

This is a treatise of the communion of saints, which continues to suffer doctrinal authenticity as an Article of Faith of the Apostles Creed. The book reveals it is a profound expression of the sacramental truth of the Eucharist, which is the portal of Christian Humanism characterized by human dignity, unity, justice and the common good.

The Doctrine of COMMUNION OF SAINTS: Sacramental Paradigm of Christian Humanism

By Nithyananda Augustus Nathan

Order the book from the publisher BookLocker.com

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/10792.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**

SACRAMENTAL PARADIGM OF
CHRISTIAN HUMANISM

The Doctrine of

COMMUNION
OF
SAINTS

HUMAN DIGNITY
HUMAN EQUALITY / COMMON GOOD

NITHYANANDA AUGUSTUS NATHAN

Copyright © 2021 Nithyananda Augustus Nathan

ISBN: 978-1-63263-738-3

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

Printed on acid-free paper.

Booklocker.com, Inc.

Second Edition, 2020, 2021

CONTENTS

PREFACE	vii
ABBREVIATIONS	xi
INTRODUCTION	1
PART I - UNDERSTANDING THE COMMUNION	15
Chapter 1 - Origin and Development	17
Chapter 2 - Communion of Saints	51
Chapter 3 - Divine Love	75
Chapter 4 - The Trinity	99
Chapter 5 - Social Commission of the Apostles' Creed	155
PART II - SACRAMENTS OF CHRISTIAN HUMANISM	239
Chapter 6 - Sacramentality of Christian Personhood	241
Chapter 7 - Baptism and Human Dignity	301
Chapter 8 - Eucharist and Social Unity	379
Chapter 9 - Church and The Common Good	449
Chapter 10 - Conclusion	569
BIBLIOGRAPHY	575
SELECTIVE NAMES INDEX	639

PART I

UNDERSTANDING THE COMMUNION

Chapter 1

Origin and Development

The history of *communion of saints* of the Apostles' Creed can be traced to the Third Article of Jerome's Symbol, *Sanctorum communionem* (Latin), which was formulated by Jerome in the desert of Chalice, southeast of Antioch (377/378 AD):

*Credo remissionem peccatorum
in sancta ecclesia catholica;
Sanctorum communionem;
Carnis resurrectionem
ad vitam aeternam.*¹

The composite meaning of *sanctorum communionem*, which constitutes the *sancta* and the *communio* can firstly be determined from Jerome's own use of the expression *sanctorum communionem* in his *Epistulae* 92.3 where he referred to the disciplinary measure of the “*Separari a communio sanctorum*” issued by Bishop Theophilus of Alexandria in the year 401 against Bishop Isidore, a former presbyter.² It called for separation or suspension of Isidore from the priestly celebration of the Eucharist.³

This sacramental understanding is corroborated by the *Imperial Script* of 388 AD – an “*inhiberi a communio sanctorum*”

¹ Badcock, *History of the Creeds*, 76.

² *MPL*, v.22, 326; *CSL*, 54-56.

³ Badcock, *History of the Creeds*, 93.

(inhibition of holy communion) – against Apollinarians and other heretics that made it illegal for them to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist or reception of the Holy Communion.⁴ The *Acts of the Council of Nimes* (394 AD) is further indicative of its sacramental meaning where it alerts believers of the “simulated” practices of false ecclesiastics who gave the impression that they were authentic in their participation in *communio sanctorum*, i.e., the Eucharist.

For the Latin Fathers and now Saints, such as Cyprian (c.200-258 AD), Cyril of Jerusalem (c.315-386 AD), Jerome (c.342-420 AD), and Niceta (c.335-c.414 AD), the *communio* was a genitive combination to a thing that gave rise to the fellowship of the Church in the metaphorical sense. The fellowship was caused by the common participation in the sacraments. Exclusion from the Church, therefore, meant exclusion from the Eucharist. In this regard, the contribution of the German Protestant theologian Ferdinand Kattenbusch, credited by Pope Benedict XVI for the historicity of the Apostles’ Creed, is especially helpful.⁵ Based on the canons of the *Synod of Elvira* (306 AD) Kattenbusch clarified that *communio* referred to a relationship that should be restricted to the Eucharist.

⁴ Benko, *Meaning of Sanctorum Communio*, 94-95.

⁵ Kattenbusch’s *Des apostolische Symbol* (1894) traces the origin of the Apostolic Creed and is recognized for its contribution to the history of dogma and the theology of the Church (Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, trans. J.R. Foster, *Introduction to Christianity*, San Francisco: Communion Books, 2004), 202.

The Latin equivalent is also synonymous with the Eucharistic *koinonia* of Paul (1Cor 10-17) where the *communio* is identifiable only in the sense of *communio corporis et sanguinis Christi* (communion of the body and blood of Christ) in such expressions as *dominica communio* (the gathering of the community on a Sunday); *communione dare* (to give communion presumably to give the sacred species to someone); *ad communionem admittere* (to join a community or to allow a person to receive the sacred species); *communione impertire* (to share communion with another person and/or to give communion to another person; *communione praestare* (to remain in communion with or to maintain a community) and *a communione arcere* (which means to reject from the community the reception of the sacred species as imposed by the Council of Arles).⁶

From a credal approach, the meaning and significance of *sanctorum communionem* becomes clearer when it is compared in the structural context and location with other creeds (Table 1). In the East, suffice to mention, Baptism has always been inclusive of the Eucharist from the beginning. It is the finalization of the baptismal.⁷

⁶ Benko, *Meaning of Sanctorum Communio*, 87.

⁷ Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 427, 722.

Understanding the Communion

Table 1: Correlation of *one baptism and communion of saints* in Christian Creeds (300 AD to current).

Eastern Creeds			Latin Creeds					
Apostolic Constitutions ^a	Epphannus ^b	Nestorian Creed ^c	Nicea - Constantinopolitan Creed ^d	Niceta's Creed ^e	Jerome's Symbol ^f	Spanish Confession ^g	Gallician Creed ^h	Apostles' Creed ⁱ
312 AD Syria	374 AD Palestine	Before 381AD Syria	364AD Constantinople	335-414 AD Rimini	342-420 AD Chalced	380 AD	500 - 543 AD	8th Cent - Current
I am also ...	We confess...	We confess...	We confess...	We believe in...	We believe ...	We believe ...	We believe ...	I believe...
baptized in the holy spirit; resurrection of the flesh, in the remission of sins, and in the life of the age to come.	one baptism; forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the dead, and in the life of the age to come.	one baptism; forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the dead, eternal life	one baptism; forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the dead, life of the age to come.	communion sanctorum (communion of saints), forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the dead, life everlasting.	communion sanctorum, forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the flesh, life everlasting.	baptism salutare, forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the flesh, life everlasting.	communion of saints, the remission of sins, resurrection of the flesh, life eternal.	communion of saints (communio sanctorum), forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the body, life everlasting.

^aBenko, *Meaning of Sanctorum Communio*, 57-58; ^bG. Ludwig Hahn, *Bibliothek der Symbole und Glaubensregeln der alten Kirche*, (3rd ed., Breslau, 1897), 129;
^cC. P. Caspar, *Ungedruckte, unbeachtete und wenig beachtete Quellen zur Geschichte des Taufsymbols und der Glaubensregel*, vol. 1, (Christiana, 1866, 1869, 1875), 125;
^dSchaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 1, 52; ^eBadcock, *History of the Creeds*, 72; ^fBadcock 76; ^gBadcock, 90; ^hBettenson and Maunier (eds.), *Documents of the Christian Church*, 26; ⁱSchaff, 45.

The creeds of the East, viz., *Catechesis of Cyril of Jerusalem* (c.350-366 AD),⁸ the *Syrian Creed/Apostolical Constitution* (4th. century),⁹ and finally, the *Nicene Creed* (381/451 AD), which would in time replace all the local creeds as the common creed, are consistent in objectivity and design of the significance of “one Baptism.”¹⁰ It is sacramental. Sacramentally, from their fallen state as the children of God by sin, the catechumens are assured of the benefits of a second birth with a sign of resurrection and life everlasting by becoming a *new* person in Christ.¹¹ This declaration of “one Baptism” in Greek always has been the central tenet of Christianity. This faith in the sacrament corresponds with its Latin counterpart *sanctorum communionem* in the West. The Latin creeds follow a structure almost identical with the East beginning with the fourth century’s *Jerome’s Symbol*,¹² *Niceta’s Creed*,¹³ the “Baptismum Salutare” in the *Spanish Priscillian Creed* and the *Gallican Creed* (503/543).¹⁴ The *sanctorum communionem* replaces *one Baptism* in the East.

⁸ Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 184.

⁹ Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 186.

¹⁰ Anthony W. Keaty, “Nicene Creed,” in *Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, 917.

¹¹ Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 527.

¹² Badcock, *History of the Creeds*, 76; Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 388–389.

¹³ Badcock, *History of the Creeds*, 76; Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 385–388.

¹⁴ Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder (eds.), *Documents of the Christian Church* (Oxford, UK: 2011), 26.

Of crucial significance is the similarity of the *two* universal creeds of the Church, the Nicene Creed of the East, and the Apostles' Creed of the West. Importantly is the corresponding relationship in structure and objectivity right across their Articles of Faith of both these creeds. Rufinus (345-410 AD), the bishop of Aquileia in Northern Italy, in fact preferred the *Aquilien Creed* only because it was virtually identical to the *Old Roman Creed* (the predecessor of today's Apostles' Creed). Scholarship conjectures that the current Creed represents either the original text of the Roman creed or at any rate as an alternative Greek text designed for Greek-speaking catechumens.¹⁵ The final or complete edition of the current Apostles' Creed in Latin can be dated to eighth century and probably originated in France, before being universalized in Rome.¹⁶

Both the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed are used alternatively before the celebration of the Eucharist in the Catholic Mass.¹⁷ The chief difference between them is the pledge of belief in "one Baptism" (*unum Baptisma*) in the East which is substituted by *sanctorum communionem*, often translated as the *communion of saints* in the Latin West. The meaning, content, and function would

¹⁵ Rufinus, "A Commentary on the Apostles' Creed," in J.N.D. Kelly (trans.), *Ancient Christian Writers, No. 20* (New York: Newman, 1954), 12-17.

¹⁶ "Apostles' Creed," in *Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford University, 2005), 90,

¹⁷ *The Sunday Missal: The Order of Mass for Sundays* (London: Harper Collins, 2011). 12-14.

be the same for both if *sanctorum communionem* referred to the Eucharist as the Article of Faith.¹⁸

In early Christianity the Eucharist – the *sanctorum communionem* – was the final ritual of Baptism,¹⁹ that motivated Theodore of Mopsuestia (c.392 AD), the Syrian bishop and theologian most appropriately to express in his *Catechetical Homilies* as the “sacrament of all sacraments.” The process of initiation begins with the sacramental birth through Baptism, which is finalized in the Eucharist so that the eating of “the immortal food, consonant with your birth, with which you will be nourished.”²⁰ It is “the sacramental food of immortality” in the species of bread and wine, which maintains the new existence given in Baptism, Accordingly, only those who have been baptized can partake in the Eucharist.²¹

The devotion to the Eucharist as the universal sacrament had been intense since the middle of fourth century. Baptism in the East, which was inclusive of the Eucharist, found its way into the local creeds in the West as *sanctorum communionem* in such a way to highlight the inclusion of the eucharistic hegemony.²² This emphasis

¹⁸ The “Nicene Creed” and the “Apostles’ Creed” are compared. In the Catholic celebration of the Eucharist, both Creeds are used alternatively (*The Sunday Missal*, 12-13, 184-185).

¹⁹ Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 239.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 526.

²¹ *Ibid*.

²² Nathan, “The Origin and Development of the Doctrine of the Communion of Saints, pp.66-80.

on the Eucharist was heightened by the impact it had on the lives of believers. As noted by Augustine, the Eucharist was equally as essential to salvation as was Baptism, because both conferred forgiveness. In effect, no one could inherit eternal life without participating in this body and blood. At Baptism, the believer received forgiveness of prior sins, cancellation of original sin, and was incorporated in the body of Christ. He/she thereby became a member of the Church.

Augustine enlightened the profound contribution of the Eucharist following Baptism as one's duty to enjoy Christ, which would sustain and protect the believer in this body lest the baptized be severed from Christ by some sin. "They receive life from the supper of the Lord" (*Sermo 239.2,2*).²³ Thus, in the breaking of bread, which is received life is restored: "For both he that doth not take it hath no life, and he that doth take it hath life, and that indeed eternal life" (*In Joannis Evangekum Tractus 26.15*)²⁴ Augustine emphasized that it is through these sacraments that the saving work was appropriated, that is, without Baptism and participation in the Lord's Supper it was impossible for anybody to attain not only the

²³ Benko, *Meaning of Communio Sanctorum*, 51.

²⁴ St Augustine, (trans. Rev. John Gibb), *Lectures or Tractates on the Gospel According to St John, 26.5* (Book-on-line), p.248, https://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0354-0430,_Augustinus,_In_Evangelium_Joannis_Tractatus_CXXIV_%5bSchaff%5d,_EN.pdf (7/04.2021)

kingdom of God but also salvation and eternal life (*De Civitate Dei*, *xxi*, 20).²⁵ Thus:

It would seem that its primary meaning is a communication or sharing in the sacraments, understanding by that word all the sacred goods by which one obtains ‘teleiosis,’ the completion and final perfection; the most important of these goods being the Eucharist.²⁶

As rightly insisted upon by Cardinal Henri de Lubac the doctrine should be understood based on the original Greek formula derived from Asia Minor. By sanctification, a Christian becomes a new being: “When, therefore, He made us new by the remission of sins, He made us men of a different stamp...” (*The Epistle of Barnabas*, 6:11, 8:3, 11:1 16:8).²⁷ The western creeds would be inconsistent with the eastern creeds without the expression of faith in the sacrament. Critically viewed if *sanctorum communionem* was to have meant the intercessory attributes of the Saints rather than in the sacrament of Baptism inclusive of the Eucharist, the Apostles’ Creed in intent and content would have been conspicuously deficient for failing to express public confidence in the sacrament. The Creed is the human response to Jesus Christ for salvation through faith and repentance for our sins. Baptism is the crux of Christianity.

²⁵ Augustine, “City of God,” in Philip Schaff (ed.), *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (NPNF)*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 467-468.

²⁶ Henri de Lubac (trans. Richard Arandez), *The Christian Faith, An Essay on the Structure of the Apostles’ Creed* (San Francisco, USA: Ignatius, 1986), 218.

²⁷ Barnabas, “The Epistle of Barnabas,” in James A. Kleist (trans.), *Ancient Christian Writers, No..6* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1957), 37-65.

A personalized meaning of *sanctorum communionem* as *communion of saints* probably arose from the *Mystagogical Catechesis* (5.19) of Cyril of Jerusalem that the Church is the beholder and deliverer of the sacraments. Cyril's catechesis was a clear inference that the Church was God's dwelling place and that the saints or the disciples who made up the Church were a special people who had been elected with a mission of salvation for all of God's people. Cyril discussed in detail the underlying sacramental theology of the Eucharist for the newly baptized.²⁸

After this the Priest says, Holy things to holy men. Holy are the gifts presented, having received the visitation of the Holy Ghost; holy are you also, having been deemed worthy of the Holy Ghost; the holy things therefore correspond to the holy persons. Then ye say, One is Holy, One is the Lord, Jesus Christ. For One is truly holy, by nature holy; we too are holy, but not by nature, only by participation, and discipline, and prayer.²⁹

By "holy things to holy men," Cyril was alluding to the efficacy of the Eucharist that makes people holy, i.e. becoming saints. In these terms, the *communion of saints* might have been stretched to mean *communio sanctorum*, which for Augustine meant the "*communion of sacraments*" as it sanctified people and drew

²⁸ Allan Doig, *Liturgy and Architecture from the Early Church to the Middle Ages* (Ashgate, Farnham, UK), 36.

²⁹ Cyril of Jerusalem, "Mystagogical Catechesis," <http://readthefathers.org/2014/04/20/lectures-for-holy-week-the-fifth-mystagogical-catechesis-of-cyril-of-jerusalem/> (6/02/2018).

them together to form the Church (*City of God*, 10.6).³⁰ As such, the Church is a holy community of saints elected from all the people of God that is characterized in Article VIII of the Creed as “One, holy, catholic, apostolic church.” It would therefore be superfluous to interpret *sanctorum communionem* (Article IX) in any other way than as the sacrament that causes this communion.

The next significant development came from southern Gaul, which is modern-day France. Already alluded to earlier, Gaul itself derived its Christianity solely from places, which lie on the great road from Asia Minor. Between the fourth and fifth centuries, there was a strong influence from the East to south Gaul where the Greek equivalent and related phrases were firmly established. The Gallican Church owes its origins to Asia Minor and the Greek language. It is from here that a most radical diversion and interpretational history of the *communion of saints* are noted.³¹

Initially, it bore the clear-cut sense of “participation in the holy things,” i.e. the Eucharistic elements.³² Therefore the expression was used liturgically to mean the sacraments. By the close of the fifth-century this understanding underwent radical distortion to obscure the original sacramental meaning and liturgical practice of *sanctorum*

³⁰ Augustine, “The City of God,” *NPNF*, 184.

³¹ Niceta, “Niceta of Remsiana Writings,” 50.

³² Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 390.

communione.³³ It no longer meant a faith in the sacraments, but rather a faith in the intercessory powers of the Saints to intercede for the living.

In the *Eusebius Collection* of sermons, the preachers in fifth-century Gaul tried to build urban Christian communities when the influence and importance of the Roman Empire as an administrative and psychological infrastructure suffered. The result was an increasing level of Gallic self-reliance.³⁴ It was fertile ground for the development of the “cult of the saints” that would become the dominant form of religion in Christian Europe. This populous trend was largely fostered by Bishop Faustus of Reiz (c.400 - c.490) from Britain who was unfamiliar with the Greek tradition and confused *sanctorum* automatically with the heavenly Saints.³⁵ By the close of the fifth century, the sacramental character of *communio sanctorum* almost disappeared, even though Faustus himself would later redirect his attention to how the community should acquire grace. He stressed in his *Homilia 1 de Symbolo* that, “According to the truth of the heavenly promises, God, without doubt, gives forgiveness of sins in this life through Baptism and the faith of the universal Church.”³⁶ Also in his *Homilia II* as well as in *Tractatus* he clarified that the

³³ Ibid, 389-390.

³⁴ L. Bailey, “Building Early Christian Communities: sermons on local saints in the Eusebius Gallicanus collection,” in *Early Medieval Europe*, vol. 12/1, 2004, p.21.

³⁵ Benko, *Meaning of Sanctorum Communio*, 103.

³⁶ Ibid, 102.

idea of forgiveness of sins cannot be separated from Baptism and that the clause *remissio peccatorum* thus ought to be preceded by a reference to the sacraments.³⁷

A personalized interpretation of *sanctorum* can be noted for the first time in the Gallician creed of Bishop of Arles (503-544) who elevated the phrase “communion of saints” to an Article of Faith for his local creed,³⁸ without explaining what it meant. The *Pseudo-Augustinian Sermons* (c.700-c.800) demonstrates a total uncertainty prevailing at the time concerning *sanctorum communio*. In *Sermo 240.1* the doctrine referred to “the gifts of the Holy Spirit.” Thus,

The *communio of saints*: the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given in different ways to different people, nevertheless in eternity such gifts shall be common to all in their entirety and as a result whatever aspect of the (gifts of the Holy Spirit) an individual may have (in this life), and the (in eternity) one will possess every grace.³⁹

In *Sermo 241*, we are returned to the eastern meaning of the Gallician Church, which collates faith and sacraments: “And so because one believes in the holy catholic Church, there is also the *communio of saints* because where there is faith there is also the community of the blessed.”⁴⁰ Because the sacrament of Baptism

³⁷ Ibid, 103.

³⁸ Bettenson and Maunder, *Documents of the Church*, 27.

³⁹ Benko, *Meaning of Sanctorum Communio*, 104. (Emphasis is added)

⁴⁰ Badcock, *Early Christian Creeds*, 265-266. (Emphasis is added)

includes in its meaning the belief that God has himself given to us the promise of the resurrection of the body and the remission of sins, it is appropriate that this community believed in this new life in Christ.⁴¹

In *Sermo 242.4* it is possible to identify *sanctorum communionem* with *sacramentum Baptisma*,⁴² while elsewhere the *sancti* and *communio* are understood in terms of fellowship that arises out of the forgiveness of sins in the holy Church.⁴³ This later Gallican assertion is consistent with Niceta's definition of the Church and its sacramental function as a communion of the saints. Here for the first time, the sacramentality of the Church gets attention.

Undoubtedly, there have been mixed interpretations of the doctrine in the life of the Church. Archbishop Magnus of Sens (812), for instance, wrote in response to Emperor Charlemagne an explanation of the baptismal creed in *Libellus de Mysterio Baptismatis* where a more personalized interpretation than as sacraments per se is given: "And they also confess one universal Church and the communion of all Saints, that is the congregation of all the faithful in Christ."⁴⁴

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Benko, *Meaning of Sanctorum Communio*, 106

⁴³ Ibid, 106

⁴⁴ Ibid, 109.

This suggests that *sanctorum communionem* was another name for the faithful, the Church. This was further taken up by Bishop Amalarius of Treves (d.816) who expressed his understanding of *sanctorum communionem* in his *Epistola ad Carolum Magnum Imperatorem de Caeremoniis Baptismi* as an expression of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, that is, the Church: “the universal congregation of the just and the unity of faith. (sancta ecclesia)”.⁴⁵

Similarly, it may be said that Alcuin (d.804), the Anglo-Saxon scholar, who understood *sanctorum communionem* to mean an expression of belief in a personalized sense, that is, it referred to the fellowship and the communion of faith of the living with those saints who have departed to God.⁴⁶

By the close of the eighth century the phrase “communion of saints” was incorporated into the Apostles’ Creed but the understanding of *sanctorum communionem* until the ninth century was essentially sacramental. This is indicated in the work handed down by the Christian writer and philosopher Jacobi who edited the *Symbol of 381* by replacing *sanctorum communionem* with the eastern creedal expression *Baptisma in remissionem peccatorum*.⁴⁷ As an Article of Faith, there was also a corresponding sacramental

⁴⁵ Ibid, 109 – 110.

⁴⁶ *MPL*, vol.101, 439.

⁴⁷ *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 4, 1884; also Benko, *Sanctorum Communio*, 62.

perception of its meaning by Ivo, the Bishop of Charters (d.1116). In his *Sermon 23, de Symbolo Apostolorum* he actualized *sanctorum communionem* as participating in the sacraments. He went on to state that *sanctorum communionem* was about the truth of the sacraments of the forgiveness of sins of the Church, which the saints cherished as the unity of faith.⁴⁸ In a similar vein the Bishop of Soissons (d.1152) in his *Expositio symboli of Josselin* instructed that should anyone question *sanctorum communionem* or seek an opinion about Baptism, the body and blood of the Lord, and the other sacraments, the response should be as follows:

I believe in the *sanctorum communio*, that is, the truth of the sacraments of the Church which the saints partook who departed this life in the unity faith.⁴⁹

This was how the Saints whilst on earth believed and understood *sanctorum communio* and the other sacraments that they commonly possess all heavenly gifts.

Peter Abelard (d.1142) too gave a neutered meaning to *sanctorum communionem* in his *Expositio Symboli quod Dicitur Apostolorum* in stating that it was “the communion by which the saints are established and confirmed by participation in the divine sacraments.”⁵⁰ For St. Bernard of Clairvaux (d.1153), on the other

⁴⁸ *MPL*, vol. 162, 303.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, vol. 186, 1488.

⁵⁰ *MPL* vol.178, 629.

hand, *sanctorum communionem* was the means to fulfil our insufficiencies; if we loved the saints in heaven, he explained, they would communicate blessedness on our behalf in the presence of God.⁵¹ Anselm of Canterbury agreed with Bernard,⁵² while leading Franciscan theologian Alexander of Hales (d.1245) believed that the doctrine included both the saints and the sacraments.⁵³ These examples of theologians and scholars offer divergent views that create serious doubts about what the doctrine meant: the sacraments or the bond between the living and the heavenly saints, that is, a present reality, or an eschatological hope?

A more precise interpretation of the doctrine came from Aquinas who to this day remains an influential voice in the Church in theology and philosophy. From his use of the term, the expression *sanctorum communionem* was the “existing oneness of holy Christians in the body of Christ realized through the mutual sharing of spiritual goods.”⁵⁴ Here Aquinas relates *sanctorum communionem* not to *sancta ecclesia* but to *remissio peccatorum*, which sanctifies Christians. Aquinas expects that *sanctorum communionem* should be thought of as “participation in the sacraments” and that “forgiveness of sins is dependent upon *sanctorum communionem*.” But Aquinas does not limit himself to a neutered understanding of the expression.

⁵¹ Ibid, vol. 184, 425.

⁵² Ibid, vol. 158, 156.

⁵³ Benko, *Meaning of Sanctorum Communio*, 112-113.

⁵⁴ *MPL* vol.178, 629.

He also appropriated a personalized meaning to Article IX of the Apostles Creed but not compromising the sacramental nature of this communion. Among the points of faith handed down by the apostles, Aquinas claimed that it was a community of goods, the spiritual body, in the Church because all the faithful are one body, the good of one member is communicated to another ... there is a common sharing of good in the Church:

This is expressed in the words, “the Communion of Saints”This communication takes place through the Sacraments of the Church in which operate the merits of the passion of Christ, which in turn operates for the conferring of grace unto the remission of sins.⁵⁵

To avoid any confusion, another Doctor of the Church, St. Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), avoided calling the Church as “communion” by using either “congregation” or “convocation” when explaining *sanctorum communionem*. For him, the *communio* were the sacraments for the common good of the Church, in addition to offerings, prayers of indulgence, and others. He made it clear that those who separated themselves from the apostolic Church, therefore, could not share in these goods.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Thomas Aquinas (trans. Joseph B. Collins), *Expositio in Symbolum Apostolorum – The Apostles Creed Apostolorum*,
<https://dhspriority.org/thomas/english/Creed.htm#10> (20/11/2018).

⁵⁶ Benko, *Meaning of Sanctorum Communio*, 115-116.

In his encyclical on the Eucharist, Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) explained the Eucharist in terms of the unity of the Church: that “as everyone knows,” he claimed, the *communion of saints* is nothing else but a sharing in help, satisfaction, prayer and other good works that transform believers into a community that cares for one another.⁵⁷ It is:

[A] mutual communication among all the faithful, whether those who have reached heaven, or who are in the cleansing fire, or who are still pilgrims on the way in this world. For all these are come together to form one living city whose Head is Christ, and whose law is love (n.14).⁵⁸

This interpretation was not limited to the Catholic Church. Karl Barth who has often been regarded as the greatest Protestant theologian of the twentieth century viewed the doctrine as conveying for the holy Church, “the commission that consists in witnessing by means of the *preaching of the Gospel* and the *administration of the Sacraments*” and that “no third action has a place beside these two, which are in essence, the *ministerium verbi divini*.”⁵⁹

In a comparative study, the eminent Protestant theologian and scholar on the New Testament canon, Theodor Zahn, recapped the

⁵⁷ Pope Leo XIII, *Mirae Caritatis (On the Eucharist, 1903)*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/leoxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_28051902_mirae-caritatis.html (21/10/2019). \

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Karl Barth (trans. J. Strathearn McNab), *Credo* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1937), 143.

variety of interpretations given to the doctrine and was able to assert unequivocally the meaning of *sanctorum communionem* as used in the Apostles Creed:

This could scarcely have been anything else than, according to the language of the Greek Church, could only be interpreted as ‘Participation in the holy things...’

He was convinced that the *communion of saints* ought to mean the communion of in “holy things” as had been in the creeds of Jerome and Niceta.⁶⁰ He asserts, “The belief was thus expressed that in the Sacraments and through the same, especially in the Holy Communion, the gifts offered therein were really received.”⁶¹

Zahn was convinced that Augustine’s understanding was based on its location just where Niceta and others have placed *sanctorum communionem*, which was Baptism in the eastern creeds (*Table 1*).

I believe that Sacraments exist, but I believe that I in the Sacraments partake of the holy things of the other world the Consecrated Bread which I eat with the community that keeps the feast and the Consecrated Cup which I drink with them are truly ‘the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ.’ I believe that the water of Baptism is not mere water but a bath of the New Birth.⁶²

⁶⁰ Badcock, *Early Christian Creeds*, 266.

⁶¹ Theodor Zahn, *The Apostles Creed: A Sketch of its History and Examination of its Contents* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1899), 196-197.

⁶² Zahn, *Apostles Creed*, 199-200.

Zahn poignantly raises this question: “Who can deny that the mention of the Sacraments in the Creed, and especially after the Church, is quite in place?” This, then, he concluded was the original meaning of *sanctorum communio*. From its sacramental nature there had been extrapolations of its original meaning to mean the Church (*sanctam ecclesiam*), a universal congregation of the righteous (*remissio peccatorum*), or unity of faith (*congregation fidelium*), *communio sacramentorum* or *sanctorum communio* all of which clarifies the faithful as the people of God in one communion together as a Church. The meaning of *communion of saints* in terms of a creed, therefore, represents the two elements of the doctrine, it is “holy things for holy people” where the Church is “the great sacrament in which we all together commune.”⁶³

The Eucharist is the cause and effect of the communion within which evolves the ecclesiology. The Church was created not only because of the celebration of the sacrament but because in some measure, she is synonymous with the communion Christ creates by his Holy Spirit in the Eucharist. The communion effected at the Eucharist is the communion of the body and blood of Christ and these mystical relationships exist between the head and all his members. The dynamics of *sanctorum communionem* as the *communion of saints* was most appropriately summarized in this

⁶³ Nicholas Ayo, *The Creed as Symbol* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1989), 133.

famous epithet of Cardinal Henri deLubac: “The Church makes the Eucharist, the Eucharist makes the Church.”⁶⁴

In anthropological terms, the *communion of saints* should be viewed as a calling upon all who have been justified and sanctified by grace through word *and* sacrament. In this, the *Dialogue of the Working Group of the National Bishops’ Conference of the German Lutheran and Catholic Bishops (1984)* echoed that the Church was a communion and it is theology of the Church. In the New Testament all Christians are referred to as “saints,” i.e., made holy by an act of divine consecration (1Cor 6:1-2; Phil 4:21-22, Phlm 5,7; Rom 1:7) and Christian communities consist of “all the saints” (2Cor 1:1; 1 Thess 3:13; Phil 1:1; Col 1:4, Eph 3:8, 18). The Dialogue acknowledges that *communion of saints* is characterized to the three-fold office of Christ – priestly, prophetic, and kingly and that the “kingly priesthood” – had not been clearly taught in all periods of Church history. This holiness was caused by their creaturely correspondence with a grace that could be traced from the second century onwards and should therefore be understood as “almost a standing epithet of the Church as the successor to the privileges of the holy people.”⁶⁵ The manifestation of the Church’s

⁶⁴ Michael Plekon, “Orthodox Theologians: Nicolas Afasianiev,” in Ståle Johannes Kristiansen and Svein Rise (eds), *Key Theological Thinkers; From Modern to Postmodern* (London & New York: Routledge, 2013), 373.

⁶⁵ Badcock, *History of the Creeds*, 264., (trans. by

holiness was attested by the unity from the common participation in the sacraments:

The Church is.... made holy by one faith and way of life, stamped with one Spirit, made into one body whose head, as we are told, is Christ. I go further, The angels and virtues and powers in heaven are co-members in this one Church, for, as the Apostle teaches us, in Christ ‘all things whether on the earth or in the heavens, have been reconciled’ (Col 1:18-20).⁶⁶

Niceta personified the human mark of the Church that was intimately linked to its flock who had been sanctified by the Church. The German bishops brought forward this ecclesiology of the *communion of saints* not just to the community but to each member as well because of Baptism:

Through Holy Baptism, individuals are made members of the people of God, gifted with the gifts of the Spirit and called to love God and the neighbour. Baptism incorporates each believer into the people of God’s new covenant and makes of them a universal priesthood – an instrument of his purpose for the whole of creation.⁶⁷

The last century’s prominent Catholic mystique Thomas Merton in his leading title to his work, *Living Bread (1955)* shared this useful insight of the Eucharist or Holy Communion, which was

⁶⁶ Niceta, “Niceta of Remesiana Writings,” 49.

⁶⁷ Mark W. Jeske and Daniel R. Smith (trans.), *Communio Sanctorum: The Church as the Communion of Saints: Dialogue of the Bilateral Working Group of the German National Bishops’ Conference and the Church Leadership of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany* (Collegeville: MN: Liturgical Press, 2000, 42-43)

the kernel in the *communion of saints*. The *communion of saints* of the Apostles' Creed is an undertaking for a confessor to be a "fully eucharistic apostolate." He explained:

Our life in Christ ...calls for a fully Eucharistic apostolate – a far-seeing and energetic action, based on prayer and interior union with God, which is able to transcend the limitations of class and nation and culture, and continue to build a new world upon the ruins of what is always falling into decay.⁶⁸

Thus, we live as Christians to be the human face that God has chosen for his presence, manifestation, and epiphany. In other words, we have been anointed into the kingly priesthood and called to echo him, signify him, and contain him. Essentially, it was sacramental, which was the ultimate objective of *communio sanctorum*:

Mass and Communion do not make sense unless we remember that the Eucharist is the great means which God has devised for gathering together and unifying mankind, dispersed by original and actual sins.⁶⁹

The Eucharist is the sacrament of unity, and the Eucharistic life by its very nature is orientated towards an apostolate of charity which will result in a visible union of all mankind. It is about how Christian sainthood is accomplished by the close visible union of the whole world in Christ.

⁶⁸ Thomas Merton, *The Living Bread* (London: Burns and Oats, 1955), 123.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 123.

The Eucharist is the social imperative to Christian living. The implication is how Christians live out their sanctified life. Having been created in God's image in a fallen world, *sanctorum communionem* is the regular source of the graces of wisdom and strength to be authentic witnesses to Christ. This personal conversion means to endorse and apply the humanism of God in Christ who hoped "that we may all be one" (Jn 17:21). This wish of Jesus is the start of a much wider dynamic that envisages a social change that oversees his "kingdom come on earth, [his] will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:10, *NIV*).

The doctrine had drawn the interest of contemporary scholars and theologians. Kelly's *Early Christian Creeds* (1972), the *magnum opus* of early creeds is a classic on the study of the early Christian creeds that had shaped the views of many students of the creeds. He identifies three interpretations of *sanctorum communionem*: first, the fellowship of holy persons (generally the faithful, living, or dead); second, participation in Eucharistic elements; and third, the Church as "one, holy, and catholic."⁷⁰ Nonetheless in his illuminating review of patristic literature Kelly notes that the words were often taken in the West as referring to the sacrament,⁷¹ even though the dominant conception, between the fifth and eighth centuries, was fellowship

⁷⁰ Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 390.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 392–393.

with holy persons.”⁷² This reflects a populous devotion seeking the intercession of the Saints for the social ills of the time.

Bernard Marthaler, who is also recognized for his insights into the creeds, lends support to the sacramental origin of *communio sanctorum*.⁷³ Like Kelly and others, Marthaler believes that a strong religious influence flowed from the East to South Gaul through the Balkans in the early fourth to fifth centuries.⁷⁴ There are particular pointers towards this, particularly the *Catechetical Lectures* of Cyril which also caused Kelly to shift from his original reference of *sanctorum communion* to mean holy persons to sacramental:

While the expression SANCTORUM COMMUNIO was rare and its meaning fluctuating in the West, the Greek equivalent, viz., *koinonia ton agion* and related phrases were firmly established in the East and bore the clear-cut sense of ‘participation in the holy things,’ i.e., the Eucharistic elements.⁷⁵

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, the *communion of saints* represents two closely linked meanings: “in holy things (*sancta*)” and “among holy persons (*sancti*).” *Sancta sanctis* (‘God’s holy gifts for God’s holy people’) is proclaimed by the celebrant in most eastern liturgies during the elevation of the holy

⁷² Ibid, 394.

⁷³ Bernard L. Marthaler, *The Creed: The Apostolic Faith in Contemporary Theology* (New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2007), 332–351.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 330–350.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 333; Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 389–390.

Gifts before the distribution of communion. The faithful (*sancti*) are fed by Christ's holy body and blood (*sancta*) to grow in the communion of the Holy Spirit (*koinonia*) and to communicate to the world (CCC, n. 948).

In the primitive community of Jerusalem, the disciples devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers based on Acts 2:42 (CCC, n. 957). There are therefore four possible interpretations: (i) "communion of sacraments" (CCC, n. 950); (ii) *communion of saints* refers to the Church (CCC, n. 951); (iii) "having everything in common" (CCC, n. 952); and (iv) "communion in charity," which is extended to mean "solidarity with all men, living or dead" (CCC, n. 953).⁷⁶ Therefore, the understanding of the *communion of saints* is left open for a believer's interpretation according to one's circumstance. As a condition of becoming a Christian, this flexibility or ambiguity falls short of *regula fidei* in terms of what ought to be believed for salvation. The essential crux of faith in the Eucharist as the sacramental body and blood of Christ is compromised in favour of the intercessory powers of the Saints. For most Roman Catholics this intercessory power remains the meaning of the *communion of saints*.

The sacramental origin of the *communio sanctorum* also has had the support of two renowned Catholic theologians, the Cardinals

⁷⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Strathfield, NSW: St. Paul's, 1994).

de Lubac⁷⁷ and Avery Dulles.⁷⁸ Others like Nicholas Ayo regard the doctrine as consisting of two inter-related concepts: sacramental and communal or ecclesiological.⁷⁹ Some believe these two concepts should be regarded as one because the Eucharist is intimately linked with the community.⁸⁰

Regrettably, the ambiguity of the doctrine has led to the real meaning of the phrase almost being forgotten.⁸¹ The full richness of *communion of saints* is its sacramentality that can be expressed in social terms.⁸² The most influential of contemporary Catholic theological interpretation comes from Pope Benedict XVI who in his Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis: On the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of Church's Life and Mission, 2007 (SC)* affirms that *communio sanctorum* is essentially sacramental.⁸³ He insists that it is important that the Eucharist leads to a form of the Christian life, that the profound meaning of the *communio sanctorum*

⁷⁷ de Lubac, *The Christian Faith*, 218.

⁷⁸ Avery Dulles, "The Church in Communion," in Bradley Nasiff (ed.), *New Perspectives in Historical Theology: Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmanns, 1996), 126.

⁷⁹ Ayo, *The Creed as Symbol*, 131.

⁸⁰ Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief* (London: HarperCollins Religious, 1999), 178.

