ontological equality” of three divine persons; however, he disagree Pannenberg’s concept of “moral subordination” of the Son; cf. Miroslav Volf, “‘The Trinity is Our Social Program’: The Doctrine of Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement”, *Modern Theology*, Vol. 14, No.3 (Jul 1998), p. 420 n. 20.

⁹⁵ Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, p. 202.

⁹⁶ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 203, 208-213.

⁹⁷ Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, pp. 150, 174-176.

stands in relation not only to the other persons, but is also as a personal center of action internal to the other persons”. Therefore, Volf concludes that one has to realise the correspondence between the church and the Trinity from the aspect of the “*relation*” between the divine persons. With support from Scriptures,⁹⁸ Volf follows Pannenberg’s idea that the Trinity is the “reciprocal Self-distinction of Father, Son, and Spirit”.⁹⁹

How does the reciprocal relation between the divine person or the church members perform? Volf says “the more a church is • • • *symmetrical* and *decentralised* • • • the more will it correspond to the Trinitarian communion.”¹⁰⁰ To Volf, the unity of the church is in its “reciprocal participative”, “dialogue, consensus and harmony”.¹⁰¹ Volf favors an equal, “reciprocal relation” model of the ecclesial structure. Among models of the Trinity,¹⁰² Volf chooses Moltmann’s *symmetrical* reciprocity model.¹⁰³ Volf accepts part of Zizioulas’s model of the structure of the church, but replaces Zizioulas’s “hierarchical bipolarity between the one and the many” model into his “*polycentric and symmetrical reciprocity of the many*”.¹⁰⁴ It is a revision of the Eastern Orthodoxy pattern of the Trinitarian and the ecclesial structure.

2. The Equality: Polycentric and Relational Structure of the Church— Equal Status of the Officeholders (Clergies) and the Laities

Volf insists that the relation between the divine persons only correspond the relation *within* a local church. He argues from the position that if one comprehends the church from the perspective of the salvation history, when one participates a local church, he/she involves

⁹⁸ Cf. Volf’s arguments in Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 217.

⁹⁹ Cf. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, pp. 308-319. Volf basically follows Pannenberg’s doctrine of Trinity, but their ecclesiologies are quite different; cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *The Church*, trans. by Keith Crim (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), and *idem.*, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 1-526.

¹⁰⁰ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 236; emphasis added by the author of this paper.

¹⁰¹ Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, p. 202.

¹⁰² Cf. 2.I.A – 2.I.C of this paper.

¹⁰³ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, pp. 305-306. Volf mentions it at Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 236. Also cf. IIA – II.C and III.C of this paper.

¹⁰⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 217; emphasis added by the author of this paper.

in the universal church.¹⁰⁵ If the relationship *within* the local church corresponds to the relation within the Trinity, what is the structure of the church,¹⁰⁶ especially the local churches? Volf thinks that the Catholic Church focuses on the “unity of totality”,¹⁰⁷ and therefore conducts a “*strictly hierarchical*” structure of the church. Contrarily, the Eastern Orthodox Church stresses “*reciprocal relation*” in the ecclesial structure.¹⁰⁸ Since choosing the “reciprocal” model of the Trinity, Volf proposes that each member of a local church is as equal as each divine person of the Trinity. He especially concentrates on the “*status*” equality of the clergies and the laities.

Volf first discusses the issues of the “power” and the “obedience”. What is “the pattern of *power distribution* and the manner of its *cohesion*”?¹⁰⁹ Traditionally, both Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches think that God works and constitutes the church exclusively through the officeholders.¹¹⁰ However, Volf argues that God gives His salvation through the church, and He delivers grace through both the clergies and the laities.¹¹¹ Volf thinks that Paul does not ask Christians to obey leaders in the church absolutely nor obey them because of the formal status (1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Cor. 16:15-16),¹¹² but rather to obey “respectively different *charismata* of others”,¹¹³ which is in accordance with the biblical teaching (Eph 5:21).¹¹⁴ Therefore, the officeholders, which mean “the clergies” in Volf’s text, do not have a higher status than the so called laities. Volf comprehends the ecclesial structure in a sense of personal *charismata* participation.¹¹⁵ He terms this model as “a *polycentric church*”,¹¹⁶ i.e. the centre of the church life is not *one* officeholder, but rather *many* Christians with

¹⁰⁵ Cf. 3.I.A of this paper.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. 2.I.A – 2.I.C of this paper.

¹⁰⁷ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 214. Also Cf. 2.I.A and 2.I.D of this paper.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. chapter two of this paper.

¹⁰⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 236; emphasis added by the author of this paper.

¹¹⁰ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 224, 226-227.

¹¹¹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 145, 226-227.

¹¹² Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 231.

¹¹³ Hans Küng, *Die Kirche*, (Munich: Piper, 1977), p. 474; cited from Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 231.

¹¹⁴ Eph. 5:21 “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

¹¹⁵ Cf. 3.I.A – 3.I.C of this paper.

¹¹⁶ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 224-225, 227, 236, 257.

charismata. Frank Rees analyse the five characters the polycentric community of Volf's ecclesiology, and he thinks that Volf's polycentric model closely connects to his pneumatological structure of the church. It is because that in the polycentric church, all members are priests with their own *charismata*. They give and receive one another and subordinate to one another; these show that they are interdependent just like the divine persons.¹¹⁷ However, David Cunningham points out that Volf's model of the Trinity has some problems. He criticises that Volf's version of Trinity goes too far that treating the three divine persons as the persons in the human society. Cunningham thinks that the divine persons not only has relations, but "they are relations". Therefore, he suspects that Volf's opinion of the equality of the Trinitarian persons comes from the concepts of democracy and the human right.¹¹⁸

If the correspondence of the structures of the Trinity and the church should not be seen from the internal angle,¹¹⁹ is the church still "*polycentric*" as Volf mentioned? Volf regards polycentricity of the church from the aspect of "*power*" and Christians gathering. Basing on this Charismatic participating structure, he thinks that the clergies and the laities are equal in the status. It views the correspondence between the Trinitarian and the ecclesial structure from the "*internal*" perspective. If one focuses on the "*outward*" aspect of this correspondence, the church is still "*polycentric*", since each church member works "*perichoretically*" to deliver salvation as divine persons do.¹²⁰ Therefore, the church is polycentric, but slightly different from what Volf describes.

C. Comparison between Three Different Trinitarian and Ecclesial Models

There are three different Trinitarian models, which are adopted by the Western Church, the Eastern Churches and Volf. These three models result in three different ecclesial

¹¹⁷ Frank Rees, "Trinity and Church: Contributions from the Free Church Tradition", *Pacifica*, Vol. 17 (Oct 2004), pp. 257-258.

¹¹⁸ David S. Cunningham, "Review of Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*", *Theology Today*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (Apr 2000), pp. 122-125.

¹¹⁹ Cf. 2.II.D and 2.II.E of this paper.

¹²⁰ Cf. 2.II.E and 2.II.F of this paper.

structures. To compare and summarise these three models of the Trinitarian and ecclesial structures, it is presented as the diagram shown as follows:

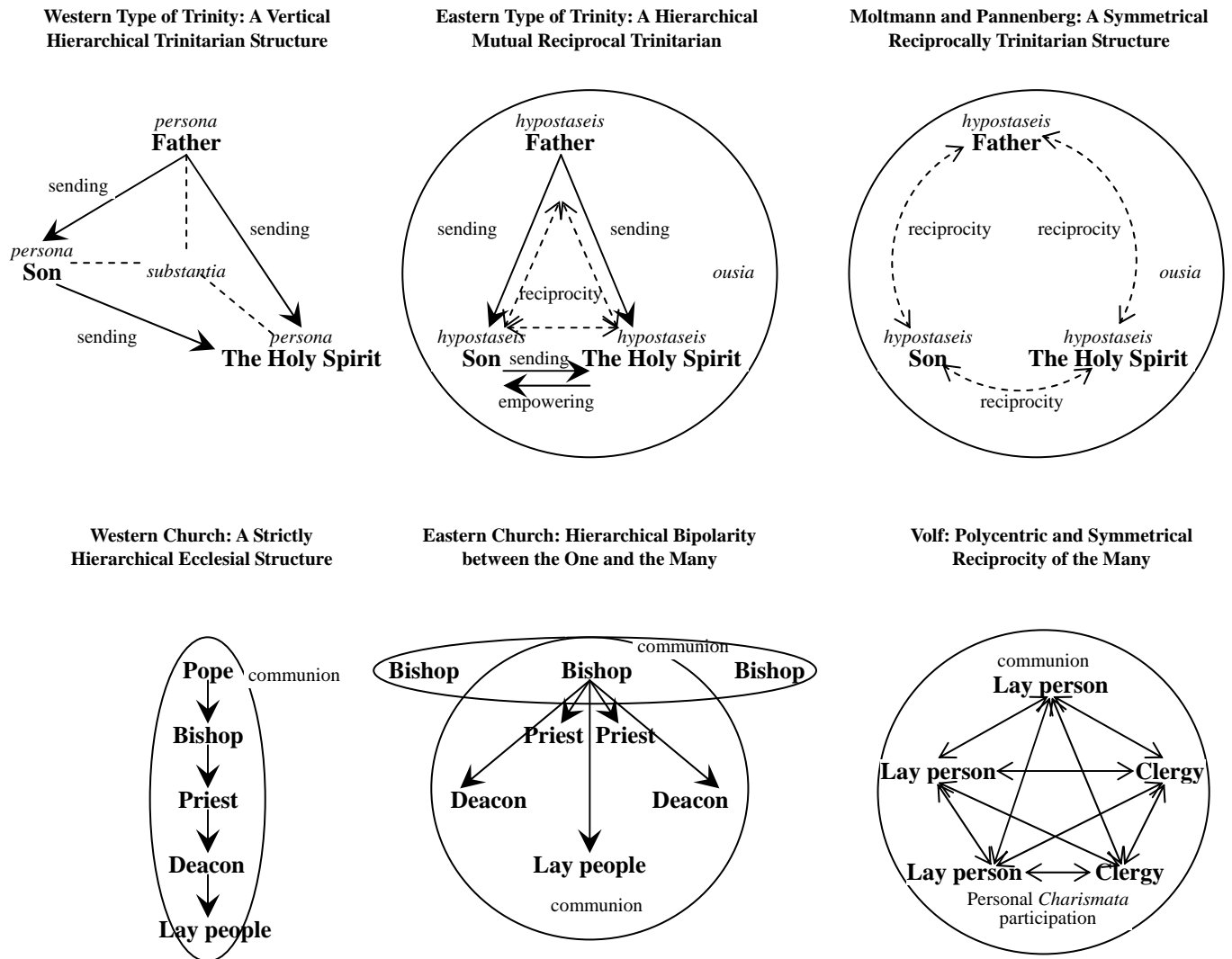


Figure 3 Comparison of the Western, the Eastern and Volf's Trinitarian Models and Ecclesial Structures

From the diagram and the argument mentioned above, it is clear that Volf adopts an equal, “ontological” Trinitarian Model corresponding to the ecclesial structure. Volf insists

that this correspondence is not formal but ontological for the reason of salvation.¹²¹ The relation with the church proposed by Volf is *symmetrical* and *decentralised*, which is according to the ontological Trinity he considers.¹²² However, one can also easily comprehend God's salvation from the angle of the "economic" Trinity. Karl Rahner proposes that "the 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic' Trinity", and he utilises the formula to understand that "the Trinity as a mystery of salvation".¹²³ Therefore, it is reasonable to understand the ecclesial relation from the perspective of the relation within the economic Trinity according to Volf's and Rahner's rationale.

D. The Church Corresponds to the Economic or Immanent (Ontological) Trinity?

Following Moltmann,¹²⁴ Volf does not like the "hierarchy" and the "power"¹²⁵ such as the "origin" and the "sending" within the Trinity, and as well as within the church. Therefore, he suggests an equal, unlegislated, polycentric and relational interecclesial relation. He also understands the "sending" within the Trinitarian persons from the dimension of openness and *perichoresis*.¹²⁶ It is one of the important foundations of Volf's ecclesiology.

