**Chapter 2**

**Sacrament and Ethics: From Synergy to Counterpoint and Back**

Synergy ([συνεργεία](http://www.wikiwords.org/dictionary/%CF%83%CF%85%CE%BD%CE%B5%CF%81%CE%B3%CE%B5%CE%AF%CE%B1/904402/1750584))denotes the notion of the uncreated triune God and the created human persons co-laboring or co-operating together asymmetrically yet reciprocally and with a radical loyalty toward the sustaining of both astonishingly different, divine and human, integral natures in the process of working out salvation. It is not a new idea in the Christian history. Even though in some Protestant circles the idea of synergy rarely fails to invoke specters of heresy, it rather tranquilly permeates the soteriological imagination of the various Eastern Christian theological sensibilities with Roman Catholic tradition looking on with little grounds for disagreement.

The notion of synergy is most intimately related to the perception of salvation as *theosis[[1]](#footnote-1)* (θεωσις) – salvation by becoming God-like or becoming deified through a perichoretic interpenetration of God and humanity. In this perichoretic interlacing and mutual indwelling human persons may come to gradually participate, by grace, into divine life through the progressive order of salvation. The salvation of all created reality is truly *opus Dei*. But it is a participatory *opus*, the *leitourgia* performed by the triune God through Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit with the people of God for the life of the world. Of course, salvation within such a trinitarian imaginary is perceived as a processual and progressive *theosis[[2]](#footnote-2)* – a transfigurative deification/divinization or engodding of the human person as they grow as precisely *imago Dei*  (κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ) into the likeness (*similitudo,* ομοίωσις θεώ) of Christ. An early definition of *theosis* by Pseudo-Dionysius in the 6th century states that “divinization consists of being as much as possible like and in union with God.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Salvation conceived as *theosis* includes, yet is not limited to, the liberation from sin and death as well as justification in a more juridical view of atonement. Among many conceptions of salvation in Christianity, *theosis* most importantly alludes to the transfigurative and participatory indwelling of the created life through its bodily, voluntary, affective, and intellectual aspects into the trinitarian life of God. To put it in Western terms, this soteriological vision highlights sanctification rather than merely justification.[[4]](#footnote-4) As far as the progressive and processual nature of salvation perceived as *theosis* is concerned, it is probably worth noting – to minimize misunderstanding – that the idea of progress here does not involve self-determining, totalizing, and inescapable necessity akin to fate or a manifest natural law. Deification is an interruptible and derailable itinerary of human life. It is initiated and nurtured throughout by grace or the “energies”(ἐνέργειαι)[[5]](#footnote-5) of the triune God – or simply, by God in the act of interactive relating to the created life as God works out the salvation of the whole created reality. It may be entered by human persons as always called yet only occasionally enthusiastic sojourners of God.

Given the loaded connotations of the notion of “progress” when pondering *theosis* at this late stage of the Western (post)modernity, perhaps it is salient to invoke Theodor Adorno’s reflections on progress as a category of thought that has been exposed to the dangers of becoming a conclusive category but which may signal precisely an opposite thrust. For Adorno, progress “is not a conclusive category. It wants to cut short the triumph of radical evil, not to triumph as such itself.”[[6]](#footnote-6) *Theosis* as progressive growth into the likeness of God across the terrain of human life at full stretch does not equal an inexorable and predictable emancipation of supposedly totally autonomous human reality. Progress, in the strangely applicable words of Adorno, is the “resistance at all stages” to such unrelenting and hegemonic necessity and “not the surrender” to the lures of “their steady ascent.”[[7]](#footnote-7) Now *theosis* resists, in the first place, a predictable and inexorable “steady ascent” of entirely profane creatures toward the uncreated entirely holy God through a profitable yet presumptuous and violent gesture of divine condescension through an imputed forensic atonement as the sole crucial act of salvation. Yet it also resists an equally presumptuous “steady ascent” of a monadic and supposedly self-sufficient human subjectivity intoxicated by its own power to achieve and to conquer – which is then nothing else than a steady ascent in auto-celebration toward auto-idolatry. *Theosis*, rather, is salvation performed synergistically. That is, the “how” of *theosis* – or the quiddity of the divine-human relationality, or the ethics of *theosis* – is weaved into the score of the still decidedly unfinished divine “symphony of salvation” (*consonantia salutis*)[[8]](#footnote-8) as an asymmetrically reciprocal co-working between God and human persons. Such an asymmetrically reciprocal synergy seen as the ethical “how” of *theosis*, I will argue below, suggests the constellation of relations that I have already denoted in the Overture as intrinsically sacramental. But first things first.

1. **Synergy and Ethics**

What kind of relationality is implied in the idea of synergy? As the Greek term suggests, [συνεργεία](http://www.wikiwords.org/dictionary/%CF%83%CF%85%CE%BD%CE%B5%CF%81%CE%B3%CE%B5%CE%AF%CE%B1/904402/1750584) engenders a composite action of communication, collaboration, or cooperation, carried forth as an amalgam of intentionality and activity. Synergy is situated in the whole imaginary of *theosis* that is grounded in an asymmetrical reciprocity. This reciprocity is one of participation wherein God participates in the human condition, always preveniently and very particularly and intensely through the incarnation of Christ and subsequently through the modulation of Christ’s presence in the sacraments as liturgical events. It also opens up the prospect for salvific human participation in the triune life of God through which human persons may progressively and infinitely grow into an ever greater likeness to God without becoming divine by nature. Indeed, the *telos* of redeemed human existence is salvation as union with God through participation in the divine life. What is crucial for the redemptive process from the perspective of *theosis* is the audacious idea of “working together” – [συνεργεία](http://www.wikiwords.org/dictionary/%CF%83%CF%85%CE%BD%CE%B5%CF%81%CE%B3%CE%B5%CE%AF%CE%B1/904402/1750584) – or co-operation, co-acting, co-laboring across the ontological divide without digressing into coercion and violation of the integrity of either co-worker of this salvific partnership.[[9]](#footnote-9) What must be said immediately is that, in the words of John Breck,

synergy implies a fundamental (and non-Pelagian) paradox: the initiative is wholly divine, originating and coming to completion within Trinitarian divine life; yet an appropriate human response is necessary for the appropriation of saving grace.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Synergy denotes the “mystery of the coincidence of grace and human freedom” and the “simultaneity in the synergy of divine grace and human freedom.”[[11]](#footnote-11) In fact, the stubborn apophatic emphasis on the incomprehensibility and impenetrability of God’s essence alongside the equally relentless insistence on real participation of human life in the triune life of God does not merely – and necessarily – safeguard the integrity of God alone as it may appear from the essence/energies distinction. It similarly safeguards the integrity of created human life in the wholeness of its gracefully endowed created freedom so that increasing likeness does not issue in hegemonic annihilation and so that deification does not, at the end of the day, issue in nothing else but conquering assimilation. With these concerns in mind, synergy is rather a working paradox of dissimilar agencies wherein the *ergon* and the *energeia* of God and human persons interact, intertwine, interlace as they body forth salvation as the graced wellbeing of the creation at peace among itself and in love with its creator. At least in some, predominantly non-Western and non-modern, currents of Christian worldview, according to John Meyendorff,