⁸¹ Brother David Steindl-Rast, *Deeper than Words: Living the Apostles' Creed* (New York, NY: Crown Publishing, 2010), 144–145.

⁸² Thomas P. Rausch, *I Believe in God: A Reflection on the Apostles' Creed* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2008), 145.

⁸³ Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis (On the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of Church's Life and Mission, 2007)*, <http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en> (18/06/2016).

is about a mystery to be lived: “[Just] as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whosoever eats me will live because of me” (Jn 6:57). Thus, it has both a vertical and horizontal dimension, that is, a communion with God and with our brothers and sisters. Having been called to be members of Christ and thus members of one another (1Cor 12:27), the Benedict explains that as Christians we are grounded ontologically in Baptism and nourished by the Eucharist.

The Pope draws our awareness to the fact that “it is not the Eucharistic food that is changed into us, but rather we who are mysteriously transformed by it. Christ nourishes us by uniting us to himself; he draws us into himself” (SC, n.70). His concise description states how the Eucharist makes our whole life an act of spiritual worship pleasing to God: “I appeal to you therefore, my brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom 12:1). In these words, the new form of worship appears as a total self-offering made in communion with the whole Church (SC., n.70).

The Second Vatican Council’s *Lumen Gentium* (LG), the Constitution of the Church, which imagined the Church as the “people of God” and the body of Christ, took up the initial theme of Niceta’s Communion of Saints. In its deliberations, the Council critically examined this communion in the context of itself as a

sacrament and as a “people of God” that are neither in competition nor are they identical. They focus was on the same people but from different angles and perspectives.

The meaning and scope of this “communion” can be complex as has been noted by the Catholic theologian Brian Gleeson:

The image of the People of God, more than that of the Body of Christ, suggests the humanity and the freedom of the persons who make up the church community, and therefore the possibility of the sinfulness of its members.⁸⁴

The consequence is an over-emphasis on the Church as the “body of Christ” that may tend to credit it as the “the body” with all the holiness which belongs only to Christ the Head. This gives an “unhealthy tendency to divinize the Church, as though its every action was directed by Christ and the Holy Spirit, to the exclusion of all error and all sin.” There are therefore two images each limited in their application that are must be regarded as complementary rather than complete in themselves. It is when these are taken together that they shed light from different angles on the Church as communion or community.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Brian Gleeson, “The Church as the People of God: A People in Communion,” in *Australian eJournal of Theology*, 5/08/ 2005, http://aejt.com.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0010/395515/AEJT_5.13_Gleeson.pdf (18/09/2018).

⁸⁵ Ibid.

There is also the concern that this over-emphasis on the sacramental body of Christ – the Eucharist – may override the creedal understanding of the Church itself as a sign and an instrument, which was of communion with God and unity among all people. However, the true meaning of *sanctorum communionem* was not compromised but rather *enhanced* by the two images of the Church - as Eucharistic *and* personalized as the *communion of saints* – each being complementary rather than complete by themselves. Cardinal de Lubac clarified the hermeneutics of this doctrine by claiming that if the world lost the Church, it would lose redemption too because God alone communicates God’s grace to us:

Faith in the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation rests ultimately upon Christ, who continues to will that sinners carry out His mission to sinners. True power comes from God in the Church and the “sacraments.” These are the visible signs that point our way back to God.⁸⁶

As taught by the Church Fathers, immortality cannot be bestowed apart from the forgiveness of sins (*Didache*, 10).⁸⁷ The effect of sin separates the sinner from God, who can have no

⁸⁶ David G. Bonagura, Jr, “The Church: The Sacrament of Salvation,” in *The Catholic Thing* (6/04/ 2010), <https://www.thecatholicthing.org/2010/04/06/the-church-the-sacrament-of-salvation/> (18/09/2018).

⁸⁷ Daniel J. Sheerin, *The Eucharist: The Message of the Fathers of the Church* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1986), 353.

fellowship with evil.⁸⁸ Hence, there is a need for reconciliation, and for the intervention of God to affect it. Through the sacraments, which are “the sacred goods” of *communio sanctorum*, one obtains the *teleosis* (*Gk*), or the completion or final perfection, to have life everlasting, and the most important of these sacred goods is the Eucharist.⁸⁹ Immortality is only possible through faith in Christ. The sacramental significance of *sanctorum communionem* can also be determined from Jerome’s *Dialogue Against the Luciferians* (382 AD) where he illustrated how a man baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit becomes a temple of the Lord. In other words, “while the old abode is destroyed a new shrine is built for the Trinity.” He stressed, for the benefit of the Arians, that sins couldn’t be remitted without the coming of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁰

The *sanctorum communionem* as portrayed in the Creed is to instil this functionality whereby the confessor consciously accepts the divine action that he/she is cleansed, renewed, and changed “truly and totally” to become a Christian. This creedal formula by itself is of little or no consequence if it does not involve God with a perfect eternal life. Such a reflection changes our model of perfection. This is a faith-based in *agape* or divine love, which “in turn can transform

⁸⁸ James Dodds, “Exposition of the Apostles’ Creed,” Article 10, 2004, www.reformed.org/documents/apostles_creed_orr.html (20/12/2015).

⁸⁹ de Lubac, *The Christian Faith*, 218.

⁹⁰ Jerome, “The Dialogue against the Luciferians,” in IntraText Edition CT (Èulogos, 2007), n. 6, <http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG1305/> (6/06/2016).

not only the way we think about God but the way we think about Christian communities and our own lives as Christians.”⁹¹ Love “is the most authentic mark of the Christian life.”⁹² It is derived from *agape*, which is God’s being as a Trinity and “reaches to the deepest of the soul and helps us to know the majesty of God’s presence and the mystery of his love.”⁹³

Summary

The original meaning of *sanctorum communionem* was the Eucharist, the sacramental body and blood of Christ which finalizes Baptism and all other sacraments. It is the sacrament of all sacraments. It professes the unmistakable faith of believers that the Eucharist sacramentally cleanses and ontologically transforms believers into a new life in Christ.

To becoming a Christian is to be sanctified by the sacraments, so that a believer can express authentically the humanistic face of God in this world. The sacraments lay the objective ground as a necessary condition for salvation.

Even though there were no “Saints” at Pentecost this does not undermine the theology of the age-old Catholic devotion to the Saints. Referred to as the “Communion of Saints” it is a consuming

⁹¹ John Webster and George P. Schner, *Theology after Liberalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 89

⁹² Robert Wilken, “The Resurrection of Jesus and Doctrine of the Trinity,” in *Word and World* (1982), vol.2/1, p. 28.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

Understanding the Communion

theology of *visio beatifica*, the Saints' ultimate direct self-communication with God on behalf of the living and the dead.

Chapter 2

Communion of Saints

St. Niceta of Remsiana (c.335-c.414 AD) was the first to use the phrase “Communion of Saints” in order to define and expound Article VIII of the Apostles’ Creed), *sanctam ecclesiam catholicam* (“holy catholic church”), which is followed by *sanctorum communionem* (Article IX).¹ In “Communion of Saints” Niceta was clarifying the spiritual link between heaven and earth caused by Baptism and the Eucharist:

Church is simply the community of all the saints. All who from the beginning of the world were or are will be justified – whether Patriarchs, like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, or prophets, whether Apostles or martyrs. or any others – make up one Church, because they are made holy by one faith and way of life, stamped with one Spirit, made into one body, as we are told, is Christ ... I go further. The angels and virtues and powers in heaven are co-members in this one Church.²

In this, Niceta was responding to the rival factions of the Nicene Creed on the sacramental unity and universality of the Church that

¹ Badcock, *History of the Creeds*, 72.

² Niceta, *The Fathers of the Church*, 50.

was being undermined by bishop Photinus (*d.* 376)³ and Arianism that Jesus was not divine and the Logos did not exist before Jesus' conception,⁴ as well as the heresies of Sabellianism,⁵ and Patripassianism.⁶

The “Communion of Saints” refers to the continuing spiritual link between the living members of the Church on earth and the Saints in heaven who once lived in this world, died, and are now enjoying eternal life with God. The devotion to the heavenly Saints – characteristic of Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic spiritualities – is consistent with the belief that death does not destroy the bonds of human love and relationship between the living with the dead thereby linking heaven and earth; for in Christ, the “last enemy” – death – was destroyed (1Cor 15:26). The communion with the Saints, thus, is founded in the Christian belief of eternal life (Mt 19:16, 29; 25-46, Mk 19:17, 30; Lk 10:25; 18:18, 30; Jn 3:15, 16, 36; Rm 2:7). Everlasting life comes from this grace given to us in Baptism by Jesus Christ “who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light

³ R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy*, (USA: Baker Academic, 2005), 87-91, 318-338.

⁴ Arianism is a fourth-century movement declared heretical by the Church at the Council of Nicaea for denying the divinity of Christ (Encyclopaedia of Catholicism), 92.

⁵ Named after Sabellius (2nd century) and sometimes referred to as modalistic monarchianism, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three modes, roles or faces of a single person, God. (Encyclopaedia of Catholicism, 1146).

⁶ Patripassianism, regarded the Son as merely a different mode of God and not distinctively a Person from the Father (Encyclopaedia of Catholicism), 966.

through the gospel” (2Tim 1:10). Everlasting life is the core of Christianity. Accordingly, as Christians, we pledge this “everlasting life” as *regula fidei* in the Creed (Article 12) assured by Baptism which is finalised by the Eucharist, the “sacrament of all sacraments.” The Eucharist initiates eternal life and everlasting glory of Saints.

There are considerable differences between the aforesaid dogma of *sanctorum communionem* translated as *communion of saints* of the Apostles’ Creed (Chapter 1) – the New Testament’s sacramental Eucharistic manna of salvation – and the “Communion of Saints” (in capitals), which can be traced to the religious ancestral devotion of Israelites alluded to in the Torah (Old Testament) climaxing in the doctrine of *zechut avot* of Second Temple Judaism.⁷

Christianity, or Judeo-Christianity to be precise, is the syncretism of “traditionally Jewish and traditional Christian themes, thought-worlds, signs, and symbols that might be expected within Messianic Judaism.”⁸ Jesus, himself a Rabbi sought not to create a new religion but to restore the old traditions of the time of King David for the entire truth (Mt 5: 17-19). He prayed the *Shema*, the

⁷ The Second Temple Judaism is the “intertestamental” period in Jewish history which lasted between 516 BC and 70 AD when the building of the Second Temple of Jerusalem as completed. The sects of Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots and early Christianity were founded during this period (Annette Yoshiko Reed, “Second Temple Judaism,” Oxford Bibliographies, [https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/\(4/01/2021\)](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/(4/01/2021))).

⁸ Aron Engberg, “Evangelicalism in the Interspaces: The Construction of Judeo-Christianity Identity in a Messianic Community in Jerusalem” in *Swedish Messiological Themes*, vol.100 (3), 2012, pp.264-266.

integral part of Judaism's evening and morning prayers,⁹ to emphasize the two most important commandments of Christianity came from the Torah, the Law and the Prophets.¹⁰

Primitive Christianity knew nothing of the special Saints in heaven. Christianity was born without the cult of the Saints. The first Christians were Jews and the Torah offers some evidence of the likely origin of this spirituality with the ancestral dead. As pointed out by the prominent Rabbi Geoffrey Dennis, teacher of Kabbalah and Rabbinic Literature and author of *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Myth, Magic, and Mysticism* (2017) these included such practices as ensuring the dead are gathered together with the clan on ancestral land (Gen 50:24-25), caring for the dead spirits (Deut 26:14; Isa 57:6), and consulting them for occult knowledge (Deut 18:11; Isa 8:19-22, 19:3). In the Torah, Saul consults a medium to summon the dead spirit of Prophet Samuel (1Sam 28:4-25).

In Judaism the prophet Elijah (Elias) chronicled in *Kings 1-2* did not die and was taken up to heaven in 718 BC. According to Jewish tradition, he occasionally reappears to rescue individuals from danger and brings "messages back and forth between heaven and

⁹ The Shema: "*Shema, Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad*" (Deut 6:4), which is "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Mt 22:37).

¹⁰ Engberg, pp.264-266.

earth and also occasionally in leading souls to paradise, both in mystical ascent and after death.”¹¹

It had been a Judaic practice of venerating the ancestral dead in ancient times (Deut 10:15) that linked heaven and earth, the dead and the living. This link was further advanced in the Jewish apocalyptic literature of the period (c.100 BC-200AD) represented at Qumran and by the pro-Maccabean and pro-Hasmonean war narratives.¹² Together these laid the foundation for the early Christian inculturation of invoking the intercession of the Saints.

The trend was augmented by Rabbinic Judaism of the Second Temple. In the Midrash are the *Sages of Talmud* which expresses at times the belief that their ancestors were aware of what transpired on earth. The Israelites would plead before God on behalf of their descendants such as the *Lamentations Rabbah* that includes a description of biblical figures like Abraham, Moses, and Rachel interceding before the Divine Throne when God’s punishment was being pronounced against Israel (Lam R.24). This positive influence of the beneficent dead expanded into the doctrine of *zechut avot* (the merit of ancestors), which became canonized in the daily liturgy with the *Avot Prayer* of blessing connecting the faithful with Abraham,

¹¹ Alan F. Segal, *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 634.

¹² Bio Reicke, “Official and Piestic Elements of Jewish Apocalypticism,” in *Journal of Biblical Literature* (1960), vol. 79/2, pp. 137-150.

Isaac, and Jacob, the matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah. In these prayers the Jewish faithful remember them as being part of the covenant with God that started with these ancestors.¹³

The Midrash *Eleh Ezkerah* (*Let Me Remember Thee* and *The Legend of the Ten Martyrs*) of Rabbinic Judaism also envisioned that the purified souls of the righteous sat in the heavenly academy on golden thrones to listen to Rabbi Aqiba's (a martyr of the second century) discourse on Torah: "You remember the faithfulness of our ancestors and therefore bring redemption to their children's children." In later Kabbalah there was also a shift from the veneration of biological ancestors to "soul" ancestors.

The rock tombs of the patriarchs in the Holy Land such as the Cave of Machpelah (Tomb of the Patriarchs) in Hebron, is considered by the Jews as the second holiest place in the world after the Temple Mount. The graves of Saints and martyrs, and fragments of bodies or even physical objects that had made contact with these bodies were thus considered as privileged places and things where the contrasting places of heaven and earth met.¹⁴

The first Church comprised a Jewish "sect" with a strong Israelite identity, mainly the Essenes, which saw itself as the exclusive area of God's blessing. It shifted its identity around Jesus of

¹³ "Avot Prayer, Avotv'Imahot," www.Templesinairi.org/avot-vimahot.html (16/04/2019).

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 3.

Nazareth rather than the Torah.¹⁵ As given in Philo, in Hippolytus as well as in the rabbinic literature, the Essenes in particular were influential in the ethical and apocalyptic teachings of the Gospel and the Epistles.¹⁶ This is the precursor of the “Communion of Saints.”¹⁷

This devotion to one’s ancestors, already a well-entrenched religious practice, remained popular despite the opposition of the Prophets.¹⁸ In addition, between the first centuries BC and AD, the Etruscans were among the great number of people in the Roman world who made clear of their devotion to their ancestors in literature, epigraphy, and structure by the furnishing of tombs. They “persisted and prevailed the conviction that some kind of conscious existence [was] in store for the soul after death and that the dead and the living can affect one another mutually.”¹⁹ The Christian inculturation of venerating the dead in the early Church found favor with the Roman converts who had been influenced by the Etruscans’ deep-seated belief in the survival of the soul after death. This practice, however, had no festive or cultic implications; “holy” is simply an expression of praise that stresses the “moral perseverance of the witness unto

¹⁵ George W.E. Nickelsburg, *Ancient Judaism and Christian: Diversity, Continuity and Transformation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), 183.

¹⁶ Kaufmann Kohler, “Essenes,” in 2002-2011, *JewishEncyclopaedia.com* <http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5867-essenes> (6/04/2019).

¹⁷ Geoffrey Dennis, “Ancestral Spirits in Israel and Judaism,” November 12, 2009, ejmmm2007spot.com/2009/11/ancestral-spirits-in-israel-and-judaism.html (4/4/2019).

¹⁸ Dennis, “Ancestral Spirits in Israel and Judaism.”

¹⁹ J.M.C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (Baltimore, USA: John Hopkins University, 1996), 34.

blood.”²⁰ It differed from that of the Jews and Christians who saw sainthood in terms of a barrier of the universe, that is, the barrier between earth and the stars that had been broken by both Elijah and Christ in the resurrection of the dead.²¹

For Judaism as well as Christianity the *locus classicus* biblically linking the living and the dead is the prophetic verse of Jeremiah (31:15-16): “A cry is heard in Ramah, wailing, bitter weeping, Rachel weeps for her children, she refuses to be comforted.” Rachel who died in giving birth to Benjamin was buried in Bethlehem. Jacob set a pillar upon her grave. Rachel, being the ancestress of the three tribes of Israel, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, “is represented as feeling like a mother for all the tribes connected with those three. Her “weeping” is no mere figure of speech. Jeremiah believed that the patriarchs and the holy men of old continued to feel an interest in the fortunes of their ancestors.”²² This same verse is also quoted in Matthew’s Gospel (2:18) in the lamentation at Bethlehem for the children slaughtered by King Herod. For the skeptics within Christianity, another important resource of this spirituality comes from no other than Saint Mary, the Mother of Jesus, in her

²⁰ P. Dorfler, *Die Antange der Heiligenverehrung den romischen Inschriften und Bilderwerken* (Munich, 1943), p. 103.

²¹ *Ibid.*, .2.

²² “Jeremiah 31:15 Commentaries,” [www. Biblehub.com/Jeremiah/31-15 htm](http://www.Biblehub.com/Jeremiah/31-15.htm) (26/6/2019).

Magnificat: “Yes, from this day forward all generations will called me blessed” (Lk 1:48). This assurance to all people, Jews and Gentiles and all posterity, that is, not only in the present generation but all succeeding generations will call her blessed establishes the communion or communication between Mary in heaven and the “people of God,” on earth who make the Church.

The practice of honoring the Old Testament prophets featured in Rabbinic Judaism was extended by St. Ignatius of Antioch to presbyters, just about seventy years since Jesus’ death and ascension. The Patristic Fathers lived much closer to the days of the apostles than we do. Some even knew the apostles. Their homilies and apologetical writings are therefore important for their innumerable valuable insights, which were eminently biblical and foundational for true Christianity, especially in response to the influx of various heresies and errors.²³

The faithful of the primitive Church believed that martyrs were perfect Christians and should be recognized as Saints since they had shown the supreme proof of love by giving their lives for Christ. Martyrs were extraordinary because they were “baptized in their own blood” and as such, they were honored as *sanctus* or *sanctissimus* which is “equated with blamelessness.”²⁴ Martyrs were God’s special

²³ James L. Papandrea, *Reading the Early Church Fathers: From the Didache to Nicaea* (New York: Paulist Press, 2011).

²⁴ Benko, *Meaning of Sanctorum Communio*, 71.

designates and they were therefore looked upon as intermediaries between God and the living people.²⁵ Eventually, it may also be said, that the doctrine of *zechut avot* itself evolved into a more direct veneration of the meritorious dead with practices such as praying to them for their intercession in personal matters. The Jewish devotion and Christianity's communion with the Saints fortified each other simultaneously into a growing populous religious practice. The custom of graveside veneration endures and thrives to this day in some sects of Judaism.

In Psalm 103 we pray for the intercession of the angels and saints in heaven: "Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will" (Ps. 103:20–21, *NIV*). And in Psalm 148, we pray, "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise him in the heights! Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his host!"

Not only do those in heaven pray *with us*, but they also pray *for us*. In the Book of Revelation, the evangelist John states: "the twenty-four elders [the leaders of the people of God in heaven] fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints" (Rev. 5:8). Thus, the Saints offer to God the prayers of the saints on earth. Angels do the same thing: the angel "was given a great quantity of incense to offer

²⁵ *Ibid.*

with the prayers of all the [Saints] on the golden altar that is before the throne” (Rev.8: 3).

God instructs that we pray for one another, precisely, “Love your neighbours and pray for those who persecute you” (Mt 5:44). The apostle James also tells us to “pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayers of the righteous is powerful and effective” (Jas 5:16). Paul too urges us “that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made *for all men*, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” (1Tim 2:1-2).²⁶

In the devotion to Saints, we give expression to our faith in life everlasting by continuing to communicate with those in heaven so that our relationship can continue to grow, and that our reconciliation with them and with God that wasn’t possible before our deaths can now occur. As Augustine once wrote, “After this life, God himself is where we will be” (*ipse [Deus] post istam vitam est locus noster*).²⁷ The intercessory prayers to the Saints are no different from our prayers for one another in this world. Jesus himself prayed when facing torture and death not just for himself but also for his disciples (Lk 22:41-42). In John’s Gospel, Jesus prayed to the Father: “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their

²⁶ (Emphasis is added)

²⁷ In other words, “Our location will be God all in all, in an environment shaped and formed by God’s self-communication to creation” (Anthony J. Kelly, “Eschatology and hope for nature,” in *Pacifica*, vol.28/3, 2015, p.266).

word” (Jn 17:20). Jesus prayed for joy, peace, and the gift of the Holy Spirit to protect his followers from all evil (Jn 17:15).

The intercession of Saints was supported by the great men of the third century who, as theologians and catechists, had visions that they enjoyed the exceptional degree of closeness with their invisible guardians.²⁸ For instance, Origen of Alexandria (c.184-253 AD) the Hellenistic scholar, ascetic, and early Christian theologian wrote: “But not the high priest [Christ] alone prays for those who pray sincerely, but also the angels as also the souls of the saints who have already fallen asleep” (*Prayer* 11, 233 AD).²⁹ This notion of the Saints can also be traced to the catechesis of St. Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage (c.200-c.258 AD) who spoke of this unity of heaven and earth in a way that was causal of this communion: “Banish the fear of death,” he said, “and think of the eternal life that follows.”³⁰ Equally, Gregory Thaumaturgus (c. 234 AD), Origen’s pupil, and later bishop expressed the benevolent presence of the guardian angels amongst Christians. He talked of the day-to-day search of protection and inspiration among Christians³¹ He reminded the faithful:

²⁸ Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1981), 52-53.

²⁹ Origen, “Prayer II,”
http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/origen_on_prayer_02_text.htm
(12/03/2018)

³⁰ Cyprian, St., “A Sermon on Man’s Mortality,”
<https://www.rosarybay.com/mans-mortality.html> (15/03/2019).

³¹ Gregory Thaumaturgus (trans. W. Metcalfe), *Address to Origin* (New York: MacMillan, 1920, 33.

Let us remember one another in concord and unanimity. Let us on both sides [of death] always pray for one another. Let us relieve burdens and afflictions by mutual love, that if one of us, by the swiftness of divine condescension, shall go hence first, our love may continue in the presence of the Lord, and our prayers for our brethren and sisters not cease in the presence of the Father's mercy (*Epistle 56*).³²

This was an intense dialogue with invisible companions. Cyril of Jerusalem (c.315-386), the distinguished theologian of the early Church who was highly respected in the Palestinian Community highlighted in his *Catechetical Lectures* that during the Eucharistic prayer: “we make mention also of those who have already fallen asleep: first, the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, that through their prayers and supplications God would receive our petition (*Catechetical Lectures*, n.23: 9).³³

Jerome, the renowned biblical scholar and theologian too was convinced of the intercessory powers of the Saints: “But if the apostles and martyrs while still in the body can pray for others, at a time when they ought still to solicitous about themselves, how much more will they do so after their crowns, victories, and triumphs?” (*Against*

³² Cyprian, *Epistle 56*, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/050656.htm> (12/03/2018).

³³ Cyril of Jerusalem (ed. Paul A. Boer), *Catechetical Lectures of St. Cyril of Jerusalem* (Veritatis Splendor, 2014), 681.

Vigilantius,6).³⁴ Convinced, Augustine, the theologian, and philosopher who influenced western Christianity proposed that as a Christian people we should celebrate together in religious solemnity the memorials of the martyrs, both to encourage one's being and imitated so as to share in their merits.³⁵ He also insisted:

Neither are the souls of the pious dead separated from the Church which even now is the kingdom of Christ. Otherwise there would be no remembrance of them at the altar of God in the communication of the Body of Christ" (*The City of God*, 20:9:2).

Another influential ecclesiastical bishop of the fourth century was St. Ambrose (337-397 AD), the Bishop of Milan who claimed that those who had died were more intimately connected with the living, giving them the uninterrupted enjoyment of their presence, which they could not give while living.³⁶ He prayed: "May Peter, who wept so efficaciously for himself, weep for us and turn towards us Christ's benign countenance" (*The Six Days Work* 5:25:90).³⁷

Following the harsh and barbaric living conditions that succeeded the collapse of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, men and

³⁴ Jerome, "Against Vigilantius," <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3010.htm> (12/03/2018)

³⁵ Augustine, "Contra Faustum, Book 1," <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/140601.htm> (12/03/2018)

³⁶ Ambrose, "Funeral Oration on His Brother Satyrus, Book 1," (Book-on-line) <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/34031.htm> (12/12/2017).

³⁷ Ambrose, "The Six Days Work," in *Fathers of the Church, New Translation*, 281.1, 252, (Book-on-line) https://archive.org/stream/fathersofthechur027571mbp/fathersofthechur027571mbp_djvu.txt (12/03/2018).

women increasingly relied on the merciful intercession of the holy dead to obtain justice, forgiveness, and find new ways to coexist; this expressed the communion and solidarity with the Saints.³⁸ By the end of the sixth century, “the graves of the [Saints], which lay in the cemetery areas outside the walls of most of the cities of the former Western Empire had become centers of the ecclesiastical life of the region.”³⁹

In the Roman catacombs there are archaeological evidences of inscriptions that contain intercessory prayers to and for the dead. The earliest indication of praying for the dead dates to the second-century Christian bishop Abercius who lived less than two centuries after Christ (c.170 AD). The bishop himself had sought that his gravestone has this inscription: “Let him who understands this, and everyone who agrees therewith, pray for Abercius.” It is a testimony of early Christianity of the belief in the communication between the living and the dead. Importantly, it bears the valuable inscription of the Eucharist that underwrites life everlasting. The influence of the Saints to pray for the dead is also supported by the funerary inscription near St. Sabina’s in Rome, 300 AD: “Atticus, sleep in peace, secure in your safety, and pray anxiously for our sins.” Another is to the Mother of God: “[listen to] my petitions; do not disregard us in adversity, but rescue us from danger,” (*Rylands Papyrus 3*, 350 CE).

³⁸ Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 2-22.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 3.

In the Catacomb of St. Sebastian there is also third-century graffiti with invocations to St. Peter and St. Paul.⁴⁰

In an ecclesiological sense “Communion of Saints” meant the whole family of God, comprising both heaven and earth. It is a technical term for the Church. Consistent with Paul, Niceta was introducing the “communion” that unites the saints of heaven and earth, that is, the continuity of life obtained by Baptism in the triune God: “Though we have been buried with him by Baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.” (Rom 6:4). This idea that we are made one with Christ through Baptism was also reiterated by Paul in Colossians (2:12), and in Galatians (3:27) where he likened Baptism to “being clothed with Christ.” The sacrament takes the believer from simple repentance, belief, and profession of faith into a more mysterious identification with Christ, in which he is the vine, and we are the branches, that we die with him so that we may rise to new life (Jn 15:5).

Others too have voiced this understanding of the Saints most conspicuous being St. John Chrysostom, then Archbishop of Constantinople (c.349-407 AD) and Paulinus of Nola (354-431 AD). They were foremost amongst the churchmen of the century who gave support to this notion of intimacy between the living and the heavenly

⁴⁰ Fabrizio Mancinelli, *The Catacombs of Rome and the Origins of Christianity* (Scala, Firenze, 2005), 18.

saints.⁴¹ Chrysostom is significant in this regard. He insisted, “When you perceive that God is chastening you, fly not to his enemies ... but to his friends, the martyrs, the saints, and those who were pleasing to him, and who have great power Him (*Orations* 8:6).⁴²

This trend gave rise to a cultic devotion to the Saints from the fourth to sixth centuries marked by such practices as seeking burial next to a martyr (*deposition ad sanctos*) and of celebrating a funeral meal (Latin, *refrigerium* meaning refreshment) held near the tomb or mausoleum on the day of the burial of martyrs and other prominent “saints” on the anniversary of their death.⁴³ The Lord’s Supper, or the Eucharist replaced the pagan custom of holding a funeral banquet to honor the dead. It was during the fourth century after the fall of a fresh flood of martyrs, the cult of the saints developed into a mature and distinct phenomenon and by the fifth and sixth centuries, it had rapidly spread throughout the Mediterranean into Christian-hagio tourism or pilgrimage. By this stage, a rich and varied literature had grown up around the individual Saints, and the notion that their relics channeled supernatural powers had become a fully established phenomenon of Christian belief.

⁴¹ Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 24-49.

⁴² John Chrysostom, “Orations,” <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/220226.htm> (12/03/2018).

⁴³ Wendy Mayer and Brownen Neil, *The Cult of the Saints: St John Chrysostom* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 2006), 11-12.

According to *Catholic Catechism* the Communion of Saints means how all of God's people, on heaven, earth, and in the state of purification (Purgatory), are spiritually connected and united (CCC, n.948). In other words, Catholic and Orthodox Christians (and some Protestants) believe that the saints of God are just as alive as those on earth and are constantly interceding on our behalf. It is a communion brought about by the belief in life everlasting through Jesus Christ. Our prayers are joined with the heavenly community of Christians.

From a historical perspective the commemoration of all Saints began to be celebrated early as Christians began honoring martyrs since the second century. The *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (c.170-180), a Saint and Church Father in the Eastern Orthodox, probably written near the middle of the second century, attests to this reality. Pope Boniface IV, who consecrated the Pantheon at Rome to the Virgin Mary and all the Martyrs on May 13 in 609 formally started “All Saints’ Day.” Boniface also established “All Souls’ Day,” which followed All Saints.

By the close of the fifth century, this deep and populous devotion to the Saints had already become a well-entrenched tradition in the Eastern churches. There was, therefore, no need for such an article as the Communion of Saints that needed to be incorporated into the Nicene Creed of the eastern tradition. In addition, between 720 and 730 when the Eastern Church experienced the outbreak of the

iconoclasm controversy,⁴⁴ the veneration of the Saints had already become part of the fabric of Christian devotion both in the Byzantium and the West.⁴⁵ The Seventh Ecumenical Synod of Nicea (787) required that all consecrated churches should contain saints' relics enforcing what was already a widespread practice in the East.⁴⁶ This triumph of orthodoxy in the Byzantium Empire also meant there was now an official enunciated theory about the significance of the icons. These were viewed not as mere illustrations; they served as:

Windows on heaven, mediating between the earthly worshippers and the saints in glory; venerating the icon meant venerating the saint, and through the icon the saint could manifest his presence and power.⁴⁷

The development of this devotion to the Saints in the Western half of the Christian was more circumspective. Certain threads would pose for the believer if this communion represents an eschatological truth of bonding and uniting persons in God, which would justify the mutual help Christians on earth receive as well as in purgatory by their prayers for one another? Or, simply the culmination of this “mystical reality” of the Church as the body of Christ?

⁴⁴ The Second Council of Nicaea (754) called by Constantine V condemned idolatrous worship of icons as pagan but nothing was said against the veneration of relics or the intercession of saint. (Henry Chadwick, *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church, From Apostolic Times until the Council of Florence* (Oxford: University Press, 2003), 79.

⁴⁵ Andrew Louth, *Greek East and Latin West; The Church Ad 681-1071, The Church in History*, vol.3 (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 2007), 45-46.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 90.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 198.

No one is born a saint and the designation of sainthood is the recognition by the Church of what God has already done, given a state of holiness to a person. It applied to the people of God in both the Old and New Testaments (e.g., Ps 31:23; Eph 1:1, 15; 2 Thes 1:10; Rev 5:19; 18:20). Saints are God's "holy ones" (Heb. *qědōšim*, Ps 16:3; 34:9) or "faithful ones" (*hāsīdīm*, Ps 30:4; 85:8; 145:10). They rejoice in God's goodness and trust in his care (2Chr 6:4; Prov 2:8). Their death is precious "in the sight of the Lord" (Ps 116:15).⁴⁸

The extension of the meaning of *sancta* of *sanctorum communionem* to the Saints undoubtedly countered difficulties for the Church. By the fourth century, however, this "consciousness of communion with the redeemed in heaven who had already tasted the fullness of the glory of Christ, was as real and as rich in hope to the theologians as well as to ordinary Christians. Their devotional and doctrinal atmosphere was so charged with such ideas that "it calls for but a slight effort of the imagination to understand how easy it must have been for formal testimony to their influence to find its way into the Creed."⁴⁹

This devotion received immense popularity particularly in the Gallic Church, whose Christianity itself was derived from the East. The presbyters and deacons who were the predecessors of the Gallic church

⁴⁸ Allison A. Trites, "Saints," in David N. Eerdmann (ed.), *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 1151-52.

⁴⁹ Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 2006, 397.

doubtless spoke Greek and would have brought with them the phrase *koinonia ton agion* as a liturgical theme and language to mean “holy things for holy people.”⁵⁰ Equally, there was no indication whatsoever that these early Greek fathers at any stage intended to transfer the meaning of this sacramental reference to the holy Saints. Before the close of the sixth century, the Gallician Church had, however, incorporated the Communion of Saints most likely as an extension to the meaning of “the holy catholic Church” in place of the sacraments.⁵¹

This does not necessarily suggest that the Gallician church was shifting its understanding of the *sancta* of *sanctorum communionem* from sacraments to the Saints. It is probable that the local church adopted a more inclusive meaning of *sancta* that would include the heavenly with the living. Far more likely the Church, which had been essentially sacramental in all facets of its life from the beginning, would have desired a creed that affirmed the efficacy of the sacraments as a declaration of a truth. This is evident from the Antiphony of Bangor, a liturgy that dates to 680-691, which was about one hundred years after the Gallician creed had become incorporated into the liturgy in the West. It sends a powerful message by reference to the *sancti* that unequivocally means the Eucharist which sanctifies the saints:

⁵⁰ Badcock, *Early Christian Creeds*, 251.

⁵¹ A.E. Burn, *Niceta of Remesiana, His Life and Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1905), lxxxii.

Come. You saints, and receive the body of Christ,
Drinking the sacred blood by which you are redeemed...⁵²

The most significant development in the Saints finally came from the Council of Trent's Session XV on the "Purgatory and Invocation of Saints" (1563) which clarified the merit of the "intercession of saints, the invocation of saints, the honor of relics" but fell short of declaring specifically that the Communion of Saints was a *regula fidei* for salvation; rather "that it is good and useful practice to invoke them in supplication and to have recourse to their prayers,"⁵³ There had never been, therefore, a precise *regula fidei* of the Saints in contrast with Baptism and the Eucharist as the communion *of* the saints.

The Church holds highly the value of intercession, but this duty does not threaten the salvation of those for whom a Saint failed to intercede. It is the intercession of Christ, and not of Christians, which possesses saving efficacy.⁵⁴ In a technical sense, the Communion of Saints might have been intended to affirm the mystical unity of the term "Church" embodying the living and the dead. The Church, the living body of Christ, shares in the promise of resurrection. Thus, in the Eucharistic Prayer, the Church invites "the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, the blessed Apostles and all the Saints, with our deceased brothers and sisters" to join in the celebration of the Eucharist

⁵² Henri de Lubac (trans. Gemma Simmons and Richard Price), *Corpus Mysticism, The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages* (Cornwall, UK: SCM, 2006), 15.

⁵³ Bettenson and Maunder., *Documents of the Christian Church*, 281.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 247.

as part of the living Church.⁵⁵ Through this lens of the resurrection, the Church revitalizes and draws deeply a vision of life uniting the living with the departed Saints.

This populous support for the Saints had caused an unfortunate diversion from the true meaning of *sanctorum communionem*. In time the Church herself would become concerned over the imbalance that had drastically altered the pattern of Christian worship. It became conscious that the faithful “no longer focused almost exclusively on the celebration of the Paschal mystery but concerned with tapping the resources of power represented by the relics of the saints.”⁵⁶ *Lumen Gentium*, the principal document of the Second Vatican Council corrects this imbalance of the inappropriateness as well as abuses associated with the Saints by emphasizing that “The minds of the faithful *must* be directed primarily toward the feasts of the Lord” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 1963, n.108) (SC).⁵⁷ Lest the feasts of the Saints take precedence over the feasts which commemorate the very mysteries of salvation, the encyclical also directs that only feasts that commemorate Saints of universal significance should be kept by the universal Church and that others should be confined to local

⁵⁵ *Sunday Missal*, 159-160.

⁵⁶ Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, 194.

⁵⁷ Paul VI, Pope, *Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 1963)*,

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html (2/10/2016).

churches.⁵⁸ The encyclical also moderates the use of images and relics of Saints lest “they may create confusion among the Christian people and promote a faulty sense of devotion” (*SC*, n.125). Thus, belief in the Saints cannot be obligatory for salvation to be grasped as a *regula fidei* of the Creed.

Summary

Christianity is syncretism of Judaic and Christian beliefs and practices. The Christian devotion to the Saints evolved from the ancient Judaic practice of *zechut avot* within Rabbinic Judaism. It is the precursor of the Communion of Saints.

The devotion to the Saints is a compelling theology of Baptism that life continues after physical death (Jn 6:51). All the baptized are re-created to a new life-everlasting in heavenly glory. The continuity of communion between the living and the dead was authenticated and secured by Jesus’s own death and resurrection. Invoking the Saints, thus, is consistent with praying for one another as when they were with us in this world. Neglect of this does not, however, threaten the salvation of those for whom a Saint failed to intercede. The Communion of Saints, therefore, is not a *regula fidei* of the Apostles’ Creed.

⁵⁸ Bonavneture Kloppenburg (trans. M. J. O’Connel), *The Ecclesiology of Vatican II* (Chicago, IL: Franciscan Herald, 1974), 346.

Chapter 3

Divine Love

The ultimate sacrament of Christianity is the Eucharist, the *sanctorum communionem* of the Creed. It is the sacrament of all sacraments wherein God in Christ gives his people, his Church, his own body and blood so that God's attribute of love can be incarnated in humanity. The *communio sanctorum* is the very nature of God is Love so that everyone who believed in him may not be lost but have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but that through him the world might be saved.

A potent point of this transcendence is revealed in the Lord's Prayer or "Pater Noster" (Latin) in the Gospels (Mt 6:9-13; Lk 11:2-4, and also *Didache* 8:2), which had been passed on through generations from parent to child and shared with Christians of other churches in all parts of the world. Its familiarity sometimes dulls our fuller appreciation. In structure and tone, the Lord's Prayer beautifully connects Christianity with the deep roots in Judaism and with the living tradition of the Jewish people today. It is a true summary of the whole gospel of Christ. It is the covenantal code we make before Baptism in the belief we are incorporated into the inner life of the triune God. This transcendence underlines God's love of humanity as our Creator, despite of our fallen nature, and restores our authentic personhood.