However, what does "perichoresis" mean? Does it necessarily mean "status equality"? Does it mean there is no "hierarchy" and "power" between three divine persons? How much do we know about immanent Trinity? F. Rees appropriately comments that Volf's idea of the correspondence between ecclesial communion and Trinitarian communion provides detailed discussions, but it is not analysed sufficiently.¹²⁷ Rahner argues that what is presented for us in history is economic Trinity; therefore, the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity for

¹²¹ Cf. 2.II.A.2 and 3.I.A of this paper.

¹²² Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 236.

¹²³ Cf. Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. by Joseph Donceel; introduction, index and glossary by Catherine Mowry LaCugna (New York: Crossroad, 1999), pp. 21-24. Also see the discussion below.

¹²⁴ Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, pp. 129-137; 191-202; *idem.*, *The Church in the Power of the Holy Spirit*, pp. 291-300; *idem.*, *The Spirit of Life*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), pp. 290-295.

¹²⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 236.

¹²⁶ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 236. Cf. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Holy Spirit*, pp. 55-56.

¹²⁷ Rees, "Trinity and Church", *Pacifica*, Vol. 17 (Oct 2004), p. 252.

us.¹²⁸ Catherine Mowry LaCugna also complains that there are too many discussions of “substantial metaphysics” about immanent Trinity, and there is too little understanding focused on God in history.¹²⁹ LaCugna concludes that “*theologia* and *oikonomia*, the mystery of God and the mystery of salvation, are inseparable.”¹³⁰ Similarly, Colin E. Gunton points out that it is insufficient to understand God merely through a logical way, and people also understand God through the narrative of God’s actions in the Bible.¹³¹ He thinks that God is closely associated to time and space since He creates, saves, and sanctifies the world.¹³² As result of it, the attributes and communion of the economic Trinity is the relation and structure of immanent Trinity.¹³³ Therefore, it is adequate to correspond the image of the economic Trinity to the structure of the church.

How is the economic Trinity structured? Is the economic relation between divine persons as equal as Volf mentions?¹³⁴ Since God Himself is connected to time, and His action is related to salvation history, it is worthy to focus on the actions of divine persons in history. At the end of the salvation history, “Son also himself be subject unto him (Father)¹³⁵ that put all things under him”.¹³⁶ It is ambiguous that there is “*hierarchy*” and “*power*” within Trinity, although it is “*economical*”. If the relation within the church corresponds to economic Trinity, why can some members not be subordinated to certain members of the church “economically”? Gunton correctly points out that there is “a subordinate in doing” in the Trinity.¹³⁷ The “one and many” model of the Eastern Orthodox Church can also explain 1

¹²⁸ Rahner, *The Trinity*, pp. 21-24.

¹²⁹ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HaperCollins, 1991), pp. 222, 243, 300.

¹³⁰ LaCugna, *God for Us*, p. 4.

¹³¹ Colin E. Gunton, *Act and Being: Towards a Theology of the Divine Attributes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), pp.44-46.

¹³² Colin E. Gunton, *The One, the Three, and the Many: God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 158-159.

¹³³ Colin E. Gunton, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Essays toward a Fully Trinitarian Theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), p. 12.

¹³⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 236.

¹³⁵ Added by the author of this paper.

¹³⁶ 1 Cor. 15:28.

¹³⁷ Cf. Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), pp. xxii-xxv.

Corinthian 15:28 easily. Furthermore, according to Volf's theory, the relation between three divine persons corresponds to relation within a local church. If the Father sends the Son and proceeds the Holy Spirit, why is a member of the church not able to "send" another member? It is obviously that Volf tries to avoid "*hierarchy*" and "*power*" in the structures of the Catholic or Eastern Orthodoxy Churches; therefore, he makes an effort to direct the Trinitarian issue to immanent (ontological) Trinity. However, his hypothesis cannot deal with these issues mentioned above well. It is appreciated that Volf wants to promote "the laities participating" ecclesial structure;¹³⁸ however, it is not inevitable theologically.

E. The "Perichoresis" in John 17:20-23¹³⁹

Another issue regarding Volf's understanding of the Trinity is "*perichoresis*". What "*perichoresis*" means in this section of Scripture will affect the model of communion of the Trinity. It also influences of the outcome after interpreting John 17:20-23, which may lead the church become internally focused or looking outward. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss the "*perichoresis*" in John 17:20-23.

From the phrase καθὼς σύ, πάτερ, ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ γὰρ ἐν σοί (as thou, Father, [art] *in* me, and I *in* thee), the "*perichoresis*" means mutual dwelling of Father and Son. However, the main thesis of John 17:20-23 are "the world may believe/know that thou hast sent me".¹⁴⁰ Therefore, the "*perichoresis*" within God is not close and immanent focused. Secondly, from the clause αὐτοὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ὄσιν (they may be one in us), there is also perichoretical relation between the church and Trinity. Therefore, the "*perichoresis*" within God is open to the church.

Furthermore, ἐγὼ ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ σὺ ἐν ἐμοί (I in them, and thou in me) and "the world may know that thou hast sent me" also show that the purpose of perichoretical relation between the church and the triune God is to reveal the Son and the Father. Similarly, John

¹³⁸ Cf. Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 223-228, esp. 223, 227.

¹³⁹ Cf. 2.II.A.2 of this paper.

¹⁴⁰ Jn 17:21 ἵνα ὁ κόσμος πιστεύῃ ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας (that the world may believe that thou hast sent me) and 17:23 ἵνα γινώσκῃ ὁ κόσμος ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας (that the world may know that thou hast sent me).

15:1-17 also mentions the perichoretical relation between the church and the Son and the Father, for

“⁷If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. ⁸Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. ⁹As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. ¹⁰If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.”¹⁴¹

In this section of Scripture, to “bear fruit” is to glorify the Father.¹⁴² It is reasonable to interpret “φέρει καρπὸν πολὺν ” (bears much fruit),¹⁴³ “ἐθηκα ὑμᾶς ἵνα ὑμεῖς ὑπάγητε καὶ καρπὸν φέριτε ” (appointed you that you would go and bear fruit),¹⁴⁴ and John 15:1-17 in light of John 20:21-23.¹⁴⁵ If one focuses on “as [my] Father hath sent me, even so send I you”, it is clear that the relationship between the church and Christ is the same as the one between God the Father and Christ.¹⁴⁶ As Jesus obeyed the Father’s commandments as a revealer of the Father, the church also has to keep the commandments as a revealer of Jesus Christ; i.e. the church as a revealer of Christ just as Christ is a revealer of the Father. It links Christ’s and the church’s mission together.¹⁴⁷ The church receiving the Holy Spirit should reveal Christ who reveals the Father. People who accept the witness of the church accept Christ and Father who is in Him, and vice versa. That is the reason “whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto

¹⁴¹ Jn 15:7-10.

¹⁴² Jn 15:5.

¹⁴³ Jn 15:5.

¹⁴⁴ Jn 15:16.

¹⁴⁵ Jn 20:21-23:

²¹Then said Jesus to them again, Peace [be] unto you: *as [my] Father hath sent me, even so send I you.* ²²And when he had said this, he breathed on [them], and saith unto them, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost:* ²³Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; [and] whose soever [sins] ye retain, they are retained.

Emphasis is added by the author of this paper.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, (Dallas: Word, 1987), pp. 271, 273-274, 275; Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. by G. R. Beasley-Murray (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971) pp. 382, 541.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, pp. 692-693.

them; [and] whose soever [sins] ye retain, they are retained”. Therefore, the perichoretical relation between the church and the Trinity is “mission” oriented. The “*perichoresis*” of the triune God is *not immanent oriented* but open to the world.

From the analysis above, it is noticeable that the “*perichoresis*” in John 17:20-23 is not “the relations internal to the Godhead”,¹⁴⁸ or not comprehended merely ontologically, but is rather understood from the “outward relationship making”. Since the perichoretical relation between the divine persons corresponds to the relation between church members, the relation within the church should also be mission oriented. It should put more effort in discussing how intraecclesial relation could work more effectively to fulfill the mission (salvation and on the economic Trinity), but not to spend time on sorting out how it works between the church members (substantial metaphysics, and on ontological and immanent Trinitarian perspective). Therefore, the correspondence between Trinitarian and ecclesial structures does not direct us to look “inside” of the church, but to look “*outside*” of the church.

F. The Church and Communion of the Trinity:

The Church Brings People into the Communion within the Triune God

From the argument above, it is clear that the communion of the Trinity is open to the church and to the world. In this framework, the church plays an important role in the mission: to let the world know Jesus Christ who reveals the Father. Karl Barth has similar idea but shows in another way. Barth proposes that the church is a “provisional representation” of “the world of men reconciled with God in Him is His body”.¹⁴⁹ The way that the church responds to God’s grace is “to be His creaturely image, His imitator”;¹⁵⁰ i.e., to “imitate” God is to present “as the One He has shown Himself to be relation to them”.¹⁵¹ Therefore, the purpose of the church is to invite non-Christians into the fellowship of the hope. It is God’s design for

¹⁴⁸ Cf. LaCugna, *God for Us*, p. 10.

¹⁴⁹ Such as Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), IV, 2, p. 680; 621-623; p. 730. There are follows three numbers after Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*, which indicates volumes, parts, and pages respectively in following citations.

¹⁵⁰ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II, 2, p. 413.

¹⁵¹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II, 2, p. 414.

the church: to call all people to come into the communion with God. Moltmann also agrees with this idea:

In the movements of the trinitarian history of God's dealings with the world the church finds and discovers itself, in all the relationships which comprehend its life. It finds itself on the path traced by this history of God's dealings with the world, and it discovers itself as one element in the movements of the divine sending, gathering together and experience. . . . it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church, creating a church as it goes on its way.¹⁵²

LaCugna has similar idea that the purpose of economy of Trinity is to bring the world back to the God (Father). It is because

the biblical and pre-Nicene sense of the economy is the one dynamic movement of God (Father) outward, a personal self-sharing by which God is forever bending toward God's 'other' (cf. Eph. 1:3-14). The economy is not a mirror dimly reflecting a hidden realm of intradivine relations; the economy is God's concrete existence in Christ and as Spirit. The economy is the 'distribution' of God's life lived with and for the creature. Economy and theology are two aspects of *one* reality: the mystery of human-divine communion.¹⁵³

From the analysis above, as the communion of the Trinity is for the world, the relation within the church is also open to the world. As the economy of the Trinity aims to bring people back to God (Father), the objective of ecclesial structure is also to reveal Christ who reveals the Father, and to get into the world to bring non-Christian back to the communion of the triune God.

G. The Church and the Economy of Trinity: The Church for the World

The church is open to the world and for the world, and the purpose of ecclesial structure

¹⁵² Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, p. 64.

¹⁵³ LaCugna, *God for Us*, p. 222.

is to bring non-Christian back to the communion of the Trinitarian God. What actions should the church carry out when facing to the people? Is proclaiming the Gospel or evangelisation the world the only thing what the church should do for the world? Do we reveal Christ who reveals the Father only by worshiping the true God in the church? Citing Hebrew 13:15-16,¹⁵⁴ Volf advocates that “*authentic Christian worship takes places in a rhythm of adoration and action.*”¹⁵⁵ He thinks that the relationship between Christians and God and that between Christians and their neighbours are not separated. It is also not dividable that the material world and spiritual world, for “it must always include active striving to bring the eschatological new creation to bear on this world through proclamation of the good news and socio-economic action.”¹⁵⁶ Volf alludes to Revelation 21-22 that God deliver the people when the people and God dwell each other to support his idea that the Gospel is regarding to liberation. Luke 4:18-19¹⁵⁷ also backs up Volf’s idea. Volf thinks that if the church wants to be co-worker of God who intends to redeem the world, the church has to appreciate the world God creates and human actions. Volf says: “if God’s deeds in the world open the hearts and mouths of people to praise God, then human action, which God uses to accomplish God’s purposes, must do the same: the purpose of evangelism and good works is the well-being of the people and God’s creation.”¹⁵⁸

From the position that the Gospel is associated to liberation, Volf advocates that “Christian faith has bearing on and demands creative development of political

¹⁵⁴ Heb 13:15-16 “¹⁵By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of [our] lips giving thanks to his name. ¹⁶But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

¹⁵⁵ Miroslav Volf, “A Rhythm of Adoration and Action: A Response to Jürgen Moltmann”, *All Together in One Place: Theological Papers from the Brighton Conference on World Evangelization*, ed. by Harold D. Hunter and Peter D. Hocken (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), p. 39.