… there is no opposition between freedom and grace… the presence in man of divine qualities, of a ‘grace’ which is part of his nature and which makes him fully man, neither destroys his freedom, nor limits the necessity for him to become fully himself by his own effort; rather, it secures that cooperation, or synergy, between the divine will and human choice which makes possible the progress ‘from glory to glory’ and the assimilation of man to the divine dignity for which he was created.[[12]](#footnote-12)

The whole imaginary of *theosis* is a counterpart of the incarnation of Christ in the sense that it “expresses the full extent of the consequences of the Incarnation.”[[13]](#footnote-13) To be sure, the divinizing union with God in *theosis* is not the union according to essence (ουσία) such as that of the persons of Trinity. Nor is it the hypostatic union of the incarnation. Certainly, all these crucial patterns of relationality in the Christian lore of God – God as Trinity, the hypostatic union of incarnation, salvation as synergistic *theosis*, and sacrament as exemplified in the Eucharist – are related vitally, yet analogically. Analogy here denotes resemblance and resonance across distance: neither absolute difference nor absolute identity is implied. Precisely through their enduring yet variously distanced and variously attuned resonances to the Trinity as the climactic and paradigmatic divine pattern of relationality of union in difference, the incarnation, synergistic *theosis*, and sacraments are all embodied and effective disclosures of the Trinity as a particular quiddity of relation. The markers of the trinitarian quiddity are communion and communication in mutuality and reciprocity by being together and acting together as truly different without detracting from, imposing on, competing with, or subjugating one another. This particular relationality is, after all, what God is: God “refers to the mutual action of the identities’ divine ‘energies’, to the perichoretic triune life.”[[14]](#footnote-14) Thus God is nothing other than this pattern of relationality which, I suggest, is marked as ethical precisely by being both the prefiguration and consummation of “right relation” or “just relation” according to which all relations are to be discerned, nurtured, formed, transformed, and ultimately judged.

The synergy of *theosis*, in this context, is modeled upon the pattern of the divine-human relation of incarnation, of course, without achieving the specific and unique intensity of its hypostatic constellation. Synergy denotes the relational interface of cooperation in which “divine action is not imposing itself on humanity, but offering itself for acceptance by human freedom.”[[15]](#footnote-15) As the interface of divine-human relationality, synergy facilitates a transposed analogical “continuation” of the incarnation within the terrain of existential actualities of salvation, i.e., sanctification in the reality most profoundly shaped as interpersonal. From a Chalcedonian perspective,[[16]](#footnote-16) at this level, similarly to the incarnation, the distinctions are in no way annulled by the union in which there is neither confusion nor separation. As Kallistos Ware emphasizes, to participate in *theosis* is to participate in the life and power of God while living as a distinct human subject so that “the I remains an I and Thou remains a Thou regardless how close the two get.”[[17]](#footnote-17) Synergy, ultimately then, is an envisagement of a non-coercive simultaneity of asymmetrical agencies cooperating reciprocally (or with a certain analogical interval in mind one could perhaps say, perichoretically) within the progression toward a non-hegemonic union of God and created life without dualistic detraction and without contrastive competition. The triune God and the redemptive *opus Dei* is open to participation as a relational interface, inviting human persons to take part in nothing less than the re-creation of the world as we know it since “creation is not an event in the past, but a relationship in the present.”[[18]](#footnote-18) The relationship in the present, however, is always a concurrent double movement: toward and with God as well as toward and with the neighbor. Across the analogical interval, the relationality of synergy stands under the irrevocable imperative of vicarious, if persistently inadequate, imitation of Christ’s person and life through translation of these patterns of relation into the politics of routine human living. In Christ, as a hymn puts it “there is no east or west, in him no south or north, but one community of love throughout the whole wide earth.”[[19]](#footnote-19) The range and spectrum of vicarious imitation of Christ, or ultimately the Trinity, as a configuration of relationality has no absolving limitation to justify Christian complacency on this side of eschaton.

All throughout this project I have maintained that the ethical dimension of relation resides in its quiddity, or in its “how”-ness. To ask what kind of relationality is imagined as the effective interface of salvation – or perdition – is to ask about the ethical make-up of that relationality. Ethical relationality is like the trinitarian and hypostatic relations – right and just because they do not devour the other by either conquest or by consumptive love, and because they relate benevolently, empower reciprocally, act cooperatively, love fiercely yet non-possessively, transform delicately, and judge equitably. From an ethical point of view, synergy is an imaginary of asymmetrical reciprocity and non-coercion. Synergy entails an ethical vindication of the integrity of divine as well as human natures and agencies in their *commercium* on the way to the final beatitude – herein resides its ethical admirability. As the quiddity or the “how” of the whole imaginary of *theosis*, synergy is an affirmation of the goodness of human agency and human creativity. Far from propagating liturgical Pelagianism, synergy is an envisagement of human participation in the redemptive *opus Dei* even from within the fallen dispensation where we all find ourselves and from where all itineraries of salvation must necessarily take off. This *status viatorum* is irreducible apart from eschatological fulfillment as is the finitude and corruption pertaining to this status, being present in every millisecond of the present planetary actuality. Yet, the imaginary of *theosis* and its “how” – synergy – comes across as an audacious aspiration to envisage contrapuntal reconciliation or even peace without revoking the apophatic principle of *dissimilitudo semper maior* on the ontological level.

Immediately, however, the double movement of relationality vectored simultaneously toward God and toward fellow human beings ought to be remembered as an imperative for analogical and vicarious imitation. First, regarding liturgy, synergy as the envisagement of right relationality allows human liturgies as the work and sacrifice of praise by God’s people to participate in the divine liturgy of salvific *opus Dei* without mutual cancellation. Synergy invokes the delicacy and simultaneity reminiscent of the Chalcedonian insistence on assumption rather than absorption of human nature in the incarnation. As human subjectivities and agencies remain “suspended in grace”[[20]](#footnote-20) as far as their primary causality is concerned under the circumstances of having been sourced *ex nihilo*, they nevertheless are sustained through the synergy of *theosis* in their genuine and unviolated otherness and agency. It is in this regard that synergy embodies the quiddity of divine-human relationality as a certain peace or reconciliation – and thus ethically, I submit.