As Catholics, we solemnly recite verbatim upstanding the Pater Noster each time before the celebration of the Eucharist. We pray for the “daily bread” that Augustine explains in these terms:

The Eucharist is our daily bread. The power belonging to this divine food makes it a bond of union. Its effect is then understood as unity, so that, gathered into his Body and made members of him, we may become what we receive.¹

The Lord’s Prayer is the covenant of love when we pray: “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us” (Lk 11:4, *RSV*). As explained by St. Hilary of Poitiers (316-368 AD) in *De Trinitate* this truth becomes a reality in the Eucharist: “We are in him through the flesh and blood communicated to us” (*VIII 15*) and thus, “this is the source of our life, that we may have Christ abiding in our carnal self through the flesh” (*VIII 16*).² This sublime *communio* is the gift of God himself who is *agape* (Jn 4:7), that is, divine love with its natural corollary of unconditional forgiveness. These intrinsic virtues position the Christian way of living. By Baptism, people are humanized with this love, which in time shaped western civilizations.

Christianity can continue to make a difference in our competitive world that is plagued by indifference, jealousy and

¹ Augustine, *Sermo 57, 7*: *MPL* 38, 389; *CCC*, n. 2837;

² Karl Adam, *Die Eucharistielehre des heiligen Augustins*, Paderborn, 1908, 46f; Benko, *Meaning of Sanctorum Communio*, 43.

vengeance by incarnating and accentuating these virtues within individuals, families, communities, and humanity as a whole. The scriptural truth that all of humankind is one family of God is conceived in *sanctorum communionem*. This becomes meaningful only when the divinization of *agape* is defined and facilitated to become our incarnated nature.

Agape

“God is love” (1Jn 4:8), which is his intrinsic social nature that underlines *sanctorum communionem*. Out of love, God the Father forsakes his Son to redeem sinful humans: “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15:13, *NIV*).

Greek biblical writers spoke of God with their rich concept of love in terms of God’s act of love towards creation. The creation narrative of the Old Testament focussed specifically on humankind and how the loving God makes provisions for fallen humankind, Thus. God lovingly sustained creatures by providing water, food, and shelter for animals (Ps 104:10–28), as well as through the Spirit renewing the face of the earth (v.30). The New Testament elevates the story of Jesus as the supreme expression of divine love.³ As explained by Paul *agape* is the grace of Lord Jesus Christ: “that

³ Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 134.

though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (2Cor 8:9). We were still sinners, but God demonstrated his love for us by sending Jesus Christ to die for us (Rom 5:8; 1Jn 4:10). The theological basis of *communio sanctorum* is *agape*, the highest form of love, which depicts the dynamic nature of God’s eternal life in salvation.

Beginning with St. Athanasius (c.296-373 AD), theologians understood *agape* in the salvation narrative as a link to God’s triune nature as the fellowship of the trinitarian persons. Trinitarians believe that “divine unity is comprised by mutual love – the mutual self-giving – among these persons who comprise the one God.” Thus, “God is love, therefore, not only because the first trinitarian person loves but also in that the divine essence is the *agape* that characterizes the life of the triune God.”⁴ As Christians having been created in God’s image, we are called to mirror this love for one another. Thus, it can be claimed, “that man was made with a social nature, even as God had a social nature. Human nature and social interests spring directly from this element in man’s nature.”⁵

Christian thinkers have often wrestled with the implications of the biblical focus on *agape* to other meanings of love that C.S. Lewis cites. There are four distinct meanings of the English word

⁴ Ibid, 313.

⁵ Henry C. Thiessen (revised by Vernon D. Doerksen), *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 157.

“love:” *storge* (affection within families), *philia* (friendship), *eros* (love between sexes or being in love), and *agape* (charity or self-giving love).⁶ Only *philia* and *agape* are found in the New Testament,⁷ but *philia* is used sparingly compared with *agape*, which is predominant. The traditional focus on *agape* was understood as selflessness, as the apex of love. It can be argued that *agape* alone refers to divine love, whereas *storge*, *philia*, and *eros* are merely “natural loves.” Thus, affection, friendship, and desire are natural loves, which can be assimilated, as proposed by Lewis, by adding *agape* to work through them and thereby bring them to participate in the “eternity of Charity.” In other words, these loves are not mutually exclusive; *agape* can exist with *philia*.

The declaration that “God is love” in Christian theology is a bold statement to mean that all of God’s actions are motivated and ruled by love.⁸ The scripture makes it clear that God is and portrays *agape*. His goodness communicates and diffuses itself. There are, however, some questions about the relationship between the other types of love and God. As God lacks nothing, some theologians may argue that there is nothing in him that corresponds to *eros*. According to Dulles, God’s love for man “may certainly be called *eros*, in the same way, scripture describes

⁶ C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (London: HarperCollins, 2011).

⁷ Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 313.

⁸ Avery Cardinal Dulles, “Love, the Pope and CS Lewis,” in *First Things* (January 2007), <http://www.firstthings.com/contact-us> (1/06/2016).

God's love by metaphors such as betrothal and marriage." It is important to recognize that God has a true affection for the people he loves. God's *eros* for man is *agape* because God's love for creatures includes an element of desire (*concupiscentia*).

Love is an essential element that helps us understand the purpose of our life and existence. Benedict XVI in *Deus Caritas Est* (DC) proposes that this love should be understood in terms of ascending and descending – *eros* and *agape* – that can never be completely separated from each other.⁹ This nature of love, in general, is realized when we find unity in the reality of love.

Agape is the highest form of love derived from the love of God for humankind and of humankind for God:

You have heard that it was said, "You shall love (agapēseis) your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love (agapāte) your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? (Mt 5:43–46).

This may be said of all religions of a God no one had seen yet can have no equivocation in Christianity where the depth and scope of this love or *agape* had been revealed by God in Jesus Christ who once walked on this earth. Jesus distinctively illustrates the

⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (*God is Love*, 2005), http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html (26/12/2016).

nature of this love in the Sermon on the Mount. It is manifestation of the need to give and receive in terms of love. Thus, when we share the love with others, we acknowledge we received it from Christ who gave himself for all (Jn 7:37-38). E his love is of God. It is kind, merciful, enduring and breaks down barriers between Gentile and Jew, slave and free, poor and rich, women and men, healthy and sick, young and old.

Agape is both sacramental and social. It is fundamental for humanity as we are created in God's image and likeness. *Agape* promises infinity and eternity, and this reality is far greater than our everyday existence (1Jn 4:8; *DC*, n. 5). This divine activity now takes on dramatic form when, in Jesus Christ, it is God himself who goes in search of the "stray sheep," suffering and lost humanity (*DC*, n. 12). The *agape* is illustrated in Jesus's parables, specifically of the shepherd who goes after the lost sheep (Lk 15:2-7), the woman who looks for the lost coin (Lk 15:8-10), and the father who embraces his prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32). These are not merely words; they constitute the very being and activity of God demonstrating *agape*.

In its most radical form, *agape* demonstrates Jesus's death on the cross. It is the culmination of that turning of God against Godself, which God gives himself to raise humankind and save them. The evangelist John explained this act as "God is love" (*DC*, n. 12), and especially when we contemplate the pierced side of Christ (Jn 19:37). Our definition of love must, therefore, begin from

this moment. In this contemplation, we discover the path along which our lives and love must move.

In terms of *agape*, there is also this poignant mention of the great parable of the Last Judgement (Mt 25:31–46) in which love becomes the criterion for the definitive decision regarding a human life's worth or lack thereof. Jesus identified himself with those in need, as well as the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned: “as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). Love of God and love of neighbour become one; in the least of our brethren we find Jesus himself, and in Jesus we find God. There is no separation of love here, we are unable to love God without loving others, and we are unable to love others without loving God.

The doctrinal and ecclesiastical relevance of *agape* would be anachronistic in the absence of a well-defined social expectation. This understanding is not new; for example, as early as the second-century, Tertullian (155-220 AD) came to the defence of Christians in how Christian love attracted pagan notice. It was principally the practice and application of such affection that identified Christians in the eyes of their enemies. Tertullian highlighted: “See, they say, how they love one another; for they themselves hate one another. See how ready they are to die for each other; for they will more

readily kill each other” (*Apologeticus*, 39).¹⁰ A verse that is often referred to as the “Gospel in a nutshell” elucidates the divinity of this *agape*:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (Jn 3:16).

Jesus Christ embodies the perfect, complete, and quintessential love of the *agape*. It is “True love” which is “unrestricted in scope, excludes no one, does not impose conditions, it is not self-serving, and it is offered even when it leads to consequences to ourselves we would hope to avoid.”¹¹

Forgiveness is an essential ingredient of *agape*. St. Stephen (c. 36 AD), the first Christian martyr, thus, echoed during his martyrdom (Acts 7:60) this prayerful plea of Jesus: “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing” (Lk 23:34). The Lord’s Supper or *sanctorum communionem* is the spiritual food that sustains this *agape* of Christ in the “people of God.” A genuine consequential expression of *agape*, thus, is the sense of “forgiveness” in that it is not just an act of personal will, but something ineffable; this happens beyond our conscious control to a

¹⁰ Tertullian, “Apologeticus, 39,” in Henry Bettenson (ed.), *The Early Christian Fathers: A Selection from the Writings of the Fathers from St. Clement of Rome to St. Athanasius* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University 1987), 142.

¹¹ Fr. Michael Coonon (ed.), *God’s Word 2020: Daily Reflections* (Strathfield, NSW: Australia, 2020, June 16).

large extent, when we allow ourselves to become available to *agape* by the grace of God via his sacraments.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness and *agape* are intrinsically linked. Love eternally links forgiveness for there is no greater love than one giving his life for another as Jesus did for the forgiveness of humankind (Jn 15:13). An essential ingredient of authentic love is this ability to forgive one another. Forgiveness is the very nature of Godself: “Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more” (Jer 31:34). The call for forgiveness is distinct in Christianity even though it is not different from forgiveness as a basic human enactment: “Forgiveness is an act of the victim initiating a new relationship with those who have caused the injury or responsible for it.”¹² Jesus’ death and resurrection are foundational to this Christian understanding of forgiveness.

Forgiveness, however, is not a natural act for human beings.¹³ As shown in the Old Testament, sin is always spoken of in terms of a relationship or a non-relationship, or a covenant and a broken covenant. Because of our fallen nature, the core of our being

¹² Neil Brown, “Reconciliation: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow,” in Gerard Moore (ed.), *A Hunger for Reconciliation in Society and the Church* (Strathfield, NSW: St Pauls, 2004), 22.

¹³ Michael E. McCullough, *Beyond Revenge: The evolution of the forgiveness instinct* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2008).

is the desire for retribution and revenge. Through sin, the whole human person – mind, will, and affection – has a broken relationship with the Creator, with whom he or she was created to enjoy fellowship. The world is therefore shaped by sin, that is, “the refusal of the offer of God’s self in and through the media of this world and our neighbour,”¹⁴ notwithstanding, on the other hand, that it is in forgiveness as a human virtue that we reflect the character of God. Forgiveness is divine.

Thus, Moses pleaded for forgiveness: “O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go with us ... pardon our iniquity and our sins, and take us for your inheritance” (Ex 34:9) and God responded, “I hereby make a covenant. Before all your people I will perform marvels, such has not been performed in all the earth ...” (Ex 34:10). The idea of a covenant is the whole message of the Old Testament. Thus, when God and humans meet (e.g., Gen 24:2–15; the commands in v. 14–15), “it is never a piecemeal affair; they always meet in terms of their whole relationship and its profound consequences for salvation history.”¹⁵ In Deuteronomy (32:4–25), Israel recalls its infidelity in past relationships and then pleads for forgiveness. When in exile it reflects and becomes aware of sin, but it does not seek forgiveness

¹⁴ James K. Voiss, *Rethinking Christian Forgiveness: Theological, Philosophical, and Psychological Explorations* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 2015), 338.

¹⁵ Cesare Giraud, “Confession of Sins in the Old Testament,” in Baptist Metz and Edward Schillebeeckx (eds.), *Concilium: Religion in the Eighties* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), 85.

just for sins; rather, it seeks a renewal of the covenant in individual and common prayer by confessing God's faithfulness.¹⁶

The most inspiring illustration of this form of divine love comes from God's forgiveness of King Manasseh of Judah who was the king of Israel for fifty years who "did evil in the eyes of the Lord" (2Chr 33:1) that the influential Christian evangelist Billy Graham regarded it as far greater evil than the atrocities of Hitler or Stalin. Manasseh led Judah and the people of Jerusalem astray so that they did more evil than the nations the Lord had destroyed. Yet, "the Lord was moved by his [Manasseh] entreaty and listened to his plea;" God brought him back to Jerusalem and even restored the kingdom to him (2Chr 3:13).

In the New Testament, Jesus taught, "Forgive, and you will be forgiven" (Lk 6:37). He went around to the villages teaching that people should seek forgiveness (Mk 6:6). To his persecutors, looking down from the cross, Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34). Paul, therefore, wrote to his church to put away within themselves "all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you" (Eph 4:31-32). Thus, although we survive wholly on mercy and forgiveness, we tend not to forgive the offenses of our brethren. Jesus said that we should pray that God

¹⁶ Ibid, 85.

“forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us” (Lk 11:4, Mt 6:12, *NIV*), as “God’s behaviour is the norm for humans;”¹⁷ thus, we should be more forgiving and plead for a forgiving heart in our prayers.

Matthew uses “debts” for “sins” as a way of talking about sins, which is characteristically Jewish.¹⁸ As Barth would have it, “this is not an exhortation but a simple statement of fact: When you receive forgiveness from God, you become capable of forgiveness to others.”¹⁹ Jesus insisted on the Father’s forgiveness again and again (Mt 18:23-27; 9:2; 9:9-13; 6:14-15) because sin “diminishes and destroys fellowship with God but also fellowship among human beings. Mutual forgiveness, which is extremely important (Mt 18:21-22), is included in the petition for forgiveness from God.”²⁰ Thus, Jesus cautioned Peter against setting limits to forgiveness: in the parable of the unforgiving servant, he told Peter to forgive “not seven times, but seventy-seven times” (Mt 18:22).

Jesus himself set the principle and standard of forgiveness by forgiving those who crucified him. For Christians forgiveness, therefore, is a divine initiative that emanates through the saving

¹⁷ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke, Sacra Pagina* (Collegeville, *Sacra Pagina* (MN: Liturgical, 1991), 178.

¹⁸ Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew, Sacra Pagina* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991), 97.

¹⁹ John A. Hardon, “Karl Barth on Prayer,” in *Theological Studies*, (1953), vol.14, p.443.

²⁰ Rudolf Schnackenburg (trans. Robert R. Bar), *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 68.

action of Jesus. This emphasizes that sinners are those who have been judged as such, but who have nonetheless been offered mercy. In turn, repentant sinners should be moved by gratitude to be generous to those who have sinned against them. This mercy received is the motivation that makes forgiveness a fundamental aspect of being Christian.²¹

Exemplary acts of such genuine love and forgiveness are well recorded in the annals of Christian history, especially in the life of Saints. These inspire and strengthen our resolve for unconditional forgiveness of a villain or perpetrator, as was St. Maria Goretti (1890-1902). Italian born, following the death of her father from malaria, her mother with her six children including Maria who was 6, moved to a nearby farm to support them. When Maria was 11, she was brutally stabbed 14 times as she fought the attacker, a 19-year-old farmhand. Maria lived in the hospital for two more days, forgiving her attacker, asking God's forgiveness. She died July 6, 1902, holding a crucifix and a Blessed Mother medal. After 27 years in prison, the attacker visited Maria's mother and asked for forgiveness. Later he testified for Maria's beatification and attended her canonization 1920.²²

²¹ Voiss, *Rethinking Christian Forgiveness*, 383.

²² Hugo Hoever (ed), *Lives of the Saints, For Every Day of the Year* (New York: Catholic Book Pub. 1955), 259-60.

Another Saint whom we readily remember in our time is Amy Biehl (1967-1993), a graduate of Stanford University and a Fulbright scholar, who volunteered to work in South Africa. Two days before the 26-year old was planning to return home, she was stabbed and stoned to death in the black township of Guguletu, just outside Cape Town in the dying days of apartheid. The assailants ignored her plea for mercy by yelling, “Kill the settler!” Amy’s Catholic parents tried to understand the circumstances of her death and find peace. They forgave her killers who were convicted and sentenced. Later they went to work at the Amy Biehl Foundation, a non-profit agency they had established to especially help South African people.²³

True forgiveness is sacramental. Jesus in the Lord’s Prayer instructs that we seek God’s forgiveness as “we forgive those who trespass against us.” *Sanctorum communionem* restores the image of God in the sinner through the power of the Holy Spirit and faith in the work of Christ.²⁴ The Creed’s Article X, “forgiveness of sins” thus follows immediately the “communion of saints” (Article IX). An unforgiving Christian is, therefore, a contradiction to the Christian way of life: to be true to one’s Baptism is to reciprocate

²³ Linda Vergnani, “Parents of Slain Fullbright scholar embrace her cause in South Africa,” in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (19/01/2001).

²⁴ Kelly M. Kopic, *Communion with God: The Divine and the Human in the Theology of John Owen* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 65.

our debt of gratitude to God for his mercy in one's life. Every act of forgiveness radiates this intimate godliness within us.

In forgiving one another we are witnesses to the graces of *sanctorum communionem* as Baptism and Eucharist change us in the same way Jesus healed an invalid at the Pool of Bethesda (Jn 5:1–15) or his instruction to a woman caught in the act of adultery to sin no more (Jn 8:3–11). Paul stresses that by Baptism we have been buried with him into death so that we might walk in newness of life (Rom 6:1–4). This newness is in the redemption when we are born again (Jn 3:3) by the power of the Holy Spirit which breaks the power of sin that once had over us and restores the bond with our Creator: “Once we lived only to please ourselves” (Rom 6:6) but “when we have been forgiven, our motivation changes. We now live to please God” (Gal 2:20). When we fail, we can seek forgiveness from God (1Jn 1:9; 1 Pt 4:1–2). To truly be God's children, and to become the true image of God, we must accept that God will correct us and discipline us when needed (Hb 12:6–11). It is God's *agape* at work to conform human beings to the image of his Son (Rom 8:29). Forgiveness becomes internalized and embodied in one's life that was exemplified by Christ himself. The Christian narrative transforms the sinner to become a participant in the life and work of Christ.²⁵

²⁵ Voiss, *Rethinking Christian Forgiveness*, 389.

Social Sin

There is also an intimate link between social sin and personal sin (CCC, n.1869). “Social sin” or “social evils” such as sexism, racism, genocide, and oppression of the poor are sins of individuals that often go unrecognized. As society, these sins transform the social arrangements into their opposites, as they become “vehicles of our capacity for aggression and injustice rather than justice,”²⁶ causing many people in the world today to live in situations of poverty, slavery, violence, and war.

In the language of the gospel, these are offenses against God because they are offenses against one’s neighbour or family member. They are “a kind of counter-sacramental tendency or impulse coordinating our individual exercises of freedom.” Instead of inclining towards exercises of freedom that arise in the communion of life and love, “it sets us in opposition to one another and, even more perniciously, leads us to regard our oppositional relationships as righteous and justified.”²⁷ In reality, most Christian traditions, therefore, recognize that the history of sin is more than just individual acts as sin is pervasive resulting in making sinful

²⁶ Richard Lennan, “Sin: Struggling with God and Our Humanity,” in Moore (ed.), *A Hunger for Reconciliation*, 37.

²⁷ Voiss, *Rethinking Christian Forgiveness*, 338.

choices that in turn get embedded in “the structures of relationships in the world.”²⁸

People are becoming doubtful of the many appeals for forgiveness and seem to have developed an attitude that forgiveness is no longer relevant in the public arena. As noted by Kay Carmichael forgiveness “as a concept of universal, authoritative, professionally or religiously administered ideas of morality” was becoming increasingly irrelevant in this world that features so much debate and dilemmas in the media constantly.²⁹ Such a broad observation may be news-worthy but it ignores the fundamental reality of authentic communities that rely on the dynamics of reconciliation which can be so deep and extensive in enhancing the existential well-being of people and their relationships with one another. Forgiveness and reconciliation are essential means for restoring peace and harmony even at times of serious conflicts between societies and nations.

The Church is conscious that “all sins, however personal they may be, have a social dimension.”³⁰ The ecclesiastic character of penance (*pax cum ecclesia*) clarifies that certain personal sins, such as racial prejudice or damaging the environment, are directly aimed

²⁸ Ibid, 338.

²⁹ Kay Carmichael, *Sin and Forgiveness: New Responses in a Changing World* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 137.

³⁰ Michael Sievernich, “Social Sin and its Acknowledgement,” in Collins and Power (eds.), *Concilium: Religion in the Eighties* (Edinburgh, UK: T&T Clark, 1987), 55.

against society. The social consequences of personal sin were specifically highlighted by Pope John Paul II, now a Saint, in his post-synodal exhortation – *Reconciliatio Poenitentia (On Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church Today, 1984)*³¹ and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (On Social Concern, 1987)*.³² Society is the bearer of sinful structures, John Paul II insists, but structures themselves cannot sin. The responsibility for the creation and maintenance of these structures rests, therefore, upon the personal sins of members.

Despite of this awareness, the Church has come for serious criticism for not sufficiently stressing the consequences of social sins; in fact, it is said that it is “quite novel to relate talk of sin to social arrangements and structures.”³³ The Church seems oblivious to sins relating to social institutions, rules, and norms, which ought to “secure fundamental rights, control the satisfaction of basic needs, and govern inter-human relations.”³⁴ These had given rise to a liberation theology of people by theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez and Leonardo Boff who call for the Church’s direct

³¹ Pope John Paul II, *Reconciliatio Poenitentia (On Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church Today, 1984)*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_02121984_reconciliatio-et-paenitentia.html (27/12/ 2016).

³² Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (On Social Concern, 1987)*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html (27/12/ 2016).

³³ *Ibid*, 59.

³⁴ *Ibid*.

attention to these social sins of injustices: “Man is the measure of all things, since God became man” and Christian faith should, therefore, move towards a more social orientation.³⁵ Boff rightly points out: “The eternal destiny of human beings will be measured by how much or how little solidarity we have displayed with the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, and the oppressed. In the end, we will be judged in terms of love.”³⁶

Forgiveness is a crucial act of being a Christian. As was demonstrated at the School of Philosophy of 425 adults between 50–95 years old, forgiveness was associated with the dimensions of successful aging. Forgiveness was also the potential mediator of health or healthy behaviour, social support, and spiritual well-being.³⁷ Literature also suggests that scholars know very little about the potential negative implications of forgiveness, in particular, how “the tendency to express forgiveness may lead offenders to feel free to offend again by removing unwanted consequences for their behaviour (e.g., anger, criticism, rejection, loneliness) that would otherwise discourage reoffending.”³⁸ Contrary to such negativity, research indicates there are even stronger forces at play that

³⁵ Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (London: SCM, 1973), 7

³⁶ Leonardo Boff, *The Way of the Cross: Way of Justice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1980), 38.

³⁷ James M. McNulty, “The Dark Side of Forgiveness: The Tendency to Forgive Predicts Continued Psychological and Physical Aggression in Marriage,” in *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* (2011), vol. 37/6, pp. 770-783.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

contribute to the enhancement of experience in existential well-being, personal relationships with others, and personal growth.³⁹ This was especially evident from the South African experience, where crime victims come face-to-face with their offenders. This allowed them to embrace wholeness and healing between the offenders and the victims.⁴⁰ Thus, the rites of traditional reconciliation, which comprise contrition, confession, penance, and absolution, can be adapted to create a new spirituality “that is willing to hear the voice of victims, to bring victim and offender together,” and thereby bring victims to a point where they can forgive.⁴¹

The approach to forgiveness varies within Christian traditions. The critical comparative study by the Jesuit writer James Voiss on this topic of forgiveness by the Reformed,⁴² Lutheran,⁴³ and the Catholic traditions shows the differing ways in which each tradition approaches and practices forgiveness.⁴⁴ These can be grouped into two broad categories ranging from the Christology “from below” to

³⁹ Kathleen A. Lawler-Row and Rachel L. Piferi, “The Forgiving Personality: Describing a Life Well Lived?,” in *Personality and Individual Differences* (2006), vol. 41/ 6, p.1009.

⁴⁰ Gerard Moore (ed.), *Why Rites of Reconciliation Matter* (Strathfield, NSW: St. Paul’s, 2008), 70.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 71.

⁴² Lewis B. Smedes, *The Art of Forgiving: When You Need to Forgive and Don’t Know How* (New York, NY: Ballantine, 1996).

⁴³ Miroslav Volf, *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiveness in a Culture Stripped of Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).

⁴⁴ Voiss, *Rethinking Christian Forgiveness*, 230–263.

Christology “from above.”⁴⁵ Each one articulates and emphasizes God’s work throughout. Despite their differences, “they stand within the larger shared matrix of meanings called Christianity.”⁴⁶

Perhaps the most prominent form of reconciliation in the Catholic tradition comes from its liturgy and the external manifestation of confession in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which demonstrates how the divine grace precedes, empowers, and restores the brokenness and whatever satisfaction is desired. The purpose of the penance – better referred to as satisfaction in the light of its proper meaning – remains not simply a punishment for sins but helps penitents to pray for and be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, so they can be truly converted to “sin no more” and participate fully in creation.⁴⁷

Reconciliation is important not just for Christians and their communities, but also for everyone who wants to live in a world that is a place less vengeful and more forgiving. For Christians, the baptized are led into ways of “forgiveness and compassion, godly ways, spirit-filled ways, teaching the paths of peace and offering

⁴⁵ Christology “from above” is *descending* Christology that emphasizes humanity’s movement towards God (from below) is possible only because of God’s prior reaching out to humanity (from below). In contrast, “from below” is *ascending* Christology that stresses Jesus’s self-consciousness as a human being. Jesus’s humanity establishes a union of the human self with the divine self of the Logos. This relationship bonded their wills through a continual exchange of love (Marthaler, *The Creed*, 110–113).

⁴⁶ Voiss, *Rethinking Christian Forgiveness*, 263.

⁴⁷ David M. Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2001), 121.

fellow travellers hope and insight into peace-making and reconciliation.”⁴⁸ This provides benefits for the wider community, as a broken person or society is restored to a peaceful existence. Thus, “communities of reconciliation become communities of safety and communities of hope from which people can go forth empowered, commissioned to bring forth life in abundance.”⁴⁹

There is a danger that as Christians we may lose sight of God and remain alone in our sins.⁵⁰ Christianity acknowledges the importance of reconciliation both for the individual and for society. For the Church to be relevant it has to be involved in “factual, objective or subjective participation in social sin” that leads society to recognition and to confession before God (*coram Deo*).⁵¹ This can be the beginning of conversion, which would be incomplete and inconsequential if it did not “correspond to a *new turning to God* that corresponds to the rejection of sin.”⁵²

Born into sin, the *mandatum novum* (New Commandment) of Jesus (Jn 13:34) would, in fact, be an unrealistic proposition of a loving God without the sanctifying grace of forgiveness. For Catholics in particular the Mass, thus, begins with the Penitential Act – the *Confiteor* – which is a solemn public seeking pardon from

⁴⁸ Ibid, 71.

⁴⁹ David Ranson, “Becoming Reconciled,” in Moore (ed.), *A Hunger for Reconciliation*, 65.

⁵⁰ Giraudo, “Confession of Sins in the Old Testament,” 85.

⁵¹ Sievernich, “Social Sin and its Acknowledgement,” 59.

⁵² Ibid, 60.

God and each other, as a community. This confession most profoundly reverberates our social failings especially to the least of one's brothers and sisters (Mt 25:40), the "face of Christ."⁵³ Accordingly, the new developing Eucharistic models of communal sharing are aimed to changing society by forgiveness and reconciliation.⁵⁴

Summary

Agape is unique and complete of God's nature. The greatest expression of love is God's sacrifice of his only Son for our redemption. Authentic love accompanies unconditional forgiveness for fellow human beings. This is the truism of *imago Dei*.

The humanness of this love, which is sacramental, originates from the very nature of God who is a Trinity of love as the Father, and the Son and the Spirit from eternity. The divine love helps us to reconcile our broken relationships and separation not only with God but also between fellow human beings and families.

Forgiveness is sacramental as each act of forgiving arises from the undertaking freely given at Baptism to change to the new life of love in Christ.

⁵³ Leonardo Boff, "Prologue: Getting the Poor Down From the Cross", in José M Maria Vigil, *Getting the Poor Down from the Cross* (International Theological Commission, 2007), 11-12.

⁵⁴ David N. Power, "Editorial Conclusions," in Collins and Power (eds.), *Concilium: Religion in the Eighties*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987, 130.

Chapter 4

The Trinity

Sanctorum communionem is the sacramental attribute of God as a triune being: “*Fides omnium christianorum in Trinitate consistit*” is the declaration of faith of all Christians. Christian faith rests on the Trinity.¹ It is the Christian theological worldview,² buoyed by “faith at present, life in the future; faith on the road, life in our fatherland; faith in hope, life in reality; faith in the battle, life in the kingdom; life in action, life in recompense.”³ The Trinity is central to Christian dogmatic in understanding God, the nature of God, and the identification to God. The Creed is therefore professed as a summary of our response by a commitment to God as Father, Son, and Spirit before the liturgy of the Eucharist.⁴

Sacramentally, *sanctorum communionem* brings to bear upon the faithful this divine nature necessitated by the loss of our divine

¹ *CCL*, vol. 103, 47.

² B. D. Marshall, *Trinity*, in G. Jones (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 182-183; also Giulio Maspero, and Robert J. Wozniak (eds.), *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology; Disputed Questions And Contemporary Issues in Trinitarian Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), viii.

³ Caesarius of Arles (trans. Sister Mary Magdeleine Mueller), “Sermo 9,” in *Saint Caesarius of Arles, Sermons 1-80, vol. I.* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1956, Reprint 1977, 2004), 54.

⁴ J. D. Crichton, *Christian Celebration: Understanding the Mass* (London, UK: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993), 93.

image by sin. The trinitarian dogma of “one God in three persons” is expected to be thoroughly assimilated into Christian life and thought,⁵ as it is the prime source of our conduct as social beings. In other words, God who exists as the Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is foundational for a philosophy of Christian living. The Trinity, therefore, is Christianity’s cornerstone and *sanctorum communionem* is the means of actualizing this divine nature in the hearts and minds of believers as the people of God.

For Christianity, understanding the divine nature from God’s triune being is foundational of our being, as we are created in God’s image. Understanding God’s being as the Trinity is a spirituality that provides the platform for understanding the meaning of “God” and in the way God engages with creation. It is preeminent among the divine perfections as it can offer humankind the source, structure, and purpose of Christian personhood.⁶ The Eucharist is the spiritual food that replenishes, refreshes, and stimulates this baptismal faith repeatedly in the triune God. Therefore, like all doctrines, *sanctorum communionem* ceases to be Christian when it is no longer trinitarian.

The Trinity alone distinguishes God’s nature holistically by God’s intent in order to incarnate in the world by taking on truly and

⁵ Robert W. Jenson, “The Triune God,” in Carl E. Brastén and Robert W. Jenson (eds.), *Christian Dogmatics* (Philadelphia, USA: Fortress, 2011), 83-114.

⁶ William J. Danaher Jr., *The Trinitarian Ethics of Jonathan Edwards* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 1.

fully our human nature.⁷

Scripture

“Trinity” is not technically a biblical term but it is conceptually derived from scripture: it is a doctrine of the intrinsic ontological constitution of the one God as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.⁸ In the Old Testament (OT), God’s triune nature is depicted as the Father of Israel, and his divine nature is revealed in his Word or *dabar* (e.g., Ezek 6:3, 25:3 and 36:4), Spirit or *ruah* (e.g., Gen 1:1–2), Wisdom or *hokmah* (e.g., 1Sam 16:13) and Presence or *shekinah* (e.g., Ps 18:7–15).⁹ God has three major *hypostasizations* (*Gk*) or “personifications” that lead to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament: *Wisdom* as God the Father (Job 28; Prov 1:20–23, 9:1–6; Ecc 2:12–17), the *Word of God* as Jesus Christ who originates from God the Word and the *Spirit of God* (Isa 42: 1-3; Ezk 36:26, 37:1-14). Even though the doctrine in a strict sense is not explicit in the Old Testament it can be detected when exploring for God’s presence and activity in and through

⁷ Ingolf U. Dalferth, “The Eschatological Roots of the Doctrine of the Trinity,” in Christoph Schwöbel (ed.), *Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Act* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 1995), 147; also Nicholas Lash, “Considering the Trinity,” in *Modern Theology* 2 (1986), p.183.

⁸ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, “Doctrine of Trinity,” in *Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, 1995, 1270.

⁹ *Ibid.*

creation; it reveals God is not a monism but a social being,¹⁰ in such terms as “Let us make humankind to *our* likeness (Gen 1: 26).¹¹

In the New Testament, John’s Gospel suggests that Jesus was not an independent agent, but an emissary sent by the Father. For example, Jesus said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to complete His work” (Jn 4:34), and “My teaching is not mine but his who sent me” (Jn 7:16). Jesus acknowledged, “that it is my Father who glorifies me, he of whom you [the Jewish leaders] say, “he is our God” (Jn 8:54). Jesus’s high priestly prayer also begins, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you ... Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed” (Jn 17:1). Certainly, this speaks of a two-way glorification between the Father and the Son. The far most unequivocal expression of the cohesion of the Father and the Son is Jesus’ clarification to Philip: “How can you say, Show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me?” (Jn14:10).

God is called the Father of Jesus Christ 170 times. In addition to the “Father” texts, the opening greetings in the Pauline and Deutero -Pauline letters direct the praise to be offered to God through Jesus Christ. The most explicit triadic texts include the

¹⁰ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 238–239.

¹¹ (Emphasis is added)

baptismal formula (Mt 28:19); the account of Jesus's baptism (Mt 3:13–17); the benediction of Christ (2 Cor 13:14) who has set us free (Gal 5:1) and the Spirit as the hope of righteousness (Gal 5:5). So, “When we cry, Abba! Father! It is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (8:15–16). The whole economy of salvation is undertaken by the Spirit (Eph 1:3–14, 2:20–22; 1Cor 12:4–6; 2Cor1: 21–2; Gal 4:6; 2Thess 2:13–14; Titus 3:4–6 and 1Pet 1:2). The trinitarian relationship of God the Father and God the Spirit directs attention to God the Son in the Gospel. Therefore, scripturally the Trinity is God's ontological constitution that is evidenced when Godhead manifests with creation in the personhood of three persons as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Trinity, in other words, is the *communio* or self-communication within God-self *ad intra* as a communion of love and/or *ad extra* when Godself is in relationship with creation.

For most Christians especially from Orthodoxy and Catholic traditions the Trinity is theologically founded on scripture as shown above. As the exegete Edward Gratsch points out, “There is absolutely no way in which we could come to the knowledge of the Holy Trinity by ourselves” other than by God who had chosen to reveal himself in the scripture but not all at once.¹² As also indicated by Aquinas in his *Summa* the mystery of his triune being, the origin

¹² Edward J. Gratsch, *Zuinas Summa: An Introduction and Interpretation* (New York, NY: Alba House, 1985), 23–24.

or procession of his divine personhood, their relations and the persons themselves could be drawn from the scripture (*Prima Pars*, q. 28-43). Likewise, in line with this scholastic tradition, Rahner declared that the consummation of the trinitarian essence couldn't be determined other than using the creation and salvation history revealed in the Old and New Testaments.¹³ In the search for the testimony of God's triune nature, it is not possible to find three "names" but we can discover passages that testify the serving works of God who redeems through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴

The Trinity is also supported by leading voices of Protestantism led by Calvin, Luther, and Zwingli, whilst the likes of the prominent German theologian, philosopher, and biblical scholar Friedrich Schleiermacher would question the legitimacy of the doctrine as it had been derived by assembling scriptural texts into a systematic doctrine.¹⁵ They understood trinitarian persons "to be developments of the being of God in the temporal course of natural and human history."¹⁶ Modernist Protestant scholars have generally

¹³ Anselm K. Min, *Paths to the Triune God: An Encounter between Aquinas and Recent Theologies* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2005), 85.

¹⁴ LaCugna, "Doctrine of Trinity," 1270.

¹⁵ Frederick Schleiermacher (ed. H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart), *The Christian Faith* (Berkeley, CA: Apocryphile, 1830, 2011), 738-751.

¹⁶ Samuel Powell, "Rethinking Michael Schulz, "The Trinitarian Concept of Essence and Substance," in Maspero and Woźniak, *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology*, 61.

ensured that *Sola Scriptura* “goes out the window,”¹⁷ convinced of the reality of such verses as these: “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf” (Jn 15: 26). Also, “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved” (Jn 3:16-17) and the “Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus is the Christ – the Messiah and Saviour (1Cor2: 10) All three persons speak with *authority* because God – the Creator of everything – is our ultimate authority in every area, and that is the major reason why the Trinity is so important. Thus, from the reformed tradition, Jonathan Edwards who was convinced of the centrality of the Trinity was known to have expressed disappointment that his congregation had largely ignored scripture and the historical process of the Church’s interpretation of it. Edwards cared a great deal about how the divine attributes conditioned everything about God and humanity.¹⁸ Likewise, William Danaher Jr. built upon the Trinity using the scriptural platform for his Episcopal tradition.¹⁹

The principal German idealist with an interest in the Trinity in the nineteenth century was Georg Hegel (1770-1831) who was a

¹⁷ Philip Cary, “Barth Wars: A Review of Reading Barth with Charity,” *First Things* (2015), vol. 252, p.52.