¹⁵⁶ Volf, “A Rhythm of Adoration and Action”, *All Together in One Place*, ed. by Harold D. Hunter and Peter D. Hocken, p. 40.

¹⁵⁷ Lk. 4:18-19 “¹⁸The Spirit of the Lord [is] upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, ¹⁹To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”

¹⁵⁸ Volf, “A Rhythm of Adoration and Action”, *All Together in One Place*, ed. by Harold D. Hunter and Peter D. Hocken, p. 44.

philosophies”.¹⁵⁹ He also argues from the position that the human society is also an image of the Trinity.¹⁶⁰ From arguing the equality of the divine persons,¹⁶¹ the mutual relationship within the Trinity,¹⁶² and self-Donation of them,¹⁶³ Volf comprehends the cross “as the Triune God’s engagement with the world in order to transform the unjust, deceitful, and violent kingdoms of this world into the just, truthful ‘kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah’ (Revelation 11:16)”.¹⁶⁴ Volf then utilises John 20:19-23¹⁶⁵ to explain the rationale of that the church should be engaged to the world:

The “Breath” of Christ risen from the dead gives birth to the “body of Christ” offered to the world—a people whose social vision and social practices image the Triune God’s coming down in self-emptying passion in order to take human beings into the perfect cycle of exchanges in which they give themselves to each other and receive themselves back ever anew love.¹⁶⁶

This idea of Volf¹⁶⁷ may come from Moltmann. Moltmann understands the church as a “political church”,¹⁶⁸ and the Christianity is always with political life.¹⁶⁹ It is because that the

¹⁵⁹ Miroslav Volf, “Introduction”, *A Passion for God’s Reign: Theology, Christian Learning and the Christian Self*, written by Jürgen Moltmann, Nicholas Wolterstorff and Ellen T. Charry, ed. by Miroslav Volf (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. vii.

¹⁶⁰ Volf, “The Trinity is Our Social Program”, *Modern Theology*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Jul 1998), pp. 403-423.

¹⁶¹ Volf, “The Trinity is Our Social Program”, *Modern Theology*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Jul 1998), pp. 407-408.

¹⁶² Volf, “The Trinity is Our Social Program”, *Modern Theology*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Jul 1998), pp. 409-412.

¹⁶³ Volf, “The Trinity is Our Social Program”, *Modern Theology*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Jul 1998), pp. 412-414.

¹⁶⁴ Volf, “The Trinity is Our Social Program”, *Modern Theology*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Jul 1998), p. 415.

¹⁶⁵ Jn 20:19-23

¹⁹Then the same day at evening, being the first [day] of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace [be] unto you. ²⁰And when he had so said, he shewed unto them [his] hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. ²¹Then said Jesus to them again, Peace [be] unto you: as [my] Father hath sent me, even so send I you. ²²And when he had said this, he breathed on [them], and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: ²³Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; [and] whose soever [sins] ye retain, they are retained.

¹⁶⁶ Volf, “The Trinity is Our Social Program”, *Modern Theology*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Jul 1998), pp. 418-419.

¹⁶⁷ More discussion of this concepts can be found in Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996).

¹⁶⁸ Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, pp. 15-18.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, pp. 176-182.

Gospel is for the poor and the weak.¹⁷⁰ Moltmann applies the principle “*Ubi Christus, ibi ecclesia*” (where is Christ, where is the church)¹⁷¹ and advocates that the church is with the poor since Christ present in the poor.¹⁷² And the Eucharist is the “feast of freedom”,¹⁷³ therefore, the church aims to set the people free from the sins as well as the dictators. Therefore, the prayer is undividable from the earthiness.¹⁷⁴

Praying in the Spirit and interest in life drive one another on, if both are concentrated on the crucified Christ and his messiah kingdom. The prayer is not a compensation for disappointed love; it makes love ready to absorb the pain into itself and to love more fiercely than before.¹⁷⁵

The church is truly political and must be political from the perspective that the church is for the world.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer has similar idea like Volf and Moltmann. Bonhoeffer starts from the points that there is a close linkage between Christ and the church. Since a true Christian is a disciple who follows Jesus Christ, the true church is the church which takes up its cross.¹⁷⁶ A Christian who follows Jesus Christ is to be asked to bear other Christian’s burden: “as Christ bears our burdens, so we are to bear the burden of our sisters and brothers. The law of Christ, which must be fulfilled, is to bear the cross.”¹⁷⁷ Christians not only share burdens one another, but also have to take the burdens and sufferings of the world. It is because that the life of Jesus Christ is giving and “for others”. “Christ is ‘for us,’ not only in his word and his attitude toward us, but in his bodily life. • • • The body of Jesus Christ is ‘for us’ in the strict

¹⁷⁰ Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, pp. 78-80.

¹⁷¹ Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, pp. 123.

¹⁷² Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, pp. 126-130.

¹⁷³ Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, pp. 109-114.

¹⁷⁴ Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, pp. 282-284.

¹⁷⁵ Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, p. 284.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 4, trans. from the German edition ed. by Martin Kuske and Ilse Todt, English edition ed. by Geoffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey, trans. by Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), pp. 84-86.

¹⁷⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, p. 88.

sense of the world—on the cross . . . ”¹⁷⁸ Therefore, “whenever Christ calls us, his call leads us to death.”¹⁷⁹ Bonhoeffer sees the church as a representation of the world, similar to Barth. However, the church in Bonhoeffer’s eyes is not the field God reconciliates the world, but the follower of Christ who redeems the world by suffering. Bonhoeffer advocates:

Suffering . . . Either the world must bear it and be crushed by it, or it falls on Christ and is overcome in him. That is how Christ suffers as vicarious representative for the world. Only his suffering brings salvation. But the church-community itself knows now that the world’s suffering seeks a bearer. So in following Christ, this suffering falls upon it, and it bears the suffering while being borne by Christ. The community of Jesus Christ vicariously represents the world before God by following Christ under the cross.

. . .

God is a God who bears. The Son of God bore our flesh. He therefore bore the cross. He bore all our sins and attained reconciliation by his bearing. This is why disciples are called to bear what is put on them.¹⁸⁰

Therefore, “the church is the church only when exists for others. To make a start, it should give away all its property to those in need.”¹⁸¹ From the analysis above, the church corresponds the economy of the Trinity, which is for the world, open to the world, and is to bring people back to the communion of the triune God. However, the church, as the image of the Trinity, has to take actions to bring non-Christian back to God. The church not only proclaims the Gospel and worship God to draw all people to Jesus Christ, but also has to stand by the side of the poor and the weak and to set all people free from the sins and dictators. It shows the church’s engagement to the world, which is one of the most important applications of Volf’s Trinitarian structure of the church.

¹⁷⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, p. 217.

¹⁷⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, p. 87.

¹⁸⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, p. 90.

¹⁸¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, an abridged edition, ed. by Eberhard Bethge (London: SCM Press, 1981), p. 140.

CHAPTER 3

CHURCH LIFE IN VOLF'S TRINITARIAN AND PNEUMATOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH

I. Participating: Believers Participate in Church Life through Personal Charismata

The fundamental concept of Miroslav Volf's ecclesiology is that the ecclesial structure corresponds to the Trinitarian communion. From this view point, Volf proposes an equal, polycentric, reciprocal and participative ecclesiology. Volf's idea of equality and polycentricity of church members has been presented in chapter two, and his reciprocal and participative characters of ecclesiology, especially his "dynamic and unlegislated" structure of the church, will be investigated in this chapter. Volf sees the church as a "fellowship", which is presented as "personal gifts participative structure of the church".¹ This section will inspect three dimensions of the participating ecclesial structure.

A. The Church as Fellowship of Dependent Christians

Volf does not see the church as a single and collective subject, but rather a "communion" of "*dependent*" persons.² Volf uses the word "communion"; however, it is better to describe his idea regarding the church as a "fellowship"³ of Christians. It is because of that some Pentecostal and Charismatic churches prefer to name themselves "fellowships" but not "churches",⁴ and Pentecostals prefer being called a "fellowship" rather than a "church" in former Yugoslavia.⁵ It is obvious that Volf understands the church from the aspect of "*a charismatic fellowship of the people of God*".

¹ Cf. 3.II.A of this paper.

² Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 145, 222, 224.

³ The word "fellowship" has the meaning "equal"; however, "communion" do not has such a meaning; cf. William Allan Neilson, Thomas A. Knott, and Paul W. Carhart (eds.), "communion", *Webster's New Dictionary of the English Language*, 2nd ed., unabridged, (Springfield: G. & C. Merriam Publishers, 1959), p. 541; *ibid.*, "fellowship", *Webster's New Dictionary of the English Language*, p. 930. Volf argues the equality of the clergies and the laities; cf. 2.II.B.2 of this paper.

⁴ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Church as Charismatic Fellowship: Ecclesiological Reflections from the Pentecostal-Roman Catholic Dialogue", *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, Vol. 18 (2001), p. 111 fn. 51.

⁵ Peter Kuzmič & Miroslav Volf, *Communio Sanctorum: Toward a Theology of the Church as a Fellowship of Persons*, (unpublished) p. 10; cited from Kärkkäinen, "Church as Charismatic Fellowship", *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, Vol. 18 (2001), p. 111 fn. 51.

B. Interactive Church Structure Corresponds to the Trinity:

The Structure of the Church is the Interaction of Charismata of Believers

Volf thinks the church can be understood as a “*social institution*”, in which Christians have a salvific life and communion with one another and the triune God through interactive and social processes.⁶ Furthermore, there is a close connection between the fellowship of Christians (the *institution* of the church) and the Trinity in Volf’s system. Since Tertullian is one of the first theologians proposing the relationship between the Trinity and the church, Volf mentions two of Tertullian’s works,⁷ one alluding to Mathew 18:20.⁸ and then Volf tries to establish his Trinitarian ecclesiology on John 17:21, 1 Corinthians 14:26 and Galatians 2:20.⁹

Volf’s considers that the relation within the Trinity only correspond the relation *within* a local church. He argues it from the perspective of the local church and the universal church in salvation history.¹⁰ Volf sketches a different idea of the church comparing to traditional Catholic and Eastern Orthodox ecclesiologies.

If the relationship *within* a local church corresponds to one within the Trinity, what is the structure of the church,¹¹ especially a local church? Volf follows Pannenberg and Moltmann’s concepts of the Trinity and proposes a “*polycentric and symmetrical reciprocity of the many*” model.¹² Volf comments:

This yield the ecclesial principle that the more a church is characterised by *symmetrical* and *decentralised* distribution of power and freely affirmed *interaction*, the more will it correspond to the Trinitarian communion.¹³

⁶ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 234-235.

⁷ Tertullian, *De Pudicitia (On Modesty)*, 21; *idem.*, *De Baptismo (On Baptism)*. Tertullian wrote *De Pudicitia* when he had become a Montanist; cf. Alexander Robert & James Donaldson (eds.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3: *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), p. 11.

⁸ Tertullian, *De Baptismo*.

⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 197.

¹⁰ Cf. 3.I.A and 2.II.A.2 of this paper.

¹¹ Cf. 2.I of this paper.

¹² Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 217; emphasis added by the author of this paper. Also cf. 2.II.B.1 of this paper.

¹³ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 236; emphasis added by the author of this paper.

Volf's "Trinitarian model" of the church structure is analogical rather than "typological"¹⁴. He focuses on "the pattern of *power distribution* and the manner of its *cohesion*"¹⁵. Volf holds the opinion that the church is God's new creation which corresponds to the Trinity; therefore, the structure of the church should be "interactive" since the church reflects the communion of Christians and of God in the eschaton.¹⁶

C. Church Members Participate in Church Life through Their Charismata

How do the church members act interactively corresponding to the Trinity within a local church? Volf believes that no one is without *charismata*, and Christians activate their *charismata* through interactions with self, the church and the world. Each member of a local church serves and satisfies one another with each one's spiritual gifts.¹⁷ Therefore, spiritual gifts only have meanings in "relationship". This is known as "*interactional model* of the bestowal of *charismata*", which is the key element of Volf's ecclesiology.¹⁸ It is so-called "*personal participative structure*"¹⁹ of the church termed by Volf, contrasting with "*apersonal institutional*" model.²⁰ From the argument presented above, Volf advocates that the church can be understood as "*an interactively Trinitarian social institution*".