Within the salvific economy of *theosis*, the uncreated grace does not rape and coerce[[21]](#footnote-21) the created beneficiary of God’s kenotic love but rather enables and nurtures the reciprocity of unpredictable and precarious responsivity in assent as well as in refusal. So synergy, ethically speaking, is an attempt to orchestrate the simultaneity of peace and freedom across the most tremendous span of difference. Within this simultaneity, freedom is not degraded into voluntary submission and peace here sounds indeed contrapuntal “as the state of differentiation without domination, with the differentiated participating in each other.”[[22]](#footnote-22) But of course, as Emmanual Levinas would be quick to remind, “of peace there can only be an eschatology.”[[23]](#footnote-23) It is nowhere more obvious than in the realm of the political – the sphere of interpersonal and intercultural relations. To be an ethically fruitful imaginary and to have any performative efficacy apart from theological speculation synergy must be re-orchestrated into the analogical interval from *theologia* to *oikonomia*, from the lofty heights of the Trinity and incarnation (a relationality!) into the depths of excruciating moral conundrums of the present global postcoloniality so prone to seductions of the civilization of clashes despite all its complex cultural hybridities. To rush ahead somewhat, it is important to sound here again the motif of relationality as always already simultaneously vectored toward God and toward fellow humans. I previously suggested that, as the “how” of divine-human relationality, synergy facilitates analogical “continuation” of the incarnation within the terrain of existential actualities of salvation. But the terrain of salvation is most profoundly shaped as interpersonal, as ineradicably relational, as thoroughly political. Thus, by another analogical transposition, from the Trinity and incarnation and *theosis* as precisely mutually resonant constellations of “right” or ethical relation, synergy as the quiddity of these relational patterns emerges as an incarnational template for vicarious imitation amidst the inexhaustible messiness, let alone tragedies, of our common life on this planet. I will elaborate on this in Chapter 3. In order to do so there, the remaining pivotal and analogically resonant element of the ethical trajectory of relationality – Trinity, incarnation, *theosis* – must be attended to here: namely, sacramentality and the liturgies best known as sacraments.

1. **From Incarnation to Sacramentality: Synergy, Sacrament, and Ethics**

Sacrament is above all about those tangled things that (the English) language (among several others) usually expresses by using prefix “inter” – inter-relating, inter-twining, inter-penetrating, inter-lacing, inter-mingling, inter-weaving – of different identities, elements, and orientations. To put it bluntly, sacrament is the codeword for the mystery of embodied, material, and aesthetical mediations of divine revelation and salvific grace, that is, of the triune God *in actu*. Sacrament is also the codeword of the preferential option toward union: for connecting rather than putting asunder, for uniting rather than dividing, for integrating rather than fragmenting. All of that, however, does not mean that sacrament is a codeword for transparent fusion without surplus or uniformity without residual opacity. By no means is sacrament a camouflaged “mystery” of standardization and sameness! Ultimately, sacrament is the mystery of union and the paradigmatically fecund sign of life-giving and life-affirming impurity of “both” and “and” rather than “either/or.” Sacrament is also the mystery of simultaneously perceiving, living, thinking, feeling, tasting, and envisioning the divine transcendence and immanence alike as *a priori* related. Above all, it is the unique and pivotal role of the incarnation – hypostatic union! – that grounds and prefigures the divine itineraries of redemptive self-disclosure and salvific presence through sacraments. In the words of Leo the Great, “that which till then [Christ’s ascension] was visible of our Redeemer was changed into a sacramental presence.”[[24]](#footnote-24) The *opus Dei* of salvation is worked out as the power of justifying and perfecting grace flows as derived from the incarnation, from the divinity of Christ through the humanity of Christ, into the sacraments.[[25]](#footnote-25) Already in the Overture I mentioned in passing that, in the incarnational economy of salvation, sacramentality paradoxically denotes the possibility or locus of the incarnation of Christ. But the sacraments, in turn, come to fruition as consequences of the incarnation. The incarnate Word is the prototype and the apogee of sacramentality. Thus the preferential option of divine disclosure unfolds through transfigurative entanglement with the materiality of creation from the womb of Mary through the last supper and ascension all the way into the signs that can be heard, touched, tasted, seen, smelled, written, read, translated, sung, baked, fashioned, painted, sculpted, sewn, endlessly worked on and pondered over and, of course, distorted and misunderstood willingly or unwillingly in more ways than there are grains of sand. Not only that, the distortions are often enthusiastically and profitably imposed on everybody within reach to actually ridicule what appears to be worshipped into idolatry and to routinely scandalize “the least of Christ’s brothers and sisters” with obscene relentlessness. The latter aspect is, in a sense, a presently irremediable ingredient of Christ’s kenotic sacrifice and crucifixion for the life of the world through leaving his insignificated presence at the cruel mercy of the finite and easily corruptible sign-making and sign-using hands and minds of humanity.

If sacramentality is the preferential interface of God-world relationality, then a sacramental style of practicing theology is, as I indicated in the Overture, a style of theological inquiry and contemplation extremely loyal to the whole sacramental economy of incarnation as the pivotal postulation of Christian theological rationality. Sacraments are not the accidental and extrinsic *parerga[[26]](#footnote-26)* of the economy of salvation as modernity was so prone to (mis)understand it. To underscore it, Gordon Lathrop refers to the eucharistic axiom of Irenaeus of Lyons’ from his *Adversus haereses* 4:18:5 as the methodological summary of liturgical theology and the eucharistic economy: “But our judgment is consonant with the Eucharist, and, in turn, the Eucharist establishes our judgment.”[[27]](#footnote-27) I cannot abstain from expanding Lathrop’s vision of the eucharistic economy and liturgical *ordo* further – and I believe in consonance with Irenaeus’ much broader methodological viewfinder in *Adversus haereses* 4:18:5. So I see the Irenaean eucharistic consonance as mirroring the union of incarnation as the methodological imaginary of all theology, most specifically, of what is usually called the systematic, dogmatic, and fundamental modes of theology. Here I again refer back to Yngve Brilioth’s conviction that

… the central secret of genuinely Christian theology is the holding in combination of the two contrasted opposites of God’s Transcendence and Immanence; and precisely at this point the eucharist is the surest safeguard of a sound theology (…) a meeting point on which all the issues of theology converge.[[28]](#footnote-28)

For Brilioth, then, as well as for an ancient tradition of theologians with which I align myself too, “the eucharist sums up the Christian faith and the Christian religion with a fullness which verbal definitions can never adequately express.”[[29]](#footnote-29) It is in this particular context that I envisage the whole interface of sacramentality which I characterized, through the optic of the Eucharist, as the paradox of non-allergic and non-colonizing cohabitation of relational differences.

Ethically speaking, what can be said about the incarnation can be analogically said about the sacraments as well as far as the quiddity of those relations is concerned. Sacrament is a configuration of relationality wherein different realities, identities, materialities, and agencies coexist together, “consubstantially,” interpenetrating one another intricately and intimately without confusion, without losing its integrity, without division, without separation in a union in which distinctions are not annulled and the irreducible characteristics of each participant are preserved. Such a quiddity or “how” of relations I have proposed as ethical. This, to dare a mind-boggling simplification, is also, in a nutshell, the perception of the relational ecology of sacrament present in both Eastern Orthodox and Lutheran traditions as they envision the Eucharist. John Meyendorff, for example, points to the linkage of the incarnation, *theosis*, synergy and the Eucharist as exhibiting the same enduring pattern of non-binaristic and non-hegemonic relationality. According to Meyendorff, in the Eucharist the dilemmas of nature and grace and of the divine as opposed to the human are overcome since the Eucharist itself is a synergy or a non-coercive and non-absorptive divine-human communion.[[30]](#footnote-30) The incarnation enables and inaugurates the eucharistic liturgy in which the created, the earthly and the worldly, enters the process of becoming transfigured toward its divinely gifted perfection by engodding and superbly enriching ascent through the agency of the Holy Spirit rather than by miraculously swift “upgrade” by annihilation of the irreconcilable and inferior alterity of the earthly sacramental elements.