¹⁸ Gerald R. McDermott and Harold A. Netland, *Trinitarian Theology of Religions: An Evangelical Proposal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹⁹ Danaher, *The Trinitarian Ethics of Jonathan Edwards*, 1.

major influence on “logic” in Western religious philosophy. Even Friedrich Schelling (1775-1884), a dominant critique of Hegel’s key structures in modern philosophy, would accept Hegel’s critique of the reason of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) that the Trinity was the “logic of necessity.” For Hegel, a finite mode of full consciousness is only possible through a projection of oneself on to something else other than oneself. The Father to have a Son as other than himself before a coming to full self-consciousness could occur only in the life of the Holy Spirit.²⁰

Many scholars recognize that the renewal of trinitarian theology in Protestantism dates to Karl Barth (1886-1968).²¹ Barth is acknowledged as the greatest Protestant theologian of this century. Barth, however, did not view the Holy Bible as a revelation and as the communication of the mysterious truth of the Trinity but that the

²⁰ Hegel’s trinitarian logic is founded in his development of the “spirit” in history. He could be seen literalizing the notion of spirit in different cultures. The spirit contributes towards a person’s being and progress by instilling a self-consciousness of the cosmos - God itself. The pantheistic legacy inherited by Hegel meant that he had no problem in considering an objective *outer* world beyond any particular subjective mind. But this objective world itself had to be understood as conceptually informed: it was *objectified* spirit. Hegel postulated a form of *absolute* idealism by including both subjective life and the objective cultural practices on which subjective life depended within the dynamics of the development of the self-consciousness and self-actualization of God, the *Absolute* Spirit (Paul Redding, "Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2018 Edition, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/hegel/> (12/10/2019); also Michael Schulz, “The Trinitarian Concept of Essence and Substance,” in Maspero and Woźniak, *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology*, 147.

²¹ Grenz, *The Social God*, 3–4.

revelation was primarily in Jesus Christ (*CD I/1*, 295) and the doctrine of the Trinity was an explication of the fact that God was revealed in Jesus Christ.²² Barth's dialectical theology stressed that the Trinity, therefore, was not a proposition, but an event: "*God reveals Himself. He reveals Himself through Himself. He reveals Himself*" (*CD I/1*, 296).

Barth's idealistic acceptance of the Trinity should not confuse the subjectivity of God as the projection of human subjectivity. A critically realistic doctrine of the Trinity begins with *a posteriori*, that is, with the fact of the divine self-revelation and the witness to it of the primitive Church.²³ Wolfart Pannenberg, who was critical of Barth for equating revelation with Jesus Christ, would argue instead, "revelation is the totality of history of divine action. This is because revelation is about God's rule – God's kingdom..."²⁴ Without God's self-revelation in Christ, it would not be possible to conceive God's triune nature. Thus, Samuel Powell makes note that Barth's grounding of the doctrine in the idea of revelation and his subsequent emphasis on the economic Trinity represents a notable improvement in Protestant theology.²⁵ Despite the different approaches, there is the general acceptance of the doctrine in

²² *Ibid*, 61–62.

²³ Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 249–251.

²⁴ Samuel Powell, "Rethinking Trinitarian Theology," 62.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 56.

Christianity as a whole, which is central to Christian dogma for understanding the nature and identification of “God.” This sublime faith is manifested in the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist.

Theology

Trinitarian theology is the ontological unity between the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, as well as the link between the Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit. The Trinity portrays the constitution of God as of three “persons” as conceived from the scripture (Mk 15:3, 14:36, 15:34; Mt 15:46, 27:46; Lk 3:22, 4:1, 4:18, 4:21, 11:2, 11:13, 23:46; Jn 19:30). This triune ontology expresses God’s nature not as a monism but as a social being that shares life within the self (*communio*), a form of life that exposes the relatedness “to-be-with, being-with-others or interconnectedness (*communication*).”²⁶ The term “person” is understood as a center of consciousness and is often assumed univocally to apply as much to the divine hypostases as it does to human beings in general.²⁷ This trinitarian doctrine emerged in the fourth century, largely due to the efforts of Athanasius and the Cappadocians (330–389), who responded to the doctrinal challenges of Arius (c. 255), strongly supported by Bishop Eunomius in Cappadocia (c. 335–c. 394).²⁸

²⁶ Gilbert Greshake, “Trinity as Communio,” in Maspero, and Woźniak, *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology*, 334.

²⁷ Stephen R. Holmes, *The Holy Trinity: Understanding God’s Life* (UK: Authentic Media, 2001), 200.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

Arianism refused to accept the Council of Nicaea (325) that Christ was of the same nature as God. In the Latin West, these Christological and trinitarian questions were taken up by Augustine.²⁹

The concept of Trinity is Christological epistemology. It is an account of how a Christian “ascends in thought and desire towards understanding in reverse order the route laid out by the Word’s humble assumption of humanity” – the *Logos* who is Jesus Christ.³⁰ To say that God is Trinity is to say that there is *no* divine being without a relationship. Trinity is the relationship of Godself in the dynamics of God’s life, and the character of that dynamic is love.³¹ Thus, when Christians come to know and act as people in love – as God is love – they delve into the question of the relationship between situ trinitarian theology and personal self-perfection,³² as humans are created in God’s image and likeness. The Trinity provides the theological framework – the *communion* – for restoring the lost nature of *imago Dei* in our fallen world.

²⁹ Lewis Ayres, “Into the Cloud of Witnesses: Catholic Trinitarian Theology Beyond and Before its Modern Revivals,” in Woźniak and Maspero, *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology*, 17-25.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 19.

³¹ Alastair I. McFadyen, *Bound to Sin: Abuse, Holocaust, and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 9–10; Danaher, *The Trinitarian Ethics of Jonathan Edwards*, 185–186.

³² Stefan Oster, “Becoming a Person and the Trinity,” in Maspero and Woźniak, *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology*, 355.

Trinitarian *Communio*

The Trinity is *communio* supported by reason. It is a communion joined in a common existential society that ties them to a life of common good in which each person is dependent on the other.³³ In human terms, it is a relationship of oneness drawn from the world that can be applied to understanding God analogically.³⁴ It relates to the union with one another. The idea that “we may all be one” (Jn 17:21) – *ut omnes unum sint*– is the basis for a society where we live in harmony with nature and one another.

Everyone is a child of God as God created everyone in his likeness. Aquinas was certain that created after God’s image signified humankind has the capacity for understanding, making free decisions, and having mastery of oneself (*Summa* I, q.93, a.5). Hegel also transferred the essence of the substance of the Trinity to a human subject, which became the building block of Hegel’s philosophy of religion. As pointed out by Michael Schulz, “If a person becomes a person with a gift of self to others (*Hingabe*), then God’s three-personality becomes easier to understand.”³⁵ The divine persons are God’s personality in an act of reciprocal transfer of self.³⁶ Put differently the *communio* is a “community” that is

³³ Ibid, 333.

³⁴ Greshake, “Trinity as *Communio*,” 334.

³⁵ Schulz, “The Trinitarian Concept of Essence and Substance,” in Maspero, and Woźniak, *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology*, 147.

³⁶ Ibid, 150.

“associated with the static being-together of different persons.” In this way, humanity as an authentic community functions as a family.³⁷

Communio is “the very event of the mediation of particular with the many, the part with the whole, the different with the identical.”³⁸ This corresponds to the *koinonia* in Neo-Platonic philosophical terms, which is the communication between friends where everything is common. This led to the Latin expression *Bonum est communicativum sui*, meaning “goodness always spreads.” It is a notion of the highest philosophical expression of the concept of God: “All unity is formed after the One, and all plurality somehow participates in the One.”³⁹ This is the nature of trinitarianism that the *communio* is *ad intra* which is constituent of the divine *ad extra* when God communicates to Jesus of Nazareth through the power of the Holy Spirit. The presence of Jesus Christ is the self-communication of God to humans.

The trinitarian concepts Three-in-One or One-in-Three concepts are less of a conundrum when understood as an integrated and interlinked component of what the term “God” means. It is the personality that is expressed or that emerges when Christians live

³⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, *The Garden of God: Toward a Human Ecology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2012), xvi.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 334.

³⁹ Franz-Josef Eilers, “Communication Theology: Some Considerations,” http://www.freinademetzcenter.org/pdf/Communication_Theology.pdf (25/07/ 2016),

out their Baptism and the Eucharist. The meaning of the Trinity is derived from the knowledge and experience of God through Jesus Christ, who reveals God's economic relations with creation as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰ Importantly, it is the recognition that, "if the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Mk 12:29), then any one of the three persons in that oneness would also involve the presence and activity of the other two.⁴¹

The Trinity conveys that our God having created the world has not left it to its destiny and is merely in the heavens. Rather, our triune God is intimately connected to the world and is present in it. Thus:

To divide the Trinity by separating the work of one person from the work of the other two is to violate the [trinitarian] logic of the [Gospels], that since each of the persons coinheres in the other two, it is impossible for one person to be separated from the other two.⁴²

Therefore, we should be cautious in viewing Christ as an aspect of the Spirit's mission, instead of viewing the Spirit as a function of Christ.⁴³ We should avoid any possible misrepresentation in Pauline scholarship that emphasizes the Son at the expense of the Spirit. This concern has been noted among evangelicals based on Romans (3 and 4) of God's plan-through-

⁴⁰ McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 82.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 54.

⁴² *Ibid*.

⁴³ Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-University, 1996), 80.

Israel-for-the-world, which is worked out through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ in his propitiatory death on the cross. Through this, we are declared righteous. But as the leading Anglican scriptural scholar Bishop NT Wright warns, there is more to this covenantal justification of having a too restricted understanding of Paul, as though justification were the whole of Paul's theology. What often goes unrecognized is also Paul's stress of the different gifts of the Spirit distributed throughout the body of Christ (1Cor 12:12-30; Rom 12:4-8), the Church, that "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Rom 5:5); again only by the power and experience of the Holy Spirit (1Thess 1:5), Paul asserted, that his followers had come to experience the love of God, and thus their salvation.⁴⁴

Modern theologies of the Trinity can broadly be grouped into two categories: the *communio* is personal and social. Both have a significant bearing on *imago Dei* and the sacramentality of Christian living without prejudicing God's indivisibility, as both are aspects of the one same God.

⁴⁴ N. T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-University, 2009), 10–11, 106–7, 188–89, 252; also Michael F. Bird, Christoph Heilig, and J. Thomas Hewitt (eds.), *God and the Faithfulness of Paul A Critical Examination of the Pauline Theology of N.T. Wright* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 3-20

***Communio* in the Personal God**

Scripture states, “In the beginning ... God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them” (Gen 1:27) and “God blessed them” (Gen 1:28). Sin, which deviates humankind from God’s perfect standard of holiness is restored in the new life in Christ. Baptism is the first step towards restoring the relationship that had been severed by sin, a bond underlined by the triune love of God as Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit that assigns the birth of a new being as Christians in the realm of God’s activity as Creator. This renewed personhood commits believers to be witnesses of this divine love for fellow human beings. We all become one in Christ. The *communio* is the Eucharist, the body and blood of Christ that regularly brings us to close contact with Jesus Christ.⁴⁵ Christ’s presence in Word and Sacrament, in priest and people, which is real and active brings us to a life in Christ in this world.

An important step towards this direction is to achieve a state of self-perfection, that is, a likeness to the divine goodness. In the analogy to the way of Jesus himself, the redeemed person’s identification with Christ means that the believer is a “concrete individual,” who in contrast to abstract, isolated or dehumanized individual or a mere mouthpiece, is capable of judgment and make a

⁴⁵ Bernard Cooke, *Sacraments and Sacramentality* (Mystic, CT.: Twenty-Third, 1999), 10.

difference to the community by constantly growing in similarity to Christ. When Paul says, “it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in him” (Gal 2:20) he did not mean negating one’s selfhood but rather that Paul’s most primal selfhood is more realized. By *communio sanctorum* the profiled *Gestalt* of the believer, that is, the perception of wholeness of oneself is achieved in and through the relationship with Christ by the action of the Holy Spirit. This *Gestalt* psychology to acquire and maintain meaningful perceptions of life occurs above all in the loving-knowing person.⁴⁶

Augustine developed this trinitarian anthropology from an intellectual and psychological base by stressing the inner dimensions of God as a triune person. For Augustine, the whole of theology and life flowed from God. His trinitarianism provided the template for considering the Trinity as part of our lives. For Augustine, the human likeness of God was situated in the mind or soul. In *De Trinitate* (Book X, 11, 12), Augustine regarded the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as a unity of *memoria sui*, *intelligentia sui* and *voluntas sui* – that is, unity of the mind (thoughts), heart (understanding) and volition (will).⁴⁷ This became

⁴⁶ Oster, “Becoming a Person and the Trinity,” 358

⁴⁷ Augustine (ed. Schaff), “On the Holy Trinity,” in *NPNF*, vol. 3, Book X, 134–143; also Grenz, *The Social God*, 16; Ayres, “Into the Cloud of Witnesses,” 17–19.

the basis of the human self's triad of being, knowing, and will.⁴⁸ Augustine's Trinity is *in situ* (on-site).

Augustine's trinitarianism has been extensively but unjustly criticized as "ultimate philosophical monism."⁴⁹ It had been claimed that Augustine's quest for the Trinity isolated God within the soul and this risked reducing the Trinity to theological irrelevance, for it could be asked in what way the doctrine of the Trinity might, in other ways, throw light on the human condition.⁵⁰ Such a claim arises only from insulating oneself from God's inner trinitarian nature that otherwise could be the *imago Dei* of Christian personhood. The Augustinian account of God operated within a trinitarian understanding of God and importantly the critiques overlook how this could transform the psychic of a person to one of love and charity in the image of God.

Trinitarian faith is more than mere rhetorical or speculative philosophy. The baptismal faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit conditions and actualizes human behaviours of believers at a personal level. This personal love is the first step important step towards building a coherent society: "If love is to be born and to

⁴⁸ John R. Franke, "God is Love," in *Trinitarian Theology for the Church*, eds. Daniel T. Treier and David Lauber (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009), 109–110.

⁴⁹ Ayres, "Into the Cloud of Witnesses," 3.

⁵⁰ Colin E. Gunton, "Trinity, Ontology and Anthropology," in Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton (eds.), *Persons, Divine and Human*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 49.

become firmly established it must find an individualized heart, on individualized face.”⁵¹ The criticism waged upon Cartesian’s *cogito ergo sum* as “intellicentric arrogance” therefore seems unduly harsh when it overlooks the vital role of critical anthropocentrism in the cosmos and as forming a key part of God’s plan for the universe.⁵²

Indeed, there is much appeal in the secular world for ethical individualism, which is the philosophical position of an individual who regards his/her conscience or reason as the only moral rule that should have any bearing in one’s life, and that there is no objective authority or standard by society, state, or religion that one is bound to take into account.⁵³ It is what Kant describes as “autonomous morality.”⁵⁴ In other words, each person is sovereign and is an end in oneself; that he/she alone is the fundamental unit of moral concern and is therefore free to choose to be selfish or not. Jürgen Moltmann refers to this as “possessive individualism,” that is, the idea that “everyone is a self-possessing, self-disposing center of

⁵¹ Tiellhard de Chardin, “My Fundamental Vision,” in *Toward the Future* (New York: Harcourt Jovanovich, 1975), 187. (Emphasis is added).

⁵² *Ibid*, Preface n. 45-46.

⁵³ Craig Biddle, “Individualism vs. Collectivism: Our Future, Our Choice,” in *The Objective Standard* (2012), vol. 7/1, www.theobjectivestandard.com/issues/2012-pring/individualism-collectivism/ (10/03/2017).

⁵⁴ Robert Johnson, “Kant’s Moral Philosophy,” in *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, 2016, (Book-on-line) <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-moral/> <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-moral/> (15/07/2016).

action which sets itself apart from other persons.”⁵⁵ The celebrated eighteenth-century political thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his *Social Contract* challenged the individualistic way of life by developing the first modern theory of nationalism.⁵⁶ He drew attention to individualism – a form of ignorance and submission to one’s passion – which is self-love that is “distinct from the salutary *amour de Soi*” (or self-love based on preservation), that brings about the following trajectory of social and individual decline such as vanity, contempt, shame, envy, ambition, concluding with inequality.⁵⁷

Augustine’s Trinity is foundational for Christian personhood as it is directed by love to help achieve the greatest good for the benefit of all, even at the expense of one’s freedom. In this regard, we are especially mindful of Baptism that is potentially self-transcendent by bringing meaning to life at a personal level. The inner unified essence of God’s triune nature is the analogy of Christian personhood. It is personhood that can be expressed as individualism or liberalism that carries with it a sense of

⁵⁵ Jürgen Moltmann (trans. Margaret Kohl), *Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1981), 145.

⁵⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses* (Great Britain: Everyman, 1999).

⁵⁷ Seth David Halverson, “Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the Core Curriculum,” <https://www.college.columbia.edu/core/content/jean-jacques-rousseau> (5/5/2018).

responsibility, reason, justice, and honesty, which were revealed in Jesus Christ. Put differently, Baptism revives the trace of the Trinity that can be recognized in every creature. To quote Aquinas, “There is a created substance (*substantia*) that represents the cause and principle, which is love that comes from the Holy Spirit of the Creator” (*Summa I*, q. 45, a.7). The human body cannot be the principle that accounts for life, since the body, when deprived of life is still a body but not alive. The body matters to the soul, and the soul is form or act to the potentiality of the body. In other words, a human cannot be merely a mind without a body (*Summa I*, q.76, a.1).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (n.362 - n.265) refers to this unity, which is Augustinian but differs from the dualism in the Greek notion of body and soul.⁵⁸ This oneness of body and soul is a perspective that makes it possible to advance a theological framework for discussing human personhood and relationality in the context of the Trinity. In this regard, our own personality can be said to be triune where this unity is actualized in a family where the “father,” the “mother,” and the “children” love one another without any reservation, and live as one, even though we may never have

⁵⁸ Howard Robinson, “Dualism,” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2016, (Book-on-line, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dualism/> (25/5/2018).

that same level of a perfect union as compared to the internal unity of God-self.⁵⁹

Christological and trinitarian debates have shaped Christian (and western) understanding of the *person*.⁶⁰ The robust investigation of Philip Rolnick on the concept of a *person* calls us to think about a person not just psychologically – that is based on a set of traits or behaviours – but also theologically in the development of the *person*. This work, which traces the development of the pre-Christian ancient Greek, Etruscan, and Latin cultures and right through for Christian thought of the early Church councils to Augustine, Boethius, and Aquinas indicate that understanding the *person* underlies virtually every Christian doctrine. What is most at stake is that Christian personhood is best understood as analogous to divine personhood.⁶¹

The starting point of knowing God is based on a premise on human analogies that illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity. Human personality is a synthetic unity of reason, love, and will, a unity that is bound inseparably in Christian thought. The Trinity *in situ* is

⁵⁹ Paul M. Collins, *Trinitarian Theology, West and East: Karl Barth, the Cappadocian Fathers, and John Zizoulas* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2001), 106.

⁶⁰ Philip A. Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 49, (Book-on-line) <https://books.google.com.au/books> (28/08/2015); also Ewert Cousins, “The Theology of Interpersonal Relations,” in *Thought* (1970), vol. 45/1 pp. 56-82.

⁶¹ Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God*, 189.

intelligible considering the analogy drawn from the consciousness of our personality, and which is dogmatically defined by the assistance of that analogy. Thus, the thesis of a personal God can affirm the main traditional proofs of God's existence – cosmological, teleological, ontological, and moral. The triune constitution of human personhood is the projection of the triune being of God, the *imago Dei*, as “the incarnation reveals the perfect being of God as the archetype of humanity's potential being.”⁶²

Christian personhood, therefore, finds its identity in the humanity of God in Christ. God “uses human words and concepts, human hands and lips, human history in its glory and tragedy” as exemplified in Jesus Christ.⁶³ Thus, the Trinity of God explains the potential trinity of man; and what follows is our anthropomorphic language or expressions from our theomorphic minds. The Trinity (in terms of a personal God) establishes not only what it means to be a person, but also “the status of personhood in our conceptual and practical interaction with one another and with the world.”⁶⁴

Of special interest to the present study is the refinement to Augustine's psychological oneness of God's unity by Richard St.

⁶² Christoph Schwöbel, “Introduction,” in Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton, *Persons, Divine and Human, King's College Essays in Theological Anthropology* (Edinburgh, UK: T&T Clark, 1991), 3.

⁶³ Robin M. Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity: Ritual, Visual, and Theological Dimensions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 75.

⁶⁴ Schwöbel, “Introduction,” in Schwöbel and Gunton, *Persons, Divine and Human*, 3.

Victor, which has an important bearing in Christian personhood. For Richard, the Trinity is the “epistemology of illumination and its metaphysics of exemplarism” that occur when a Christian examines his or her possession of charity because charity is perfection and God possesses the fullness of perfection.⁶⁵ Thus, the basic insight into the nature of revealing the sharing of this perfection, which although limited, is found in interpersonal relationships. One will discover there is nothing better or more pleasing than charity. Nature itself teaches this lesson and so do varied experiences. God’s relationality is the vision of humanity as the image of God.⁶⁶ Therefore, the “most distinctive and original element” is not that one prefers charity to love, but that one finds within oneself a “reflection of the Trinity (that forms) the basis for developing a trinitarian theology.”⁶⁷ Charity is the highest perfection and requires self-transcending love for another person. This is the essence of the Trinity: “Where there is only one person, charity cannot exist.”⁶⁸

Another Catholic theologian Paul D. Molnar also endorses Richard’s inspiring identification and contribution to his love, which is trinitarian within oneself. In dialogue with his Protestant counterparts, especially Barth and Torrance he identifies more accurately that economic Trinity is the interaction of divine and

⁶⁵ Cousins, “The Theology of Interpersonal Relations,” p. 67.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 68; Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God*, 48.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

human in one's sphere of faith and knowledge. From this emerges his pneumatology that establishes most effectively that God is perfectly free about us and frees us through grace. In other words, it is not our work that saves us but rather God entirely and miraculously revealing himself to us through Christ by the power of the Spirit.⁶⁹

Trinity is a concept of God's interior life that ontologically inspires and modulates a Christian person. It is "the non-bodily" trinitarian theology of unity and love that stresses the relations involving all dimensions of our reality, especially in love for one another.⁷⁰ Traditionally, the likeness was based on certain faculties held by a person, but here the focus is on the ontology of personhood. The theology of Christian personhood as imaging God's inner Trinity can be summed up in this way:

To be in the image of God is at once to be created as a particular kind of being – a person – and to be called to realize a certain destiny. The shape of that destiny is to be found in God-given forms of human community and of human responsibility to the universe.⁷¹

We can share Augustine's understanding of the Trinity that as an aspect of God's overall trinitarianism, it is personalized theology

⁶⁹ Paul D. Molnar, *Faith, Freedom and the Spirit: The Economic Trinity in Barth, Torrance and Contemporary Theology* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015).

⁷⁰ Gunton, "Trinity, Ontology and Anthropology," 61.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

which offers an insightful approach to God's nature about oneself and as such has an important bearing on a person as an individual. Individuality imitates God's role as Creator. Thus, it can be argued that God's word initiates the creature's activity. In other words, "God's making, doing and creating surround and transcend the creature's own activity" in a person and in this way, "God's activity keeps the creature's own activity dependent and under control."⁷² Christian personhood is consistent with God's inner *communio* that the sacraments instill in believers. Human inner qualities become the starting point for a successful enterprise of restoring the divine kingdom.

It must also be recognized that God's image is a being in relation, without remainder relational. Thus:

To be is not to be an individual; it is not to be isolated from others, cut off from them by the body that is a tomb, but in some way to be bound up with another in relationships.⁷³

Being a person is therefore about being from and for and with the other. Persons are beings who exist only in relation to God, to others, and to the world from which they come. Humankind is given the gift of a choice of personhood that can be analogously applied to God, to Christ, and man. The key and center for understanding this

⁷² Michael Welker, "What is Creation?" in *Theology Today* 1991, vol. 48/1, p.62.

⁷³ Colin E. Gunton, *Father, Son and the Holy Spirit: Essays Toward a Fully Trinitarian Theology* (New York: Continuum, 2003).16.

gift are to seek “to be oneself, in order to give oneself, or to be as self-giving;” in other words, being a person is a gift,⁷⁴ a reality that can be found in the Trinity, where God’s relation to humankind is expressed in the paschal mystery. It is what Hans von Balthasar referred to as “receptive existence.”⁷⁵

The origin of the divine essence of this gift is in the *hypostasis* (Gk. for *individuals*) or persons of God the Father who is the total capacity of a gift without reserving anything for himself, in the Son, and in the giving of the Holy Spirit that has engendered everything for humanity.⁷⁶ As Paul stated, “He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?” (Rom 8:32). In the Trinity, the paternity of God is transformed into the source, foundation, and model of human and spiritual paternity as *imago Dei* for humankind. Although the New Testament does not explain the Trinity explicitly, it reflects, “there is a relation in God, an alterity, a dialogue, a space. God is unique, but not solitary.”⁷⁷

From scriptural and theological viewpoints, it is possible to articulate how God incarnate in the Eucharist can uniquely affect

⁷⁴ Ángel Cordovilla Pérez, “The Trinitarian Concept of Person,” in Maspero and Woźniak, *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology*, 139.

⁷⁵ H. Urs von Balthasar, *Theologie der Geschichte; En Grundris* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1959), 23-30; also Pérez, “The Trinitarian Concept of Person,” 139.

⁷⁶ Pérez, “The Trinitarian Concept of Persons,” 41.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 143.

one's personality. This is done by uniting with God so that the whole human race is one: "there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). That is, by this *hypostatic union* – the unity of divine and human natures – the Trinity secures the universality of an inclusive conception of personality as the essence of what it means to be human. This personality is characterized by unity in "holiness" and sets a new standard of human personhood – a quality of life that reflects justice and the common good.

The incarnation provides the foundation of humanism in terms of a sense of belonging, or communalism, as opposed to indifference and isolationism. Christians live for one another. This union of the natural and divine personality gains an exemplary expression in the Cappadocian trinitarian theology, where human existence is a unity based on God's relational image.⁷⁸ In this sense, human existence translates to a social model for humanity as *imago Dei* from the relationship with God of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in a communion of quintessential love. At the same time, as had been the experience of the Cappadocians who were emphatic that even if they could define divine paternity, words such as "begotten," "unbegotten," "generate," and "unregenerate" did *not* express the one *substance* (Latin, *ousia*) of God, but only the

⁷⁸ John Zizioulas, "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Significance of the Cappadocian Contribution," in Schwöbel (ed.), *Trinitarian Theology Today*, 49.

characteristic of the divine *hypostasis* of how God relates to us.⁷⁹ Using the category of *relation*, the Cappadocians developed a novel ontology that connected *personhood* and *relationship* by distinguishing the oneness of *substance* as *essence* (or *ousia*) away from the relationship of substance (*hypostasis*) that is identifiable in the personhood of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.⁸⁰

It is proper to regard God not as a substance but as a relational or communal being of divine persons. As noted earlier the term “person” refers to a center of consciousness and is often assumed univocally applied as much to the divine *hypostases* as it is to human beings in general. In other words, being a person means being a human being committed to other human beings in giving and taking and it is this relationship that confers the identity of a person. A person is therefore identified by one’s “I-Thou” relationship that reflects the triune relationship of the persons of the Trinity rather than by one’s individualism and its isolationist tendencies.⁸¹ Being a Christian is to be a social being who does not live just for oneself alone. He or she is a communal person. This *hypostasis*, or persona, arises from relationships among one another. Therefore, human

⁷⁹ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (USA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 57.

⁸⁰ Stephen R. Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012).

⁸¹ Robert A. Krieg, “Kardinal Ratzinger, Max Schler und eine Grundfrage der Christologie,” in *Theologische Quartalschrift* (1980), vol. 160, p 109; also Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 68.

personality and divine personhood can be understood as “irreducibly Trinitarian” because it consists of a subject, an object, and their relation, as in the Father-Son relation to the Holy Spirit. The difference is in the case of human beings, the relation is added to the person; but in the case of God, the person simply *is* relationality.⁸²

Philosophically, this relationship element becomes vital when one thinks, desires, or wills with oneself as an object. One cannot think, desire, or will without an object; the Holy Spirit mediates this. Through Baptism, the Holy Spirit resides in the baptized. Conceptually, this understanding of God as a personal God is a genuine triune reflection of human self-consciousness. Importantly, Augustine’s trinitarianism as a theology of unity is this embodiment of love that becomes “the root of the social character of human personality.” Christian personhood can, therefore, be described as the process of the realization of one’s potential to form personal relationships with others.⁸³

The Trinity defines and guards the essence of Christianity so that the divine humanity of Jesus Christ – the hypostatic union of nature and divine – could be stated anthropomorphically. As such, the Trinity has a practical objective: to achieve a personal union with the living Christ that can be felt not just *ad-intra* or just within

⁸² Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 68.

⁸³ Schwöbel, “Introduction,” in Schwöbel and Gunton, *Persons, Divine and Human*, 2.

oneself and self-consuming but *ad-extra* that can be shared and experienced in association with other persons. The Trinity identifies the social dynamics of Godself.

***Communio* in the Social God**

The Cappadocians were the earliest in emphasizing the *communio* of the social God.⁸⁴ St. Basil the Great (c.330-c.379), the father of Eastern communal monasticism, was exemplary in this regard which translated the *communio* into Christian living through the provision of an estate at Caesarea for the needy by providing “indwelling-houses, a church, a hospital for the sick, a hospice for travellers, a staff of doctors, nurses, and artisans, the whole of such a scale so to be called a new town.”⁸⁵ This form of divine exposition can also be attributed to the thoughts of theological scholars such as Augustine, Luther, and Kant.⁸⁶

In the twentieth century, German idealists revived Trinity’s cardinal importance of the *communio* of the social God developed by the Cappadocians. Following the reformation, however, in places like Poland, Hungary, and Italy, there was an overt rejection of this doctrine by some thinkers.⁸⁷ But as noted by Christophe Chalamet

⁸⁴ Samuel M. Powell, *The Trinity in German Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁸⁵ Donald Attwater, *Dictionary of Saints* (London, UK: Penguin, 1983), 56.

⁸⁶ Schwöbel, “Introduction,” in Schwöbel and Gunton, *Persons, Divine and Human*, 1995, 2.

⁸⁷ Powell, “Rethinking Trinitarian Theology,” in Maspero and Woźniak (eds.), *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology*, 50.

and Marc Vial,⁸⁸ there was also a rediscovery of trinitarian thought at the turn of the last century in at least two important ways.

The *first* is the Christocentric approach led by Barth, who understood God in the relational terms of Revealer (*Offenbarer*), Revelation (*Offenbarung*), and Revealedness (*Offenbarsein*) rather than as three persons (*CD I/1*, 295). He believed there were neither three personalities in God, nor were there three distinct gods but one God, in one essence (*CD I/1*, 351). The Barthian trinitarian structure was an explication of the fact that God revealed himself in Jesus Christ, the Word of God, which was simultaneously the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth. For Barth, revelation, therefore, was primarily given in Jesus Christ. For Barth, God was constituted as the Holy Trinity, but determined by a free inner-trinitarian decision to be the same God also to us. As Barth saw it, God was free to reiterate himself in time precisely as the Holy Trinity is in eternity, and always would be in eternity, in and for itself, even if time did not exist. Barth's whole point stressed that God would be the Holy Trinity without us, that God did not need the world to be God, nor, furthermore, God did not need it to be constituted as the Holy Trinity, because God as was the Holy Trinity before and independently of the world. The Trinity was the foundation of his dogmatic and it would be difficult to conceive a view more contrary

⁸⁸ Christophe Chalamet and Marc Vial (eds.), *Recent Developments in Trinitarian Theology: An International Symposium* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2014).

to Barth than one that makes the Holy Trinity a mere function of God's relationship to the world. For Barth, God's act of pre-temporal election was free self-determination of God's prior existence as the Holy Trinity.⁸⁹

The eternal Son of God was always none other than Jesus Christ, for he was the one who from the beginning had chosen to be this one man. God eternally determined his own identity as humanity's covenant partner, that is, all of God's acts, including the choice to be incarnate, are eternal. Therefore, this one being of God, in Bruce McCormack's term, is always "being in correspondence" – a correspondence between what God is in the economy and what God is his eternal decision to be the God of the covenant.⁹⁰ Accordingly, any decision to reverse the logical order between Trinity and election does fatal damage to the doctrine of God as what we then have, in some measure, is a dependent deity, i.e., "a deity whose very being is constituted, shaped or transformed by created history." But a dependent deity is truly incapable of acting decisively for us in history as the living God does.⁹¹

Barth's contemporary, Rahner revitalized this relational understanding that superseded Aquinas's scholasticism. Rahner's

⁸⁹ George Hunsinger, "Election and the Trinity: Twenty-Five Theses on the Theology of Karl Barth," in *Modern Theology* (2008), vol. 24/2, p.195.

⁹⁰ Bruce McCormack, "The Lord and Giver of Life: A 'Barthian' Defense of the Filioque," in Maspero and Wozniak (eds.), *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology*, 240.

⁹¹ Molnar, *Faith, Freedom and the Spirit*, 186.

theology underpinned the understanding of *communio* by the *hypostatic union* in the incarnation.⁹² Incarnation has both anthropological and theological significance as Jesus Christ the *Godman*, which is the anthropic principle of the unity of the two natures – divine and human – in the second person of the Trinity. Therefore, Rahner insisted that the incarnation alone is “intrinsic, not merely accidental, to the meaning of human existence.”⁹³ Rahner insisted on the essential unity between *oikonomia* (the nature of God in the economy of salvation)⁹⁴ and *theologia* as the fundamental framework for Christian theology. Rahner’s principle, which is widely supported in Catholic and Protestant theology, stated that “the economic Trinity *is* the immanent Trinity, and immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity,”⁹⁵ that is, theology is inseparable from soteriology and vice versa. The rationale was that a God who reveals himself to humankind must enter the nature of truth and love, which are the basic precepts of trinitarianism. In this regard, Rahner was consistent with Barth in that the Trinity was the eternal nature of God before and after creation.

One can argue from the perspective of the world that it is the history in which it will be finally demonstrated that the trinitarian

⁹² Karl Rahner (trans. Joseph Donceel), *The Trinity* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1997), 9–34.

⁹³ Min, *Paths to the Triune God*, 85.

⁹⁴ LaCugna, *God for Us*, 2.

⁹⁵ Rahner, *The Trinity*, 22.

God is the only true God.⁹⁶ This is an account of God's revelation or fact of religion, which "may be a mystery of faith, but it is rationally transparent to philosophical reason."⁹⁷ The Barth-Rahner approach is particularly important as it captures the focus of the Greek patristic fathers especially the Saints, Athanasius, Basil the Great, Chrysostom, and Cyril of Jerusalem in the light of the theology of grace and divinity received through the sacraments. It does not tolerate an isolated position in the total dogmatic system.

The *second* approach is Christological, where the focus is on "the Son" as the Father's Son who becomes prominent through the Spirit's active involvement in and beyond the Christian community. Pannenberg, who had been critical of Barth's approach to revelation, argued that revelation is the totality of history as the field of action. This is because revelation is about God's rule: God's kingdom. Pannenberg's trinitarian hermeneutics especially drew attention to the Spirit of God as the mediator of Jesus's community, with the Father and believers participating in Christ.⁹⁸ Pannenberg sought recognition of the Spirit's role in the resurrection and depicted the dependence of the Father and the Son on the Spirit as the medium of

⁹⁶ Christoph Schwöbel, "Wolfhart Pannenberg," in D. F. Ford (ed.), *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 276.

⁹⁷ Dalferth, "The Eschatological Roots," 155.

⁹⁸ Wolfhart Pannenberg (trans. George W. Bromiley), *Systematic Theology I, vol.2* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 308–319.

their community.⁹⁹ Pannenberg found that the Spirit is at the heart of the dynamic trinitarian relationship. In his terms, the Spirit functions as a dynamic force. The Father and Son are in unity, and therefore their divine essence is realized only through their relations to the Spirit. Thus, the Spirit is a distinct hypostasis only by its relation to and fellowship with the Father and Son in their differentiation.

The dynamic of divine love provides a solution not only to the problem of the unity of the triune persons in the immanent Trinity but also the problem of the unity of the immanent and the economic Trinity – of the immanence and the transcendence. The experience of believers mirrors that of trinitarian relations. As the Spirit unites believers with God, it also unites them with one another and thereby creates the Church. The fact that the Holy Spirit was poured out upon all believers identifies this community as the recipient of end-time universal salvation.¹⁰⁰ By this line of trinitarian thinking it is possible to conclude that the *monarchia* of the Father must be understood as resulting from the cooperation of all three persons in the divine economy.¹⁰¹

Importantly too is Jürgen Moltmann's trinitarian hermeneutics of the Trinity, which offers the means for achieving

⁹⁹ Ibid, vol. 1, chap. 5.

¹⁰⁰ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, chap. 13.

¹⁰¹ Schwöbel, "Wolfhart Pannenberg," 276.

radical social and political change,¹⁰² The creation was the expression of God's self-communicative love from which it is possible to discern *three* inherent social transcendentals of the Trinity, which together constitute the social or communal nature of God: *relationship*, *substantiality*, and *perichoresis*, which are relevant for human relations.¹⁰³

Social Transcendentals of Trinity

Philosophically, the unity of trinitarian relationality enhances the development of an ideal human society that is uniquely Christian. It depends on three qualities of life that Christians understand as "open transcendentals" of the Trinity. These contribute towards human oneness as a community.

(i) Perichoresis: the principle of "unity with diversity."

In Greek *perichoresis* (περιχώρησις) means "mutual interpenetration," that is, a reciprocal interrelation. This term has been used to characterize the mutually internal abiding in the trinitarian sense of both divine nature and of their unity from the time of Pseudo-Cyril of Alexandria (c. 376-444).¹⁰⁴ St. John of Damascus (c.675-749) explains that in perichoresis each person must be in each other without any coalescence. It can be described as

¹⁰² Richard Bauckham, "Moltmann's Theology: An Overview," in *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995).

¹⁰³ Jürgen Moltmann and Elizabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *Humanity in God* (London: SCM, 1984).

¹⁰⁴ Ioanna Sahinidou, "Christological Perichoresis," in *Open Journal of Philosophy* (2014), vol. 4, pp.552-553.

co-indwelling, co-inhering, and mutual interpenetration without compromising the individuality of the persons so that each person shares in the life of the other. It is often used to express the idea of a “community of being” of a person wherein each person, “while maintaining his/her distinctive identity, penetrates the others and is penetrated by them.”¹⁰⁵ Importantly, often the critics of perichoresis unity are not aware of its scriptural source from which Christian personhood can be related: “so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father” (Jn 10:38, cf. 14:10-11; 17:21).

In the early church, several key fathers of the East, spoke of *theosis* or *divinization*, which is identifiable with *perichoresis*. These included the Saints Irenaeus (c.130-c.202 AD), Clement of Alexandria (c.150-205 AD), Origen (c.184-c.253), Athanasius (c.296-373 AD), Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389 AD), and Gregory of Nyssa (c.335-c.395 AD) ¹⁰⁶ *Theosis* was the process of transformation when being baptized into the Church, which is identifiable with *perichoresis*. Bulaniuk, the Orthodox theologian, characterizes *theosis* as divinization (or sometimes even deification). It refers to the omnipotent, sanctifying, divine and Triadic activity:

¹⁰⁵ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 241.