In this "personal participative structure" of the church, everyone rather than the leader does everything in the local church.²¹ The duties of the leader are: (1) to help each member focus on his/her own *charismata* and coordinate one another; and (2) to give trial on the spiritual things and determine whether it is from Holy Spirit or not.²² Secondly, *charismata* are "*interdependent*", and the church is "a community 'of [mutual] giving and receiving'

¹⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 198-200, 235.

¹⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 236; emphasis added by the author of this paper. Also cf. 2.II.B.2 of this paper.

¹⁶ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 237.

¹⁷ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 230.

¹⁸ Cf. 3.II.B of this paper.

¹⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 232.

²⁰ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 232.

²¹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 230.

²² Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 230.

(Phil. 4:15)”,²³ since “All members have *charismata*, but not every member has all *charismata*.”²⁴ It is important to the nature and the actions of the church, because

• • • the church is not a club of universally gifted and for that reason self-sufficient charismatic, but rather a community of men and women whom the Spirit of God has endowed in a certain way for service to each other and the world in anticipation of God’s new creation.²⁵

In short, to Volf, it is the church that each member participates in church life through his/her own *charismata*, which fulfill the purpose and the meaning of the church determined by God.

D. The Reciprocity: Unlegislated Relationships and Actions of Church Members

Another character of Volf’s unlegislated relational ecclesiology is “reciprocity”, which stresses on the relation and the action. These two factors present a “dynamic” view of the church. The dynamics in Volf’s ecclesiology is presented as “unlegislated relationships and actions of church members”. It will investigate in two dimensions: (1) relationships and actions as the structure of the church; (2) salvation delivered through interactions.

1. Relationships and Actions of Church Members as Ecclesial Structure

Comparing with Eastern Orthodoxy or even Catholic ecclesiology, Volf’s idea regarding ecclesial structure is truly “dynamic”. He proclaims that: “the members of the church do not stand over against the church as an institution; rather, their own *actions* and *relations* are the institution church.”²⁶ It is deduced from his model of the Trinity.²⁷

Because of the dynamic relationship between church members, their *charismata* and actions are not able to be legislated in the way such as the Canon law. Furthermore, since the *charismata* are bestowed by the Holy Spirit according to His will, the church cannot

²³ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 231.

²⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 231.

²⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 231.

²⁶ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 241; emphasis added by the author of this paper except the word “are”.

²⁷ Cf. 2.II.B of this paper.

decide the duration which the *charismata* is on a certain member. The *charismata*, therefore, cannot be “formalised” or legislated.²⁸ Thirdly, since the office is a kind of *charismata*, it is not necessarily *lifelong* and may be “revocable”.²⁹ In addition to this, the *charismata* manifested in the church may change over time. To Volf, therefore, the offices are inappropriate and unable to legislate the structure of the church, since the dynamic relationships and actions of church members themselves are an ecclesial structure.³⁰

2. Salvation Conveyed through Social Interactions

Volf rejects Ratzinger’s idea that officeholders, who are supposed to have the Holy Spirit, represent God and have authorities to do ministries,³¹ and he fights with Zizioulas’s concept that the ecclesial structure is in each Eucharistic gathering.³² Volf holds the opinion that the church is a “*social institution*”,³³ in which salvation is delivered through mutual interaction.³⁴ The social institution also expresses the dynamics in Volf’s ecclesiology and fits his rationale of the correspondence between ecclesial structure and Trinitarian communion.³⁵

E. Individualism and Confessionism in Volf’s

Personal Gifts Participative Structure of the Church

There still are some insufficiencies in Volf’s theory. He wants to avoid *individualism* in his ecclesiology.³⁶ However, Volf refuses to see the church as “a collective subject”, but rather “a communion of persons”.³⁷ Therefore, Christians “enter into salvation as an individual believer”³⁸ and then form the church. Volf’s view faces two challenges: (1) many

²⁸ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 242.

²⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 250-251.

³⁰ Cf. the discussion in 3.II.C of this paper.

³¹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 239.

³² Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 239-240.

³³ Cf. 3.I.B of this paper.

³⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 234-235.

³⁵ Cf. 3.II.A.2 of this paper.

³⁶ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 3.

³⁷ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 145, 166.

³⁸ Frank Rees, “Trinity and Church”, *Pacifica*, Vol. 17 (Oct 2004), p. 256.

scriptures see local churches and the universal church as a collective subject;³⁹ (2) it is against both traditional Catholic and Eastern Orthodoxy ecclesiologies, which “see the bishop, rather than the people, as central reality of the church”.⁴⁰ Secondly, in his framework, Volf emphasises the “*confession of faith*”⁴¹ to build a common ground of Christian communion. Probably it comes from Volf’s experience, as a school boy from a small denomination who confessed his faith openly in a communist country. However, Zizioulas warns of the danger of the idea of the confessional church. He says: “we must be ready to admit that as long as confessionalism prevails no real progress towards ecclesial unity can be made.”⁴² Thirdly, the “free church” tradition is “those who interpret the bible and Christian tradition for themselves.” However, “this is the point of greatest vulnerability in the ‘Free Church’ or ‘Believers Church’ approach: it seems to lack any basis outside itself, any ‘authority’ other than the faith of its adherents in the word of God.”⁴³

In Volf previous famous work, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work*, he disposes of the *static* concept of *vocatio*.⁴⁴ Similarly, he also abnegates a static model of the structure of the church. A dynamic view of the church is a Pentecostal tradition.⁴⁵ Volf successfully presents his “dynamic” view about how the church institutes; however, his dynamic ecclesiology may come from his philosophy and attitude toward the modern world.⁴⁶

³⁹ For example, Rev. 2:1-29 see each local church as a collective subject, and 21:2 and 22:17 view the church as a subjective; so as Eph. 5:21-32.

⁴⁰ Rees, “Trinity and Church”, *Pacifica*, Vol. 17 (Oct 2004), p. 256.

⁴¹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 148-154, 163, 166, 248.

⁴² John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002), p. 260.

⁴³ Rees, “Trinity and Church”, *Pacifica*, Vol. 17 (Oct 2004), p. 254.

⁴⁴ Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. vii.

⁴⁵ Kärkkäinen, “Church as Charismatic Fellowship”, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, Vol. 18 (2001), pp. 111-112, esp. p. 111 fn. 51.

⁴⁶ Volf’s “dynamic” view of the society may come from Marxism; cf. Volf, *Work in the Spirit*.

F. Eucharist in Ecclesial Structure

Following John Smyth, the English separatist, it is not surprising that Volf stresses the importance of the laity. In addition, Volf utilises *charismata* to replace the altar, where Christ manifests, in the church; therefore, it is reasonable for him not to treat the sacraments.⁴⁷ However, it is possible for us to get better ideas by addressing the sacraments,⁴⁸ especially the Eucharist. It is because that the Eucharist is related to the identity of the church and the relationship within the church.

Traditionally, the Eucharist plays a primary role of the identity, unity and Catholicity of the church.⁴⁹ Jean-Marie Roger Tillard thinks of the church as the body of Christ, which appears at the Eucharist table. According to 1 Corinthians 11, Tillard points out that the communion of the Christian in the Eucharist is the “one and invisible body of the Christ”.⁵⁰ After analysing Ephesians and Colossians, he concludes that “the Church finds its full reality only in the Eucharistic mystery”.⁵¹ Getting support from Ignatius of Antioch, Tillard argues the importance of a bishop in a local Eucharist community,⁵² and then establishes that the one true church is the communion of local churches.⁵³ Similarly, Robert W. Jenson thinks the church is “in the assembly of believers”, for “the world can find Christ as the assembly of his faithful around his sacrament”.⁵⁴

Secondly, the Eucharist is not only a mystery sacrament but also something important to the “relationship” and “interaction” between church members. The reason that Paul writes

⁴⁷ Volf says: “Although apersonal institutions include the sacraments, these cannot be examined with the framework of this chapter.” Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 232 fn. 48.

⁴⁸ Even Kevin J. Vanhoozer complains about the poor reflection, practice and worship of evangelical ecclesiology; cf. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Evangelicalism and the Church”, in *The Futures of Evangelicalism*, ed. by Craig Bartholomew, Robin Parry, & Andrew West (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003), pp. 41-45.

⁴⁹ Werner G. Jeanrond, “Community and Authority”, *On Being the Church*, ed. by Colin E. Gunton & Daniel W. Hardy, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), pp. 87-88, 105.

⁵⁰ Jean-Marie Roger Tillard, *Church of Churches: The Ecclesiology of Communion*, trans. by R. C. De Peaux (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992), p. 23.

⁵¹ Tillard, *Church of Churches*, p. 24.

⁵² Tillard, *Church of Churches*, pp. 28-29.

⁵³ Tillard, *Church of Churches*, pp. 29-33.

⁵⁴ Robert W. Jenson, “The Church and the Sacraments”, *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, ed. by Colin E. Gunton, (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1997), p. 210.

Corinthians 11 is to order the Corinthians to have “social relation in the church by restricting the intrusion of household-based power.”⁵⁵ In 1 Corinthians 12:24, “**This my body** may allude earth primarily to the church or alternatively equally to the bread and to the people of God”, and “σωμα, **my body**, initially serves to promote the theme of *sharing, participating, or identification*”.⁵⁶ Therefore,

“²⁸but let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of [that] bread, and drink of [that] cup. ²⁹For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. ³⁰For this cause many [are] weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”⁵⁷

To discern the Lord’s body is “to *discern* our *distinctiveness*, not as individuals, but as the *having-died-and-being-raised-one-body-of-Christ*.”⁵⁸ The purpose of self-examination is to examine “themselves to confirm that their understanding, attitude, and conduct are genuine in sharing (cf. ἐκ) in all that the body and blood of Christ proclaims, both in redemptive and in social terms.”⁵⁹ Therefore, “to belong to Jesus Christ means to participate in his giving of himself to God and his kingdom • • • in fellowship with all who are related in this way to the same Lord.”⁶⁰

From the argument mentioned above, it is noticeable that the relations and the actions between Christians are the ecclesial structure. Volf’s idea that participating the church life through *charismata* also encourages the laities to serve in a local church with power given by the Holy Spirit. However, Volf’s participating ecclesial structure of personal *charismata* could go further, because the interactions of the church members are not limited in the

⁵⁵ Stephen C. Barton, “Paul’s Sense of Place: An Anthropological Approach to Community Formation in Corinth”, *New Testament Study*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Apr 1986), p. 239.

⁵⁶ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians : A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 878.

⁵⁷ 1 Cor. 12:28-30.

⁵⁸ Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 897.

⁵⁹ Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 891.

⁶⁰ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3 Vols., trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991-1998), Vol. 2: 1991, p. 326.

charismata participating. It is worthy to consider the issue especially from church fathers' interpretation of the New Testament. It is also suggested that to have more discussions to generate an inclusive theological model to integrate the eschatologically charismatic fellowship, oneness of the body of Christ, and the communion in the Eucharist.

II. Pneumatological: The Church as a Charismatic Fellowship

The "Holy Spirit" in Volf's ecclesiology is presented as "the pneumatological structure of the church". This section will investigate the issue in three dimensions: (1) the Holy Spirit is fundamental to the church; (2) the church as media and arena of the work of the Holy Spirit; and (3) offices in the "pneumatic anarchy" ecclesial structure.

A. The Holy Spirit is Fundamental to the Church

To Volf, it is impossible for the church to become a church without the Holy Spirit, because "the church is constituted by the Holy Spirit", not by the officeholders, i.e. the clergies.⁶¹ Volf clarifies this point with a good metaphor: "*the church was borne out of the womb of the Spirit*".⁶² Not surprising, Newbigin uses a similar metaphor of the role of the Virgin Mary in Christ's incarnation to express alike ideas:

• • • the Church lives neither by her faithfulness to her message nor by one fellowship with the apostles; she lives by the living power of Spirit of God. It was by the Holy Spirit that the Word took flesh of the Virgin Mary. It is by the Holy Spirit that He has now a new body, a body into which only the Holy Spirit can engraft us.⁶³

The church is also the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, which empowered the church; i.e. the church *must* be charismatic. Volf thinks that the church is constituted by spiritual gifts of each

⁶¹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 224. It is also presented at pp. 142, 145, 165-166.