The sacramental analogy between the incarnation and Eucharist as corresponding patterns of relation was acutely noticed by Martin Luther. So, in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Luther proposes that

… what is true in regard to Christ is also true in regard to the sacrament. In order for the divine nature to dwell in him bodily [Col.2:9], it is not necessary for the human nature to be transubstantiated and the divine nature contained under the accidents of the human nature. Both natures are simply there in their entirety… In the like manner, it is not necessary in the sacrament that the bread and wine be transubstantiated and that Christ be contained under the accidents in order that the real body and real blood may be present. But both remain there at the same time, and it is truly said, ‘This bread is my body; this wine is my blood’, and vice versa.[[31]](#footnote-31)

To sum up, in sacrament one reality indwells another while neither is forced to cease to be what it is yet both are reciprocally enriched without dualistic competition. The rationale of binarity is undermined in hypostatic union as well as in sacrament by the mystery of the greatest possible differences becoming uniquely and intimately interlaced while preserving the integrity of both the strongest and the weakest partner of this *admirabile commercium* across the greatest range of asymmetry ever thinkable. Sacrament, in this sense, is an eschatological configuration of ethical relationality as peace, or at least reconciliation. Of these truly amazing things indeed there is only an eschatology so mysteriously at work in the present dispensation that it can almost be confused with invisibility and inaction…

Sacraments round up the interlaced lineup of mysteries that I earlier called the ethical trajectory of relationality. All these mysteries of relationality are permeated by a particular quiddity of relation that is both sacramental and ethical. Now a configuration of relationality, divine or human, is ethical precisely because of its infinitely complex consonance with the sacramental which, in turn, itself stands in relation of a resonant consonance with the Trinity and the incarnation. Theologically speaking, the sacramental prefigures the ethical and the ethical safeguards the sacramental if both are viewed as a parallax. Namely, the same relationality can appear as sacramental without ceasing to be ethical and vice versa depending on the parallactic viewpoints. But perhaps this line of thought can be put much better, much more flexibly at least, in aural rather than visual terms. So theologically, a particular configuration relationality is neither sacramental nor ethical if one of the these two indispensable melodic lines in this synergistic or fugal relation is not heard, no matter how dissonant often their harmony may be in the decidedly unfinished “symphony of salvation.” But without doubt, as fugue is never a mere unison, sacramentality and ethics also remain mutually irreducible. Their reciprocity is asymmetrical insofar as faith and liturgy as performances of sacramental relationality cannot be seamlessly reduced to a particular configuration of human relations even when this configuration is ethical, i.e., consonant with that particular quiddity of relationship that permeates the greatest mysteries of the Christian ethical trajectory – the Trinity, the incarnation, *theosis*, and sacraments. What the fugal, and more statically also the parallax, view of sacramentality as ethical alludes to is that sacramentality as God’s preferred interface of relationality with creation is always dually vectored. As I already noted in Part I, Ch.1, this is most acutely affirmed in Martin Buber’s and Emmanuel Levinas’ explicit insistence on the inerasable similitude between the quiddity of the human relation to God and other human lives. So the dually vectored relationality – sacramentality – encompasses the whole of created life and the division and separation between the supposed “real relation to God” in a “sacramental” or “liturgical” way and an allegedly “unreal relation of the I-It attitude toward the world”[[32]](#footnote-32) can only be an idolatrous fabrication. Of course, the Eucharist as both the relational locus and the fruit of the incarnation and the whole economy of salvation, as I will elaborate in the final chapter of this project, can be interpreted as no less explicit insistence on the same relational similitude, even if the glaring explicitness has managed to remain implicit for way to long. What that means is that ethics now seen here as the “right relation” among individual human persons and whole cultural and political collectivities, and liturgy as the “right relation” of sacramentality in action, are eucharistically scored as intrinsically concurrent, non-competitive, non-hegemonic, asymmetrically reciprocal – on other words, contrapuntal. But pondering over this question also means engaging in another, very specific, conversation with Alexander Schmemann and Emmanuel Levinas. Before that can happen, some contrapuntal modulations of the notions of synergy and sacrament, as proposed here so far, seem to be in place.

1. **From Synergy to Sacrament: Toward a Sacramental Counterpoint**

What does counterpoint have to do with the sacraments? Most pertinently, I submit, counterpoint provides a further specification of synergy as the ethical “how” of both *theosis* and sacraments as relational mysteries. Perhaps, it also clarifies by nuancing, to a certain extent, the working ecology of sacramentality as a relational interface. Now counterpoint, as I conjured it from the thought of Edward Said in conversation with Theodor Adorno in the previous chapter, is a sounding and an explicitly vivacious image of complex cohabitation, especially as far as the quiddity or the ethical make-up of reciprocal and interactive relations are concerned. The resonance between counterpoint, synergy, and sacraments first of all abides, I submit, in the shared particular quiddity of relation they all facilitate. It is the relation of an asymmetrical, free, often divergent, inconsistent, yet not always necessarily disagreeable, reciprocity without obliteration of integral difference in the synergistic relationality of God and the world. Contrapuntal harmony is, then, a synergy in sound or the very sounding effort toward that harmony, equally shaped by both interdependence and independence. To reiterate, counterpoint is the process of several voices sounding concurrently, conjunctively and reciprocally without detraction from any participant of relational events and realities. Counterpoint also, to remember the old musings of Jean-Philippe Rameau, is the musical imaginary of a multi-voiced plenitude wherein beauties mutually enhance one another rather than competitively detract from one another to achieve their autonomous apogee. Counterpoint really “works” when not only the contrapuntal subject that is expressed in a maximally rich way but precisely when the countersubjects approach the complexity of the subject as closely as possible. Thus Rameau contends that,

…although we ordinarily start with one part, which we try to infuse with all the melodic beauty we can imagine (called the ‘subject’), if the other parts are proportionately robbed of beauty, then this diminishes the beauty of the subject… the melodies of two or three parts should be almost equal…[[33]](#footnote-33)

Now it would be tempting to move from beauty to theology at once, but there is more to be said about counterpoint as a most apt and fruitful figure of the ecology of sacramental relationality. It is after all music, “the most magical/enchanting of all arts,” which also “learns to break the magic which it itself lays upon all its representations”[[34]](#footnote-34) as Adorno observes in his reflections on Richard Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde.* Thus, the musical imaginary of counterpoint accomodates what Said called “irreconcilabilities.” Counterpoint may be so scored as to result in patently dissonant harmonies yet still remaining counterpoint while it accommodates the “nonharmonious and nonserene tensions.” More about that later. Most importantly, however, counterpoint as a postcolonially shaped imaginary is about the problematization of reified boundaries and nonrelational identities. Particularly, as I already noted in the previous chapter, counterpoint as exposed by Said is an aesthetically configured representation of hybridity reflecting the contradictory realities of migrancy, exile, displacement, and diaspora. Said’s imaginary of counterpoint admits moments of incommensurability. In this sense it is a musically inspired elaboration of hybridity precisely as a problematization and reconnecting of boundaries without erasure or dissolution. Hybridity mocks the desire for transparent gridlocks of purity to be conjured up for thoughts, bodies, actions, moralities and politics. Furthermore, postcolonial counterpoint as a specification of hybridity, following Said, is an imaginary of reciprocal and interactive relationality, equal or unequal, allowing both – irreconcilabilities as well as “concert and order.” Above all, it envisages an irrevocable connection and never submersive synthesis.