¹⁰⁶ Paul Derengowski, “Theosis of the Early Church Fathers, - <https://capro.info/theosis-of-the-early-church-fathers/> (25/5/2018))

Because of the indwelling of the Trinity and grace, and because of the inborn and natural capacity of the creature for transfiguration, induces a process of assimilation to God the Father of the whole human person, of mankind and of the visible and invisible universe in its totality, through the mediation of the incarnate Logos, Christ the Pantocrator, and in the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁷

For Christians, perichoresis or in-dwelling of the triune God is, therefore, of special significance. By the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, we are reconciled with God. Sacramentally we are infused with God's personal presence that enriches our being as people of the triune God of both giving and receiving that can be reflected in the "perichoreic" relationship of the Trinity:

The persons are what they are by virtue of what they give to and receive from each other. As such, they constitute the being of God, for there is no being of God underlying what the persons are to and from each other. God's being is a being in *relation, without remainder, relational*.¹⁰⁸

In some sense, this capacity of each person of the Godhead to be indwelt by the other while remaining as an individual can also be reflected in human beings, as we are created in the image and likeness of God. Peter spoke of the gift by which we "become participants in the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4). Believers partook in

¹⁰⁷ Petro B. T. Bulaniuk, "The Mystery of Theosis or Divinization" in David Neiman and Margaret Schatkin (eds.), *The Heritage of the Early Church*, (Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1973), 338.

¹⁰⁸ Colin E. Gunton, "Relation and Relativity: The Trinity and the Created World," in Christoph Schwöbel (ed.), *Trinitarian Theology To-day: Essays on Divine Being and Act* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 98. (Emphasis is added)

what they termed *divine energies*, but not the *divine essence*, which is unique to God alone.¹⁰⁹ It was a form of social unity that is pluralistic, meaning unity is not uniformity, which in turn referred to a plural rather than a unitary existence of people as a community. Thus, for Christians, an authentic community represents God's nature as a plural indwelling of the three persons: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Perichoresis is a model for the relationship in an authentic community that is continuous and not transient, as God is everlasting.

Like any other model of the Trinity, Moltmann's social trinitarianism has its difficulties in its ability to map intra-trinitarian relations onto intra-human relations. A major concern is that moving and appropriating from divine persons to human persons presupposes the prior move from human persons to divine persons. It amounts to defining, in the first instance, the divine persons according to our notion of human persons; only then the divine relations can inform human relations.¹¹⁰ It is a circular hypothesis that makes God in our image to find our image in God. The other weakness of social trinitarianism is that it amounts to tritheism. It can be argued that it is polytheism disguised by perichoresis, which does the work of uniting God into a single agent. In perichoresis,

¹⁰⁹ Dumitri Staniloae, "Image, Likeness and Deification in the Human Person," in *Communio* (1986), vol.13/1, pp. 64–83.

¹¹⁰ Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 2010), 220.

there is only one self-consciousness, so that when the one “I” acts in a triune way all the “others” are necessarily acting too. There is no deliberation between Father, Son, and Spirit as there is with human beings.¹¹¹ Above all, it is problematic to assume that a personal relationship *within* God is like a personal relationship *among* human beings; human persons cannot be internal to one another as subjects. In a strict sense, there can be no correspondence to the interiority of the divine persons of the Trinity. Another “human self cannot be internal to my own self as subject of action. Human persons are always external to one another *as subjects*.”¹¹²

It is important to understand that human beings are also in the Spirit (Rom 8:9), but as Volf pointed out, we are not internal to the Spirit. Thus, “the Spirit indwells human persons, whereas human beings by contrast indwell *the life giving ambience of the Spirit*, not the person of the Spirit.”¹¹³ It is vital, therefore, to discern this perichoresis unity, not in terms of mutual perichoresis, but rather, the participation and indwelling of the Holy Spirit common to everyone who makes the Church into a communion corresponding to the Trinity: “It is a communion in which personhood and sociality are equiprimal.” By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the social and natural relations of the human beings, it constitutes them

¹¹¹ Ibid, 224.

¹¹² Volf, *Free of Charge*, 210-211.

¹¹³ Ibid, 211.

through ecclesial relations as an intimate communion of independent persons that corresponds to the unity of the triune God.¹¹⁴

(ii) Substantiality: the principle of “equality in dignity.”

Substantiality (the “substance” of each person) is another term for Christian personhood. The social dynamics of the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit indicate the unique and indivisible “principle” of creation,¹¹⁵ wherein each person of the Trinity has his or her uniqueness.¹¹⁶ Christian unity is substantially analogous to this in an authentic community, as every person is seen as different and functions distinctively but with a common purpose or unity. This is analogous to a free and open transcendence in the same way that each person of the Trinity determines the work of creation in their way; but when one person of the Trinity acts the others are necessarily acting too. In short, any act of one person of the Trinity is unison with the other two.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 213.

¹¹⁵ As Augustine explains (*De Trinitate*, VI, 10,12) the external works of the Trinity are *undivided*. Thus, whatever God does outside of the divine essence, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit do like the one divine causal agent: when the Father acts, the Son and the Holy Spirit act as well. Father, Son, and Spirit are identical in their attributes, so if the Father exercises his omnipotence to create, the Son and the Spirit do so as well because the omnipotence of the Father is the omnipotence of the Son is the omnipotence of the Spirit.

¹¹⁶ Colin E. Gunton, *The One, The Three and The Many, God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1993), 212.

¹¹⁷ Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 224.

(iii) Relationality: the principle of “social being.”

Relationality, already alluded to earlier, is the social relatedness of human beings to one another by nature, which for Christians, is analogous to God’s relatedness in creation. It corresponds to Aquinas’s interpretation of the Trinity, which is communication on relationships between all elements of divinity. The Trinity proposes “perfect co-inherence, love, union, and mutual participation,” but without any loss of individual uniqueness.¹¹⁸ The Trinity provides the framework for *imago Dei*:

[It] provides a vision of God as a union of three divine [persons] or distinct, but related subjects. This specific understanding of God as a mutually loving, interacting, and sustaining society supports the theology of society.¹¹⁹

Human life takes shape within this setting of the divine nature and is founded on love for one another. These transcendentals enable people to understand the world in the context of a free personality that can be justified and developed in an open society. It is:

[A] framework which liberates rather than imprisons human life on earth, and which enables a symbiotic conception of the relation of man and nature, of kind of community which makes us neither wholly active and dominant nor wholly passive in relation to the rest of [creation].¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Danaher, *The Trinitarian Ethics of Jonathan Edwards*, 67.

¹¹⁹ John Milbank, “The Second Difference: For a Trinitarianism without Reserve,” *Modern Theology* (1986), vol. 2, p. 233.

¹²⁰ Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, 213

Importantly, the transcendentals overwhelmingly modify the nature of society. Noteworthy is the identity of the Holy Spirit as a person of the Trinity from its relative independence and work as the person in its community with the Father and the Son: “People and things are therefore gathered into the trinitarian glorification of the Son and the Father through the Spirit. In this way, people are united with God and in God himself and the Trinity is offered as a social model for humanity because it,

Provides a vision of God as a union of three divine [persons] or distinct, but related subjects. This specific understanding of God as a mutually loving, interacting, and sustaining society supports the theology of society.¹²¹

The Trinity is a progressive approach to understanding “God” as it offers “a free, creative, relationship of friendship of humanity to God in the Holy Spirit.”¹²² This ensures that God is not a closed monad, but rather a community of loving interaction. The Trinity assists in the development of a “social personalism and personalist socialism” in a united and uniting community of Christians where there is no domination and subjection. The Trinity lays the foundation for an ideal society:

¹²¹ Jürgen Moltmann (trans. Margaret Kohl), *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993, Reprint), 122-126.

¹²² Ibid.

It is a united and uniting humanity without class rule and without dictatorial oppression. That is the world in which people are defined by their social relationships and not by their power or their property. That is the world in which human beings have all things in common and share everything with one another except their personal qualities.¹²³

An authentic community therefore is: “a united and uniting humanity without class rule and without dictatorial oppression.” Christianity conceives the world as a people defined by their social relationships and not by their power or their property.¹²⁴ The Christian world envisages culturally to be communal in spirit and orientated towards having all things in common and sharing everything with one another except their personal qualities.

From a socio-theological perspective Richard Swinburne,¹²⁵ amongst others have offered analogies to revive Trinity’s social importance as the model for human society. They all position the three persons in the genus “deity.” Cornelius Plantinga Jr summarized the Trinity as a “society or community” of three divine persons with distinct “centers of knowledge” (will, love, and action), as well as distinct “centers of consciousness.”¹²⁶ Each exists

¹²³ Jürgen Moltmann, “The Trinity, Society and Politics,” in John Thompson (ed.), *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 106–107.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

¹²⁶ Plantinga, “The Social Trinity and Tritheism,” 22.

as a different species from the other two persons, which, however, leads to a suggestion of polytheism. William Lane Craig,¹²⁷ too has offered similar analogy to revive Trinity's social importance. Each person exists as a different species from the other two persons, which, however, also leads to a suggestion of polytheism. Alternatively, the *Statue-Lump Analogy* of Peter van Inwagen seeks to overcome the difficulty by defining the Trinity as "relative-sameness."¹²⁸ Here, the assumption is that things can be the *same* about one kind of thing, but *distinct* relative to another. In simple terms, it is a relationship such as "a son, a brother, and an uncle" where all are distinct, yet the same person consistent with the concept that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one God but distinct persons. This analogy is unpopular because its proponents cannot provide a clear account of what it would mean for things to be the same about one kind but distinct about another.

A comprehensible methodology, in my estimation, of articulating the Trinity is one that provides clarity in trinitarian terms of the *koinonia* or *communio* of the early Church communities. As indicated earlier, it is a methodology that establishes a link between the immanent and the transcendent. The *communio* associated with

¹²⁷ William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity, 2003).

¹²⁸ Peter van Inwagen, "And Yet They Are Not Three Gods but One God," in Thomas Morris (ed.), *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1988), 241–278.

the theological and sacramental exegesis of the Trinity offers a genuine comprehension of God's nature and character.¹²⁹ Thus, God is not to be seen or understood as an isolated, static, or ruling monarch.¹³⁰ At the same time, in the trinitarian *communio*, God is much more than the divinity of the Son and the Spirit; God is a communion.¹³¹ Building upon this patristic understanding, people who are in *communio* find themselves together behind a common embankment, i.e., "they are joined in a common existential reality, which ties them together to a life in common, to which each person is dependent on the other."¹³²

The *communio* designates the "part-taking," that is communally realized by giving and receiving. Thus, *communio* is the mediation of identity and difference – of the particular *and* the universal. What differentiates that which is different, strange or foreign is "drawn to unity by partaking in and/or the shared giving of a common reality, without thereby losing the element of their differences." Seen in this way, *communio* is essentially the social theology of the Eucharist, the *communio sanctorum* where Jesus goes to believers sacramentally with this hope: "that they may all be

¹²⁹ Franke, "God is Love," 106.

¹³⁰ Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1997), 192.

¹³¹ "Pannenberg, Trinity Sermon," <http://www.scriptoriumdaily.com/2010/02/21/pannenberg-trinity-sermon-transcendence-in-the-midst-of-our-lives/> (3/06/2013)

¹³² Greshake, "Trinity as Communio," 490.

one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me” (Jn 17:21, *NIV*).¹³³

When supported by faith, Trinity can be meaningful even though God’s nature remains a mystery. The in-depth distinction of the Trinity is the “logic of love” and the “logic of freedom,” with the cross as the expression of the self-disclosure of God’s trinitarianism and as the center of their togetherness.¹³⁴ Paul illustrated this notion of unity when he was confronted by his community in Corinth (1Cor 1: 11–12) that was quarrelling and beginning to polarize among themselves behind their favourite teacher by claiming: “I belong to Paul, or I belong to Apollos, or I belong to Cephas or I belong to Christ” (1Cor 1:10–17). Paul asked them: “Has Christ been divided?” (v.14). He told the community: “Let the one who boasts, boasts him who boasts in the Lord” (v.31).

Paul’s admonishment can be related to the divisions within Christianity, that it should be the Lord not mere humankind who should draw any comparison with what Christ had done in dying on the cross for all of humankind. Thus, for Christians, this means that the distinctiveness of our doctrinal differences is unimportant when we elevate a human teacher to the point where the allegiance shatters

¹³³ Ibid, 333–334.

¹³⁴ Pilot Malysz, *Trinity, Freedom and Love: An Engagement with the Theology of Eberhard Jüngel* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 208.

the body of Christ. We should never lose sight of the infinite and overwhelming worth of the crucified Savior (Mt 23:8).

Personal identity is a relational identity in which a person does not exist independently of the life of the person; rather, relationships give life to a person. In distinguishing the four kinds of foundational relationships – self, social environment, material environment, with God – these distinct dimensions are always together.¹³⁵ They are “constitutive dimensions of human being” and “are woven into its very fabric.”¹³⁶ This “rich relationality is primordial and therefore beyond, or rather prior to, actual choice.”¹³⁷ We can articulate how God’s triune being as a unity of love and freedom of persons can be expressed in terms of human relationality. God’s existence is God’s essence, which “must be *with me*, and *only with me*, because only *through me*, can God be present.”¹³⁸ Humans find meaningfulness in relationships, thus, Martin Buber contended in *I and Thou* our relationships ultimately take us into a relationship with the Eternal Thou, who is God.¹³⁹ Likewise liberation theologian, Leonardo Boff, insists that when one says “God,” it must always be implicitly understood as the Blessed Trinity, because:

¹³⁵ Ibid, 18–19.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 19.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 8.

¹³⁹ M. Buber, *I and Thou* (Eastford, CT: Martino, 2008), 8.

The Trinity is ... a perfect communion. Because of this perfect communion the three Divine Persons are one sole God-of-life-and-love.¹⁴⁰

The Trinity is God's disposition of relationality. Foremost it is a *communio* of a social being, which is constant and continuous. Second, it is unity with diversity and is interdependent of all three persons who are in concert with each other continuously. Third, it is the freedom and love of each member of the Trinity. These give expression to a theology of the *communio*, which constitutes the basic ingredients of a community, mimicking Trinity's model of belonging. The Trinity is a model of interpersonal relations that presses on "for transformations of the present decadent situations [so] to make it a more faithful reflection of the reality that is the foundation of all community."¹⁴¹

The Trinity as God's image is a hermeneutic that encompasses all that can be said about trinitarian relationality. In this regard, Stanley Grenz, the American theologian and ethicist in the Baptist tradition recognizes a much deeper phenomenon that arises within the individual as the starting point: "the individual-in-the-community –rather than the community itself – that is the image of God."¹⁴² The "image of God does not lie in the individual *per se*

¹⁴⁰ Leonardo Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 111.

¹⁴¹ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 116.

¹⁴² Grenz, *The Social God*, 305.

but in the relationality of the persons in the community.”¹⁴³ The basis of this relational life flows from the community, as God himself is triune. For Christianity, the Trinity is the source of participants’ communal fellowship in the new life God offers in Christ. In this way, the principle of *imago Dei* is accomplished. Trinity is a relational ontology that brings the divine prototype and the human antitype together.¹⁴⁴ Through such an engagement, a philosophical idea of the human self that supports the “ecclesial self” can be envisaged.¹⁴⁵

The objectivity of the kingdom of God on earth in a broken world should be perceived as restoring this fellowship – a sense of belonging as evidenced scripturally in the Pauline *koinonia*. Humans were created to be in a relationship. Paul reemphasized the social nature involved in “putting on Christ” and the corporate character of the new humanity renewed after the divine image (Col 1:11). Paul’s intent in this verse was to highlight the character of the new humanity. This new humanity does not emerge from the distinctions that separate humans into competing communities. The new humanity has no place for peculiarities such as ethnic distinctions. It is fundamentally a humanism whereby particular ethnic distinctions not only, but the very possibility of such continuing distinctions has

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

ceased to exist.¹⁴⁶ Christianity strives for a society of unity where the distinctions that mar the oneness of humankind are abolished.¹⁴⁷

From the time of Augustine theologians had been trying to uncover the meaning of the confession, “I believe ‘in’ God.” Augustine distinguished three Latin constructions to identify the objectivity of Christian faith, which Aquinas explained as “what it means to know God”: first, “*credere Deo*” – that is, to believe God is the call to our response to what God says; second, “*credere Deum*,” meaning what faith knows or has in mind; and third, “*credere in Deum*,” which is “God is the object of our faith as heart’s desire, as goal towards which all our life and thought is set.”

Scott Horrell eloquently summarizes the objectivity of our Christian personhood that considers our purpose in life as co-creators of God’s kingdom:

It is in God himself that we find a basis for human reason and language, for our capacity to choose, for our profound diversity of emotions, for appreciation of beauty, for our propensity to creativity, for our sense of morality and eternity, for our social nature desiring relationship with others – all virtual enigmas for modern man who experiences these realities but has no adequate final explanation.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ James D. G. Dunn, “The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon,” in Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hague (eds.), *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 223.

¹⁴⁷ Grenz, *The Social God*, 258.

¹⁴⁸ J. Scott Horrell, “The Self-giving Triune God, the *Imago Dei* and the Nature of the Local Church,” Bible.org 6, <https://bible.org/article/self-giving-triune-god-iimago-deii-and-nature-local-church-ontology-mission/> (10/03/2017).

In other words, our personhood is to be “believing to love, in believing to delight, in believing to walk towards him, and be incorporated amongst the limbs or members of his body.”¹⁴⁹ The business of Christianity, thus, begins with the mission of understanding the God of the scripture and what it means to be created in the divine image: “far from taking us *away* from the world God makes, opens up, ineluctably, to the demands of justice, peace, and the integrity of all creation.”¹⁵⁰

The idealism or merits of the Trinity as the social model for humanity can be problematic, already noted in Moltmann’s social transcendentals. In addition it also runs the risk of succumbing to a crude anthropomorphism.¹⁵¹ The ontological difference between God and humanity must never be forgotten and it would be illusory to think that the Church can simply replicate intra-trinitarian relations.¹⁵² Divine persons are equal because, in a strong sense, they are the same; however, socially and politically, it is an awkward analogy because humans differ individually and socially in terms of gender, race, age, culture, and in the outlook of life. Further, humans can’t enter into relationships like the divine Persons who are tightly

¹⁴⁹ Lash, *Believing Three Ways in One God*, 20.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 2

¹⁵¹ Anne Hunt, “The Trinity through Paschal Eyes,” in Woźniak and Maspero, *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology*, 473.

¹⁵² Mark Husbands, “The Trinity is *Not* Our Social Program: Volf, Gregory of Nyssa and Barth,” in D. J. Treier and D. Lauber (eds.), *Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, Community, Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 120–141.

interwoven together when compared to a society of human persons.¹⁵³

These criticisms arise from a misrepresentation of the purpose and function of the Trinity. They are not insurmountable once Godhead's unity is understood not simply as a fellowship of three independent deities or a unique relationship that is in no way separated ontologically or a just a "blank unity" but about being in communion.¹⁵⁴ God's being is best understood not in classical Western terms of abstract substance (or *essence*), but in terms of eternal relatedness. That is, God's being is a relationship, or personally shared being. It is a harmony unique to God that exists on a transcendent level outside of human understanding.

Hence, as a theological concept, the Trinity offers a framework in which humanity can adapt itself to a set of values that reflect the image of God. Just as the Father indwells the Son and the Son indwells the Father, and that the Holy Spirit is also "the Spirit of Christ" and "the Spirit of the Father," so God has structured humans, that we can be indwelled by the Holy Spirit. The heart and core of Christianity is the fact that we must diligently seek to change to become like Jesus Christ, which is to have his life formed in us.

¹⁵³ Kathryn Tanner, "Social Trinitarianism and its Critics," in Maspero and Woźniak, *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology*, 377.

¹⁵⁴ Gunton, *The One, The Three and The Many*, 214.

The implication of the Trinity is in we “finding for ourselves” what it means to be human. Scripture repeatedly points us to our Creator, the living God. When we focus on God, we should look upward and not inward to begin recovering our humanity.¹⁵⁵ Our definition of a person must finally be situated in God. Although significant differences exist between the infinite and the finite, the Trinity provides an ontological framework for our personhood as human beings.

Summary

Christian God is not a monism but a triune being of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is the language of God’s social being that orientates and transforms Christians into the vital truths of human relationships, both as individuals and in the community.

The Trinity is the primacy of *imago Dei*. Sacramentally the trinitarian dogma of “one God in three Persons” is expected to be thoroughly assimilated into Christian life and thought,¹⁵⁶ as it is the prime source of our conduct as social beings. In other words, God who exists as the Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is foundational for a philosophy of Christian living. The Trinity, therefore, is Christianity’s cornerstone and *sanctorum communionem*

¹⁵⁵ Horrell, “The Self-giving Triune God,” 5.

¹⁵⁶ Jenson, “The Triune God,” 83-114.

Understanding the Communion

is the means of actualizing this divine nature in the hearts and minds of believers as the people of God.

This then is the pledge we give in the Apostles' Creed, that the social paradigm of the Trinity underwrites the humanism of our Christian personhood

Chapter 5

Social Commission of the Apostles' Creed

The Apostles' Creed is the baptismal creed of Christianity. It is more than just a set of dogmas that Christians are expected to believe. It is our affirmation that subscribes to the divine trinitarian nature which characterizes the historical authenticity of our human existence. Thus, personal salvation calls for participation in a social order that is revealed in the Creed. It conveys the divine plan of God's kingdom in this world. For believers, as *imago Dei*, the Creed is the commission or source of ethics in how we as individuals and as a community modulates our lives. This succinct statement of faith scribed almost 1900 years ago points to the absolute core of our faith in God's triune nature. It is the cornerstone of Christians living today.

The Creed, historically known as *Symbolum Apostolorum* or the *Roman Symbol* dates to approximately 140 AD.¹ It originally consisted only of the opening Article, which is an expression of faith in God's trinitarian nature "*in Deum Patrem, in Jesum Christum, in Spiritum Sanctum,*"² before being expanded in the Rufinus commentary around 404 AD. The present Received Form can be

¹ James M.A. Orr, "The Apostles' Creed," in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 706.

² Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 14–15.

found in the sermon of Abbot Priminus (c.700-753) and it contains all the twelve Articles of Faith.³ Importantly all the Articles hinge on the three Persons of the Trinity.

The Nicene Creed of the Council of Nicea (325 AD) in Greek replaced the Apostles' Creed in the Byzantine tradition as the universal creed of Christianity. For all intent and purposes, it is similar to the Apostles' Creed,⁴ but for the absence of *sanctorum communionem* (Article IX), which was introduced into the Apostles' Creed only at the close of the eighth century.⁵ Scripturally and structurally (Chapter 1) Article IX is the Latin equivalent of *koinonia ton agion*,⁶ meaning "holy things for holy people" in the Orthodoxy's Eucharistic liturgy since the fourth century.⁷ The *sanctorum communionem* or the *communion of saints* in the Latin Creed is the Eucharist (Chapter 1).

The Apostles' Creed is a set of scriptural truths about who God is and how he relates to humankind. It is the center of Christian theology: "I will be their God, they will be my people, and I will

³ *Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, 74–76..

⁴ *Sunday Missal*, 12–14.

⁵ Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 22.

⁶ Rausch, *I Believe in God*, 142.

⁷ Orthodox Church in America, "The Divine Liturgy: The Eucharistic Canon: Anaphora, vol. 2," <https://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/worship/the-divine-liturgy/eucharistic-canon-anaphora> (21/08/2018).

dwell in the midst of them.”⁸ Its twelve *regula fidei* comprises the whole spiritual good of Christianity. This Creed reveals the nature of God thereby providing a foundation for continuity and expansion of the humanism of God incarnated to us in Jesus via the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist.

This common baptismal Creed of Christendom ⁹ is also the liturgical Creed that is said before the celebration of the Eucharist in Catholicism as well as in the Orthodox and the Anglican traditions.¹⁰ St Cyril of Jerusalem who became the bishop of Jerusalem during

⁸ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 32.

⁹ Lutherans: *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2006); Church of England: *Book of Common Prayer and that of Common Worship* (London: Church-House, 2000); “Anglicanism’s Creeds and Authorized Affirmations of Faith, E3,” <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayerworship/worship/texts/newpatterns/contents/sectione.aspx> (14/03/2018); “Apostles Creed: Westminster Presbyterian Church,” www.wpcbryan.org/about/what-we-believe/apostles-creed (24/10/2013); *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part I, Book of Confessions* (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 1996); Hoyt I. Hickman (ed.), *The Worship Resources of the United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1989), 200; Williston Walker, *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism* (New York, NY: Pilgrim Press, 1991), 581; Baptismal Covenant of the Episcopal Church,” <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/baptismal-covenant> (24/09/2018); *Christian Reformed Churches*, “Apostles Creed,” www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/creeds/apostles-creed (24/09/2018).

¹⁰ “Creed Before Communion,” *Order of Mass: Basic Texts for the Roman Catholic Eucharist* (<http://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/Mass.htm#Word> (30/12/2015)); The Church of England, <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/texts/principal-services/holy-communion/epsforonefrontasp>; “The Anglican Church of Australia, An Order for Holy Communion,” 2009, <http://www.anglican.org.au/governance/commissions/documents/liturgy.pdf>; “The Holy Eucharist in the Orthodox Church,” <http://www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith> (30/12/2015).

the year of the Arian controversy described the Creed as “a treasure of Life” that had been committed to us as it contains the whole of the doctrine of Christianity, which we ought to listen and rehearse it with all diligence:

For the present listen while I simply say the Creed, and commit it to memory; but at the present proper season expect the confirmation out of Holy Scripture of each part of the contents. For the article of the Faith were not composed as seemed good to men; but the most important points collected out of all the Scripture make up one complete teaching of Faith.¹¹

Cyril further declares the Creed’s significance in being a Christian:

I wish you also to keep this as a provision through the whole course of your life, and besides this to receive no other, neither if we ourselves should change and contradict our present teaching, nor if an adverse angel, transformed into an angel of light (2Cor 11:14) should wish to lead you astray . any other gospel than that you have received, let him be to you anathema (Gal 1:8-9).¹²

The Creed brings to bear on the confessors the social dynamics of God as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is a process that affects our entire existence.¹³

¹¹ Cyril of Jerusalem, “Catechesis 5.12” in Paul A. Boer (ed.), *The Catechetical Lectures of St. Cyril of Jerusalem* (Veritatis Splendor, 2014), 258.

¹² Cyril of Jerusalem, “Saint Cyril of Jerusalem on the Creed,” Online Edition vol. XVI, No. 8, November 2010 (30/10/2019).

¹³ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Principles of Christian Theology: Building Stones for a Foundational Theology* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1987),55.

The Apostles Creed / Symbolum Apostolorum¹⁴

I believe in God, the Father
Almighty, Creator of Heaven
and earth.

And in Jesus Christ,
His only Son
Our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy
Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was
buried.
He descended into Hell;
the third day He rose again from
the dead;
He ascended into Heaven,
and sitteth at the right hand of
God,
the Father almighty;
He shall come to judge the living
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body
and life everlasting. Amen

Credo in Deum Patrem
omnipotentem,
Creatorem caeli et terrae.

Et in Iesum Christum,
Filius eius unicum,
Dominum nostrum,
qui conceptus est de Spiritu
Sancto,
natus ex Maria Virgine,
passus sub Pontio Pilato,
crucifixus,
mortuus, et sepultus,
descendit ad infernos,
tertia die resurrexit a mortuis,
ascendit ad caelos,
sedet ad dexteram Dei
Patris omnipotentis,
inde venturus est iudicare vivos
et mortuos.

Credo in Spiritum Sanctum,
sanctam Ecclesiam catholicam,
sanctorum communionem,
remissionem peccatorum,
carnis resurrectionem,
vitam aeternam. Amen.

¹⁴ *The Sunday Missal*, 12-13, 184-185.

As a component of the liturgies of Baptism and the Eucharist, the Creed influences the rules of discourse and the behaviours of believers based on Christianity's understanding of "God."¹⁵ Sacramentally the entire theology of Christianity is condensed in *sanctorum communionem*, the "Sacrament of all sacraments" (CCC, n. 1211), as all other sacraments are ordered to it as to their end (*Summa* III, q.65, a.3). It is foundational to Christian Humanism (Chapter 6).

The opening affirmation, *Credo in Deus* or "I believe in God," opens up the concern of Christianity as a religion; it's acceptance by believers as a comprehensive deliberation of engagement in all things that make us human beings include culture, politics, and ecology, as God's being is universal and affects every sphere of human activity. In this regard, the development of the Nicene Creed is especially informative because it has parallels both in content and significance to its forerunner, the *Symbolum Apostolorum*. As shown by Cardinal Ratzinger the Nicene Creed achieves Christian unity that is also applicable to the Apostles' Creed, as they share a common language and purpose. Both are therefore used alternatively in the Latin liturgy for the celebration of the Eucharist.¹⁶ It is about how confessing God as Trinity (Chapter 4) fosters an understanding

¹⁵ Lash, *Believing Three Ways in One God*, 16.

¹⁶ David Meager, "A Brief History of the Three Creeds," in *Cross Way* (2004), http://archive.churchsociety.org/crossway/documents/Cway_093_Creeds_History (3/01/2017)

of the entire human race as God's one human family for God is to be understood in terms of the spiritual, not of the atom or the material.¹⁷

God as the oneness of being, wisdom and love is a higher oneness than the oneness of undifferentiatedness.¹⁸

The Creed is Christianity's Magna Carta and is the most popular and admirable summary of the apostolic teachings found in the Holy Bible.¹⁹ Thus, it is a belief system that allows Christianity to exist across national and racial divides. Behaviour is an important aspect of this unity because the God we honour as Christians demand high moral standards.²⁰ It is identity-forming in the way we relate to our role in the world. Liturgically it is our moral and spiritual means of communicating God as the author of creation (Gen 1) and his presence in the world.²¹ A sacramental celebration of the Eucharist is a rehearsal of the Old Covenant God made with humanity which is revealed fully in the person and work of Jesus Christ (CCC, n. 1145).

The Creed is an important part of baptismal and the Eucharistic liturgy. Through the sacraments, it becomes the efficacious response to God's presence in the entire world: "He was in the world ... yet the world did not know him" (Jn 1:10). The

¹⁷ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 119.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 118–119.

¹⁹ Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 14–15.

²⁰ Young, *The Making of the Creeds*, 99–100.

²¹ Cooke, *Sacraments and Sacramentality*, 44–55.

critical role of the Creed as an expression of faith in God's trinitarian nature is about the world. It heightens Christian living. It ensures that God is not to be understood as a monad, but as one being of three persons who meaningfully participate in creation socially in three different ways.

The Trinity, *firstly*, is the cornerstone of Christianity (Chapter 4). Socially, a clearer understanding of God emerges when we understand God the Father who *creates* the world. He is the Maker of heaven and earth (Article 1). *Secondly*, in communion with his Son, Jesus Christ, who appears as God incarnate (Articles 2–7), the breach of unity between God and the lost humanity caused by sin is repaired by faith in God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. God's self-revelation is given special attention concerning the events portraying Jesus's human and divine attributes in his conception, birth, suffering, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, exaltation, and pending judgment. These experiences become part of the spiritual and living experiences that make a difference in a believer's lifestyle. Jesus's humanity becomes the role model for Christians through their participation in the sacraments. *Thirdly*, is the "Belief in the Holy Spirit," where the Spirit of God descends upon the Church and upon each believer who together constitutes the Church. Through the Holy Spirit God facilitates and achieves the ultimate objective of attaining God's kingdom on earth through *peacemaking* (Articles 8–12). In this way,

the Creed readily draws our attention to God's engagement with creation. These three functions of the persons of the Trinity – *creating, appearing, and peace-making* – transform the Creed into something more than a logical statement of abstract doctrines. Sacramentally it is one God who makes all things in that the Trinity becomes a living instrument that is archetypal of the God of the Creed, who is relational and communicable as the Father or Mother of the human family. When believers profess belief in *sanctorum communionem* they covenant their new life (sanctified by the Spirit) into their Christian personhood – a characterization that is referred to as “saints” in the scripture. Thus, when we say “Amen” to “I Believe” there is an undertaking to pledge our lives, our minds, and our hearts in God's direction so that we become the true witnesses of God in this world.²²

The Apostles' Creed consists of all the fundamental components of the Christian faith that are necessary for salvation.²³ It is intimately linked to the body and blood of Christ, especially when Jesus said, “Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for this forgiveness of sins ... I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom” (Mt 26:28–29; Lk 22:19–20). The awareness of the community is alerted to

²² Lash, *Believing Three Ways in One God*, 50.

²³ Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 14–15.

Christ's salvific acts and in the mystery of God in Jesus Christ.²⁴ In the Eucharist, we recall the actions and passions of Christ's work for the salvation of humanity. The Creed brings into focus the sacramental power that is derived from Christ's Passion, the virtue of which is in a manner united to us (*nobis copulatur*) by our receiving the sacrament (*Summa* II, q. 62, a. 5, 1), which is the instrumental cause of salvation in virtue of the spiritual power united to it.

The *sanctorum communionem* or the *communion of saints* is the indivisible link of the Church with Christ of the Eucharist who is identifiable in the Creed for the "the Eucharist makes the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist" (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 2003, n.26).²⁵ It is by faith in this life that we come to know God and in this way we learn to see all things in the way God sees them.²⁶ The implications of the confession of faith, as presented in the Creed and symbolically conveyed in the sacraments, are pledges of unconditional loyalty to the Lord, and it is upon this confession the Christian community rests. Importantly, it "belongs to a community, it is a social construct and is usually related to the

²⁴ Edward J. Kilmartin, "The Catholic Tradition of Eucharistic Theology: Towards the Third Millennium," in *Theological Studies* (1994), vol.55/3, p. 405.

²⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia (On the Eucharist in its Relationship with the Church, 2003)*,
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/special_features/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-p-ii_enc_20030417_ecclesia_eucharistia_en.html (20/12/ 2015).

²⁶ Lash, *Believing Three Ways in One God*, 22.

formation of identity.”²⁷ The Creed is a “process of selection, discernment of cause and effect, and interpretative patterning” of Christianity’s faith.²⁸ A careful examination of the three components of the Creed reveals the social dynamics of God and the composite nature of God’s humanism incarnated in Jesus Christ embodied in the Eucharist. The Creed *is* the Eucharist.

Belief in God the Father

The first ordinance of this unity of humanity’s social oneness is in the confession of God as “Father” of all.

In the Creed, the entire social dynamics of God – the scriptural notion of how God relates to creation – are condensed into two relational terms: “Father” and “almighty.” In various contexts of the Old Testament, the idea of God as Father appears 14 times to convey his paternalistic and magnanimous role as the Creator. This is heightened by 261 references in the New Testament,²⁹ inclusive of Jesus’ addressing and speaking of God as Father at least 170 times.³⁰ In the ancient Latin and Roman world, the concept of fatherhood was genealogical, sociological, and juridical: *pater familias* (the father of the household) and *patris potestas* (paternal authority) played a prominent role in the framework and order of

²⁷ Young, *The Making of the Creeds*, 8.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Luis F. Ladaria, “Tam Pater Nemo: Reflections on the Paternity of God,” in Maspero and Woźniak, *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology*, 447.

³⁰ Marthaler, *The Creed*, 42.

society. Father had therefore been a symbol and summation of what was in the ancient world the venerability and authority that sustained life. Fatherhood also conveyed strictness, kindness, and solicitude.³¹

In Genesis (1–11), families and nations are depicted as the outcome of God’s parenthood, or the fundamental orders of God’s creation which are revelatory of God’s humanism. The creation narrative of Adam and Eve genealogically implies God’s sociality of creation in the context of the family: “Now the man who knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have produced a man with help of the Lord”” (Gen 4:1). Furthermore, “the whole earth had one language, and the same words.” And as they migrated from the east they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. The Lord said:

Look, they are one people, and they all have one language: and this is only the beginning of what they will do ... (Gen 11:1-2, 6).

Here, Genesis depicts humanity as God’s human family. God is presented as a human being because God spoke the language of human beings.³² God was to be understood in terms of God’s governance in the social structure of Israel, which comprised “the extended family of several generations, which looked to one of the elders – the patriarch – as the ultimate authority.”³³ In “the

³¹ Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 138.

³² *Ibid*, 137.

³³ Marthaler, *The Creed*, 42.

patriarchal worldview of biblical Israel, the Father was the linchpin of family life, and his house was the basic unit of biblical society.”³⁴ The essential ingredient to human life and well-being was the notion of family, which was the basis of social structures and was founded on love for one another.³⁵

In this regard, the listing in Genesis 10 of the origins of nations affirms the work of God through families. This began with the chosen family of Abraham and Sarah, from whom the nation (Gen 12:3) takes shape. The setting is relational or communitarian. God’s choice of a family demonstrates his preference for communication through communities. Humans are not perceived as isolated individuals. God is the Father/Mother of Israel (Ex 4:22; Deut 32:6; Isa 63:16, 64:7). By God’s blessings on Abraham (Gen 28–4) and extolled by Isaac to God on behalf of Jacob (Gen 28: 3–4) and extended to Jacob (Gen 28:13–15, 35:10:12) that a community known as Israel came into being.³⁶ God reveals himself in the communities.

Humans are thus presented as members of communities, such as his or her people – namely, the Moabites (Gen 19:37–38), Edomites (Jos 24:4), and Levites (Jos 13:33) – to live, worship, serve, and grow in the context of communities. God chooses to make promises, referred to as “constitutive” and meaning “community-

³⁴ Kathleen S. Nash, “Father,” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 456.

³⁵ Fretheim, *God and World*, 103.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 107.

forming.”³⁷ God mediates through Abraham, his sons, and his many descendants (Gen 12:1–3, 7, 13:14–18, 15:4–5, 18–21). God’s approach to governance is social. Through God’s creative activity, Israel was constituted as a nation-people. God created Israel and subsequently cared for them and established a special relationship with them. His care for them is frequently compared with that of the Father (Hos 11:1; Deut 14:1; 2Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7, 89:26; Deut 1:31, 8:5; Isa 1:2).³⁸

The understanding of God as Father became a motive for observing the Law (Deut 14:1) and seeking divine compassion and forgiveness (Ps 103:13–14; Jer 3:19, 31:9, 20; Hos 2:1).³⁹ The Old Testament, in particular, places importance on the “God of the Fathers” (Ex 3:13, etc.), the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the people of Israel as sons of God not based on a natural descent, but on election and vocation (Ex 4:22; Hos 11.1; Jer 31:9).⁴⁰ The scriptural exegesis of the mythological First Parent is a theological portrayal of solidarity of the human species led by Adam, as “the son of God” (Lk 3:38), who images God to the rest of the world by mediating the fatherhood/motherhood of God. This unity that God brings as the parent in the family and community life is further

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ W.J. Cameron, “God as Father,” in Walter A. Elwell (ed.), *The Concise Evangelical Dictionary* (London, UK: Marshall-Pickering, 1993), 178.