⁶² Miroslav Volf, "The Nature of the Church", *Evangelical Review of Theology*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2002), p. 69.

⁶³ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (London: SCM Press, 1953), p. 96.

person, and follows K ung’s idea that *charismata* are “universally present in the church”.⁶⁴ Every Christian serves others with his/her own gifts, and is served by others’ *charismata* in the church.⁶⁵ However, the church itself does not have the autonomy, since the Holy Spirit bestows *charismata* according to His will (1 Cor 12:11).⁶⁶ The Church itself cannot decide when and what gifts should be given to which member, and Volf even says: “It is not the church ‘organises’ its life, but rather the Holy Spirit”.⁶⁷ Therefore, the church is dependent and governed by the Holy Spirit. It is the so called “pneumatological structure” of the church, and the Holy Spirit is vital and fundamental to the church.

B. The Church as Media and Arena of the Work of the Holy Spirit:

The Church Delivers Salvation through Charismata

Volf’s ecclesiological approach is pneumatological; however, he tries to integrate the “Christological” element into it. He begins his ecclesiology at the role of the Spirit in Jesus’ ministry, and then analyse the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the church. His ecclesiology is from the point that the church, a *bearer* of the Holy Spirit like Christ, continues Jesus Christ’s ministry on the earth.⁶⁸ In other words, “the church is the continuation of Christ’s anointing by the Spirit”.⁶⁹ Clark H. Pinnock has similar idea about the church.⁷⁰ He proposes a “Spirit Christology”,⁷¹ which views “*Christ as an aspect of the Spirit’s mission*, instead of (as is more usual) viewing the Spirit as a function of Christ’s”.⁷² Pinnock uses “Spirit Christology” to complement “Logos Christology”. He builds

⁶⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 229.

⁶⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 230.

⁶⁶ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 231-232.

⁶⁷ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 232.

⁶⁸ Cf. Volf, & Lee, “The Spirit and the Church”, *Conrad Grebel Review*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (2000), pp. 20-66.

⁶⁹ Volf, “The Nature of the Church”, *Evangelical Review of Theology*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2002), p. 69.

⁷⁰ Volf constructs his ecclesiology mainly basing on pneumatological approaches. However, there is some Christological element in it. Therefore, these two foundations of Volf’s ecclesiology, the Holy Spirit and Christ, are not as asymmetric as to Pinnock’s idea.

⁷¹ Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), pp. 79-101, 108-111.

⁷² Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, p. 80; emphasis added by the author of this paper.

Christology on the base of Pneumatology and then constructs his ecclesiology in the same manner: “*The church may be viewed . . . as a continuation of the Spirit-anointed event that was Jesus Christ.*”⁷³

To Volf, *charismata* are not only associated with the Holy Spirit, but is also Christ related. Volf points out that the spiritual gifts coexist with confession (1 Cor 12:2-3), so *charismata* are ways of the presence of Christ in the church.⁷⁴ Volf believes that “every person acts *in persona Christi* and every person receives this activity” because “each person contributes in his or her own specific way to the various aspects of church life, that a person is acting as a ‘representative’ of Christ to those affected by that action.”⁷⁵ It is worthy to address that *in persona Christi* is the role of a bishop in the church.⁷⁶ Therefore, each Christian is the centre of the church like a bishop, and that is the key element of Volf’s “*polycentric church*”.⁷⁷ From this position, Volf shifts the centre of the church life from altar to *charismata*.⁷⁸ In addition, Volf thinks that the *charismata* are given in the mutual relation and actions between church members.⁷⁹ As a result of it, the ecclesial structure is the interaction of *charismata* of Christians.⁸⁰

On the basis of the polycentricity of the church mentioned above, Volf thinks all Christians are called to believe in Jesus and given *charismata*, power, and authority to serve one other and the world.⁸¹ He concludes that each church member has the vocation to become a priest,⁸² the same as Luther’s “universal priesthood of believers”, because the church is called to deliver salvation⁸³ as Jesus did. To Volf, the church is comprised with each

⁷³ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, pp. 113; emphasis added by the author of this paper.

⁷⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 145, 228-229.

⁷⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 231.

⁷⁶ Volf mentions this at Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 223-234.

⁷⁷ Cf. 2.II.B.1 of this paper.

⁷⁸ Cf. the discussion in 3.I.F of this paper.

⁷⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 233.

⁸⁰ Cf. 3.I.B and 3.I.C of this paper.

⁸¹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 225, 231.

⁸² Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 225-226.

⁸³ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 243.

member and his/her own *charismata*.⁸⁴ Therefore, he concludes that the “pneumatic anarchy” is the only proper structure of the church, which is drawn from Rudolph Sohm,⁸⁵ Emil Brunner⁸⁶ and Han-Joachim Kraus’s⁸⁷ idea.

C. Offices and Church Order in the “Pneumatic Anarchy” Ecclesial Structure

The vocabulary “*anarchy*” seems to conflict with “*offices*” and “*structure*”; however, Volf tries to incorporate them together. Although Volf promotes the concept “pneumatic anarchy”, he thinks the church cannot sustain in the long run without offices,⁸⁸ which are one kind of spiritual gifts. Christians’ participating in church life with their own *charismata*, including offices given by the Holy Spirit, are the “*institution*” of the church.⁸⁹ Volf thinks that it is the Holy Spirit selects the officeholders rather the church itself select them alone. Officeholders are chosen to ensure believers’ confession, perform sacraments, and serve the very local church they belong.⁹⁰ However, Volf does not comprehend that officeholders are the centre of the church life,⁹¹ which contradicts the Catholic or Orthodoxy model that “the Holy Spirit constitutes the church exclusively through officeholders”.⁹² Volf proposes that each member serves others with his/her own specific *charismata*, since the Holy Spirit gives power according to his/her vocation (1 Pet 4:10-11).⁹³

Since the offices of the church are given by the Holy Spirit, Volf states that they are revocable as the same as other spiritual gifts.⁹⁴ Volf then concludes that offices are not

⁸⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 228-229.

⁸⁵ Rudolph Sohm, *Wesen und Urprung dea Katholizismus*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1912), p. 54; cited from Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 234.

⁸⁶ Emil Brunner, *Das Gebot und Ordnungen: Entwurf einer Protestantisch-Theologischen Ethik* (Zurich: Zwingli, 1939), p. 18ff; cited from Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 234.

⁸⁷ Han-Joachim Kraus, *Reich Gottes: Reich der Freiheit. Grundriss Systematischer Theologie* (Neukirchen: Neukirchen Verlag, 1975), p. 376; cited from Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 234.

⁸⁸ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 248.

⁸⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 234-235.

⁹⁰ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 248.

⁹¹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 226.

⁹² Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 226-227, esp. 227.

⁹³ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 226.

⁹⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 250.

necessary lifelong, and it is crucial for them to be recognised by the local congregation.⁹⁵ He complains of the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches: “‘too much’ with regard to soteriology corresponds simultaneously, however, to ‘too little’ with regard to the laity.”⁹⁶ He argues correctly that spiritual gifts are the presence of Christ,⁹⁷ *charismata* also convey salvation, which is exclusively transmitted via the Eucharist in Catholic and Eastern Orthodoxy ecclesiologies.

From the discussion shown above, there are two paradigm shifts in ecclesiology. First, Volf builds his ecclesiology on the doctrines of the Trinity and the Holy Spirit, whilst the traditional ecclesiological approach is chiefly “Christ” or “Logos” centred. Evangelism also constructs ecclesiology in this approach.⁹⁸ Furthermore, Volf progresses his concept regarding church structure from the Catholic hierarchical or Eastern Orthodoxy Trinitarian model to “pneumatic anarchy”.

It is worthy to consider Volf’s “pneumatic anarchy” and its foundation. First, Volf proposes his ecclesiology based on 1 Corinthians 14:26:⁹⁹ “How is it then, brethren? When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying”; and 12:11¹⁰⁰ “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” From this position, Volf sees the offices are dynamic *charismata*; however, it faces two challenges: (1) Are offices dynamic *charismata*? (2) Is it appropriate to construct ecclesiology only depending on these two verses of Scripture?

Most of *charismata* in 1 Corinthians 12 – 14 are “dynamic”. If Volf builds his ecclesiology on 1 Corinthians 12:11 and 14:26, the offices should be similar to the *charismata*

⁹⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 250-251.

⁹⁶ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 223.

⁹⁷ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 228.

⁹⁸ From example, from analysis of Kevin J. Vanhoozer’s four natures and functions of the church, it is apparent “Gospel” or “Word” centred, which can be classified as “Christ” or “Logos” pattern of ecclesiology. Cf. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Evangelicalism and the Church: The Company of the Gospel”, *The Futures of Evangelicalism: Issues and Prospects*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Robin Parry, & Andrew West (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003), pp. 70-75.

⁹⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 197.

¹⁰⁰ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 231-232.

mentioned in 12:8-10, which are not static. For example, προφητεύω (prophecy) in ancient Greek is closely associated with “oracle”,¹⁰¹ and what a prophecy saying is about the situation at that moment.¹⁰² The usage of προφητεύω in the New Testament is very similar to that in ancient Greek literature, and it is not a prediction about the future.¹⁰³ Additionally, the message of prophecy is usually very short,¹⁰⁴ and a person is able to προφητεύω only when the Holy Spirit inspires him/her.¹⁰⁵ If Volf establishes his ecclesiology only according to 1 Corinthians 12:11 and 14:26, the offices are dynamic and not sustainable for a long time. However, Christians cannot imagine the situation: one person is an officeholder at this moment, and his/her office is taken away by the Holy Spirit according to His will in the next second. It seems like that is not the offices mentioned in Acts and 1 Timothy, and that Volf’s theory is not applicable in the real church life.

Volf the argues that the office are not necessarily temporary *charismata* but may sustain for a longtime.¹⁰⁶ If one has an enduring *charisma*, it can be recognised as an office by the congregation.¹⁰⁷ However, it contradicts the description of *charismata* in 1 Corinthians 12 – 14, especially 12:8-10. Therefore, It is methodologically inappropriate to view these offices or positions as *charismata* mentioned in 1 Corinthians and utilise the scriptures there to understand offices.

Küng complains that the Catholic ecclesiology is established mainly on Pastoral Epistles, but 1 Corinthians is neglected. In result of it, Catholic ecclesiology has too many hierarchies

¹⁰¹ Helmut Krämer, “ προφήτης, προφήτης, προφητεύω, προφητεία, προφητικός, ψευδοπροφήτης ”, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 Vols., ed. by Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, & Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976), Vol. VI: 1968, pp. 784-790.

¹⁰² Krämer, “ προφήτης, προφήτης, προφητεύω, προφητεία, προφητικός, ψευδοπροφήτης ”, p. 793.

¹⁰³ Gerhard Friedrich, “ προφήτης, προφήτης, προφητεύω, προφητεία, προφητικός, ψευδοπροφήτης ”, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 Vols., ed. by Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, & Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976), Vol. VI: 1968, p. 848.

¹⁰⁴ Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gift Then and Now*, Revised and Reprinted Edition (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), p. 186.

¹⁰⁵ Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gift Then and Now*, p. 190.

¹⁰⁶ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 232-233; p. 232 fn. 53.

¹⁰⁷ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 232 fn. 53.

and ordination but too few *charismata*.¹⁰⁸ Comparing to Catholic ecclesiology, Volf's ecclesiology has too many *charismata* but too few orders and offices, i.e. elements of "Christological" approach.

Even if one confines this complicated issue of the offices in the New Testament, we do not see Volf discussing the offices such as apostles, elders, deacons, prophets, teachers, evangelists, and ἐπίσκοπος (bishops) in the structure of the church; these are positions established by God in the church. In addition, some *charismata* in First Corinthians 12 – 14 are dynamic, such as "the word of wisdom" and "the word of knowledge";¹⁰⁹ however, others may be static, such as "apostles", "prophets", "teachers" "helps", and "governments".¹¹⁰ It is appreciated that Volf tries to "balance" too many Christological factors in the traditional ecclesiology; however, his "pneumatic anarchy" theory is insufficient from a methodological perspective. It is necessary to clarify the distinctions and similarities between (1) offices in Acts, Romans, Ephesians and 1 Timothy, and (2) *charismata* in 1 Corinthians 12 – 14, especially in 12:8-10.