Turning from music and postcolonial theory to some more explicit sacramental theology, the understanding of sacrament could be envisaged as a pattern of relationality that is curiously akin to contrapuntal hybridity. What takes place in the eucharistic liturgy, by grace and in the power of the Holy Spirit, is that the body and blood of Christ emerges as really present in contrapuntal consonance with bread and wine also being there truly, sustainably, and effectively as Christ himself is when the human convocations of discipleship become the Body of Christ in communion with Christ and one another in Christ. In sacrament a certain relational hybridity obtains and it obtains contrapuntally: the boundaries endure but remain porous; the boundaries do not disappear but are “problematized” through cross-pollinations, echoes, analogies, resonances, dissonances, and even harmonies; agencies and powers are incommensurate yet always affiliated and reciprocal; difference is not totally privileged even though it could be; identity and difference cohabit “in an apparently impossible simultaneity;”[[35]](#footnote-35) harmony is not unison; harmony among differences is not fixed irreversibly but is being worked out ever anew as they play off one another within impressively asymmetrical grids of power and love. To sum up, the relationship between the created and the uncreated in the Eucharist is synergistic or contrapuntal in the sense that their cohabitation and their performative efficacy for the human participants – grace, sanctification, salvation, deification, healing union with Christ and in Christ with other human persons – is constantly being worked out as two interpenetrating realities together signify and cause the passage toward union of God and humanity. Through sacraments the prototypical mysteries of ethical relationality – the Trinity and the incarnation – indwell the historical materiality of human life. These mysteries indwell human histories in a rather messy way: through entanglement, opaque transparencies, fluid interactions, asymmetrical give-and-takes, and very uncomfortable wholeness of hybridity as it so often adds an “and” to the closures of thought, imagination and practice. Thus the whole enterprise of sacramental theology, or, even better yet, of theology being practiced sacramentally, turns out to be a discourse of “impurity and pollution” before it adheres to any other methodology. Certainly, this perception of sacramental theology will not be universally consoling for hybridity, after all, is the acknowledgment of palimpsestic congruity and incongruity within signs and their recipients and creators.

Sacraments are the climaxing instantiations of sacramentality as the ethically configured interface of divine-human relationality amidst the existential actualities of so pervasively distorted relationships in the world. Considering ethics as a theological locus, the Eucharist then is the crucial constellation of right and just relationality in the broadest way. To make my argument explicit, it is time to finally say that the sacrament of Eucharist, in precisely this synergistic and contrapuntal sense, is the methodological and substantial proto-envisagement of an interface of an ethical relationality among the triune God and the created life[[36]](#footnote-36) at full stretch, without coercion, hegemony, and exclusionary competitiveness among persons, powers, and agencies. By performative analogy, the Eucharist can body forth into fruition within interpersonal relations among the crossings and couplings of routine human cohabitation. Further, by a similar performative analogy, such a right relationality can and indeed ought to body forth in the arena of disciplinary turf wars within theology and other discourses of religion, all fabricated after the image and likeness of the Western idol of either/or rationalist dualism. At this point it is crucial to emphasize again that Alexander Schmemann’s lamentations about the habitual disciplinary divorces among various segments of theology as a particularly nasty symptom of Western binarism (see Part II, Ch. 1) are particularly resonant with resistant voices from the Two-Thirds World or marginally Occidental theologians despite all the differences that these critiques involve. In the case of these non-Occidental, marginally Occidental or hybrid theological sensibilities, the most dire consequence of the habit of disciplinary divorce is not so much expressed in sacramental terms as in ethical terms. Namely, the primary concerns of various liberation and postcolonial theologies are the issues of orthopraxis rather than doctrinal and disciplinary orthodoxy. The *ortho*-component of any theological discourse is ethical insofar as it is clear that any theological endeavor, intellectual, social, political, artistic, or economical, is always embedded in an inescapably politicized historical materiality and in the response of theology to the exigencies of life. So the *ortho*-component of the sacramental discourses resides in the explicitly contextualized sacramental ethics rather than disciplinary purity or observable and demonstrable adherence to the (Occidental) normative traditions, methods, and styles in theology. If the orthodoxy of any theological discipline is not socio-culturally transformative, or at least, if it does not hold itself accountable to the good news of salvation for all humanity at its fullest stretch before God, then it forfeits its truth. The theological, thus, is the ethical as in the pertinent insistence of Adorno on attention to human suffering as the condition of all truth.

Here another important connection has to be highlighted. As I already noted in Part I the concern about the quiddity of relation pertains equally acutely to both postcolonial discourse as well as feminist discourse. The hegemonic unilateralism of colonial power and the habitual masculine monopoly in patterns and practices of religious knowing are being challenged in these discourses precisely as “wrong” – unjust, violent, humiliating – kind of relationality. What I called the quiddity of relationality is one of the most fundamental and enduring dimensions of feminist thought. Particularly, the issue of reciprocity of power and agency should be mentioned as the pivotal ingredients of human relationality. As Beverly Wildung Harrison already and clearly observed some decades ago from within the Christian context,

for feminists, the core dynamic of evil is located in the uses and abuses of power we share with God. Power that is not reciprocal is *always* violent power, abusive power. It destroys our capacity for, and cuts us off from, embodied, sensuous relationships with one another. [[37]](#footnote-37)

The concern for the quiddity of how-ness of relation is crucial to feminist sacramental theology as well. Moreover, as Susan Ross argues, the emphasis on relationality as connectivity and integrity is precisely what links feminist discourse and sacramental theology, or at least it should, if sacramental theology could be taken beyond its distorting (co-)inscription within the Occidental dualist worldview.[[38]](#footnote-38) The enduring disavowal of women in the sacramental and liturgical practices, especially in those “high sacramental” Christian traditions which continue to exclude women from ordained ministry or priesthood, most definitely jeopardizes[[39]](#footnote-39) the credibility of the very idea of Eucharistic justice let alone the fruitfulness of the whole sacramental discourse as a theological avenue of ethical deliberation and orthopraxis. With these concerns in mind, feminist liturgical theology in Janet Walton’s view, privileges “connections between everyday human experience and the presence of God” and explicitly “connect[s] worship of God with justice.”[[40]](#footnote-40) Feminist liturgical and sacramental ethos insists on the practice of shared power since it “require[s] participation that is reciprocal, accountable, and relational.”[[41]](#footnote-41) Feminist critiques of the pervasive dualism of predominantly malestream Western liturgical and sacramental theologies underwrite the need for a comprehensive interrogation of the doctrinal, ontological, and epistemological presuppositions of sacramental and liturgical discourses that often go unnoticed despite the most inspiring liturgical creativity. In response to such need, many “women-identified liturgical way[s] of doing theology” are emerging to advance “theology not dependent on binarist constructions of the ordinary and the sacred but one able to claim sacred space in all of life, especially in the ordinary of women’s lives so often subject to trivialization and marginalization.”[[42]](#footnote-42) It is fairly obvious that the concerns of this project resonate with these major preoccupations and thrusts in feminist discourse even though they do not exhaust the critical and constructive trajectory of the project. What these feminist critical preoccupations accomplish – synergistically with postcolonial critiques – is the addition of yet another facet of depth to the multivocal diasporic imaginary of constructive sacramental theology as a method of theological inquiry aspiring to be seriously loyal to the “radical implications of the Incarnation.”[[43]](#footnote-43)