³⁹ Nash, “Father” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 457.

⁴⁰ Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 138.

evidenced in the patriarchal story of Joseph (Gen 37–50). Therefore, God's design for creation was principally one of unity conceived as family life.

Effective leadership for the development of social life is central to God's creation (Gen 41:53–57). As shown in these narratives God's involvement in economics, agriculture, politics, and governmental life is revealed by Joseph's involvement in these matters as parent and guardian. Essentially, according to God's wisdom, humans come under the parenthood of God and thus are called to live as a family. This reveals the deepest truth about the nature of the human person and God's plan for us, which is that every one of us is made to love and be loved. It is the humanism we have been made that mirrors the truth and love that lie at the very core of God's being. The human family is the Judeo-Christian characterisation of the world as one people of God even though the true Yahwistic notion of community was no longer identifiable with the political entity.⁴¹

⁴¹ Historically, Northern Israel formed a kingdom that was less the ideal fostered by the Yahwistic faith. Nonetheless, there was, even though less tangible, a spiritual community, like in the South, of those worshipping the one true God, and seeking to embody God's righteousness and compassion would grow. From this developed under a somewhat different type of kingship under Davidic rule. This would draw on Jerusalem temple theology, the wisdom of the seers, and the language and praxis of priests. Importantly throughout Israel's history it would never forsake or forget the root from which it had grown: "Yahweh, who brought you out of the house of bondage" (Paul D. Hanson, *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible*, Louisville, KN: Westminster John Knox, (1986, 2001, 135).

God reveals his creative intent and activity by electing Israel as a nation-people. God created Israel and subsequently cared for and established a special relationship with them. God's care for them can be compared with that of the Father (Hos 11:1; Deut 14:1; 2Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7, 89:26; Deut 1:31, 8:5; Isa 1:2). This understanding of God as Father became a motive for observing the Law (Deut 14:1) and seeking divine compassion and forgiveness (Ps 103:13–14; Jer 3:19, 31:9, 20; Hos 2:1).⁴²

In the patriarchal worldview of biblical Israel, the Father was the linchpin of family life, and Israel: God's house was the basic unit of biblical society.⁴³ God was understood in terms of God's governance in the social structure of Israel, which comprised "the extended family of several generations, which looked to one of the elders – the patriarch – as the ultimate authority."⁴⁴ God's "loving choice of Israel aligns with the oath given to its ancestors" (Deut 7:6–8), as well as the giving of the Law, so that: "you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you are to possess" (Deut 5:33; cf. 6:24). The scripture, thus, portrays God to the rest of the world by mediating the fatherhood/motherhood of God. God's design for creation is principally one of unity manifested as family life.

⁴² Nash, "Father" in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 457.

⁴³ Nash, "Father," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 456-457.

⁴⁴ Marthaler, *The Creed*, 42.

Israel, as a covenantal people is, was fundamental to understanding God's attitude towards creation with a specific mission to be the light of the covenant with God as described in the Torah (Deut 14:2; Gen 17:7). This did not preclude a belief that God has a relationship with other peoples.⁴⁵ It reflects God's vision of creational and communal stability as essential aspects of God's way of life.⁴⁶ The Israelite community, thus, can be considered a prototypical development model of God's involvement with humanity. God's vision of a kingdom foresaw social unity where justice, equality, and common good prevailed. In Judeo-Christianity, Israel became the "*universal frame of reference.*"⁴⁷ This sociality of God in the Old Testament was carried forward in the New Testament, where the desire for oneness or unity of God's kingdom was completed in Jesus Christ, whose influence is presented sacramentally in the *communio sanctorum*.

⁴⁵ God's approach in the world has been to choose Israel as a covenant people. The covenant between God and the people of Israel meant that Israel was to be faithful to God and obey his commandments, and God in turn was to protect and bless his faithful people. Being chosen brought to Israel not more privileges but, rather, special obligations to carry out the will of God: "Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you" (Jer. 7:23). Israel was conquered by the Babylonians in 587 BCE and the oracles became more comforting as he promised to save his people, now that they have learned their lessons, and bringing them home (Karen Armstrong, *A History of God* (New York: Ballantine, 1994, 57).

⁴⁶ Fretheim, *God and World*, 103.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 101.

In the New Testament, Jesus, who was named “Emmanuel, which meant ‘God is with us’” (Mt 1:23), was conceived within the context of the family and community setting. Mary and Joseph were his parents (Mt 1:18–22). His genealogy could be traced to Abraham and David (Mt 1:1–17; Lk: 3:23–38) through the threefold sequence of 14 generations. The basic purpose of the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew was to demonstrate that Jesus was Israel’s history and for the Matthean community this served to root Jesus firmly within the lineage of God’s people – something that was important both for Jews and Gentiles alike. It served to trace Jesus’ history to David and Abraham: “The one whom Christian proclaim as ‘Messiah’ (‘Christ,’ in the Greek form) can be correctly claimed to be Son of David.”⁴⁸

From the creation narrative, the entire human race also emerged from *one* earth. Therefore, there were fundamentally no different kinds of human beings, “as the myths of numerous religions used to say and as some worldviews of our day also assert.” Thus, there were no different categories and races in which human beings were valued differently. We are all *one* humanity, formed from God’s *one* earth.⁴⁹ God’s approach to governance was paternal. The fatherhood of God might not appear as of major doctrines of the Old Testament, yet it was a very important one,

⁴⁸ Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 31–32.

⁴⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, *In the Beginning: A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 13-14.

revealing the nature of God and providing a foundation for continuity and expansion in the New Testament.”⁵⁰

For Christians, God was the Father of Jesus; in him, Jesus his Son, and the Holy Spirit were united. The divine paternity regarding Jesus was of principal significance and the two dimensions of divine paternity had been revealed in the Son who became a man.⁵¹ In many instances, Paul underscored that God was “our” Father (viz., Rom 1.7; 1Cor 1.3; 2Cor 1.2; Gal 1.4; Eph 1.2; Phil 1.2; Col 1; 1Thess 1.3, 2; 2Thess 1.2; 2Tim 1.2); since “God is the Father of Jesus, God can also be, in his infinite condescension, our Father.”⁵² The term “Father” therefore also acquired a new dimension, where the meaning and focus was on “God is love” (1Jn 4:8) in Jesus, the Son of God. This was particularly in the father-son relationship of Jesus’s baptism when a voice from heaven spoke: “You are my beloved Son” (Mk 1:11). Jesus held up the paternal love and care of God as a model for his disciples (Mt 5:43–45, 6:26, 7:11, 10:29–31, 18:14; Lk 11:13). On several occasions, he offered the Father as an example of forgiveness – most notably in the parable of the prodigal son (Mt 6:14, 18:35; Mk 11:25; Lk 15:11–32).

The themes of loving care and forgiveness found exaltation in the Lord’s Prayer, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name ...

⁵⁰ Goran Medved, “The Fatherhood of God in the Old Testament,” in *KAIROS - Evangelical Journal of Theology* (2016), vol. 10 /2, p. 213.

⁵¹ Ladaria, 447.

⁵² Ibid.

and forgive our trespasses ...” (Mt 6:5–15). The ideal qualities of fatherhood are the giving of life, love, faithfulness, continued care and protection, and dissemination of wisdom. For the patristic fathers, this universal paternity of God was love, most profound concerning both creation and the generation of the only Son was the figure of Jesus, who revealed God’s face.⁵³

It is, therefore, no small thing to address God as Father and thereby claim for our relationship to the Creator because of the intimacy that exists between child and parent.⁵⁴ This intimacy of God’s oneness with the Son also conveys the Father’s love for humanity through Jesus Christ’s communication and self-emptying of God’s *agape* are depicted in the “eternal consubstantial Son.”⁵⁵ This father-child relationship is important for a Christian worldview of creation in laying the foundation of Christian ethics. Paul displayed a “language of belonging” by his use of kinship language in such terms as “father,” “child,” “children,” and especially “brother” / “brethren,” which abound in his letters.⁵⁶

The social consequences of such an understanding of Christianity, however, varied from the early Church where the emphasis was on personal conversion from sin, because the

⁵³ Ibid, 448.

⁵⁴ Marthaler, *The Creed*, 43.

⁵⁵ Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 157.

⁵⁶ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010), 166.

possibility of a proximate *parousia* was anticipated, no stronger than in the epistle of Paul (1Thess 4:12-18). Paul was apocalyptic and he believed the end was rapidly approaching. He told the Thessalonians (2Thes 1: 7-9) that Jesus would be revealed from heaven “with his mighty angels in flaming fire” and that he would do justice upon those who refused to acknowledge God or not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.⁵⁷ The eschatology was imminent and individual choices were decisive. Paul himself looked forward to the coming (1Cor 16:22) when he spoke confidently that we shall not all asleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet (1Cor 15:51). Those who accepted Christ would be saved. Some Catholic scholars are convinced that Paul himself had suggested that he would be a witness to this event, while others saw *parousia* only in the remote future.

The primitive Pauline house-churches of the fifties of the first century, when Paul left them, which understood the *parousia* event as the time of the final judgment upon all people (1Thess 1:10), were “relatively unorganized, fraught with distress, with only rudimentary instruction in the faith, and in tension with the larger society.”⁵⁸ Many scholars have argued that in the teaching of Jesus the *parousia* will occur within the lifetime of the twelve apostles, or

⁵⁷ W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, (London, UK: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984), 98.

⁵⁸ Abraham M. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987, 61); also Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 210f, 165.

the immediate destruction of the Temple and the union with him through personal death. A much-developed theology of his Second Coming in the context of Paul's entire theology, which is centered in the death and resurrection of Christ, was for a much later period. This would reveal Paul's thinking of "the righteousness of God (Rom 3:21-31) is to interpret as a gift to the *community*, not to the individual for the individual believer does not exist in isolation."⁵⁹ This explains the nature of Baptism, which also lays the foundational basis of his house-churches, that believers are not just so many individuals but a corporate body. They are baptized into the death of Christ and likewise raised from the dead. They are crucified with Christ, have died with him, but now live with him and are alive to God (Rom 6:3-11).⁶⁰

Contemporaneously not all Christians subscribe to the social dynamics of Christianity. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, there had been a re-emergence of individualism that emphasizes that a sinner was standing alone before God and that the Holy Spirit works only in the hearts of individuals and could be known primarily through personal experience.⁶¹ This is the "modern" desire not to be told by ecclesial bodies what to believe, but for each believer to come to a personal understanding of faith

⁵⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 166.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 167.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 317.

and a personal commitment.⁶² This undoubtedly overlooks how Baptism consciously brings about a change in social relationships, that faith in Christ makes fellowships possible, and not the least, Paul's declaration that all human barriers are transcended in the Church: "Baptism is the seal of membership in the eschatological people of God."⁶³ Catholic Christians have always believed that Jesus Christ would come back to close the current period of human history in the earth (Mk 13:26-27; Mt 16:27; Acts 1:11; IThess 4:16-18), (CCC, n.668-682).

Since the beginning of the last century, Christianity's social theology of communities derived from Baptism and the Eucharist had also come for scrutiny. The works of the leading Christian existentialist Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1850), followed by Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), were primary influences in the development of existential social theory. Kierkegaard, in such works as *Fear and Trembling (1919)*⁶⁴ and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript (2009)*⁶⁵ makes it clear that Christian faith should not be a matter of learning dogma but rather of the individual repeatedly renewing his/her

⁶² Ibid, 316.

⁶³ Ibid, 167.

⁶⁴ Soren Kierkegaard (trans. Alastair Hanning), *Fear and Trembling* (UK: Penguin, 1919, 2009).

⁶⁵ Soren Kierkegaard (trans. H. Hong & E. Hong). *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. 2009).

passionate subjective truth of oneself.⁶⁶ His social theory drawn from the personal experience of his Danish heritage concludes how this “passionate tumultuous age [that] wants to overthrow everything, set aside everything.” It was an age that was not only revolutionary but also reflecting and devoid of passion.⁶⁷ He, therefore, viewed modern social life “as parasitic on meaning, character and ethical life. There is nothing of substance beyond what is received from other people and institutions.” It is completely devoid of everything, he claimed, even its inwardness.⁶⁸

Kierkegaard's preoccupation was based on his “self-knowledge by disclosing self-love as its essential motivation and the social-political context in which all self-love and self-knowledge take form.”⁶⁹ This is to say, “the desire for pleasure, the demands of duty, and the promise of faith are ontologically constitutive of persons, and the reconciling of these desires, obligations, and hopes is a private task that each individual must accomplish.”⁷⁰ It is this self, the existential task, which is one’s own that achieves the recognition of the character of human selfhood. It is this “self” that

⁶⁶ Paul R. Sponheim, “The Theological Legacy of Kierkegaard for Our Time,” in *Existing Before God: Soren Kierkegaard and the Human Venture*. (USA: Augsburg Fortress, 2017), 133-145.

⁶⁷ J. Michael Tilley, “Kierkegaard’s’ Social Theory,” in *The Heythrop Journal* (2014), vol.55/5, p.944.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 946.

⁶⁹ John W. Elrod, “The Natural Self,” in *Kierkegaard and Christendom* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2014), 86.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 87.

can be effectually applied to society, with authentic individuality, requisite for a genuine community with equality. These existential ideas, in turn, it is hoped may provide a theoretical setting conducive to the implementation of programs for social change.⁷¹

Kierkegaard, however, never fully developed his view of how society ought to be structured. He overlooked the problem of egotism so much so, that self-love was both the center of his problem as well as his solution. He was overly individualistic in choosing to ignore the contribution of faith communities in guiding principles of love, fairness, and justice. His controversial understanding of faith arises from his obliviousness to how Christianity outside his Danish homeland was manifested and the major role the faith had in influencing the Christian values and ideas that shape and gradually enliven political institutions. Historical survey of over two thousand years would have clarified for him the social manifestation of Christianity in the West that he had taken for granted. As reminded by Vivian Green,

Perhaps we should draw breath and remind ourselves that Christianity has survived because first and foremost from the very beginning it has been a society, a brotherhood, a *koinōnia*, sustained by a vision of holiness and love, and by a deep faith in the purpose and the providence of God.⁷²

⁷¹ Ibid, 120-121.

⁷² Vivian Green, *A New History of Christianity* (New York, NY: Sutton Publishing, 1996), 402.

Certainly, Kierkegaard had overlooked the role of families particularly in the development of societies.

The notion of God as Father has also been subjected to much criticism, especially from feminist theologians, who argue that scripture has been used to perpetuate the oppression of women because it was written by men with a patriarchal mindset and therefore is not unambiguously liberating.⁷³ It should be noted, however, that the attributes of the Father do not diminish the critical role of the mother who is scripturally identified: to “give life, bestow love, and remain faithful: they care for and instruct their children as the Lord nurturing Israel like a nursing mother” (Num 11:12; Is 49:15), and as a loving mother, comforting Israel in time of affliction” (Is 66:13).⁷⁴ A careful study of scripture shows that the talk of God as Father is not simply a sacral apotheosis of paternal authority; God’s fatherhood is to be understood as the source and norm of paternal authority and that it is by that the critical standard parents will be judged.⁷⁵

From a religious perspective, what Christianity is most concerned about is the emphasis on the anthropological primacy of national culture. As clarified by John Paul II in his theology of

⁷³ Roy Ann McDougall, “Keeping Feminist Faith with Christian Traditions; A Look at Christian Feminist Theology Today,” in *Modern Theology* (2008), vol. 24/1, pp. 103–124.

⁷⁴ Marthaler, *The Creed*, 43.

⁷⁵ Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 139.

religious roots and nationalism this is to be found in the constitution of the human person:

It is on the basis of this essential relationship with one's own origin – on the level of the family but also of territory, society and culture – that people acquire a sense of their nationality, and culture tends to take on ... a “national” configuration.⁷⁶

This, he insists, is a natural process, in which sociological and psychological forces interact, with results that are normally positive and constructive.⁷⁷ John Paul II also states that “Love for one's country is thus a value to be fostered,” but it should avoid those “pathological manifestations [that] runs into self-exaltation, rejection of diversity, forms of nationalism” such as “racism and xenophobia.”⁷⁸ There are clear merits of nationalism and patriotism as virtues so long as they are impartial to brotherly love for all nations. This should be followed by a common good.⁷⁹

God the “almighty”

Christians in the first and second centuries believed that the end of the world was imminent. Christ had promised to return, and Christians expected to witness that return. The early Christians were

⁷⁶ Pope John Paul II (ed. Dorian Llwelyn), “Message for World Peace,” in *Toward a Catholic Theology of Nationality*, (USA: Lexington Books, 2010), 166.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

anxiously preparing and awaiting the *parousia*.⁸⁰ The theology of this creedal faith, which initially consisted of just one line expressing faith in God as a triune being deepened in the extended *Roman Symbol* (341 AD) wherein the term “Father almighty” focuses almost entirely on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ:

I believe in God the Father almighty. And in Jesus Christ His only (begotten) Son our Lord, who was born of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary; crucified under Pontius Pilate, and buried; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father, from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.⁸¹

The basic Christian conviction of the day was on the crucified Jesus who had been exalted to a position of heavenly glory. This preceded and underlay all the titles given to Jesus in the early churches.⁸² For the early Christians, the highlight of almightiness was in God’s self-sacrifice of the divine’s son Jesus for their salvation and the expectation of new life everlasting in heaven. The thrust of God’s almightiness is complementary with the divine love for God’s community as Father or Mother.

⁸⁰ John P. McKay, Bennett D. Hill, and John Buckler, *A History of Western Society, vol. I* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), 230

⁸¹ Orr, “The Apostles’ Creed,” 705.

⁸² Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2nd ed., 1998), 93.

The early Christians converted from Judaism, had been drawn into a covenant relationship with Yahweh. Yahweh alone was to be worshipped as sovereign and “it was in imitation of Yahweh’s righteousness and compassion that Israel was to live as a holy nation.” From the time of the Exodus, the worshipping of God and the *tôrâ* emerged as the two human responses to God’s antecedent gracious initiative.⁸³ “Almighty” thus, was not understood so much an exercise of power as rather an exercise of love and generosity; rather, as “an act of self-limitation and even of self-illumination on the part of God.”⁸⁴ The almightiness should, therefore, be understood to mean God’s love and generosity, which leads God to share existence with God’s creatures, while at the same time God commits a share of the responsibility to the creatures.

God’s almightiness is also identifiable in the imagery of “the Fall” of humans from its original pristine state (Gen 3). Augustine expounded on the story of the Fall as symbolic but symptomatic of the disharmony and misery of the human condition and declared, “There was no other suitable way of freeing man from the misery of mortality than the incarnation of the Word.”⁸⁵ Humanity “left to its own devices and resources, could not begin a relationship with God.

⁸³ Hanson, *The People Called*, 30.

⁸⁴ Fretheim, *God and World*, 48.

⁸⁵ Augustine, “On the Trinity,” in Schaff (ed.), *NPNF*, Book XIII, 174; also John Hick, “Sin and the Fall according to the Hellenistic Fathers,” in *Evil and the God of Love* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). 201.

Nothing a man or woman could do was sufficient the stranglehold of sin.”⁸⁶ God’s almightiness reflects the grace – the gift of God – that is “unmerited and undeserved,” by which God had voluntarily broken the hold of sin upon humanity.⁸⁷ Thus, above everything that can be said about God as a person, is God’s forgiveness. This almightiness is in God’s ultimate radicalness on the cross where God demonstrates self-surrendering love. This is that which is greater, “the unsurpassable self-definition of God... the very unfathomableness of the divine love” that proves God is not a human being.⁸⁸

Therefore, God is not to be understood as merely a rigid lawgiver; in all events, there is a dialectic between the power of freedom of humankind and God’s law. It is God’s almightiness alone, which ensures freedom from domination. The Old Testament legacy of freedom by divine power from slavery also offers a biblical notion of a community that is committed to forming men and women freely into a universal community of righteousness.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Augustine, who was alarmed at the moral laxity of the Roman church insisted on the need for constant self-improvement in the light of the Mosaic Law and the exemplary life of Christ. He was reacting especially against Pelagianism, a religion of human autonomy, which held the human beings are able to take the initiative in their salvation on their own (Alister E. McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought* (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, 2nd. ed.), 34.

⁸⁷ Hanson, *The People Called*, 33.

⁸⁸ Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 194.

⁸⁹ Hanson, *The People Called*, 469-518.

This is where the divine almightiness manifests itself as a people of God. Where a true community is formed, the divine power is working. “The response to the divine power is responsibility. The covenant of God is with the community and the individual members of it. It imposes responsibility upon community and individual especially for concern with the needy and the oppressed.”⁹⁰

The word “almighty” (2Cor 6:18; Rev 1:8, 4:8, 11:17, 15:13, 16:7,14, 19:6,15, 21:22) is the English translation of the Greek word term *pantokratōr* in the New Testament, meaning “all ruling” and it is derived from *omni* (Latin), the equivalent of *panto*, both meaning “all.” It is an important conceptualization of God and God’s relationship with the world. Almighty is generally construed as conveying “all power,” which would normally include the negative aspects of power such as the oppressive power of kings and dictators. This would be incompatible with the character of a loving Father that it is intended to qualify in the Creed, which determines our relationship with God, with others, and ourselves.⁹¹

Current scholarship identifies the error in both translations of *pantokratōr* (Greek) as incorrectly conveying as all-encompassing power. The use of *omnipotent* to translate God’s paternal or maternal

⁹⁰ Ibid., 77.

⁹¹ Ian A. McFarland, “God, the Father Almighty: A Theological Excursus,” in *International Journal of Systematic Theology* (2016), vol. 18/3, 259-273, (Book-on-line) <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/ijst.12155> (18/6/2018).

action is far from conveying what the Greek or Hebrew words meant scripturally. God who is all-powerful with no physical limitations as man is, all-knowing of the present, past, and future and all-present by being everywhere at once and the time. Aquinas explains the divine omnipotence as *cum dicitur omnia posse Deum* (*Summa* 1, q.25, a.3c) – that is, when it is said that God can do all things it means that all things can be done by God so long these actions of God who is full of goodness, are not incompatible between the predicate and subject. God who is love, all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-present can do no evil. God is capable of “all” things therefore means that everything that can have the nature of being is included among the things that are possible, and concerning which God is said to be omnipotent.⁹²

Historically *pantokrator* and *omnipotence* evolved as two different concepts, although both were signified in English by the same term “almightiness.”⁹³ The error is in the use of *potens* (Latin, “power”), the last part of the compound word. In the Old Testament (Gen 17:1, 28:3, 35:11, 43:14, 48:3; Ex 6:3; Ezek 10:5) the Hebrew equivalent is “*šadday*” that has been mistranslated as *pantokrator* in the Septuagint and in the Book of Job. In Genesis 49:25, *shaddai*

⁹² Aquinas’ view of God’s power is that God can do all things that are possible absolutely. This implies that what is excluded by this phrase are inherently impossible, things that entail a contradiction in terms, that is, the impeccable goodness of God, because the predicate is incompatible with the subject.

⁹³ Palmyre M. E. Oomen, “God’s Power and Almighty in Whitehead’s Thought,” in *Open Theology* (2015), vol.1, 285-286.

when combined with *El*, that is, *El Shaddai* means blessing you the breasts [*shadayim*] and womb that connotes a maternal aspect of the divine.⁹⁴ This comforting maternal nature of God also occurs in the Gospels when Jesus, as God's agent exclaims to his Jewish followers, "How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" (Mt 23:37).

Also, in the Hebrew Psalter (Ps 115, 135, 139), YHWH's power, that is, "God does whatever he pleases" is a statement about God's attributes of the implied power whenever people offer their gratitude or address their requests to God in prayer. The Psalms are prayers exclusively appealing for God's saving power for the human being.⁹⁵ Thus, Psalm 115 is "a refutation of the pretensions of these other so-called gods to power," which is polemically aimed against idols and those who fashion them for their worship.⁹⁶ The phrase is a specification of how God chooses to act; Psalmists always think about God's power in connection with God's relationship to the world or to humans. It must be understood as God's acting in favour of God's people and of all who fear God. They are the beneficiaries

⁹⁴ Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1978), 61.

⁹⁵ Judith Krawelitzki, "God Almighty? Observations in the Psalms," in *Vetus Testamentum* (2014), vol.64/3, pp. 434-444, (Book-on-line) <http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/journals/10.1163/15685330-12341160> (18/6/2018).

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p.5/7

and recipients of God's redeeming power.⁹⁷ This reasoning is consistent with Cyril of Jerusalem's understanding of *pantokrator*, which means, "the Great, the Mighty God, the Lord of Hosts, is His name, Great in counsel, and mighty in his work."⁹⁸ God's rule is less about intervention than by the establishment of universal regularity by law."⁹⁹

In the New Testament, Jesus was physically powerless, from his humble birth to his crucifixion. The word "almightiness" or "omnipotence" that connotes titanic strength, therefore, is an oxymoron. The almightiness of God is in the goodness, claims Augustine.¹⁰⁰ His almightiness is in his saving power that flows from steadfast covenant love that which broke open the world by his death and resurrection for all people to be saved from death for which he was humiliated, tortured, and hung on a tree to die in shame.

Anselm of Canterbury, who was concerned about this issue of power, expresses the outlook of Augustine, by querying God how omnipotent he was if he was not capable of all things, such as not capable of being corrupted, lying, or falsifying what is true, or making what has been done and not have been done:

⁹⁷ Krawelitzki, "God Almighty?" (p. 5/7).

⁹⁸ *The Catechetical Lectures of St. Cyril of Jerusalem*, 323-324.

⁹⁹ Phipps, *The Apostles' Creed*, 54.

¹⁰⁰ Jazzbee Verlag, "Augustine," in *The Doctrinal Treatises* (North Carolina, SC: Createspace, 2017), 327.

For, the more he possesses this power, the more powerful are adversity and perversity against him, and the more powerless is he against them. Therefore, O Lord, our God, the more truly art thou omnipotent, since thou art capable of nothing through impotence, and nothing has power against thee.¹⁰¹

Impotence is to have the power of doing or experiencing what is not for his good, or what he ought not to do. It is divine almightiness in the context of human freedom: “God decided to make [God-self] impotent.”¹⁰² This self-imposed limitation of God can be compared to the “sheer, brute, power,” which is the evil means of dictators that God cannot do as it is out of order, or out of harmony with God’s character. True to God’s rationality and freedom “God is now kept from violating the character of man as rational and free.”¹⁰³ Thus, a God who interfered with human freedom and creativity would be regarded as an “omnipotent tyrant,” an all-knowing tyrant who is not different from earthly dictators.¹⁰⁴

Alfred Whitehead, well known for his work on mathematical logic and the philosophy of science, too rejects *omnipotence* in his

¹⁰¹ Anselm, “Proslogium 7,” in St. Anselm, *Proslogium; Monologium; An Appendix in Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilon; and Cur Deus Homo 9* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2000), 46.
(http://www.ccel.org/ccel/anselm/basic_works.html (5/6/2018))

¹⁰² Vittorio Messori (ed), *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (New York, Random House, 1994), 61.

¹⁰³ Rachel Henderlite, *A Call to Faith* (Richmond, NY: John Knox, 1955), 37.

¹⁰⁴ Armstrong, *A History of God*, 382-383.

view of God and the world because by God's very nature of goodness, God cannot do everything, for instance, God cannot do anything evil. While rejecting God's omnipotence (that he understood as including coercion), Whitehead retained essential elements of God as *pantokrator* concept: "[God] is the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness."¹⁰⁵ He also claims that God's power is also "All-preserver" because God's primordial nature presents that God preserves and so rescues us from meaninglessness all that can be saved by operating "a tender care that nothing be lost."¹⁰⁶ But God, for Whitehead, does not coerce but lures the difference between coercion and persuasion: God did not coerce but lure other entities. Nonetheless, for Whitehead, "God is creative, overpowering, all-governing and all-preserving: it comprehends all times and all places, it never gives up, it never ceases. All these elements are essential and classical aspects of *patokrator*."¹⁰⁷ In effect, Whitehead is no more restrictive than Aquinas's omnipotence that God can do or make everything that can be done or made (*Summa* 1, q.25, a.3). The clarification is useful as God's almightiness guarantees that no counterforce can overcome God forever, because

¹⁰⁵ Alfred North Whitehead, "Process and Realty," in corrected edition by D. R. Griffin and D. W. Sherburne (eds.), *Process and Realty: An Essay on Cosmology* (New York: Free Press, 1929, 1978), 346.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Oomen, "God's Power and Almightiness," 268.

God alone is the only everlasting entity and God's influence alone is everlasting.¹⁰⁸

In the absence of a Hebrew equivalent for the word "almighty" (a non-biblical term),¹⁰⁹ *pantokrator* suggests that it refers to God's consistent sovereignty of the world, making it an orderly cosmos and not unprincipled chaos. Therefore, the hermeneutic of almightiness in the Creed should rely on reflection on the mindset of the early church, just about 140 years after Pentecost.

James Luther Adams, one of the preeminent social ethicists, theologian, academic and a Unitarian parish minister expounded almightiness as Yahweh's kingship in a community where we are called God's people. His essay, "Theological Bases of Social Action" illustrates how God's law and humanity's freedom operate together for the creation of a community: "in social action is the exercise of power, and the character of social action is determined by the character of the power expressed."¹¹⁰ Taken together, divine necessity and human freedom operate for the creation of community, or its destruction. It is where we can identify less tangible but more essential qualities, such as righteousness, compassion, and faith by

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 288.

¹⁰⁹ Krawelitzki, "God Almighty?"

¹¹⁰ James Luther Adams, "Theological Basis of Social Action," in James Luther Adams, *Voluntary Associations: Socio-Cultural Analyses and Theological Interpretation* (Chicago, IL: Exploration, 1986), 62.

taking Yahweh's covenant of fidelity as a starting point. Such communities depict God's image of patience, tolerance, compassion, and forgiveness as the foundation for the exercise of authority. All social action is, therefore, explicitly or implicitly grounded in theology, and all theology implies fundamentally the concept of social action. Thus, Adams insists, when power, especially political power, "is not considered in its proper theological character, but only in its political, it becomes demonic or empty, separated from its end." The real creative power is divine as opposed to the destructive forces that emerge, "whenever power is divorced from an understanding of its source in the divine."¹¹¹

In this way, divine power changed the character in Israel so that the people "reacted differently to subjugation, indeed transcended it, found a new meaning in it." The divine power was not only ethicized but also interiorized. This was "interpreted as operating at the most intimate aspects of psychic experience and of divine-human fellowship," as both God and humans can now bound together not only in politics but also in the inner life. This, "remarkable interiorization of piety," according to Adams, represented the translation of the conception of divine power, into a new dimension: it represented a deeper conception of the conjugation of the divine and the human powers, the ethical and the interior, which are very important for a Christian theology of social

¹¹¹ Hanson, *The People Called*, 87-135.

action.¹¹² As St. Athanasius put it, “God became man so that we might become God” (*De incarnatione*, 54:3).¹¹³ The divine transcendence and immanence are convergent so that the conception of a God and his majestic greatness can be illuminated through God’s liberating and beneficent involvement in the world.¹¹⁴

In the Catholic liturgical calendar, the “Feast of Christ the King” is celebrated in October to focus on the kingship of Christ with this theme of God’s almightiness: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty” (Rev 1:8). The crown of Christ the King is almighty as his kingdom does not have any boundaries or walls; his crown is compassion, whose sceptre is humility; the whole court belongs to the poor, the forgotten, the lost, the despairing, and whose message is forgiveness and reconciliation. Christ the King rule is one of humble service.

In contrast to this power of love and care are the secondary relations, which are segmented impersonal relations that tend to predominate. Based on the study by the liberal Protestant theologian Ernst Troeltsch, Adams notes that alienation arises from an individual’s feelings of “isolation, homelessness, restlessness, and anxiety,” which have been created by a “lack of intimacy,

¹¹² Adams, “Theological Basis of Social Action,” 69-70.

¹¹³ Athanasius (*De Incarnatione*, MPG 25:192B; also CCC, n. 460).

¹¹⁴ Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Early Christian Fathers* (London: Routledge: 2004), 37-41.

impersonalism, the multiplicity of norms, the atomizing of obligations, (and) the loss of communal solidarity.”¹¹⁵ What follows then is abject poverty by economic power and exploitation that alienates man from the community-forming power of God.¹¹⁶ The Psalter thus speaks of the expectation of God’s involvement for securing justice and righteousness (Psalm 72: 1-7, 12-14).

God’s self-revelation in Jesus was to rescue the people of God, as God’s children, who had been rejected and marginalized within their society. What was even worse was that the Law was interpreted to suit their purposes and to justify their oppression and injustice. Jesus was God’s vision to establish the new People of God, “the new community where God’s will would be done for this world as place where everyone is cared for, everyone needs are met, everyone is respected and valued.” Thus, the gross inequalities of marginalization that existed in the old community of God were to be abolished in the new community of God being inaugurated by Jesus.

God’s almightiness became much clearer when God as Jesus Christ becomes the source of Christian theology’s social action. For Christians, this almighty power is the power of love that Christians inherit from the graces of Baptism and the Eucharist. Jesus would seek the powers that attach to or create an intimacy of fellowship: “Love and justice can prevail only when these are supported by the

¹¹⁵ Adams, “Theological Basis of Social Action,” 74.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

fellowship, friendliness, the concern of each for all and of all for each and the sense of brotherly responsibility that is found in the community of primary relations.”¹¹⁷ It is the *koinonia*, that is, a commonality in living with Jesus Christ as its head and informing power where there are the divine yearning and initiative for the intimacy of fellowship between God and humans and between humankind. This power alone is reliable and thus has a world-historical purpose in the achievement of righteousness and fellowship through the loving obedience of God’s creatures. God’s power is reliable and sovereign as it offers itself as the basis of a community of persons.

God’s almightiness serves to impress how society can serve as the medium through which the divine power grows into history, like a seed that grows “of itself.”¹¹⁸ This love as the people of God fosters human behaviour “moving towards each other in the same direction, hoping and wishing for the same things.”¹¹⁹ Love, therefore, is the center point of God’s almightiness. This is causal for the power of unity. Human flourishing is inseparable from God’s active relationship with human beings. It is this love of God for humanity mediated through communities, through the love of others that establishes solidarity with each other as the people of God. It is

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 74.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 77.

¹¹⁹ Jean Vanier, *Community and Growth* (Homebush, NSW: St. Paul’s, Reprint 1980, 1984,1989), 56.

in God's almightiness where one finds fulfillment and security from individualism, isolation, and loneliness.¹²⁰ By divine love, God chose to become a human being so that the human being 'divinized' forever in that he or she receives a personal call to share in the life of God himself. Human beings are thus called to see Christ in the face of the other, and to treat the other as another self."¹²¹ It is to become empathetic to the genuine wants of others to fulfil themselves according to God's plan, and in turn, being of service to other people.

Above all, the most insightful of God's almightiness is the conquering of death and no less than by the sacrifice of God's Son is Jesus Christ not for God's self-edification, but the love of fallen humans. As scripture says, "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8), and "Greater love has no one than to laydown ones' life for his friends" (Jn 15:13, *NIV*).

God's kingdom is achieved not in the likeness of any authoritarian religion, but through an outpouring of love as when God made a new covenant with humans: "I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of

¹²⁰ Peter McVerry, *Jesus: Social Revolutionary?* (Dublin, Ireland: Veritas, 2008), 138.

¹²¹ Anthony Annett, "Human Flourishing, The Common Good and Catholic Social Teaching," in Jeffrey Sachs, Leonardo Becchetti and Anthony Annett (eds.), *World Happiness Report, 2016, vol. 2* (Special Rome Edition, New York: Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2016).

the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth” (Gen 9:11) and blessed Abraham with the assurance “I will make you a great nation” (Gen 12:2). Undoubtedly, love was the premise upon which God’s community-creating promises were passed to Abraham’s descendants. Obedience to the law was central to the ancestral family.¹²² God’s communities are thus identifiable by the ethics of sociality and mutuality that binds together, the common good, equality amongst people and nations, and peace in the world. In this sense mutuality or solidarity includes all the other principles and values that are necessary to create and sustain a truly good society.

God the Creator

From the myth of Adam to vocation and election, the Old Testament introduces the concept of creation. God’s sovereign call and choice presuppose that he is the master of all reality – that he is the Father who has created everything (Deut 32:6; Mal 2:10), and that he is, therefore, the foundation and Lord of all reality (Isa 45:9f, 64:7). Isaiah has God said, “everyone is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made” (Is 43:7). In the Psalms, the purpose of creation is revealed: “Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens” (Ps 8:1, 19:1, 8:1, 50:6, 89:5). The world and all that God created are for the glorification of God and goodness.

¹²² Fretheim, *God and World*, 17.

In the modern secular state, on the other hand, the biblical concept of creation is becoming increasingly problematic. It conflicts with the science of evolution to the point that secular schools are even banned from narrating the biblical origin of the world. There is also much confusion on methodological and philosophical naturalism, that is, the reasoning “that because it is possible to explain so much of the natural world through natural causes (methodological naturalism), it follows that there are no supernatural entities and (in particular) no God (philosophical naturalism).” Ironically such a misunderstanding puts unnecessary barriers within science itself to the acceptance of evolution.¹²³ Scientists, unfortunately, fail to realize that the Christian concept of creation does not necessarily reject evolution.¹²⁴

Scientific interest from a professional perspective offers an intricate working understanding of the human cell – its anatomy, design, organisation, and specific function of each of its organelles such as the cytoskeleton, cell membrane, desmosome, Golgi apparatus, mitochondria, nucleolus, lysosome, centriole, and others that sustain its life – deeply ascertain that a living cell has to have an intelligent source. Darwinian evolution overlooks that life cannot and will never come from non-life. To be exact, by the law

¹²³ Louise S. Meade and Eugenie C. Scott, “Problem Concepts in Evolution Part 1: Purpose and Design,” in *Evolution: Education and Outreach* (2010), vol. 3/1, pp. 78-81

¹²⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *In the Beginning*, 20.

of biogenesis life comes from life.¹²⁵ Nonetheless, most evolutionists insist on a naturalistic explanation for the origin of life and the origin of the universe. Many evolutionists attempt to distance themselves from particularly the origin-of-life question, which is necessary for evolution to be true. This belief in evolution comes from the desire to remove the need for God as Creator.