D. Ecclesiology in Pneumatological Approach

If "pneumatic anarchy" is not appropriate, is it appropriate to construct the ecclesiology mainly in the pneumatological approach? Traditional Catholic ecclesiology is more "Christological" than "pneumatological".¹¹¹ It is because that there is a close historical connection between Jesus Christ and the church: Jesus Christ Himself founds the church. Therefore, the Christological approach in constructing the ecclesiology emphasises that the offices and the structure of the church is established by Jesus Christ.¹¹²

However, there are more and more scholars construct the ecclesiology in the

¹⁰⁸ Hans Küng, *The Church*, trans. by Ray and Rosaleen Ockenden (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1967), pp. 179-191, esp. 180-181, 183-184.

¹⁰⁹ 1 Cor. 12:8.

¹¹⁰ 1 Cor. 12:28.

¹¹¹ Miguel M. Garijo-Guembe, *Communion of the Saints: Foundation, Nature, and Structure of the Church*, trans. by Patrick Madigan (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994), p. xi.

¹¹² Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *Foundational Theology: Jesus and the Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), pp. 99-103.

pneumatological approach.¹¹³ It is because that the viewpoint shifts from the relationship between Christ and the church to that between the works of God in history and the church. For example, Moltmann sees the church from the perspective of “the movement of the Trinitarian history of God”,¹¹⁴ and Pinnock regards the church as “*a continuation of the Spirit-anointed event that was Jesus Christ.*”¹¹⁵ The pneumatological approach in constructing ecclesiology stresses on the history of salvation. The purpose of sending the Holy Spirit and the church receiving the Spirit is “to empower his¹¹⁶ followers to participate in the downward movement of God’s love which forgives sins and creates a community of Joy in the midst of suffering (John 20:19-23).”¹¹⁷ LaCugna thinks that the economy of the Trinity is to bring the world back to God (Father), and the Holy Spirit is closest to the world. The shape of the economy is drawn as a point moving along a parabola:¹¹⁸

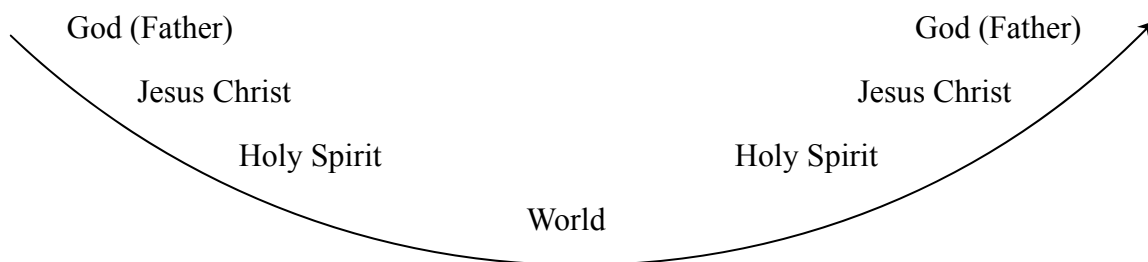


Figure 4 The Dynamic Shape of the Economy of the Trinity

¹¹³ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Towards a Theology and Ecclesiology of the Spirit: Marquette University’s 1998 Symposium, An Advent of the Spirit: Orientations in Pneumatology”, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*. Vol. 14 (1999), pp. 74-76.

¹¹⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution of Messianic Ecclesiology*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 64.

¹¹⁵ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, p. 113; emphasis added by the author of this paper.

¹¹⁶ “His” means “Jesus Christ’s”.

¹¹⁷ Miroslav Volf, “‘The Trinity is Our Social Program’: The Doctrine of Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement”, *Modern Theology*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Jul 1998), p. 418.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), pp. 222-223. Figure 4 is from LaCugna, *God for Us*, p. 223.

Michael Welker also considers the Holy Spirit is a “public person”, which makes the God’s salvation for the whole world possible.¹¹⁹ Welker considers the church from the pneumatological approach and says:

The true and real church . . . the visible body of Christ . . . is built up by the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 9:31; 11:24; and passim). This church defined by the power of the Spirit may come across from time to time and from place to place as paltry, out of touch with the world, uninteresting and insignificant, or may appear as suppressed, almost extinguish (cf. 1 Pet. 4:14). . . . Yet in the midst of seeming insignificance and *de facto* corruption, the Spirit of God joins together people called to communion with Christ from among “Jews and Greeks, slave and free” (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11), men and women, old and young, out of many times and countries of the world.¹²⁰

From the diagram shown above, it is clear that the pneumatological ecclesiology is mission related, and there should be more discussions and researches regarding ecclesiology from the pneumatological approach.

In discussion of the church in the history of God, there is a question must be answered. Should all things that happen in the church be regarded as the work of God in history? Does it blur the difference between the history and God? C. P. Wagner interprets the changes in the church from sixteen to twenty centuries are done by God.¹²¹ At the same time, Volf is also aware of rapid growth of free churches.¹²² However, are these structural and other changes all exclusively done by God? James F. Cobble, Jr. acknowledges that the church is not only a divine creation, but also a social organisation which are influence by social environment;¹²³ the early church is also without exception.¹²⁴ How can one distinguish the work of the Holy

¹¹⁹ Cf. Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*, trans. by John F. Hoffmeyer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), pp. 303-331.

¹²⁰ Welker, *God the Spirit*, pp.308-309.

¹²¹ C. Peter Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets: The Foundation of the Church* (Ventura: Regal, 2000), pp. 11-21.

¹²² Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 11-13.

¹²³ James F. Cobble, Jr., *The Church and Powers: A Theology of Church Structure* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988), pp. 93-101.

¹²⁴ Cobble, Jr., *The Church and Powers*, p. 79.

Spirit and the work of men? Therefore, the church history is also a topic we should deal with, although it is a far more complicate subject.

III. Localisation: Charismata and Offices Are Local Church Focused

The “locality” in Volf’s ecclesiology is presented as “the *charismata* and offices being local church focused”. This section will investigate three dimensions: (1) the charismatic fellowship is local; (2) ordination is local church focused; and (3) ordination recognised from the very local congregation.

A. Is The Fellowship Confined Locally? Is The Correspondence between Trinitarian Communion and Ecclesial Structure Only within A Local Church?

One of the characteristics of Volf’s ecclesiology is that he persists in that the relation between three divine persons only correspond the relation *within* a local church. He only wants to focus local churches but does not want to discuss the universal church. This preposition may comes from his free church tradition. He argues it from the standpoint of the universal church in the salvation history. Volf considers that the only difference between local churches and the universal church is their position “on the way to its eschatological future”.¹²⁵ He thinks the only one difference between a local church and universal church is “*its eschatological future*”.¹²⁶ He advocates:

When in the eschaton the whole people of God is assembled in the unity of the triune God, this distinction will be eliminated, and human beings will live in perfect communion with the triune God and will reflect the communion of the triune God in their own mutual relationship.¹²⁷

Therefore, in the eschaton, the line between universal church and local churches will disappear. For Volf, to discuss the local church is enough in talking about the church in the

¹²⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 203.

¹²⁶ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 203.

¹²⁷ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 203. Similar idea is also presented in pp. 240-241.

salvation history, and it is not necessary to discuss the universal church. Then Volf focuses on the role of local churches in the history of salvation:

Because every local church is concrete anticipation of this eschatological community, it is decisive that one understand [*sic* understands] and live [*sic* lives] the *relationships within* a given local church in correspondence to the Trinity.¹²⁸

Therefore, “whereas these relationships are eschatologically abiding, those between local churches as local churches are merely historically determined and accordingly transient.”¹²⁹

As a result of it, Volf concludes that:

The Trinity indwells in the local churches in no other way than through its presence within the persons constituting those churches, since the church *is* those who gather in the name of Christ. This is why although *interecclesial* correspondence to the Trinity is important, it can nonetheless be conceived only in analogy to the pivotal *intraecclesial* cotrespondence to the Trinity.¹³⁰

Therefore, Volf focuses on the interactions between church members, and the context he describes a fellowship is a “local church”. His theology basically follows “free church tradition”,¹³¹ especially citing John Smyth,¹³² whose ecclesiological concepts were mentioned by Volf many times in the paragraph discussing offices.¹³³ For Volf, therefore, the “fellowship” or “communion” is chiefly local church centred; i.e. the “fellowship” or “communion” is *within* a local church, not between the local churches or bishops,¹³⁴ which is

¹²⁸ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 203.

¹²⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 203.

¹³⁰ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 203.

¹³¹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 245. Regarding the concepts of “free church” tradition, cf. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), pp. 59-67.

¹³² Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 23; Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, p. 134.

¹³³ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 245, 249, 253.

¹³⁴ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, pp. 153, 257. Also cf. 3.III.A of this paper.

the idea of Eastern Orthodoxy ecclesiology.¹³⁵

Volf argues that the relation within the Trinity *only* corresponds to the relation *within* a local church. His reason is that “because every local church is concrete anticipation of this eschatological community”, and “whereas these relationships are eschatologically abiding, those between local churches as local churches are merely historically determined and accordingly transient.”¹³⁶ However, is it theologically necessary?

In the New Testament, the communion between local churches also reflects the relation between divine persons, just as the relation within a local church. For example, a church member is asked to help other members in need,¹³⁷ which shows the love of “*perichoresis*” within the Trinity. Likewise, the fact that Asian churches financially support the churches in Jerusalem in famine¹³⁸ also shows the mutual love and relation corresponding to that in the Trinity.¹³⁹ Therefore, the communion of the Trinity also corresponds to the relation *between* local churches.

From the argument presented above, Volf has many contributions in ecclesiology to promote the laities actively participating in ministries. It allows the Holy Spirit to work through the whole of body and fits the “*perichoretical*” model of the communion of the Trinity. However, the ecclesial structure may not be as equal and unlegislated as Volf suggests according to the correspondence to the *economic* Trinity.

B. Is Ordination Local Church Focused rather than Universal?

Volf rejects the idea that offices are “universal” in the church. He thinks that the offices are only *valid within* a local church. Volf argues:

According to the interaction model of the bestowal of *charismata* • • • they are always given through a concrete *local church*; reception of the *charismata* is an

¹³⁵ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, pp. 145-149.

¹³⁶ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 203.

¹³⁷ For example, Heb. 13:1-2; Jas. 2:14-17.

¹³⁸ 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8:1-4; 9:1-14.

¹³⁹ Cf. 2.II.A.3 of this paper.

integral part of their constitution. The *charismata* of office are no exception.¹⁴⁰

Volf sees the ordination as publicly identified and recognised the *charismata* given by the Holy Spirit, for he says: “ordination is an act of entire local church led by the Holy Spirit of God.”¹⁴¹ As a result of it, Volf’s concepts regarding ordination are simply local church focused rather than universal. Hence, Volf thinks that an officeholder can perform his duties only *within* his/her own local church, but he/she is not an officeholder to another local church, since the Holy Spirit bestows *charismata* via a local church.

From the quotation in above section, it is clear that Volf thinks that the officeholders are only elected with in a local church. His idea regarding the ordination of an officeholder may come from his free church tradition, which thinks that an office holder is chosen by the Holy Spirit and the congregation.¹⁴² In the free church tradition, each congregation is an independent, self-governed and direct responsible to God. Therefore, an officerholder is elected by the congregation he/she attends, and not be regarded as an officeholder in another congregation.¹⁴³

However, the ideas that “the officeholder is elected by the congregation” and “the office is not universal” are worthy to rethink. First, in ancient church, the bishops and deacons are appointed by apostles, who are chosen by Christ.¹⁴⁴ Therefore, who should be the

¹⁴⁰ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 255; emphasis added by the author of this paper.

¹⁴¹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 249.

¹⁴² Cf. Walter Klaassen (ed.), *Anabaptism in Outline: Selected Primary Sources* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1981), pp. 121, 125-126, 127-128, 130-131, 135-138.

¹⁴³ Cf. Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology*, Three Volumes in One (Vally Forge: Judson Press, 1970), pp. 912-914.