1. **The Slow Victory: Sacramentality in Counterpoint**

Now *theosis* is not a matter of predestination of a colonial sort with the associated arrogant invincibility of superiority and patronizing condescension. Neither is synergy a matter of some clandestine *die* *List der Vernunft* which is bound to find actualization at all costs. The subjectivities and agencies pertaining to human life in all its existential engagements particularly with other human beings are part of a fallen dispensation. This world is palpably unredeemed and to claim otherwise would merit at least the infamy of bad faith. In addition, as the Orthodox and certain other Christian traditions maintain with particular attentiveness, there exists what Karl Rahner called the inextricable ambivalence necessitated by human freedom regarding salvation and the protestations against it.[[44]](#footnote-44) Even though human persons are invited to the peregrination of *theosis* through the slow and gradual synergy, invitation is not predestination. Consequently, human persons are “given the *opportunity* *to grow* into full fellowship with God”[[45]](#footnote-45) without coercion to do so. Indeed, as Vladimir Lossky puts it, “union with God is not the result of an organic or unconscious process: it is accomplished in persons by the co-operation of the Holy Spirit and our freedom.”[[46]](#footnote-46) If there is any triumph in the victorious fulfillment of *theosis*, it is (will be) only eschatological. According to Alexander Schmemann, there are only the “slow transformation” and “slow victory”[[47]](#footnote-47) under the auspices of *theosis* – and not, I must emphasize, an always steadily ascending victory.

It is at this juncture that the figure of counterpoint again offers a fruitful avenue for fine-tuning the theme of synergy. First of all, synergy as a non-detractive cooperation of the divine with the human toward the salvation of the world is like a contrapuntal consonance to be striven for yet not always and not automatically accomplished. Neither the whole imaginary of *theosis* nor the notion of synergy presupposes an automatic dismissal of mutual antagonism among the divine and human co-workers. The economy of incarnation enables both the possibility of an ascetically shaped emergence of consonance as well as the emergence of dissonance with the odds being equal for both itineraries of relationship. Synergy privileges neither an *a priori* militant antagonism nor an *a priori* seamless intertwining. Difference is affirmed in a relationally collaborative way and not fetishized under the mutually allergic figures of non-incarnational sovereignty of God’s aseity or the post-lapsarian state of absolute human depravity. As a non-binaristic imaginary of “both/and” rather than “either/or” synergy is hostage to neither “always” nor “never.” As noted before, counterpoint is a sounding image of effort toward reconciliatory union amidst the differences of contrapuntal subjects. Counterpoint can here be seen as the “how” of synergy on this side of the beatific vision. Synergy is the “how” of the incarnationally inaugurated divine-human relationality of *theosis* through which God and human persons interact contrapuntally through their respective prevenient and responsive efforts toward the fulfillment of *opus Dei* – salvation. Certainly, contrapuntal synergy allows for, in Edward Said’s words, the locations and occasions of sounding like “atonal ensemble.” In fact, synergy is more often than not an effortful sounding together of different themes in an occasionally harmonious but most often disharmonious counterpoint. Within the counterpoint of synergy, harmony, or the “concert and order,” is not fate. Rather, it is more akin to the most profound and an extraordinarily multi-faceted trajectory of desire on its infinite stretch toward an ever more perfect participation in the divine life. On the other hand, taking the cue from Said’s idea of counterpoint more than from Adorno’s, the notion of synergy fits into a pattern of epistemological imagination steeped in a certain generosity towards the goodness of divine and human agencies in their mutual, incarnationally intimate, entanglement rather than agonizing and unlivable tension as the point of departure for the theo-logic of Christian lifeworld. Dissonance is not the universal and preemptive condition for truth and for reassurance of unviolated human integrity from the perspective of synergy. Musically speaking, the reservations about dissonant counterpoint as escalating into *bellum contrapuncticum omnium contra omnes* in its drive to resist the trespass into fusion, are addressed by synergy’s preferential focus on the “synthetic” polyphonic elaboration of coexistence toward non-reductive harmony. Impossible to say in the same breath, it is nevertheless crucial to say this does not mean that the “analytic” movement of accentuating the conflicting particularities is dismissed. In this regard, sonorously envisioned ecology of contrapuntal synergy comes across as an interface also akin to hybridity in its disagreeable aspects. Hybridity, as Ien Ang had so suggestively put it, “can never be a question of simple shaking hands, of happy, harmonious merger and fusion. Hybridity is not the solution, but alerts us to the difficulty of living with differences, their ultimately irreducible resistance to complete dissolution.”[[48]](#footnote-48)