When carefully studied, as pointed out by Benedict XVI, there is an inner unity of creation and evolution and faith and reason. Scripturally the occurrence of life happened only once, and this one time was on earth.¹²⁶ Based on the work of the highly regarded scientist Jacques Monod, Benedict explains that “the universe was not something like a huge box into which everything was put in a finished state ... it is comparable instead to a living growing tree that gradually lifts its branches higher and higher to the sky.”¹²⁷ Monod asserted that modern biology evolution is not a specific property of living beings; their specific property is unchanging; they reproduce themselves and their property endures. In this way, there is permanency so that in every organism its pattern is reproduced.¹²⁸ The great project of the living creation also points to a creating “reason” that shows human beings have a

¹²⁵ Jeff Miller, “The Law of Biogenesis, Part I,” Apologetic Press, USA, <http://www.apologeticpress.org> (30/10/2020).

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, 20.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 21.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 25.

creating “intelligence,” and they do so more luminously and radiantly now than ever before. These indeed confirm a “certitude and joyousness that the human being is indeed a divine project, which only the crating Intelligence was strong and great and audacious enough to conceive it.”¹²⁹ Benedict further clarified how this connection between creation and evolution can be found in our experiences. Thus, the motive or reason for creation is uniformly answered today, freely, out of love and goodness. Our trinitarian faith in God is ultimately found in the “expression of the basic Christian experience that God in Godself, is life, love, communion, communication, dialogue, exchange, fellowship, solidarity, then creation is a work of this love.”¹³⁰ Therefore, the world as creation has a form that is just as sacramental as God’s creation.¹³¹ By this, no one model can be regarded in isolation as long as they complement, and correct one another. We need to appreciate that there is some mediation between the “world of faith” and the “world of knowledge,” but with the proviso that “such mediation in any case include the fundamental difference in their respective way of experiencing.”¹³²

¹²⁹ Ibid, 26-27.

¹³⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, *Creation and Evolution* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2007), 181.

¹³¹ Ibid, 194.

¹³² Ibid, 201.

Scripture indicates that to speak of creation is to state that the cosmos did not evolve involuntarily; rather, they were created by God, who made “the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1).¹³³ Creation extends to everything on earth and in the sky, from the divine shaping of an individual in the womb of the mother (Isa 49:5; cf. Jer 1:5) to establishing the basic and dynamic infrastructure of the world. God also guarantees by the promise that: “I will never again curse the ground because of the humankind ... as long as the earth endures” (Gen 8:21–22). Further, “Every moving thing shall be food for you, just as I gave you the green plants” (9:3). God also said, “I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people” (Jer 31:1), and he assured those in distress, “Keep your voice from weeping ... for there is reward for your work, says the Lord: they shall come back from the land of the enemy; there is hope for the future” (Jer 31:16–17). The Lord “gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; the Lord of hosts is his name” (Jer 31:35).

The Pentateuch presents the image of God and the purpose of creation in “a little corner of the world” that serves as a “*universal point of reference*.”¹³⁴ At the beginning of Genesis (1–11), the reader’s attention is drawn to the creation story, which introduces

¹³³ Fretheim, *God and World in the New Testament*, 4.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 29.

the human race as “good and responsible creatures” created in the image of God; as such, they are “given work to do in God’s world.”¹³⁵ In particular, mindful of their created status, we are called to be *co-creators* with God, in and through whom God will work: “Divine activity does *not* entail human passivity in working towards God’s goal for Creation.”¹³⁶

God as Creator characterizes the manifestation of his divine charity. It is the scriptural revelation of God’s outpouring account of his love, benevolence, and grace to the world. Charity is the “theology of epiphany,” and human beings created in God’s image ought to depict this nature of God in the world. The charity has two closely linked parts: love of God and love of others, which includes loving one’s neighbours as of one’s self. Accepting “God as Creator” therefore implies that every person stands before God as a participant in the work of creation as one humanity.¹³⁷ In no uncertain terms, scripture outlines our obligation against any form of discrimination by reference especially to the socially disadvantaged, the poor: “Whoever is kind to the poor leads to the Lord, and will be repaid in full” (Gen 19:17). As Aquinas explains, our friendship with humankind for God unites us with God:

¹³⁵ Ibid, 93.

¹³⁶ Ibid. (Emphasis is added)

¹³⁷ Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000),150.

Now the aspect under which our neighbour is to be loved, is God, since what we ought to love in our neighbour is that he may be in God ... Consequently the habit of charity extends not only to the love of God, but also to the love of our neighbour (*Summa* II, q.25, a.1).

“Charity” is a requirement for happiness, which is humanity’s last goal (*Summa* II, q.23, a.1). Christian charity is founded in the communication between humans and God. As much as God communicates his happiness to humankind, some kind of friendship must be based on this same communication, of which it is written: “God is faithful: by him you were called unto the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord” (1Cor 1:9). Aquinas, therefore, defines this communication as one of love, that is, the charity of “friendship of man for God” (*Summa* II, q.25, a.1).

Luther too emphasized that God repeatedly expressed his satisfaction and delight with the results of his creation intended to be the realm of life for humanity. The most inspiring act, which Luther preached emulates God’s delight is “charity,” which are services that rendered us and blessings bestowed upon us. Divine charity called forth most appropriately our response of praise and thanksgiving. While we reflect on our understanding and wonder on this as “the citizens of that heavenly country” only as stranger and exiles, we feel convinced that after this life we shall behold nearer and

understand perfectly this bequest of God.¹³⁸ Charity, thus, is the ultimate perfection of the human spirit because it both glorifies and reflects the nature of God's being.

Christianity is conscious that creation is not "very good" at present, as sin and death have entered the world. Rather, creation includes *more* than God's originating work. It is a continuing process until Christ's work of redemption is undertaken. Scripture states: "When you give them your breath, life is created, and you renew the face of the earth" (Ps 104:30, *NLT*), which suggests God's continuing creative work. It is also done "in and through the historical process," as also indicated by Isaiah (40–45, 45:8, 54:16).¹³⁹ Paul Tillich was, therefore, able to assert: "The doctrine of Creation is not the story of an event which took place once upon a time;" rather, it is an analogy used to illustrate God's continuing involvement in the creation of the world.¹⁴⁰ Likewise, Frank Miller claims that it is "a process of past and present."¹⁴¹ Bernhard Anderson's understanding of Genesis 1–2 also suggests that creation

¹³⁸ John Nicholas Lenker (trans. Henry Coles), "Luther on the Creation," in *The Precious and Sacred Writings of Martin Luther Based on the Kaiser Chronological*, (Charleston, SC: Forgotten Books, 2012), 90, 94, (Book-online) http://www.martinluthersermons.com/luthergenesis_chap_1.pdf, (18/06/2016).

¹³⁹ Fretheim, *God and World*, 5.

¹⁴⁰ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. I (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1951, 1972), 252.

¹⁴¹ Frank D. Miller, "The Poetry of Creation: Psalm 104," in William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride (eds.), *God Who Creates* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 97.

is an ongoing process; it is not just an event that occurred in the beginning; God continues his activity by sustaining creatures and holding everything in being.¹⁴²

Scripture states, “Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created. He established them forever and ever” (Ps 148:5,6). Thus, there will be drastic changes on earth and in heaven when sin and its effects are purged (2Pet 3:10), but then creation will once again be very good, with “no more death,” “no more crying,” “no more pain” and “no more curse,” as “nothing unclean will enter it, not anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lord’s book of life” (Rev 21:4, 22:3, 21:27).

In scripture, God affirms that he will preserve creation. In total, in no less than 13 verses, God assures us that the creation of the world will be preserved (Gen 8:22; Ps 36:6, 104:1–35, 135:6–7, 145:16–17; Job 38:33–37; Acts 17:28; Col 1:17; 1Cor 8:6) and accomplish his continuing presence in creation of the world:

In the last days He has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word (Heb 1:1–3).

¹⁴² Bernard W. Anderson (ed.), *From Creation to New Creation: Old Testament Perspectives* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994), 89.

Having created humanity in the image and likeness of God, it follows that creation is never independent of God. This is a statement of our faith, that is, nothing can exist without God's sustenance and preservation. The government and rule of humans are also grounded in the fact that God does not keep the power of creation for himself. The ability to communicate, engage with others, have and establish fellowship, and thereby create something new, is also passed on to humans. As a God who shares himself with his creatures, God gives humans a share in the divine attributes. The divine attributes of the unity of humanity, therefore, are of paramount significance as it is the social indicator of God's continued activity. As demonstrated by Jean Vanier, without "a strong sense of community human beings will wilt and begin to die. Community is the foundation of human society, the zenith of interdependence, the epitome of wholeness, in fact, the end of our journeying."¹⁴³

Luther interpreted Genesis 2:16-17 as revealing God's preservation takes place in broad terms as three estates, walks of life, or hierarchies: *church, household, and state*. At a macro level, these are to be found in and remain in every kingdom, as far as the world extends, and will last until the world comes to an end. These three estates are essential for the fundamental realms of life in which

¹⁴³ Vanier, *Community and Growth*, 3.

God's promise and the word of creation organize human life.¹⁴⁴ Luther's thesis of God's social dynamics as Creator can be rephrased in this way.

Firstly, and foremost is the awareness of the divine presence in the household, which is an important starting point for participation in the work of achieving God's kingdom. The nuclear family is the foundation of a culture that embraces unity and respect for fellow humans. In this context, baptizing children plays a profound role in developing and fostering a society that lives by love from the beginning.¹⁴⁵ The fundamental truth about God is his plan that creation itself is ordered to redemption. Thus, the family as a created reality finds its full meaning as a Christian family and as a community for whom Jesus Christ is the Saviour. Jesus makes this family, or community as an instrument of his saving work to redeem all of humanity. The heart of Baptism signifies a sharing of Christian values as a family,¹⁴⁶ and Christian parents accept "their role as nurturers of the life [of their children] that God has entrusted to them" (CCC, n. 1251). This religious approach to establishing an authentic society had no doubt been met with harsh criticisms,

¹⁴⁴ Johannes Schwanke, "Luther's Theology of Creation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, 2014, <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/16/06/2016>.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Robert L. Saucy, *The Church in God's Program* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1972); also Mark Searle, *Christening: The Making of Christians* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1980), 151.

¹⁴⁶ Cooke, *Sacraments and Sacramentality*, 123–133.

largely drawn from the personal experiences of pain and suffering by the likes of Kierkegaard I already alluded to earlier.

To reiterate, Kierkegaard had argued that true believers must see the word of God as being beyond the rational concept of ethics. Kierkegaard proposes that a true Christian must proceed through faith alone, that is, “natural understanding” should be set aside to allow for a higher understanding from God. He believed in the subjectivity of truth – meaning that truth is understood and experienced individually. The modern world, he claims, “has promised freedom, but instead had delivered a deadening conformity, and even worse, a kind of puffed up rhetoric itself that seemed far removed from its tawdry reality.”¹⁴⁷ In so doing he places a wedge between faith and reason, which is contrary to Thomistic philosophy that faith and reason can coalesce and reasonably co-exist (*Summa* II-II, q.1, a.1-5; q.2, a.1- 4, 10). The anti-intellectualism rhetoric employed by Kierkegaard and others can be stretched to even to the point of opposing both faith and reason altogether. Very much to the contrary, it cannot be denied that faith itself is an act of the intellect and indeed faith is only possible because humanity is endowed with intellect. As effectively pointed out by Terry Benignus and other scholars, “if man did not have reason, no revelation could be made to him, since he would

¹⁴⁷ Terry Pinkard, *German Philosophy 1760-1860: The Legacy of Idealism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 2002), 346. 355.

have no power to grasp truth, whether aided or unaided.”¹⁴⁸ Reason can support faith and be transformed by it. For “one who attains faith’s spiritual sensitivity (or the proper eyes to see or ears to hear), even belief in something as divisive and seemingly far-fetched as God’s existence can be rational and justified.”¹⁴⁹

Secondly, the Church is a fundamental estate in preserving and continuing the work of creation as a communion of saints. At a micro level, this is far more fundamental or germinal to sustain God’s preservation as the Creator, which is the family household. As pointed out by Cardinal William Levada, the family is often the principal cell, or building block of human society, and furthermore, in creating man and woman, “God instituted the human family and endowed it with its fundamental constitution” (CCC, n. 2203).¹⁵⁰ The mission of the Church has always been to reunite all his children, scattered and led astray by sin, and “to call the whole of humanity into his Son’s Church” (CCC, n. 845).

Thirdly, is the fundamental estate of the state. This is an important aspect of creation, which is to create a just society as prescribed in the Ten Commandments. This Decalogue establishes

¹⁴⁸ Gerrity Benignus, *Nature, knowledge of God; An introduction to Thomistic philosophy* (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce, 1947), 446.

¹⁴⁹ C. Stephen Evans, *Faith Beyond Reason: A Kierkegaardian Account* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1998), 90.

¹⁵⁰ William J. Levada, *The Family in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2006*, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_faithdoc_20060707_levada-valencia_en.html (21/01/ 2017).

principles of how God's people are called upon to operate as his witnesses. It is a prototype of the orderly development of a state and represents a distillation of ancient Israel's faith and community ethic. As shown by David Pleins, the Decalogue is a movement devoted to matters of familial relationships, social interaction, and most importantly, property. It prescribes the rudiments of unity for humanity by introducing the rule of law based on justice for all.¹⁵¹

Scripture is clear that salvation is solely dependent on adherence to Christ, and "being in Christ" involves membership in a new society that, according to Paul in Galatians, transcends the limits of social class, gender, and cultural identity. For Christians, all are one in Christ (Gal 3:28). The fundamental relationship for Jesus is to "love God with your whole heart and your neighbor as yourself" (Lk 10:27). Jorge Bergoglio, before his election to Pope, summarized this political concept of creation thus: "For the disciple of Christ, solidarity is a moral duty stemming from the spiritual union of all human beings who share a common origin, a common dignity, and a common destiny."¹⁵²

Belief in Jesus Christ

The second part of the Creed is belief in Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity as God and Lord, born of the Virgin

¹⁵¹ David J Pleins, *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible: A Theological Introduction* (Westminster John Knox, 2000)

¹⁵² Pope Francis, "Address on Social Justice," at Hart Plaza, Detroit, September 1987, in *L'Observatore Romano*, (5/10/ 1987), 7.

Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit, suffered, died, buried, resurrected; and who is now seated at the right hand of God (Articles 2–6). This is the doctrine of the incarnation, the centrality of Christianity. It is an affirmation of faith in God who had incarnated as a human being so that humans could come to know him and his divine plan for this world. The incarnation establishes God's immediate and direct relation to creation. To believe in Jesus Christ recalls his nativity: “and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means “God is with us” (Mt 1:23) – that is, he is God for all of humankind. Joseph, his foster-father, was to name him “Jesus.” This is the Greek form of the Hebrew word “Yeshua,” which is a shortened form of Joshua. This was a common name at the beginning of the Christian era, and it means “Yahweh saves.”¹⁵³ To accept Jesus Christ is to acknowledge that Jesus is God. Each of the three titles of Jesus in the Creed – Christ, Lord, and only Son – points to an aspect of his work, and when taken together, they present “a composite of Christologies.”¹⁵⁴

As Saviour, he was born to be “Christ” or *Christos*—that is, the “Anointed” one who is to save everyone from their sins by the merit of his death and resurrection.¹⁵⁵ In Mark (8:28–29), Peter told Jesus, “You are the Messiah,” which translates into Greek as

¹⁵³ Marthaler, *The Creed*, 73.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁵⁵ “Christós,” www.biblehub.com/greek/5547.htm (12/02/ 2015).

christos; and in another the “Son of the Living God” (Mt 16:16). Jesus was simply bringing to pass what God had foretold that he was the Messiah:

He was from the throne of David (Isa 11:1).

He was from Bethlehem (Mic 5:2).

He was conceived by a virgin and his name is Immanuel (Isa 7:14)

He was a prophet (Deut 18:15–18).

He would present himself by riding on an ass (Zec 9:9).

The Messiah’s suffering and death (Ps 22; Isa 53).

Messianic sacrifice for our sins (Isa 53:5–9), and

Messiah’s Resurrection (Ps 16:10,22:19–21; Isa 53:58,10).

After being anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power, Jesus did good works and healed all who were in the grip of the devil for “God was with him” (Acts 10:38).

An important implication of Jesus as God is all Christians are brothers and sisters in Christ. Especially significant is God’s glory manifested from the cross for all humanity. Jesus’s death, resurrection, and ascension convey a single message concerning Jesus’s destiny, which is not limited to Christians alone but extends to all humanity. Thus, on Maundy Thursday, the day before his crucifixion, Jesus said a special prayer (Jn 17:20–21) for his disciples: “As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world” (Jn 17:18). In a pragmatic sense, his death and resurrection demonstrate how humanity can be restored to oneness from broken relationships by forgiving each other for our sins. This then is the *missio* of *communio sanctorum*. Consuming the Eucharist

is to become the *communio* of Jesus Christ in this world with the mission that Jesus himself proclaimed by citing Isaiah (61:1-2), which defines the character of his ministry (Lk 4:18-19): the good news to those who are poor, blind, in captivity, and oppressed.¹⁵⁶

The Creed encapsulates the prophetic conceptions of God as a social being of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Jesus ministry was to highlight the *community-forming power of God* that he stressed “is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices”:

You shall love your Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no greater commandment than these. (Mk 12:31).

This is the greatest of all commandments the love for one another that would extend and deepen in the world. This he repeated at the Last Supper, after Judas Iscariot had departed, as a New Commandment “that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” (Jn 13:30). Jesus reveals this divine yearning and initiative for the intimacy of fellowship between God and humanity and between each other in his commandment. For his Church, this was to remove inequality and injustice to achieve unity and harmony of humanity.

¹⁵⁶ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 81.

The Church is a crucial constituent of the world. As God's people and as witnesses of Jesus it is committed to the redemptive work of God. Thus, it is fully engaged with life issues in a world fraught with contradictions and injustices. It recognizes that humanity needs a God who is merciful and provident, who will bring people together and raise awareness of their vocation to be brothers and sisters to one another. In this regard, it is committed to restoring God's vision of the world he had created.

Thus, Pope Leo XIII in *Rerum novarum* (1891) had outlined the rights of workers to a fair wage, safe working conditions, and the formation of labour unions, while affirming the rights of property and free enterprise.¹⁵⁷ The Protestants too in United States of America (1880-1925) were committed to social salvation that included uplifting working-class families as part of their program of reform. They called their mission the "Social Gospel" which was an extensive and multifaceted movement of Christians ready to remedy a broad array of social ills. Involving hundreds of thousands of participants and numerous organizations and activities, the Social Gospel was the most widely supported, long-lasting, and effective campaign of Christians to improve social conditions in American history. It achieved its objectivity by disapproving both Marxism

¹⁵⁷ Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum (On Capital and Labor, 1891)*, http://www.vatican.va/documents/15051891_rerum-novarum.html (12/06/2018) ⁽

and *laissez-faire* capitalism of secular activists and sought as to its ultimate vision not only a more equitable balance of power within society, but also a Christianised society in which cooperation, mutual respect, and compassion replace greed, competition, and conflict among the social and economic classes.¹⁵⁸

Pope John XXIII addressed his last published encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, (1963) to all people of goodwill, believers, and nonbelievers alike. He set the view that the Church must look to a world without boundaries, without “blocs.” The Church, he argued, belongs neither to the East nor the West. By inviting all nations and political communities to a process of dialogue and negotiations, he stated that we must look for that which united us and leave aside that which divided us.¹⁵⁹

Jesus also confirmed God’s involvement in a community setting. He was exemplary for Christians’ participation in the world. It was only as a community that Christians could influence a social reconstruction where God’s social values could be put into practice and become effective enough to revolutionize the political and

¹⁵⁸ Christopher H. Evans, *The Social Gospel Today* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); also “Social Gospel,” in The ARDA, http://www.thearda.com/timeline/movements/movement_46.asp (6/6/2018).

¹⁵⁹ Pope John XXIII, “*Pacem in Terris (On Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty, 1963)*,” http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html (7/6/2018).

economic ideas and methods in any society. Jesus had set the *modus operandi* of Christian social teaching.

Jesus envisaged a “new world” with more intimate relations between himself and his community, which differed from that between Moses and his followers as the people of God. While the observance of the Mosaic Law was the dominant factor uniting the people of Israel, in the New Testament it was Jesus, as God incarnate, who presented himself in a new and tangible way in place of the Law. Jesus was the medium of this divine union. As God’s sacrificial lamb, Jesus was the perfect model of charity that is love, as there was “no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15:13, *NLT*). Both the Old and New Testaments are relevant to the world. The Torah, given to Moses, was fulfilled by Jesus, who became the new Torah of God’s absolute and universal love and united everyone. The unity of humanity and the interrelatedness of one another as one family under the patronage of God as Father or Mother was an essential outcome of this belief in Jesus Christ. Every person was of God.

The Creed instructs that Jesus is the Saviour of the world. The acronym INRI (*Iēsus Nazarēnus, Rēx Iūdaeōrum*), meaning “Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews,” was a “multilingual proclamation” in the languages of the three great contributors to the world history

of that time, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.¹⁶⁰ Jesus wanted to share his resurrection with everyone, and he told the women present: “Do not be afraid: go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me” (Mt 28:9–10). Galilee was quite a distance from Jerusalem, the center of religion, far from Rome, the center of law and government, and far from Athens, the center of philosophy.¹⁶¹

Jesus’s choice of Galilee was not random. Galilee was a microcosm of the ancient world, inhabited by Phoenicians, Syrians, Arabs, Romans, and many others. It was a multicultural and multiracial place that supported the “Galilee of the Gentiles”—a multi-ethnic populace with multiple cultural and social ties to a diverse range of urban centers.¹⁶² Galilee did not have a good reputation; it was the land of the “rejected, despised, outcasts and foreigners.” Galileans were despised and rejected by the “pure” Jews of Jerusalem in the south, who regarded themselves as “the sole heirs of cultural and religious purity.”¹⁶³ Thus, in the Old Testament, it had already acquired the name “Galilee of Gentiles” or “Galilee of nations” (Isa 9:1).¹⁶⁴ In choosing Galilee, Jesus emphasized that his

¹⁶⁰ Francis J., Moloney, *The Gospel of John, Sacra Pagina* (MN: Liturgical, 1998), 502.

¹⁶¹ Bob Robinson, *Jews and the Religions: Retrieving a Neglected Example for a Multicultural World* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 57.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Caleb Rosado, “The Significance of Galilee to the Mission of the Church, 1994,” www.rosado.net/pdf/Galilee.pdf (8/04/2015).

¹⁶⁴ Robinson, *Jews and the Religions*, 55ff.

resurrection and joy were not limited to any class or boundary and that there was no race, colour, or tribe inferior in God's eyes.

Belief in the Holy Spirit

The final, or third part of the Creed (Articles 8–12) is the belief in God the Holy Spirit who is a person of the Trinity in association with the Church, the sacraments, forgiveness sins, and life everlasting. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ who Jesus said will be the “Advocate” (Jn 14:16) or “Comforter” (Jn 14:16, *KJV*) “forever” for his disciples:

This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you” (Jn 14:17-18).

The Spirit is the fascinating and attractive dimension of the divine as the mediator of salvation, which the prophets have inquired after and searched for diligently, prophesying that it would bring upon the disciples the grace “that was to be yours” (1Pet 1:10, 11). The Spirit is important for being a Christian and to gain a fuller appreciation of the scope and implications of *sanctorum communionem*. There can be no Baptism, Eucharist, or any other sacrament without the involvement of God the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Several passages of scripture speak of the Holy Spirit in a way that assumes the Spirit has the same divine status as the Father and the Son (Mt 28:19). Other trinitarian passages in the New Testament make a similar assumption (1Cor 12:4–6; 2Cor 13:14; Eph 4:4–6; 1Pet 1:2).

The Spirit plays a dominant role in the lives of Christians. She transforms believers into holiness or “saints” by cleansing them by the Baptism of the Spirit of their sins. As Paul explained, “Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of heaven?” (1Cor 6:9) and that saints have been prepared by the Lord “to increase and abound in love for one another” and to “strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord with all his saints” (1Th 3:12).

Jesus states that without being born of water and the Spirit, one couldn't enter the kingdom of God (Jn. 3:5–7) because “It is the Spirit that gives life” (Jn 6:63). Through the Spirit, we obtain the sanctifying grace we all need to enter heaven. Sanctifying grace is an indwelling of God in us. Baptism “perfects the soul itself to enable it to live with God” (CCC, n.2000) and this sanctifying grace can be lost by a single mortal sin (CCC, n.1861). Thus:

[Human] existence is purified into peace and friendliness, reconciled relationships, sharing – in delight and harmony – in the very light of God. Hence the enablement, and the requirement, that human beings ... who are moral agents ... conform their words, and deeds, and institutions, their treatment of each other and what we call the natural world, to the pattern of God's outpoured peacefulness.¹⁶⁶

It follows that all who have been baptized are saints, and thereby all members of their Christian community are “saints” in the

¹⁶⁶ Lash, *Believing Three Ways in One God*, 88.

biblical sense of the word. For the Lord, the human body is an instrument of righteousness to holiness; therefore, it is never to be made an instrument of sin. The hope of a resurrection to glory should keep Christians from dishonouring their bodies through fleshly lusts. Thus, by being baptized, “you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our Lord” (1Cor 6:11) so that believers’ bodies become “the temple of the Holy Spirit” (1Cor 6:19).

This may sound problematic for non-Christians who live a life in God. This quandary will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 7. Suffice to quote from *Lumen Gentium* (n.16) which explains the Church’s position to non-Christians, that they too can attain salvation “who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, yet sincerely seek [God] and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do God’s will by ‘the dictates of conscience.’”

It is the “spirit of God (who) has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life” (Job 33:4) says the Lord. Until the *parousia*, the Holy Spirit is therefore involved in completing the work of creation and salvation. Thus, through the Holy Spirit, human history takes shape.

The Holy Spirit actively participates in the sacraments to transform people into God’s witnesses. The theological foundation of God’s social attributes as Father and Son is dependent on the

practical experience of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah draws attention to the social importance of the Holy Spirit by referring to it as the “Spirit of the Lord” (Isa 11:1–5), as it is the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, and power (Isa 11:1–4) that rests on the Messiah. The prophet can ensure a hopeful future led by this wisdom and power in the Messiah, who will reign in righteousness and peace.

The Holy Spirit gives life because “the flesh is useless” (Jn 6:63). The human spirit was discerned from the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Day when the Holy Spirit, in the shape of a tongue, descended on all who were gathered, and the crowd wondered with amazement, saying: “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that ... each of us in his own language ... (hears) them telling ... the mighty works of God?” (Acts 2:1–7, 11). Everyone gathered spoke in their dialects, but at Pentecost, they could understand one another once the Holy Spirit descended.

The Spirit is the principle of love and unity, so that “our lives as children of God in the form of a Gift, [fulfils] that quality in us.” This was created through the humanity of Jesus in Mary: “During his life on earth, Jesus was the temple of the Holy Spirit, containing

all men with the intention and power to accept them as children of God.”¹⁶⁷ After Jesus’s resurrection and ascension:

[The] Holy Spirit has that temple in us, enabling us to be born *anōthen* (Gk ἄνωθεν, from above and anew, Jn 3:3) and to live as a member of the Body of Christ. He himself consummates this quality in our body, in the glory and freedom of children of God. (Rom 8:21–23).¹⁶⁸

The sacraments are the instrumentalities of the Holy Spirit. Through the sacraments, Christians become the home of the Holy Spirit. The social, cultural, and religious signification of human unity and harmony are achieved by the Spirit against the works of the flesh:

Now the works of the “flesh” are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these (Gal 5:19–21).

In contrast, the fruits of the Spirit, which are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control heightens the human body. As Paul says, “There is no law against such things” (Gal 5:22).

The critical role of the Holy Spirit and its dominance in the daily life of humanity received special recognition at the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) in its theology of the Spirit. The

¹⁶⁷ Yves Congar (trans. Geoffrey Chapman), *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 2 (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1983), 67.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Council discussed the role of the Spirit in tackling the challenges of secularism, atheism, technology, politics, and the whole sphere of human activity. It is a theology that sees “the whole of humanity being united because of a common origin and destiny.”¹⁶⁹ Thus, *Gaudium et spes, The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, 1965 (GS)* stresses that the Spirit’s role in salvation is available to everyone, irrespective of his or her religious beliefs. The truth of Christ is meant for all people of goodwill “in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way” (*GS*, n.2).¹⁷⁰

Baptism signifies a person’s preparation for participation in the “kingdom of God.” On the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4), for the first time, people were permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and the Church had begun. It was in this connection with the kingdom of God, that scripture says: “the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever” (Daniel 7:18).

There is, therefore, a corporate aspect when one is baptized in the Spirit into a new life that goes beyond the sum of peoples’ attitudes and aspirations. The baptized person does not possess the

¹⁶⁹ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 81.

¹⁷⁰ Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes (The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, 1965)*, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html (1/04/2019).

Spirit on an individual basis but does so by sharing one's life in the Christian community. A Christian does not live for himself. The Spirit animates the group, gives it a personality, and is the moving force that helps bring the group to its goals.¹⁷¹ The kingdom of God is the kingdom of the Holy Spirit. Thus, in initiating a new Christian into its corporate existence, a Christian community enriches that person's life by sharing with him or her the Spirit of unending life, the new life of the kingdom of God.

Jesus' physical presence in the world and his deeds were in anticipation of the arrival of this kingdom of God over the people of God on earth in the person of the Messiah. Thus, when he cast out the demons, he said, "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you" (Lk 11:20-21). After his wilderness temptations and his return to Galilee in the power of Spirit, he proclaimed, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (Mt 4:17).

The Christian world is relatively vague in appreciating the dynamics of the Holy Spirit in the world, despite the sacred scripture's emphasis on the same. Holy Spirit is the least developed doctrine of the Trinity.¹⁷² The major creeds of Christianity – the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed – do not adequately address

¹⁷¹ Cooke, *Sacraments and Sacramentality*, 130-132.

¹⁷² James Newton Poling, *Rethinking Faith: A Constructive Practical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2011), 77.

the difference that the Spirit makes to Christian living.¹⁷³ Even Augustine's account of the Spirit seemed like "something passive and seemingly without any person-defining activity."¹⁷⁴ As also noted by Philip Hefner the Holy Spirit had not been projected like the Father or Son, even though the Spirit is the symbol of the dynamic presence of God that "called life into being as a creative source and act." The theology of the Spirit shows human purpose and participation in the life process, which is "in the life of the Holy Spirit."¹⁷⁵

There is also some confusion when theologians try to discern the Holy Spirit from the *human* spirit.¹⁷⁶ In Catholic theology, the Holy Spirit is not considered a created human spirit (CCC, n.693). Paul was unequivocal of this dualism in humanity. While a person's physical body has a sinful mind, it also has a spiritual mind that belongs to his or her human spirit. Therefore, humans are double-minded (Jas 1:8, 4:8). In Baptism, the newly created mind (Eze 11:19, 36:26) would always come into conflict with the mind of the sinful nature. Paul himself stated, "I do not understand my own

¹⁷³ Gerald O'Collins, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity* (New York, NY: Paulist, 1999), 66.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 166.

¹⁷⁵ Philip Hefner, "Self-definition of Life and Human Purpose: Reflections upon the Divine Spirit and the Human Spirit," *ZYGON* (1973), vol. 8/ 3-4, p.398.

¹⁷⁶ Veli-Matti Karkkainen, "Identity and plurality: a Pentecostal-charismatic perspective," in *International Review of Mission* (Oct, 2002, vol.91), pp..500-503; also "The Holy Spirit vs Human Spirit," <http://www.catholicdoors.com/faq/qu11.ht> (9/02/2015).

actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate” (Rom 7:15, 19). Further, Paul illustrated that our whole being is like a holy temple: “Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1Cor 3:16). The phrase “put within you” occurs twice in Ezekiel 36:26–27, indicating that the place where the Holy Spirit dwells is in the human spirit; thus, the human spirit is the home of the Holy Spirit.

Pauline theology of the Spirit is crucial for the appreciation of *sanctorum communionem*. A Christian is one who has received the Spirit of Christ and thereby participates in this reality. Paul noted that if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his (Rom 8:9). To be a Christian means to have the Spirit, and any description of Christianity must be a description of the Spirit’s manifestations.¹⁷⁷ Christians freely welcome the Holy Spirit into themselves through the process of conversion. The human spirit or consciousness allows the Holy Spirit to prevail over one’s life without compromising the “free-will” of being a Christian (Mt 12:36; Rom 7:15, 14:12). This occurs when Christians participate in Baptism and Eucharist.

The Holy Spirit impacts upon his “free-will” which is the ultimate or decisive self-determination that rests on us as humans. Thus, Jesus says that everyone will be called to “give account for every careless word you utter” (Mt 12:36). Accordingly, Paul

¹⁷⁷ Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), chap. 16.

reflects upon his free will in this way: “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not know what I want, but I do the very thing I hate” (Rom 7:15). He warns that we will have to give an account, “Indeed, [of] all of our preferences and choices and behaviour” (Rom 14:12).¹⁷⁸

The scriptural metaphor of “wind” for the Spirit (Jn 3:8) is a significant attribute of God as the Spirit of the world. The Spirit in Lash’s language is “*peace-making*” by crossing boundaries between cultures and throughout history.¹⁷⁹ The wind represents the Spirit’s control of humans for all creation, systems, or forces that arise from the breath of God. The Spirit is therefore responsible for the unity of God’s creation. To think of the Spirit like the wind is to influence or blow unpredictably (Jn 3:8): first, the Holy Spirit works vertically by opening the human mind to the divine as a personal God in the sacraments; and second, the Holy Spirit works horizontally in the world against alienation, injustice, and violence to spread solidarity, justice and peace for all (Gal 5: 22–23). Being associated with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection through the Spirit and freed from sin we walk in newness of life as one family of God (Rom 6:1-10; Col 2:12).

Augustine understood the Pentecost event as one in which the Holy Spirit unified humans when all who had gathered and spoke in

¹⁷⁸ *Encyclopaedia of Catholicism*, 545).

¹⁷⁹ Lash, *Believing Three Ways in One God*, 55–120.

their language could understand one another when the Holy Spirit descended upon them (Acts 2: 1–7, 11). He interpreted Pentecost to mean the oneness of humans in God’s design of the world, just as Jesus’s death and resurrection were not just for Christians, but all humanity:

For he beholds in the light of truth how great and how good a thing it is to understand and to speak all tongues of all nations, and to be heard by none as from a foreigner.¹⁸⁰

This universality of the Spirit also discerns Christianity from other traditions. As shown by Pannenberg the identity of Christianity is its commonality to all of the creation: “the Spirit is the force field of God’s mighty presence” (Ps 139:7), - that is, a universal force that is illustrative of the ongoing nature of God’s work in the world in preserving grace and within the life of piety in the Church.¹⁸¹ As also highlighted by Kasper, the Holy Spirit moves over the primeval waters at the beginning of creation (Gen 1:2): “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth” (Ps 33:6; Job 33:4). The “Spirit is the vital principle of the human being, the seat of its sensations, intellectual operations, and attributes of will,”¹⁸² and thereby establishes unity between God and humanity. Thus, “When you hide your face they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to dust” (Ps 104:29f;

¹⁸⁰ Augustine, “On the Trinity,” Bk. X, 1.2, 135.

¹⁸¹ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology I*, 383.

¹⁸² Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 201.

Job 34:14f). God's Spirit is the creative power of life in all things. It gives people the capacity to recognize God and to know him. It is the Spirit of God who gives human beings "artistic sense and shrewdness" that "bestows insight and wisdom."¹⁸³

The core teaching of Orthodox spirituality also views as parallel the work of the Spirit and the Son.¹⁸⁴ There is a cosmic orientation of the Spirit, where the Church is a microcosm of the universe.¹⁸⁵ This universality and communion are particularly evident in the work of the Romanian theologian Dumitru Staniloie. He viewed the Spirit's capacity to intervene in the world to "render the effects of these interventions much more extensive, more sensible, and more efficacious than the intervention of human freedom."¹⁸⁶ As noted also by the Lutheran theologian Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, pneumatology is theological anthropology.¹⁸⁷

The Spirit unites humanity universally under her patronage in its role as one "Divine Mother."¹⁸⁸ The merits of the Spirit are significant when the risks faced by Christians today include

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (New York, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), 158–159; John, D. Zizoulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London, UK: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1985), 126–136.

¹⁸⁵ Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, 79.

¹⁸⁶ Dumitru Staniloie, *The Experience of God: Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 2 (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox, 2000), 60.

¹⁸⁷ Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, 79.

¹⁸⁸ Donald L. Gelpi, *The Divine Mother: A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 215–238.

fragmentation of modern societies, which has instigated individualism and selfishness.¹⁸⁹ The antithesis to these is the *koinonia* of the New Testament, as prompted by the Holy Spirit, which encourages “the spirit of communion, association, fellowship, sharing, common, contribution, and partnership among fellow human beings.”¹⁹⁰ Yves Congar who explored theological anthropology through the lens of pneumatology demonstrates that all aspects of human life – whether ordinary or spiritual – are the domain of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹¹ Congar was following Rahner’s lead who too stressed that humans are created to participate in God’s being of unity with diversity.¹⁹² The Holy Spirit presupposes an initial universal unity of humankind, which in Congar’s terms is “unobserved, and which is a unity of consent to be together and of movement in this direction.” Here, Congar builds on the unity initially mooted by Augustine:

[This] unity of *fraternas caritas, caritas unitatis, pacifica mens* and the love of peace, of mutual harmony and unity, the opposite of the partisan, sectarian and schismatic spirit.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ Jeffrey VanderWilt, *A Church without Borders: The Eucharist and the Church in Ecumenical Perspective* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 7.

¹⁹⁰ Robert Wuthnow, *Christianity in the Twenty-first Century: Reflections on the Challenges Ahead* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University), 1993.140–141, 216–217.

¹⁹¹ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 2, 67–68.

¹⁹² Karl Rahner (trans. William V. Dych), *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 2004), 120.

¹⁹³ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol.2, 15.