¹⁴⁴ Clement says:

Christ therefore was sent forth by God, and the apostles by Christ. Both these appointments, then, were made in an orderly way, according to the will of God. Having therefore received their orders, and being fully assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and established in the word of God, with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand. And thus preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first-fruits [of their labors], having first proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who should afterwards believe.

Cf. Clement, *Epistula ad Corinthios (Πρὸς Κορινθίους ἐπιστολή, Letter to the Corinthians)*, 42. The English translation is from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *Early Church Father: Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1: *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 16.

officeholders are not decided by congregation. Second, in ancient church, if some members of a local church do not like the officeholder, Clement suggests that the office holder should leave the congregation for the reason of peace, and “very place will welcome him.”¹⁴⁵ It implies that the officeholder of a congregation is accepted by other congregation. Thirdly, there is no reason that the Holy Spirit bestows *charismata* via a local church but not give spiritual gifts to the universal church. Therefore, the ordination is not only confined within a local church, but is also universal.

C. Ordination Needs Recognition from Local Congregation

Volf also advocates that the office is *not necessary* lifelong, and the recognition from the local congregation is essential.¹⁴⁶ To Volf, the ordination and local church cannot be separated. Volf rejects the idea that a person who is ordained by the authority of the bishop can be an officeholder in any church ruled by the very bishop, which is the viewpoint of both the Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Church.

D. The Unit of a Local Church

Zizioulas has subtly different ideas regarding the locality of the church. He says: “a local Church, in order to be not just local but also *the Church* (universal church),¹⁴⁷ must be in full communion with the rest of the local Churches in the world.”¹⁴⁸ Zizioulas asks: “Can a local Church be regarded as truly local and truly Church if it is in a state of confessional division?”

¹⁴⁵ Clement says:

Who then among you is noble-minded? who compassionate? who full of love? Let him declare, “If on my account sedition and disagreement and schisms have arisen, I will depart, I will go away whithersoever ye desire, and I will do whatever the majority commands; only let the flock of Christ live on terms of peace with the presbyters set over it.” He that acts thus shall procure to himself great glory in the Lord; and every place will welcome him. For “the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof.” These things they who live a godly life, that is never to be repented of, both have done and always will do.

Cf. Clement, *Epistula ad Corinthios*, 54. The English translation is from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *Early Church Father: Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1: *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 19.

¹⁴⁶ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 250-251.

¹⁴⁷ Added by the author of this paper.

¹⁴⁸ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, p. 257.

Additionally, Anglican churches hold the idea that the basic unit of the church is not a local congregation but a *Diocese*.¹⁴⁹ Watchman Nee has a similar idea about the basic unit of the church. He thinks “the boundary of a local assembly in the Scriptures is according to the limit of such a city.”¹⁵⁰ However, L. Khong, probably adopted from Ralph W. Neighbour, Jr., has a more radical idea regarding the unit of the church. Khong says: “*the cell is the church*”;¹⁵¹ it means each cell group itself is the church. Since the church is established by Jesus Christ, who called twelve apostles on the earth, the church has historicity in this aspect and develops in the history.

It is suggested to look at the usage of the local churches and the universal church in the Bible. Paul sees many local (house) churches in a certain place as an integrated object.¹⁵² In Revelation, John writes to seven local churches in Asia;¹⁵³ however, the book ends at the appearance of New Jerusalem, which is the eschatological (universal) church.¹⁵⁴ It is also worthy to address that Paul talks about the universal church;¹⁵⁵ however, he then discusses Christian conducts in a local church immediately.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, the universal church is closely associated with local churches. From the aspect of the communion of saints, no matter how small or how big a local church is defined, the communion of local churches is important. From this perspective, that the ordination being universal fits the “communion of local churches” better, since local churches recognise one another mutually.

E. Free Church Tradition and Pentecostal Ecclesiology

Volf’s ecclesiology comes from both Pentecostal and free church tradition. However,

¹⁴⁹ Also mentioned by Newbigin; Cf. Newbigin, *The Household of God*, p. 106.

¹⁵⁰ Nee, *The Church and the Work* (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1982), Vol. I: *Assembly Life*, p. 112. Nee’s idea is presented in pp. 111-114.

¹⁵¹ Lawrence Khong, *The Apostolic Cell Church: Practical Strategies for Growth and Outreach; from the Story of Faith Community Baptist Church* (Singapore: TOUCH Ministries International, 2000), pp. 35-37; emphasis added by the author of this paper.

¹⁵² For example, Gal. 1:2 “And all the brethren which are with me, unto the *churches* of Galatia”.

¹⁵³ Rev. 2-3.

¹⁵⁴ Rev. 21-22.

¹⁵⁵ Eph. 1:1-4:16.

¹⁵⁶ Eph. 4:17-6:9.

which part is from the Pentecostal and others are from the free church tradition, or most of his ecclesiology comes from both of them? Amos Yong thinks that the Pentecostals does not have ecclesiology itself and usually follows the free church tradition.¹⁵⁷ However, this opinion is partly correct. First, free church tradition stresses that the church is consisted of voluntarily participating believers.¹⁵⁸ To Anabaptists and separatists, the existence of congregation is prior to offices and sacraments.¹⁵⁹ However, the Pentecostal Churches thinks that the foundation of the church is the Holy Spirit but not people. There is no “church” mentioned in the Gospel according to Luke, but there are twenty-four occurrences of the “church” in Acts. Therefore, the church is born on the day of Pentecostal,¹⁶⁰ not by believers’ voluntary assembly. Second, from the perspective of ecclesial structure, the free church tradition insists that only completely congregational government is faithful to the biblical teaching, and other type of government of the church is not correct.¹⁶¹ However, some Pentecostal churches, such as the Church of God and the Pentecostal Holiness Church, adopt Episcopate as their ecclesial structure.¹⁶² It is because that some Pentecostals think that the church should be leaded by apostles, prophets and other offices filled with the Holy Spirit.¹⁶³ Other Pentecostals, such as Assemblies of God, adopts Presbyterian form of the church polity.¹⁶⁴ It is also noticeable that the early Pentecostals recognise themselves as a “fellowship” and “movement”,¹⁶⁵ and they reject state churches.¹⁶⁶ Many local churches of Assemblies of God utilise congregational government system on local operations,¹⁶⁷ which is

¹⁵⁷ Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), pp. 127, 123 fn. 4.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 893-894.

¹⁵⁹ Rees, “Trinity and Church”, *Pacifica*, Vol. 17 (Oct 2004), p. 252-254.

¹⁶⁰ Stanley M. Horton (ed.), *Systematic Theology*, Revised Edition (Springfield: Logion Press, 1994), p. 529.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 903-914.

¹⁶² Horton (ed.), *Systematic Theology*, p. 548.

¹⁶³ Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, trans. by R. A. Wilson with revisions by the author (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), p. 425.

¹⁶⁴ Horton (ed.), *Systematic Theology*, p. 549.

¹⁶⁵ Horton (ed.), *Systematic Theology*, p. 551.

¹⁶⁶ Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, p. 426.

¹⁶⁷ Horton (ed.), *Systematic Theology*, p. 552.

similar to some elements of free church tradition.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, ecclesiology in free church tradition and that in Pentecostals are totally the same. From the discussion above, it is just to comment that Volf's ecclesiology is more close to free church tradition but with Pentecostal colour.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, p. 428.

CHAPTER 4

APPLICATIONS OF MIROSLAV VOLF'S TRINITARIAN AND PNEUMATOLOGICAL ECCLRESIAL STRUCTURE IN LIGHT OF PRESENT CONTEXT

I. Communion of the Church: Ecclesial Structure is Mission Centred rather than Function Focused

From the discussion in chapter three, it is apparent that the church is communion. The church is the image of the Trinitarian communion, and the relationship between church members corresponds to the *prechoresis* of three divine persons. By analysis of the Scripture, the aim of the prechoretical relation *within* Trinity and the church is to reveal Jesus Christ who reveals the Father. Therefore, the structure of the church is mission oriented.

In the circle of “church growth”, there is a trend to restructure the church. The purpose of those church growth promotes, to bring more people into the church, is correct. However, some of their concepts about the ecclesial structure are not mission centred as they claim. One is able to see that contemporary concepts of business administration and management have already been brought into these churches. The leaders of these churches behave like managers, focusing on the targets of churches, usually the number of people attending services and gatherings. To fulfill these objects, they see Christians from the angle of functions. They think that as long as a church member can function well, it is not important what his/her office is.¹ They replace the offices in the church by functions. These new titles are functional, and they have only one kind of function: to operate cell-groups.² Therefore, they see the church from the approach of business administration which is shown below:

¹ For example, Carl F. George replaces the bishop, apostle, prophet, pastor, elder, and evangelist into CEO, C, D, X, and L. Cf. Carl F. George, *Prepare Your Church for the Future. Introducing the Meta-Church: Large Enough to Celebrate, Small Enough to Care* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1996), pp. 129-134, esp.132-134.

² For example, “I minister as an X, a leader of ten”; “I serve as an L, a coach of five group leader”. Cf. George, *Prepare Your Church for the Future*, p. 134.

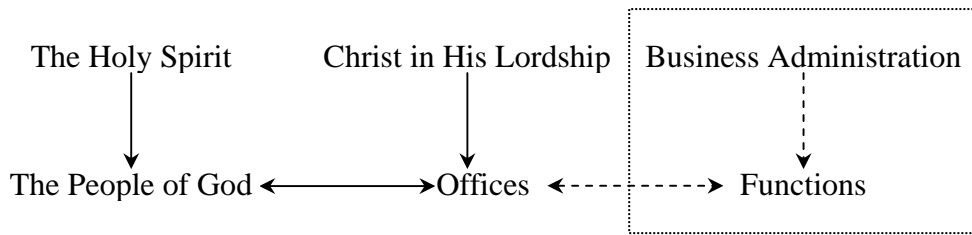


Figure 5 The Relationship between the Four Approaches of Ecclesiology

The purpose of church growth promoters is to bring more people into local churches; however, they put most efforts on operating cell-groups, and focus on how well the groups run. There are too many administration tasks in these kinds of new structures of the church,³ and Christians easily get lost in these structures: do we bring people to the communion of the Trinitarian God, or do we just run a big cell-group enterprise?

Second, it is noticeable that the offices are setup by God, and they are important in the structure of the church. An officeholder has certain functions; however, he/she is not determined by his/her function, but by God’s grace and choice. For example, a person with a gift of prophecy may be seen and ordained as a “Prophet” in a Pentecostal, Charismatic or Independent church; however, does he/she have the office of Prophet? Besides, there are some churches ordaining people as “Pastors” as long as they can bring many people into their local churches. Does the Holy Spirit call them to become “Pastors”? In addition, many Corinthians deny Paul as an apostle.⁴ However, his is an apostle no matter he is a “successful” apostle or not in the eyes of the church of Corinth. If we only put an effort on the consideration of functions and *charismata* but without any discussion on offices, we may

³ See how much administration tasks, and how a local church is like an enterprise in one of the new structure; cf. George, *Prepare Your Church for the Future*, pp. 85-196.

⁴ 2 Cor. 12:11-12 “¹¹I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. ¹²Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.” Cf. 2 Cor. 12:11-17.

know Christians “after the flesh”.⁵ Furthermore, there are many functions of offices, whose aims are

¹²For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: ¹³Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.⁶

The purpose of the offices is not to run cell-groups in this kind of administrative and functional framework of the church.

It is also worthy for other churches to reexamine their structure from a missionary perspective. Is the ecclesial structure mission centred, or does a local church only look its “inside”? Do the relations and interactions between church members bring non-believers into the communion of the church and triune God, or do we just have numerous gatherings and meetings to satisfy ourselves? Do we put most of our energy in maintaining gatherings rather than reaching out in missions? These are important questions all churches have to ask themselves to “reorient” their relations and interactions toward the target of mission.

II. Communion of Churches: Testifying the Lord in the Church and Mission Related

The church as communion is not only carried out within a local church, but also applicable between local churches.⁷ The communion of local churches does not just show the friendships between Christians, but it is also related to the mission of the church. It is because Jesus Christ says: “³⁴A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. ³⁵By this shall all [men] know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”⁸ If local churches perform mutual love, they proclaim and testify that Jesus Christ is within the church. It also reveals the “prechoretical”

⁵ 2 Cor. 5:16 “Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we [him] no more.”

⁶ Eph. 4:12-13.