A theologically appropriated hybridity here suggests a relation in which identities and boundaries do not disappear yet are worked into a laborious stretch of overlapping and intertwining in search of a curative and then also a thriving consonance – without being absorbed in hegemonic monophony of the strongest. In the present dispensation, “irreconcilabilities” remain even as they are sounded together in counterpoint. The fruits of such laborious stretch again frustrate the desire for purity and offer instead the same copious entanglements as sacraments do: identities are unsettled but not dissolved; the motion of transformation proceeds by unceasing *crescendo/diminuendo* without the jerky extremism of controlling *fff* vis-à-vis a totally depleted *ppp*. As far as non-reductive and non-coercive reconciliation of disparate and even antagonistic subjectivities and agencies is concerned, I submit that it is the theological orientation of “apophatic attitude” that may here allow a relatively temperate preference for the Saidian contrapuntal harmony of togetherness in difference rather than the Adornian crescendo of oppositional individuation. With an apophatic reserve it can be said that a total fusion – or a superciliously fabricated oneness of essence between God and created human life or of bread and wine and Christ’s body and blood in the Eucharist – can only be an idol, sinister and ruthless at that, but still only an idol both theologically and anthropologically. But the economy of creation and redemption is a roomy economy – similarly as the triune God is a “roomy God” as Robert Jenson amusingly suggests.[[49]](#footnote-49) There is enough space for illimitable progression in reconciliatory similitude of salvific *theosis* that neither detracts from God being divine nor from human person being human. To paraphrase slightly the famous line by AiméCésaire from his *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal,[[50]](#footnote-50)* there is a non-competitive space for all not only in “the *rendezvous* of victory” – salvation of the world, in this case – but also in the contrapuntal peregrinations toward it within the imaginary of synergy. As contrapuntal, the notion of divine-human synergy entails neither a necessary harmony nor necessary dissonance. The contrapuntal harmony emerges out of interdependence and the divinizing synergistic entanglement does not aspire to embody a binaristic and exclusionary – and thus reductive and hegemonic – reconciliation and communion. The imaginary of synergy in the overall broader context of non-coercive and non-hegemonic *theosis* resonates with concerns crystallized in Achille Mbembe’s postcolonial reflections about the situations of powerlessness being the situations of violence *par excellence*.[[51]](#footnote-51) When the redemptive *opus Dei* requires the passivity of absolute powerlessness on the part of the human agency to appropriately receive the imputed grace, the “situation of violence *par excellence*” most often obtains. When human agency is unidirectionally solidified as “the works” to somehow “earn” salvation, the fundamental and necessary attentiveness to the *ex nihilo* grounding of all primary relationality and causality between the uncreated and created is exaggerated, in many influential modern Western theological views, far beyond the fruitfulness and modesty of a healthy apophatic reserve on its guard against idolatry. The theological undermining of the integrity of human persons by allocating their agency to the role of absolutely passive receptacle of the “civilizing (divinizing?!) mission” of supposedly benevolent divine grace has been sufficiently disastrous, as the feminist and postcolonial critiques have shown over the past several decades. The unholy colonial synergies of the “crown and cross” as well as the slow-burning violence of theologically inspired and proliferated sexism on the top of the various colonial configurations of power(lessness) are challenged by the imaginary of *theosis* and synergy as precisely counterpointing the imagination of hegemonic unilateralism theologically – and then perhaps also politically, aesthetically and socially as well. The sinister synergy of Christ and conquest – metaphysically, politically, economically, culturally, socially – is challenged by the synergy of redemptive *theosis* and its preference for unviolated mutuality of responsive cooperation and empowerment. In short, if the goodness and integrity of the variously gendered and cultured human subjectivity and agency is a worthy concern in relation to God, then the imaginary of synergy offers an avenue for a truly ethical divine-human relationality of reciprocity in the process of an unreservedly and rigorously contrapuntal transfiguration toward salvation.

To conclude: as I have espoused it, sacramentally configured relationality is the relationality of a sound incarnational theology. It is most fruitfully conceived, I submit, under the figurality of laborious contrapuntal togetherness-in-difference and thus of privileging the unassimilable and often indeed dissonant consonance of “both” or “many” over the mastery, simplification, and transparency of “either/or.” So on the one hand, within the horizon of eschatological substantivity of synergistic *theosis*, the Eucharist is a prefiguration of the salvific “*rendezvous* of victory,” ravishingly expressed by Sergius Bulgakov:

This transfiguration of creation … is accomplished in the Divine Eucharist mysteriously or sacramentally, that is, visibly only for the eyes of faith, upon the Eucharistic matter. That which is accomplished in the sacrament will be accomplished, at the end of the time, in the whole world, which is the body of humankind. And the latter is the Body of Christ.[[52]](#footnote-52)

On the other hand, within the horizon of constructive methodological inquiry, the Eucharist conceived as an envisagement of contrapuntal relationality allows, I suggest, a reflective peregrination into sounding out the possibilities of envisioning liturgy and ethics in a sacramental counterpoint. To that itinerary of inquiry I will turn in the next – and the last – chapter of this project of thinking and peregrinating through the litany of methodological pollution from within a diasporic imaginary.

1. θεωσις has become a rather attractive object of inquiry as a half-forgotten magisterial model of soteriological reflection within the Western theological orbit as of late. Several recent studies engage the issue of deification, occasionally putting Western and Eastern traditions in conversation with their common patristic past. See Anna N. Williams, *Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), Daniel A. Keating, *Deification and Grace* (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2007), James R. Payton Jr, *Light from the Christian East: An Introduction to the Orthodox Tradition* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2007), Veli-Matii Karkkainen, *One With God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004) and *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions* (Michael J. Christiansen and Jeffrey A. Wittung, eds.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007)among others. Among the best-known Orthodox introductions to the idea of theosis remain Vladimir Lossky’s *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1976) and *In the Image and Likeness of God* (John H. Erickson and Thomas E. Bird, eds.; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974) and Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, Revised edition (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995) to mention just a few. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The language of salvation as *theosis* is not limited to this particular term alone; there is a number of terms that were used from the fourth century CE onwards to describe the deification including *theopoiesis*, see Stephen Finlan and Vladimir Kharlamov’s Introduction, *Theōsis: Deification in Christian Theology*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series (Stephen Finlan and Vladimir Kharlamov, eds.; Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications: 2006):5-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Pseudo-Dionysius, “Ecclesiastical Hierarchy,” *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works.* The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1987):1:3, 198. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See Andrew Louth, “The Place of *Theosis* in Orthodox Theology,” *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, 34-35. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. I am referring here to the well-known apophatically colored distinction between 1) God’s nature/essence, which remains unparticipable and incomprehensible even for a transfigured creation, and 2) God’s “energies,” or God *in actu,* or the operations of divine grace (or uncreated light) which encounter humanity and constitute the participatory interface of divine-human relationality. Energy here is the intrinsic, essential, and efficient activity of nature, so the distinction is serves as a tool of apophatic theological sensibility rather than as a highly organized ontological cartography of divine anatomy. Energies designate the relational revealedness of God. *Theosis* refers to the engodding participation in God’s energies, not God’s essence, yet nevertheless such the participation in the divine life is never merely figurative. This apophatic theological gesture preserves the logic of “both” – the quality of reality for human deification through Christ in the Spirit while also preserving the infinite ontological difference between the uncreated and the created. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Theodor W. Adorno, “Progress,” *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998): 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. ## I am referring to Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses*, Book IV, 14.2. I am indebted to this musical conceptualization to Ysabel de Andia’s *Homo Vivens: Incorruptibilité et divinization de l’homme selon Irénée de Lyon* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1986): 54-55. According to de Andia, for Irenaeus not only the *symphonie de salut* is placed in an explicitly eschatological context with direct reference to the multiplicity of voices in Rev. 1:15, but also signals the present incongruity and non-transparency of such vision to human reality: “L’économie comme ‘symphonie de salut’ est considérée, cette fois-ci, non plus du point de vue de l’homme, mais du point de vue de Dieu,” *ibid*.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The emphasis on the non-coercive divine action in self-disclosure of revelation and redemption is an especially important theme in major patristic sources such as, for example, John Damascene’s *De Fide Orthodoxa*, and Gregory Nazianzen’s, *Theological Orations,* Gregory of Nyssa’s, *Cathechetical Orations*, among others. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. John Breck, “Divine Initiative: Salvation in Orthodox Theology,” *Salvation in Christ: A Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue* (John Meyendorff and Robert Tobias, eds.; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1992):112. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 198, 199. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 139. The emphasis in Meyendorff’s text falls on Byzantine theology even though I would argue that “no opposition” is definitely not limited to it alone. Meyendorff’s choice of word “assimilation” is probably not the most fortunate yet it by no means suggests a trespassing of the essence/energies distinction in deification or human integrity – mercifully for all parties involved. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Louth, “The Place of *Theosis* in Orthodox Theology,” *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology 1: The Triune God* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): 214. Jenson draws on Gregory of Nyssa trinitarian thought to suggest that God is “a triunely personal perichoresis” and “not a something, however rarefied or immaterial, but a *going-on*, a sequentially palpable event, like a kiss or a train wreck,” *ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 207. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Meyendorff carefully notes with respect to the ever-lingering shadows of Pelagianism that “it is not through his own activity or ‘energy’ that man can be deified – this would be Pelagianism – but by divine ‘energy’, to which his human activity is ‘obedient’; between the two there is a ‘synergy’, of which the relation of the two energies in Christ is the ontological basis,” *ibid*, 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Kallistos Ware, “God Immanent Yet Transcendent: The Divine Energies According to Saint Gregory Palamas,” *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God’s Presence in a Scientific World* (Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke, eds.; Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2004): 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. I am referring to John Oxenham’s hymn “In Christ There Is No East or West.” [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. I am using here Eugene F. Rogers’ term from his delightful study of the relations between grace and nature in Thomas Aquinas, “Faith and Reason Follow Glory,” *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow, eds.; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005):443-444. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. I am echoing Nikolai Berdyaev’s way of conceptualizing the operations of divine grace within the synergistic framework of *theosis* with his evocative linguistic allusions – at least in the Russian original text – regarding the non-violent/ non-violating/non-raping conception of the nature of grace vis-à-vis creaturely freedom, see Н. Бердяев, *О назначении человека* (Мocквa: Республика, 1993). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Theodor W. Adorno, “On Subject and Object,” *Critical Models*, 247. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Alphonso Lingis, trans.; Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2002): 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Leo the Great, Sermon 74, “On the Lord’s Ascension.” Note that here I use the loosely translated text of *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*: *Series II*, vol. 12, ed. Philip Schaff, available at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/360374.htm>. Accessed February 12, 2009. Literally, Christ’s incarnated and visible presence has after Ascension “transitioned into the sacraments” (*Quod itaque redemptoris nostri conspicuum fuit*, *in sacramenta transivit*). Leo’s sermon joins the post-ascension sacramental presence of Christ with faith by repositioning the focus from “sight” to “faith,” which in this situation expresses the mutually interdependent activities of Christ in sacraments and faith as the gift of the Holy Spirit, enabling human persons to discern and relate to Christ across the interface of sacramentality. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Here I take my cue from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol.56 (David Bourke, trans.; Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006): III, q. 62, a. 5, *corpus*, p.66-67, where the linkage between the incarnation and sacraments is expressed: “Principalis autem causa efficiens gratiae est ipse Deus, ad quem comparatur humanitas Christi sicut instrumentum conjunctum, sacramentum autem sicut instrumentum separatum. Et ideo oportet quod virtus salutifera derivetur a divinitate Christi per ejus humanitatem in ipsa sacramenta.” [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Karl Rahner succinctly points out a sort of an incarnational imperative for the sacramental configuration of Christian lifeworld since the sacraments are not “mere supplementary statements expressing a reality which exists and comes to the fullness of its being just as well without such expressions. Grace is the incarnational grace of Christ, which by its nature aims at being flesh and history,” *Meditations on the Sacraments* (New York: Seabury Press, 1977): xvii. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999): 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Yngve Brilioth, *Eucharistic Faith and Practice:* *Evangelical and Catholic* (A.G. Herbert, trans.; London: SPCK, 1965): 274,1. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. *Ibid*., 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 207. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Martin Luther, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” *Luther’s Works 36*, Word and Sacrament II, (Helmut T. Lehmann, ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959): 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Martin Buber, *Ich und Du* (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1977). “Man kan sein Leben nicht zwischen eine wirkliche Beziehung zur Gott und ein unwirkliches Ich-Es-Verhältnis zur Welt aufteilen, – zur Gott wahrhaft beten und die Welt benützen. Wer die Welt als das zu Benützende kennt, kennt auch Gott nicht anders,“ 127. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Traité de l’harmonie réduite à ses principes naturels*, quoted from Peter Schubert and Christoph Neidhöfer, *Baroque Counterpoint* (Upper Saddle River, NJ : Pearson, Prentice Hall, 2005): 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Theodor W. Adorno, “Versuch über Wagner,“ *Adorno*: *Gesammelte Schriften 13: Die musikalische Monographien* (Rof Tiedemann, ed., Frankfurt a.M: Suhrkamp, 1997):145. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire* (London: Routledge, 1995): 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Here I gratefully acknowledge my early indebtedness particularly to the thought of Vasily Zenkovsky, see B.Зеньковский, *Основы христианской философии* (Москва: Издательство Свято-Владимирского Братства, 1992). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Beverly Wildung Harrison, “Restoring the Tapestry of Life: The Vocation of Feminist Theology,” *Justice in the Making: Feminist Social Ethics* (Elizabeth M. Bounds et al, eds.: Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004): 108. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Susan A. Ross, “Women, Body, and Sacraments: Toward and Renewed Sacramental Theology,” *Miriam’s Song II Patriarchy: A Feminist Critique* (West Hyattsville: Priests for Equality, n.d.): 19-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Siobhan Garrigan rightly notes that the liberation and feminist theologies have often recognized that “the doctrinal category ‘sacrament’ as it is presently constructed is actually incompatible with the doctrinal desire that it serve an ethic of justice,” *Beyond Ritual: Sacramental Theology after Habermas* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004): 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Janet R. Walton, *Feminist Liturgy: A Matter of Justice* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000): 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. *Ibid*., 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Teresa Berger, “Postscript,” *Dissident Daughters: Feminist Liturgies in Global Context* (Teresa Berger, ed.; Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001): 228. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Ross, “Women, Body, and Sacraments: Toward and Renewed Sacramental Theology,” 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Rahner, *Meditations on the Sacraments*, xv. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 216. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Alexander Schmemann, “The Missionary Imperative,” *Church, World, Mission: Reflections on Orthodoxy in the West* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1979): 213. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Ien Ang, “Together-In-Difference: Beyond Diaspora, Into Hybridity,” *Asian Studies Review*, 27:2 (2003):149-150. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Jenson, *Systematic Theology 1: The Triune God*, 226. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. I am referring to AiméCésaire’s words “and no race possesses the monopoly of beauty, of intelligence, of force, and there is a place for all in the *rendezvous* of victory” as quoted in Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1994): 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Achille Mbembe, “Provisional Notes on the Postcolony,” *Africa* 62:1 (1992): 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Sergius Bulgakov, “The Eucharistic Dogma,” *The Holy Grail and the Eucharist* (Boris Jakim, ed., New York: Lindisfarne Books, 1997):137-138. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)