⁷ Cf. 3.III.A of this paper.

⁸ Jn. 13:34-35.

relationship within the Trinitarian God.

There is a movement that many leaders of local churches in a certain area have cross denominational prayer meetings. It is a good thing because it shows the communion of churches. However, some of these prayer meetings change the purpose from supporting church leaders to arranging or managing tasks of local churches in that area. Some aggressive church leaders even transform this kind of prayer meeting into a new “denomination” without any consent of other leaders. If one church leader does not participate in this kind of prayer meeting, he/she will be “accused” by “not have a communion with other churches” or “splitting the body of Christ”. However, from the discussion above, the main point of communion is mutual love and support between churches, but not power cohesion. It is also suggested that local churches in a certain area, for example, within a city or a town, have an Eucharist together within a certain time, for example, one year. It will show sharing, participating and identification of Christians “in redemptive and in social terms”.⁹

III. The Place for the Holy Spirit in the Church

There is a trend to “restructure” the church in Independent Churches and the circle of Pentecostals and Charismatic. They think the old structure of the church is not able to fulfill the mission and charges of the church. Most of them comprehend the issues from the aspect of management. Numerous pastors in local churches act as managers or CEOs,¹⁰ busying in setting the number of congregation, the amount of offering, etc. They market the non-Christians they want, and urge church members to achieve their objectives.¹¹ They believe in doing every procedure according to a standard operating manual¹² and carefully

⁹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3 Vols., trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991-1998), Vol. 2: 1991, p. 326. Also cf. 3.I.F of this paper.

¹⁰ Carl F. George describes the role of leadership in his meta-church model as “CEO”; cf. George, *Prepare Your Church for the Future*, pp. 132-134, esp. p. 133 Chart 12.

¹¹ For example, Norman Shawchuck, et al., *Marketing for Congregations: Choosing to Serve People More Effectively* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992); and R. Henry Migliore, Robert E. Stevens, and David L. Loudon, *Church and Ministry Strategic Planning: from Concept to Success* (New York: Haworth Press, 1994).

¹² For example, C. Peter Wagner describes C. F. George’s “*Prepare Your Church for the Future*” as “a

monitoring. Their churches are like plants in a conditioned greenhouse, seen as another kind of industrial assembly line, can “grow” in a predictable rate and produce quality controlled outcomes *without* the Holy Spirit. The phenomena may be termed as “*Church McDonaldisation*”.¹³ Although the purpose of most of them to change ecclesial is to fulfill the Great Mission, to bring people into churches and let churches grow faster. However, we have seen that business administrations already take away the place of the Holy Spirit in the church.¹⁴

Some of these “church restructurers” and “church growth makers” do consider ecclesial structure from the angle of the works of the Holy Spirit. However, they do not explain why the Holy Spirit “favours” this kind of structure of the church, but they just proclaim that the changing church structure can bring the works of the Holy Spirit. In addition, their focus is not how to prepare a place for the Holy Spirit in the church, but emphasise on many “formulas”, such as the “cell group”, the “Group of 12”, the “purpose driven church”, the “meta – church” and so on. These pastors think their structural formula works. However, we have to ask a question: does the Holy Spirit “*favour*” a certain type of ecclesial structure? If so, how does it happen? Is there a tendency in Pentecostal, Charismatic or Independent Churches to “*control*” the Holy Spirit through “*Church McDonaldisation*”,¹⁵ just like institutional churches? If the Holy Spirit does not favour any kind of ecclesial structure, why do they discuss this issue? From the discussion above, it is clear that if one wants to change the structure of the church, his/her focus must be mission centred. However, if one does not think how and why the Holy Spirit can work more properly in the new framework of the church,

blueprint for unlimited growth” and “it is about as thorough as a modern *operator’s manual* for a new lap-top computer”; cf. George, *Prepare Your Church for the Future*, p. 10; emphasis added by the author of this paper.

¹³ Cf. John Drane, *The McDonaldisation of the Church: Spirituality, Creativity, and the Future of the Church* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 2000), pp. 28-33; George Rizter, *The McDonaldisation of Society: An Investigation into the Changing Character of Contemporary Social Life* (Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 1993), p. 1.

¹⁴ There are some reflections on the issue. Cf. Douglas D. Webster, *Selling Jesus: What’s Wrong with Marketing the Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992); and Philip D. Kenneson and James L. Street, *Selling out the Church: the Dangers of Church Marketing* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997).

¹⁵ Cf. Drane, *The McDonaldisation of the Church*, pp. 28-33

he/she may have the same danger as the institutional churches.

Furthermore, it is also helpful for churches not in the circle of Pentecostals, Charismatics and Independents to comprehend the church from pneumatological approaches. It can expand our understanding of the church, and allow the Holy Spirit to work in the church. Additionally, it is beneficial for churches to rethink the place of the Holy Spirit in everyday ministry. Do churches fill out all the church life with planned programs? Do church members participate in church life through their *charismata*, or do not allow the Holy Spirit to work through the interaction of Christians? Does the structure of churches support the work of the Holy Spirit, or does it “quench” the Spirit?¹⁶ These are important issues all churches have to face.

IV. The Participation of the Laities in the Church

Miroslav Volf promotes “polycentricity” of the church and encourages the laities to participate in church life.¹⁷ He thinks that every Christian has his/her *charismata*, and believers serve one another and the world. It is worthy for us to consider: do church members participate in church life through their *charismata*, or just sit there and wait for someone to serve them? Do church leaders and the clergies do almost everything but leave only few opportunities for the laities? Does the ecclesial structure obstruct some church members to participate in church life? These are issues that worth thinking and acting on all churches.

From the discussion above, Volf’s Trinitarian and pneumatological and ecclesiology encourages the church to restructure itself according to the image of the communion of the Trinity. It is suggested that the purpose of the ecclesial structure is mission oriented rather than function focused; therefore, the recent trend of restructuring or transitioning of the church may go to the wrong direction. It is noticeable that the visible communion of local churches is also important, because it testifies the Lord is in the church. From this position that some prayer meeting of church leaders in Taiwan may not work well. Finally, Volf’s ecclesiology reminds the church not to control everything but to provide place for the Holy

¹⁶ 1 Thess. 5:19.

¹⁷ Cf. Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 223-228, esp. 223, 227.

Spirit actively, for pneumatology is fundamental to ecclesial structure.

CONCLUSION

Miroslav Volf provides a constructive contribution on the correspondence between ecclesial structure and Trinitarian communion through detailed discussion. He proposes a polycentric, charismatic and participatory ecclesiology. To Volf, Christians served and are satisfied one another with his/her own *charismata*. Through the interaction of the church members, the Holy Spirit constitutes the church. Because the offices are *charismata* and bestowed by the Holy Spirit, the church is not static but dynamic. Comparing to the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches, Volf's ecclesiology is local church focused, in which Christians communion with the triune God and reflect the communion of the Trinitarian God in their own mutual relationship. Furthermore, the ordination is only valid in the local church, and it should be universal. Volf understands the church as "*a local, interactively Trinitarian and charismatic fellowship of the people of God*", and this understanding reflects Volf's concepts regarding ecclesial structure. When evangelism makes "distinction between invisible church of the truly converted and the church as a visible institution",¹ Volf provides a vivid, dynamic, charismatic, and participatory ecclesiology.

There is a tension between the church institution and the work of the Holy Spirit. Volf, standing from the perspective of "congregational ecclesiology", tries to incorporate his "free church tradition" with "pneumatological" approach to reduce the conflict. Volf integrates "pneumatological" and "congregational" ecclesiologies very well; however, the role of the "Christological" ecclesiology is very little. He also does not discuss the offices and the unity of the body of Christ very much.

There are three potential problems in Volf's ecclesiology: (1) "pneumatic anarchy" replaces all orders and offices in the church; (2) he sees the "offices" as the dynamic "*charismata*"; and (3) he confines the relationship between Christians and ordination in a local church. The first one comes from his methodological preference of ecclesiology, and it is associated with the Trinitarian model he adopts. If one considers the Eastern Orthodoxy model of the Trinity and modifies Volf's concept as "the ecclesial structure corresponds to the economic Trinity", it will fix the problems in Volf's theorem. Regarding the second point, it

¹ Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), p. 297.

is necessary to view the offices as a different group of *charismata*, which are distinctive from dynamic *charismata* mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. Thirdly, the communion of the church is not confined within a local church, but also between local churches. It reflects the mutual love and the prechoretical relation of the Trinity. From the perspective of the communion of the churches, the ordination should not only be local but also be universal. The unit of a local church should be a diocese as communion of many pastoral charges rather than many individual house churches. Therefore, it is suggested that churches in a city or town should have Eucharist at least once per year, in which Christians share and participate in church life “in redemptive and in social terms”.² Furthermore, the purpose of the prechoretical relation within the church is to bring people into the communion of the church and the triune God.

Miroslav Volf’s ecclesiology encourages Christians to comprehend the church from a pneumatological approach, which make us think about the place of the Holy Spirit in the church. It also promotes the laities to participate in church life and serve the world through their *charismata*. It is highly appreciated that he provides a fresh look of the church, which expands our view of ecclesiology.

² Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3 Vols., trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991-1998), Vol. 2: 1991, p. 326.

APPENDIX

A Brief Introduction to Miroslav Volf

Miroslav Volf was born in 1956 in former Yugoslavia,¹ which was divided into Croatia and Serbia in 1990s. Volf's father was a pastor of a Pentecostal Church, from whom he learnt to love their enemies in the situation of racial conflicts. Volf also learnt the importance of confession of faith from his father. When he was a high school boy, former Yugoslavia was governed by the communists. Although there were many Catholic and Eastern Orthodoxy believers, only Volf publicly recognised that he is a Christian. However, he was mocked by others because of his confession.² His taste of theology was aroused by Peter Kuzmič, who then became professor of missions at Gordon-Conwell theological Seminary.³

After graduating from high school, Volf studied in a Bible Institute and studies philosophy at University Zagreb. He finished his Bachelor of Arts in Evangelical-Theological Faculty, Osijek, Croatia in 1977 with the honour of *summa cum laude*, and then received a Master of Arts also with *summa cum laude* from Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, U.S.A. in 1979. Volf taught systemic theology at Evangelical-Theological Faculty in 1979-1980, and then recommend by visiting professor Orlando Costas to study under the direction of Jürgen Moltmann. Volf was awarded a Doctor of Theology with *summa cum laude* from University of Tübingen in 1986, and acted as Professor of Systematic Theology in Evangelical-Theological Faculty from 1984 to 1991.⁴ After Evangelical-Theological Faculty exiling in the fall of 1991 because of the civil war in former Yugoslavia, Volf taught at Fuller Theological Seminary from 1991 to 1998.⁵ He was appointed as Henry B. Wright Professor of Theology in Yale Divinity School, New Haven, U.S.A., and he teaches theology there till now. He is also the Director of the Center for Faith and Culture in Yale Divinity School.

Volf's researches are diversified, covering from medical, sexual, social and political

¹ Yugoslavia was divided into Croatia and Serbia in 1990s.

² Cf. Tim Stafford, "The New Theologians", *Christianity Today*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (Feb 1999), pp. 36-37; Miroslav Volf, "The Nature of the Church", *Evangelical Review of Theology*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2002), p. 70.

³ Cf. Stafford, "The New Theologians", *Christianity Today*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (Feb 1999), p. 37.

⁴ Cf. Stafford, "The New Theologians", *Christianity Today*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (Feb 1999), p. 37.

⁵ Cf. Stafford, "The New Theologians", *Christianity Today*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (Feb 1999), p. 36.

issues. There are three themes in Volf's theology: (1) the theology of work;⁶ (2) the problem of violence and the other people; and (3) the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the church.⁷ He is the author or editor of 12 books and has published more than 65 journal articles until 2004. Volf was invited to lecture in universities or seminaries, including Chavasse Lectures, Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, in 1990 and Gray Lectures, Duke University Divinity School, Durham in 2001. He also received many honours and grants, and the latest one was Grawemeyer Award for Religion for his book "*Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996)" in 2002.

⁶ Volf's theology of work has background of Marxism; cf. Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁷ A. James Reimer, "Miroslav Volf: One of the New Theologians", *Conrad Grebel Review*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (2000), pp. 3-19.

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