Congar offers a vital awareness of the Spirit. He claims that a person has the Spirit of Christ when he or she lives in the body of Christ, which is the Church, the communion of saints. The Spirit is received when believers are together, as “there is only one Spirit of Christ, and there is only one body, which is the Body of Christ.” Thus, the Church Fathers never cease to affirm and explain that we are all baptized into one body through the Spirit (1Cor 12:13; Eph 4:4).¹⁹⁴ This is consequential to the doctrine of *communio sanctorum* – the “body of Christ,” or the Eucharist – which transforms everyone into “saints” and makes the Church.¹⁹⁵

The messianic texts from Isaiah (11:1ff, 42:1ff, 61:1ff) depict the nature of the divine kingdom, where the Spirit functions as the Spirit of justice.¹⁹⁶ To be Christ-like after Eucharistic communion is to be a bearer of the Holy Spirit. The power and authority of the person who bears the Spirit lie in the fact that this person establishes “justice, mercy, and knowledge of God, the three functional elements of God’s law,”¹⁹⁷ which are universally relevant. God’s action in delivering a suffering Israel from lasting oppression and enslavement exemplifies his justice.¹⁹⁸ Justice is achieved through

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Michael Plekon, “Orthodox Theologians: Nicolas Afasianiev,” in Ståale Johannes Kristiansen and Svein Rise (eds), *Key Theological Thinkers: From Modern to Post Modern* (England: Ashgate, 2013), 373.

¹⁹⁶ Michael Welker, *God the Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 108.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 109.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 52.

the fulfilment of the covenant in Exodus (20:22–23:19), where different kinds of ordinances are dispensed for each form of injustice in the world to benefit weaker and disadvantaged people such as slaves (21:2ff), strangers (22:20, 23:9), widows and orphans (22:21ff), the poor (22:24ff, 23:6) and fellow persons who have neither influence nor power (23:1ff).¹⁹⁹

Mercy, like judicial equity, can be conceptualized with a degree of certainty. Isaiah’s written prophecy made it clear that a “publicly-regulated and well-honed, believable relation with God is not conceivable without the spread of justice and mercy in the described interconnection.”²⁰⁰ Exegesis of Isaiah’s prophecy suggests that without being constantly sensitive to the poor and weak, participation and integration begin “to twist justice and to misuse the cult,” which will lead to the “disintegration, decay, and destruction of the entire community.”²⁰¹ God’s kingdom is one in which mercy legislation enables people “who are poor, weak, and in the position of outsiders to reach the general level of judicial, social, economic, and cultural relations of exchange and communication.”²⁰²

The Creed, thus, is a summary of these theologies, which affirm despite their different perspectives of God’s plan for the

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 110.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 111.

²⁰² Ibid.

world by the unity of the Spirit and humanity. The social dynamics of the Spirit characterize the sociality of *communio sanctorum*.

Nonetheless, the Apostles' Creed has been critiqued for its lack of relevance in today's world. As a catalogue of beliefs, the Creed is no longer regarded as a regulator of public discourse.²⁰³ The faithful can no longer accept the Creed simply as a question of belief; it must be a question of understanding in "a far more advanced stage of theological knowledge."²⁰⁴ Further, it must be relevant to radically different social values that valorise individualism, collectivism, and consumerism in a globalized economy. Moreover, the globalization of world economies and the free movement of people has fused and compromised traditional cultures and customs that would once be averse to secular or atheistic thoughts that question the metaphysics of "a merciful Father, an obedient Son, a self-effacing Spirit."²⁰⁵ Atheistic Buddhism, for instance, or secularism increasingly ridicules the God of love, compassion, and mercy portrayed in the Creed as a contradiction in the face of the "massive poverty and obscene inequality" of current times, that it is "the terrible scourge that ranks

²⁰³ Lash, *Believing Three Ways in One God*, 1–3.

²⁰⁴ Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 16.

²⁰⁵ Francis George, *The Difference God Makes: A Catholic Vision of Faith, Communion, and Culture* (New York, NY: Herder & Herder, 2009).

alongside slavery and apartheid” notwithstanding the advances in science, technology, industry, and the accumulation of wealth.²⁰⁶

In a more recent account of the Creed, Clifton Loucks questions its objectivity when the many divisions within Christianity would seem to defeat its objectivity. He draws attention to Paul: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgement” (1Cor 1:10, *KJV*).²⁰⁷ Here, Loucks ignores the fact that Christianity allows for diversity: unity is not uniformity. As highlighted by the New Testament Scholar James Dunn, “it can justly be said, and we have discovered *a fairly clear and consistent unifying strand*” in Christianity from the beginning. It was unity with diversity from the start, and what “provided the *integrating center* for the diverse expressions of Christianity” can be narrowed down to Jesus – this kerygma of faith in “Christ crucified and risen marking out both center and circumference.”²⁰⁸ In this context, the Creed can be regarded as continuing to fulfil its purpose, as shown in my earlier discourse on the Trinity.

²⁰⁶ Kevin Watkins, *Human Development Report 2005: International Cooperation at a Crossroads* (New York, NY: United Nation Development Programme, 2005), hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/266/hdr05 (10/10/ 2014).

²⁰⁷ Clifton R. Loucks, “Rethinking the Apostles’ Creed,” in *The Trinity Foundation*, <http://www.trinityfoundation.org/journal> (10/06/2016).

²⁰⁸ James D. G Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1999), 369–370.

Most criticisms of the Creed are unduly negative. These simply fail to recognize that the usefulness of the Creed is in the link it provides between our age and the historic faith of Christendom.²⁰⁹ A deeper reflection of the Creed has also contributed to his interreligious dialogue: “Beliefs divide, but the faith from which they spring is one *and* unites.”²¹⁰ The faith expressed in the Creed had contributed towards “deep inner peace and a sense of belonging” for “struggling humans throughout the centuries.”²¹¹ Many different kinds of churches emphasize the various doctrines, beliefs, and practices, but ultimately the Apostles’ Creed remains the imperative for all Christians because it all points back to Jesus.²¹²

Christianity has had a key role in the development of Western civilization. This worldview of Christianity drawn from the American experience that is true also of Europe and Australasia highlights the foundation of great institutions, the governments, schools, and universities under Christian principles.” Christianity had become a moral influence in our societies.”²¹³ Post-war, the

²⁰⁹ Jonathan F. Bayes, *The Apostles' Creed: Truth with Passion* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 1-2.

²¹⁰ Steindl-Rast, *Deeper Than Words*, 14. (Emphasis is added)

²¹¹ *Ibid*, 15.

²¹² Jonathan G. Smith, “3 Reasons Why the Apostles’ Creed is Important for Christians Today,” in *Redeemer*, Anglican Church, Orlando, <http://www.redeemorLong/blog/3-Reasons-Why-the-Apostles-Creed-Is-Important-for-Christians-toda> (10/06/2016).

²¹³ John Noë, “Restoring the Kingdom-of-God Worldview to the Church and the World,” <http://planetpreterist.com/content/restoring-kingdom-god-worldview-church-and-world> (2/06/2018).

influence of Christianity in nations and societies, however, has been waning.

In the last 50-75 years there has been a marked retreat in both the direction and the goal of the Church's mission of achieving God's kingdom. The Church had simply withdrawn without a fight and created a vacuum into which poured the secularists.²¹⁴ In dominant Christian circles, this change to pessimism coincides perfectly with the withdrawal of Christians from societal involvement and the decline of morality and public life.²¹⁵ It is conceivable the problem arises firstly from the lack of a worldview, here and now of Christianity. This major hermeneutical difficulty lies in the understanding of "the kingdom of God" and the Church's mission.²¹⁶

The Creed is an undertaking that stresses Christianity is *not* merely about isolated individuals going into heaven; rather it is about God transforming the entire world and making things right. While Christians provide the substance of life for themselves and their families, they are equally conscious that their activities in a way appropriately benefits society: "They can justly consider that by their labor they are unfolding the Creator's work, consulting the

²¹⁴ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 43.

²¹⁵ John W. Chalfant, *America – A Call to Greatness* (Longwood, FL: Xulon, 2003), 83-90.

²¹⁶ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 113.

advantages of their brother men, and are contributing by their personal industry to the realization in history of the divine plan” (GS, n.34).

There is a need for a clear mission of “Kingdom Christianity” that offers a working definition of God’s kingdom, which can be realized internally and externally, within and among all societies to draw human hearts to him, to bless and discipline his people, and to defeat his enemies.²¹⁷ The *communion of saints* is directed to reveal this imperative of the social dynamics of the kingdom of God, which ought to be advanced by every Christian as God’s co-creators. In other words, Christianity should not be reduced to “the reign of God within the individual and or modernized in terms of personal existential orientation or dissipated to an extra-worldly dream of a blessed immortality.”²¹⁸ It is about God transforming the entire world and making things right so that all of creation will be redeemed. .²¹⁹ The kingdom of God is certainly in hand, but it has still a long way to go.

Summary

The Apostles’ Creed is the prerequisite for the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. This profession of faith in God as Father,

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 131.

²¹⁹ Allen Mitsuo Wakabayashi, *Kingdom Come* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003).

Son, and Holy Spirit summarizes the scripture as well as the traditions of the first-century Christianity of God. It underwrites the core message of the *communion of saints*, which is a theological and anthropological summation of how God's divine nature can transcend and restore a fallen generation that was born into sin.

The Apostles' Creed – the baptismal Creed of Christendom – is our affirmation of God as a relational being. This affirmation characterizes the historicity of our human existence. Created in God's image and likeness personal salvation calls for participation in a social order that is revealed in the Creed.

By God's plan of salvation, we recover sacramentally from our fallen state a new life in Christ to become co-creators of God's kingdom where Jesus is the primacy of Christian Humanism.

PART II

SACRAMENTS OF CHRISTIAN HUMANISM

Chapter 6

Sacramentality of Christian Personhood

“Sacrament,” from *sacramentum* in Christian Latin theology, has many different meanings. The word constantly indicates if not implies oath, a profession of faith, holy place, rite, faith, mystery, secret, or sacred sign.¹ In Christian thought, a sacrament is a religious rite that influences the conduct of Christian lives. More specifically, for Catholics and Orthodoxy in particular the sacraments are religious actions or symbols in which spiritual power is transmitted through material elements in the performance of the ritual (*CCC*, n. 774).

In the Catholic tradition there are seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony, which are “powers that comes forth from the body of Christ” (*CCC*, n.1113, n.1116). The Eucharist is central to each sacrament as Christ is the primordial sacrament of God. He declared at the Last Supper: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (Jn 14:6). By his Pasch, Christ also made known to his disciples that he was “the mystery of salvation, the revelation of God, the eternal word made tangible and

¹ Albert Blaise, *A Handbook of Christian Latin: Style, Morphology and Syntax* (Georgetown, Washington, DC: Brepols, 1994), 11.

visible in material flesh, the efficacious sign and or sacrament of God.”² When we eat and drink his body and blood in the Eucharist we, thus, “encounter” Christ.³

The Dominican theologian Edward Schillebeeckx (1914-2009) was the first to use the term “encounter” which captures the Christological dimension of sacramental theology. He highlights how God communicates to humankind, in contrast to privatized piety using tangible things such as water, bread, and wine.⁴ For Schillebeeckx, the all-important word is “encounter,” for the emphasis is not on the objective things that we receive, but the encounters in which we participate:

They mirror the other important encounters in our lives, the relationships and events which make us who we are. All of these encounters are bodily; we are not disembodied spirits living in a heavenly world but true flesh and blood struggling to make the world human.⁵

Sacraments are scripturally derived, which is most striking illustrated in the healing of the woman with haemorrhages by Jesus.

² Ross Thomson, *SCM Study Guide to the Sacraments* (London: SCM, 2006), 34; also Philippe Beguerie and Claude Duchesneau, *How to Understand the Sacraments* (London: SCM, 1980); P. Beguerie, “The Paschal Mystery in the Church’s Sacrament,”

<http://theology.org.hk/psa/articles/papers/booklet/06PaschalMystery.pdf> (20/6/2018).

³ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (USA: Sheed & Ward, 1987); also Michael Drumm, *Passage to Pasch: Revisiting the Catholic Sacraments* (Dublin: The Columba, 1998), 95–96.

⁴ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 95–96.

⁵ Drumm, *Passage to Pasch*, 89–115.

When she heard of Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment, saying to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well,” and immediately the haemorrhage stopped (Mt 9:20-22; Mk 5:25-34; Lk 8:43-48). What had happened to this woman is a phenomenon; it is a sacramental “encounter” with God through physical things. Thus, from the moment a sacrament is celebrated with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and the Holy Spirit act in the recipient so that one becomes from what he or she receives, depending on one’s disposition (CCC, n.1128).

There is a parallel between the human body which can be transformed through the encounter of humanity and divinity from what occurred in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. This is an encounter that is traditionally referred to as the “incarnation.” The “Word was made flesh” (Jn 1:14) means that God became one of us and part of everything that makes us human. In a sacrament, there is a genuine “encounter” with the divine that does not artificially separate the intellect from that of the will and emotive powers. The “encounter” is an experience that is properly human because it is “achieved in visibility and in bodiliness. In a word it is *sacramental*. A sacrament is the juncture where God and man meet in mutual availability.”⁶ Theologically it is where God discloses himself, in the form of man,

⁶ William J. Hill, “Christ, The Sacrament with the Encounter with God,” in *Proceedings of the Nineteenth Annual Convention* (1964), 174, (Book-on-line) <https://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/ctsa/article/download/2572/2209> (21/6/2018)

to man. The sacraments are, thus, appropriately referred to as the “masterworks of God” by the actions of the Holy Spirit, which comes forth from the Church, the body of Christ (CCC, n. 1116). They confer “grace” or “divine power” through physical things: “Three times I appealed to the Lord ... but he said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness...” (2Cor 12:9).

Through this sacramental encounter with Jesus Christ, God became intimately intertwined in all aspects of human life. The fundamental experiences of life – growing up, joy, loneliness, laughter, sadness, tears, and old age – are no longer just human, but they have become a part of the divine. In other words, Jesus is portrayed by our human behaviour:

In the life of Jesus, God has become one with us so that we might become one with God. In other words, God shares in human life so that we can become sharers in divine life.⁷

For Christians, especially Orthodoxy, Catholics, and Anglicans God speaks to us through the sacraments, which are visible symbols of creation (CCC, n. 1147). The symbols join us in the spiritual realms. In this regard, Jesus chose the most basic things – *water* and *bread*, which are necessities of life as well as *wine*, which reflect the

⁷ Ibid.

goodness of life,⁸ to convey the unity God desired of his human family.

In Baptism, *water* is used to symbolize the necessity of life that unites all living things. Jesus asks the woman, “Give me a drink” (Jn 4:7), and then states of this water: “but those who drink of this water that I give them will never be thirsty. The water I give them will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life” (Jn 4:11–14). Later, in this same Gospel, Jesus again asks for a drink: “I thirst,” he says from the cross, and from the cross, Jesus becomes the promised fountain of water, which flows from his pierced side. Since nothing can live without water, we receive this water (life) from Jesus in Baptism, and it becomes a life that wells up within us to be given and shared with others. “Give me a drink” presupposes that both Jesus and the Samaritan ask for what they need from each other. It compels us to recognize that persons, communities, cultures, religions, and ethnicities need each other.⁹

In the celebration of the Eucharist, the *bread* is not regarded as a simple composite of nutritive elements. Rather, the bread is the wholesome product of the “fruit of the sun and the rain from heaven, fruit of the earth and the work of human hands,” and “it is bread ever so much bread as when it is shared by mortals for whom it provides

⁸ R. Dennis Cole, “Wine”, in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 1380.

⁹ “Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity,”

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/weeks-prayer/doc/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20140611_week-prayer-2015_en.html (2/01/2016).

sustenance.” Therefore, bread is a socially instituted food and remains a major symbol of food and meal in our societies.¹⁰ Louise-Marie Chauvet interprets Eucharistic bread, “in its very essence,” as “bread-as-meal, bread-for-sharing,” and “It is in the breaking of the bread that its ultimate reality is manifested, its true essence revealed.” The scripture says, as “he broke it and gave it to them” and the “for you and for all” in celebration of the institution, to indicate “the gesture of breaking is the symbol par excellence of the adesse of Christ giving his life the food, that is ultimate ‘bread,’ by its very essence.”¹¹

The use of *wine* in the Eucharist is also significant. In the Holy Bible, wine is viewed as a gift from God (Deut 7:3, 11:14) to be used in the celebration of God’s goodness. It accompanies various sacrifices in the cult (Numb 15: 5,7) and is used in communal celebrations such as marriage and the Feast of the Passover (Jn 2:1–11; Lk 22:14–20).¹² As the Eucharist is the preeminent sacrament of unity, this symbolism also explains Jesus’s use of the metaphor of the vine and the branches, which is related in John 15:1–8 in the context of the Last Supper discourse, where grapes are clustered together on a vine (Gen 40:9; Num 13:23; Rev 14:18). Unlike berries or tomatoes, which have a more discrete existence on their specific

¹⁰ Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1995), 396–397.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 406.

¹² Cole, “Wine”, in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 1380.

kinds of vine, grapes either hang together or else rot off in separation and die. This is the case in Christ's parable about him and his followers. Unless they (the "branches" stemming from the vine stalk) remain attached to him ("the Vine"), they will lose the life-giving flow of sanctifying grace.¹³

These symbols remind us of our baptismal faith. The bread, wine, and water representing the body and blood of Christ produce a deep sense of awareness that helps communicants to interpret their life experiences considering Jesus's life, death, and resurrection. Therefore, it can be said that Christian sacraments comprise those elements of Christian life experience that mediate this reinterpretation and thereby transform human existence into a new and unending life. In short, the sacraments give grace.¹⁴ This is what it amounts to when each of us professes, "I believe in God," of the Apostles' Creed before participating in the eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ.

Being a Christian is to choose to be sacramental – that is, to be transformed a little more fully into Christ so that the divine love that made us and flows through us can become more fully expressed in the world. We can experience Christ by this "grace," which is the supernatural gift from God in the sacraments. Jesus Christ himself is uniquely sacramental, as he is foundational of the Church;

¹³ David P. Lang, "Wine in Why Grape Wine?" <http://www.catholic.com/magazine/articles/why-grape-wine> (31/01/2017)

¹⁴ Cooke, *Sacraments and Sacramentality*, 231.

sacramentum, therefore, is the understanding first of “the mystery of God’s history of salvation, which is the center and fulfilment in this human history of Jesus Christ.”¹⁵

Christ is the sacrament for the world and is the first sacrament as he gave his life to mediate the sacraments to allow grace to flow to humankind (1Tim 2:5).¹⁶ His sanctifying humanism is the pinnacle and focus of God’s creation as we were made in God’s image and likeness. The sanctification of human beings is God’s highest goal in the universe, which he explicitly declared to be his will: “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified” (1Thess 4:3). As reasoned by Rahner, Jesus Christ is “the primordial and historical sacrament in whom God’s pledge of himself as forgiveness and deification achieves historical manifestation and irreversible accomplishment.”¹⁷ Christ is the new Adam for redemption after the Fall: “And the Word became flesh and lived amongst us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14).

Sacraments are transformative and life-giving that Christ won for us by his life, death, and resurrection. They transform our ordinary lives and actions by sharing in the life of God. Our reconciliation with God, which the redemption of Christ has merited

¹⁵ Johann Auer (trans. Michael Waldstein), *The Church: The Universal Sacrament of Salvation*, (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1993), 47–89.

¹⁶ Karl Rahner, “What is Sacrament?” in *Worship* (1973), vol. 47, 279–281; also Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 411–413; Auer, *The Church*, 91.

¹⁷ Rahner, “What is Sacrament?” p. 279.

for us, thus finds accomplishment in the sanctifying grace of his sacraments: “Through this most precious gift we participate in the divine life; we have the right to be called children of God. This grace is the source of all our supernatural merits and bestows upon us the right of eternal glory.”¹⁸ Jesus’s humanity had become the instrument or outward sign of his divinity incarnated in the baptized, the “people of God.” Christian personhood is the expression of this humanity of Jesus – the God incarnates – and therefore becomes the principles of Christian personhood. Through God’s incarnation humanity is given another chance through divine love to become the “new creation” that Paul referred to as the old-new self, old-new humanity, and Adam-Christ (Rom 13:14).

This humanism of Jesus is best conveyed in Matthew 25, which is the cornerstone of Christian social and political thought. Christian personhood is the endorsement of these new values that arise from the sacramental union with Christ. Believers become a new creation (Gal 3:27) by the action of the Holy Spirit sent by Jesus Christ to sanctify us (Jn 14:16) into a “people of God.” Without this grace our faith is meaningless. Through the sacraments, the Holy Spirit infuses into our souls the grace we need to overcome sin and to live a life ruled by faith, hope, and charity with increasing perfection throughout our lives. In short, sacraments are outward signs of

¹⁸ Maurus Fitzgerald, *Order of Malta, Catholic Book of Prayers* (New Jersey, USA: Catholic Book Publishing, 2011), 240.

inward grace, instituted by Christ for the sanctification that makes us adopted children of God.

Of fundamental importance is also the awareness that all sacraments are administered *not* in the name of any one of the persons of the Trinity but the fullness of God's being as "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." The life of the Trinity, that is the humanity of Jesus that comes to us, as graces through the sacraments are not a mere sign but also instructs. The graces not only presuppose faith, but also by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it. That is why they are called "sacraments of faith" (CCC, 1123). One of the first awareness of this faith is the content of his nature as a triune being – "God is love" (1Jn 4:8) –, which is the nature of the Trinity. This instructs us of the three persons who are bound in love: "Love, therefore, that is, the reciprocal self-dedication of the trinitarian members, builds the unity of one God." There is no God, but the Father, Son, and Spirit bound together in love throughout eternity.¹⁹

Love, therefore, is the central essence of Christian personhood, which is of a social or relational God (Chapter 4); this forms the basis of human relationality, as humans are made in God's image. Through the graces received, Christians, therefore, commit themselves to become witnesses of the three persons of the Trinity,

¹⁹ Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 71–72.

wherein “love is given, love is received and love is shared.”²⁰ This love for each other and God perfects this love in communities, which in turn reflects God’s glory and love.²¹ The sacraments, thus, are the vital determinants of the character of Christian personhood, which is the foundation of the social theology of Christian Humanism.

The dynamics of sacramental spirituality reveals that Jesus’ humanism is closely linked with his call to “discipleship,” which has *two* dimensions: firstly is the call to “personal transformation” or conversion to become like him (in Greek, *metanoia*); our conversion is our response to God to repent and believe in the good news (Mk 1:15) as the kingdom of God is near. Secondly, following Christ, to become his disciple is to continue the mission of Jesus to “transform the world and to build the kingdom of a God of love.”²² Christian spirituality is inherently concerned with the social transformation of the world, when Jesus spoke to his disciples Simon and Andrew, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people” (Mk 1:17). Jesus himself taught us to pray: “Thy kingdom come on earth” (Mt 6:10). The call to discipleship is to share in the work of Jesus to bring about God’s kingdom. Matthew 10 lists the work of the disciples, which is

²⁰ Brian Hebblethwaite, *Philosophical Theory and Christian Doctrine* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 42.

²¹ Keith Ward, *Relational Theology and the Creativity of God* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982); also Hebblethwaite, *Philosophical Theory*, 42.

²² Philip Sheldrake, “Christian Spirituality and Social Transformation”, in *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Religion*, 2016, (Book-on-line) <http://oxfordre.com/religion/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-231> 5/31 (21/03/2019).

the good news of curing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing lepers, casting out demons. This discipleship is continually strengthened by the celebration of the Eucharist, which is participation in the life of Christ.

Sacraments are essentially social for “God entered the material world and into the human condition in the person of Jesus.”²³ Christianity, therefore, has profound social implications. It is a vision of the kingdom that Jesus declared before Pilate. It was most appropriately illustrated by the Catholic priest Jan van Ruusbroec (1293-1381) who understood it as his vocation of harmonizing his contemplative life in the service to all. A spiritual person, in other words, he claimed, never ceases to be a common person. Indwelling in God makes a person go out towards all creatures.²⁴ Likewise, the Christian mystic Evelyn Underhill (1875- 1941) in her famous book suggests that human beings are vision-creating beings rather than merely tool-making animals driven simply by a desire for material success, physical wellbeing, or intellectual achievement. Christian spirituality, she insists, embraces how human values, lifestyles, and spiritual practices relate to understandings of God, human identity, and the material world. This is not a purely individual matter but includes the quest for a transformed world.²⁵ Similarly, the eminent

²³ Ibid, p.7/31

²⁴ James A. Wiseman (ed.), *John Ruusbroec: The Spiritual Espousals and other Works, Bk. I* (New York: Paulist, 1985), part1, chap lxv.

²⁵ Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (USA: Pacific Publishing, 2011).

Emeritus Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams writes that Christian spirituality is not about private spiritual experience but that which touches “every area of human experience, the public and social, the painful, negative, even pathological byways of the mind, the moral and relational world.”²⁶

In recent times Pope Francis in his *Laudato Si* discusses how the Eucharist is closely related to an integrated social and ecological dimension. In this he recalls John Paul II’s call for a “global ecological conversion” drawn upon by St Francis of Assisi for “the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically.” Pope Francis declared:

Sacraments are a privileged way in which nature is taken up by God to become a means of mediating supernatural life. Through our worship of God, we are invited to embrace the world on a different plane (*Laudato Si*, n.235).²⁷

The Church is “the sphere of the Spirit’s activity on earth, within which the truth is taught and the divine life made actual for humanity.”²⁸ Paul reminds us of this deep truth of Christian faith and how through our participation in the sacraments particularly of

²⁶ Rowan Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge: Christian Spirituality from the New Testament to St. John of the Cross of Spiritual Consciousness* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1990), 2.

²⁷ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si (One Care for Our Common Home, 2015)*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html (23/02/ 2017).

²⁸ Andrew Walls, “Christianity”, in John R. Hinnells (ed.), *The New Penguin Handbook of Living Religions* (London, UK: Penguin, 1997), 139.

Baptism and the Eucharist we become “a single heart and mind in God” (Acts 4:32) because we are transformed into the body of Christ, the Church. Augustine echoed this social importance of unity when he reflected upon how “we are refreshed not only in body, but in mind as well. For the very power which is understood to be there is unity, that, collected into his body, made members of him, we may be what we receive.” Furthermore, the Church is the body in the world that truly provides our daily bread, “which you will come to know and receive from the altar of God,” and this food is necessary for our sojourn (*Sermon 57.7*).²⁹ Also, in his letter to Janarius, Augustine writes how Jesus had bound together with the society of his new people by the sacraments. Most sublime had been the meaning of Baptism, which is “hallowed by the name of the Trinity, the sharing of his body and his blood, and whatever else is commanded in the canonical scriptures.” Augustine insisted on observing the tradition that had been recommended and ordained to be kept by the apostles or by plenary councils whose authority was so very sound in the Church. This, Augustine, reminds had been reflected in the annual commemorations of the Lord’s Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension into heaven and the coming of the Holy Spirit from heaven on Pentecost.³⁰

²⁹ Augustine, “Sermon 57.7,” in Sheerin (ed.), *The Eucharist*, 314.

³⁰ Augustine, “First Letter to Januarius,” in Sheerin, *The Eucharist*, 1986, 309.

The sacraments, therefore, are primarily and fundamentally personal acts of Christ himself that reach and involve us through his Church. In making present the saving mystery of Christ, the Church manifests the gratuitous offer of grace through the Church's sacraments. It is through the Church and the sacraments that Christ wants to express his saving love visible within the sphere of our earthly life and earthly world."³¹

The grace-filled sacraments help us lead to real and lasting social change. As noted by Paul, we are called to break that momentum of evil, and to live the image of the Church, the body of Christ. Thus, every conversion influence, lifts and energizes the people of God in history. By his greatest of commandments, love God and neighbor, Jesus also makes it abundantly clear how Christianity impacts his kingdom. *Vertical, individual, or purely spiritual religion was not the religion of Jesus Christ.* The vertical relationship with God can only be found, developed, and maintained by way of a horizontal, social, material, and spiritual, loving relationship with other human beings, *all* other human beings.³² Christianity does not condone a tension between the vertical and horizontal as one entails the other.

³¹ Thomas Bokenkotter, *Dynamic Catholicism: A Historical Catechism* (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 185.

³² John C. Cort, *Christian Socialism: An Informal Inquiry* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 33.

Sacramental Anthropology

In the sacraments we encounter Christ and this is achieved invisibly pointing beyond itself involving sign-mystery.³³ In this way, Christians adapt to become Christ-like so that they may “announce, bear witness, make present, and spread the mystery of the communion of the Holy Trinity” to everyone (CCC, n.738). Inherent to the sacraments are sublime intrinsic attributes of Christ that can be discerned and conceptualized. Anthropologically these orientate and transform our own being so that our living becomes sacramental. These embody humanistic elements that underpin Christianity’s social manifesto.

(i) Incarnational

A sacrament is incarnational. The incarnation provides a conceptual and existential tool for correlating immanence and transcendence. In theological language, this unity of nature and grace overcomes the difficulty of balancing faith and reason, which continues to challenge the other two Abrahamic religions of Judaism and Islam.³⁴ In Christianity, the apophatic and metaphysical approach to reach and know God is overcome by God who incarnates into the world out of love to save humanity from damnation. God emptied himself of the divine glory by assuming fully our human conditions to reach us. As the evangelist tells us, “From his fullness we have

³³ Hill, “Christ, The Sacrament with the Encounter with God,” 174.

³⁴ Jens Zimmermann, *Incarnational Humanism: A Philosophy of Culture for the Church in the World* (Illinois, USA: InterVarsity, 2012), 60.

received grace, upon grace.” (Jn 1, 16), and to those who did accept him he gave the power to become children of God (Jn 1:10). By becoming flesh, God accepted the limitations of human flesh. He became vulnerable to our natural weaknesses such as hunger, thirst, and physical weariness. God in Jesus also experienced the emotional traumas that we experience, sorrow, hurt, loneliness, and rejection. But his coming down to our level, God conferred on us humans, a divine dignity.³⁵

In patristic studies, Athanasius was, therefore, able to carefully correlate transcendence with God’s enfleshment. The incarnation affirms God’s deep involvement with creation so that, “as Man, He (Jesus) was living a human life, and, as Word, He was sustaining the life of the universe, and as Son He was in constant union with the Father.”³⁶ *Incarnatus* is the Christian transformation that is derived from the Platonic idea of participation (*methexis*) as an alternative to Greek materialism and skepticism which lacked the incarnational meditation to help him participate totally and successfully in the form of beauty that Christianity’s incarnational meditation offers.³⁷

The doctrine of the incarnation was unique to Christianity that allowed early theologians to overcome certain philosophical

³⁵ Sebastian Ampattu (ed.), “The Nativity of the Lord: December 25, 2018,” in *Word of God, 2018* (Australia: St. Pauls, 2018).

³⁶ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation; The Treatise on the Incarnation Verbi Dei* (Crestwood, New York, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 1998), 45–46.

³⁷ Zimmermann, *Incarnational Humanism*, 61.

problems.³⁸ Christianity is the fulfilment of Greek humanism. Highly talented philosophical critics such as Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) and Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) had argued that Platonic intellectualism is a “static, ahistorical and world-denying nature” in Christianity.³⁹ They were oblivious as to how Christianity could resolve the dilemma in incarnation by sacramentalizing the relationship between God and humankind. Justin Martyr, one of the most philosophical and creative of early theologians,⁴⁰ was influenced by Philo, who combined the “Stoic idea of universal immanent union with Plato’s transcendent ideas to form a concept of “seminal Logos” (*Logos spermatikos*) to describe the generative and ordering principle of the universe.”⁴¹ For Justin, Jesus the Messiah was the incarnation of God’s eternal Word – the Logos – through which all things were created.⁴²

By the sacramental encounter, God’s divinity enters humanity through Jesus Christ.⁴³ The relationship is *theanthropic*, that is, this encounter invades and confers the sanctity of life on humans. An important consequence of this is that Christians are transformed into

³⁸ Michael J. Murray and Michael Rea, “Philosophy and Christian Philosophy” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2012, (Book-on-line)

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/christiantheology-philosophy/> (1/03/2017).

³⁹ Zimmermann, *Incarnational Humanism*, 67.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 62.

⁴¹ *Ibid*.

⁴² Jaroslav Pelikan, *What Has Athens to Do with Jerusalem? Timaeus and Genesis in Counterpoint* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 2000), 74.

⁴³ Drumm, *Passage to Pasch: Revisiting the Catholic Sacraments*, 95–96.

social beings in the likeness of God's nature of love. The theology of sacraments has, therefore, moved from an exclusive to an inclusive view regarding Christ and the salvation of non-Christians.⁴⁴ Thus, sacraments function "to continue the Jesus-event as determinative of man's relation to God and to fellow men."⁴⁵ The incarnation is cataphatic theology as God is identifiable positively in humanity instead of a static apophatic metaphysic that objectifies God and humans. The incomprehensible becomes comprehensible in Christianity.

This patristic theology is essentially a continuation of the Jewish belief that the Messiah is God's representative who will defeat sin and evil and renew humanity. Thus, Paul extolled Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection for the sake of a new humanity and the restoration of creation.⁴⁶ To quote Barth, the "true God did not forget humanity,"⁴⁷ as God represents righteousness and he is faithful to the covenant he made with Abraham, which is to be *with us* from pre-temporal eternity (Gen 17:7-9). By his Son's death and resurrection God ratifies the old covenant by the blood of Christ, which is shed for many for the remission of sins (Mt 26:28). This

⁴⁴ Joseph H. Wong, "Anonymous Christians: Karl Rahner's Pneuma-Christocentrism and East-West Dialogue," in *Theological Studies* (1994), vol. 55, 610.

⁴⁵ Bernard Lee, *The Becoming of the Church: A Process Theology of the Structures of Christian Experience* (New York, NY: Paulist, 1974), 174.

⁴⁶ N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 92-93.

⁴⁷ Zimmermann, 71; Karl Barth, *Der Römerbrief* (Jurich: TVZ Verlag, 1999), 18.

“blood of the eternal covenant” (Heb 13:20) finds expression in the sacraments.⁴⁸

The initiation of deification by the Church Fathers was commonly identified with the sacrament of Baptism, that is, the sacrament of the divine birth. Participation in the Eucharist was another pivotal component of the deification process, where believers participated in the actuality of the deified body and blood of Christ.⁴⁹ Eastern Orthodoxy identifies this transformative process of deification of the Spirit as *theosis*, that is, likeness to or union with God. As a process of transformation, *theosis* is brought about by the effects of *katharsis* (purification of mind and body).⁵⁰ In *Exhortation to the Heathen*,⁵¹ Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD) discusses this epistemology of *theosis* as knowing God. It means:

To open the eyes of the blind, and unstop the ears of the deaf, and to lead the lame or the erring to righteousness, to exhibit God to the foolish, to put a stop to corruption, to conquer death, to reconcile disobedient children to their father.⁵²

Thus, “the Lord pities, instructs, exhorts admonishes, saves, shield, and of his bounty promises us the kingdom of heaven as a

⁴⁸ Cooke, *Sacraments and Sacramentality*, 160-166.

⁴⁹ Vladimir Kharlamow, “Theosis in Patristic Thought,” in *Theology Today* (2008), vol. 65, 165.

⁵⁰ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 159.

⁵¹ Clement of Alexandria (trans. Kevin Knight), *Exhortation to the Heathen*, 2009, Chapter 1, (Book-on-line)

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/020801.htm> (12/10/ 2014).

⁵² *Ibid*, 3/4.

reward for learning: and the only reward He reaps is, we are saved.”⁵³ The process of *theosis* introduces human beings inextricably into the presence of God, which according to 5th to 6th century theologian and philosopher Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, it is “a mystery which cannot be taught, [but] it puts souls firmly in the presence of God.” Salvation is conceived as the culmination of synergy between divine and human, that is, the deification of human beings by divine grace.⁵⁴

For the Church Fathers, the incarnation of Christ was the cornerstone of human salvation and cosmic reconciliation, where divine filiation, forgiveness, healing, restoration, and union with God become essentially integrated aspects of deification. As God, Christ deified his human nature at the moment of the incarnation. This act of union brought the true reunion between God and humanity. It may therefore be argued that “if the Logos is the Son of God and God by nature, Christians become children of God by adoption and therefore are gods only by grace.”⁵⁵

The complex character of the deification theme had come for comprehensive assessment in relation to *imago Dei* and the incarnation. Deification “construes *theosis* overwhelmingly in terms of knowledge, virtue, light and glory, participation and union.” The

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Pseudo-Dionysius, “Letter 9.1” in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist, 1987), 283.

⁵⁵ Kharlamow, “Theosis in Patristic Thought,” 165

sacraments are often important tridents of divinization especially of human faculties such as the intellect and the ability to love one another.⁵⁶

There is also broad consensus that participation in divine nature entails bodily incorruptibility.⁵⁷ As explained by Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662), the unity between God and creation is manifested by grace as the expression of divine philanthropy (love of humankind), which essentially has a Christological foundation. As the Logos fully embraced the entirety of human nature, it made human beings capable of penetrating entirely into God and becoming a god – however, without any ontological assimilation. “In this way God and man are united without confusion according to the model of the hypostatic union in Christ.”⁵⁸ The Fathers point to the distinction between uncreated and created, along with the Creator’s desire that his creatures partake of his own life and goodness. Thus *theosis*, while entailing a degree of human striving towards virtuous assimilation to God and love of God, always remains a divine gift, a gift of grace. Deification is possible because of the close connection between Creator and the created intelligible nature of human beings,

⁵⁶ Anna Ngairé Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 31–32.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Lars Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 89.

which is reflected in the image and likeness of God. The basis of *imago Dei* assumes that:

The inner nature of each human being, and humanity as a collective entity, is to be like God. A virtuous life of contemplation and passionlessness are goals for the obtainment of likeness to God, and likeness to God often is understood as *theosis*.⁵⁹

Incarnation has deep social implications for Christians. There are forces of destruction on humanity that ultimately lead to the disintegration of the intricate ecosystem and society of God's design of this earth. This call to repair and restore justice and the common good is incarnational anthropology, which lays the foundation for Christian participation in accomplishing the kingdom of God on earth. It is one that reflects quintessential justice and the common good for all humanity. Unlike Platonic metaphysics, incarnational philosophy has opened this correspondence through the sacraments between God and Church, God and humankind, and God and the world.

Christian culture is rooted in this awareness of the correspondence between the incarnate Christ and the risen Christ through his Church. In the resurrection, Jesus of Nazareth becomes the cosmic Christ. "The risen Christ is the power of the divine at the heart of the creation, but this divine power is now mediated through

⁵⁹ Kharlamow, "Theosis in Patristic Thought," 165.

the humanity of Jesus, the first fruits of creation.”⁶⁰ The Church creates and sustains this consciousness by reconciling all things, resulting in a culture that transforms the cosmos and restores creation in the way God intended. The resurrection is more than the rising of a human from the grave. It is the rising of creation.

The universal significance of Christ’s death and resurrection was captured by Rahner: “When the vessel of his body was shattered in death, Christ was poured out over all the cosmos; he actually became, in his very humanity, what he always had been in his dignity, the innermost center of creation.”⁶¹ This divine power is sacramentally assured in the Eucharist. The *sanctorum communionem* is a celebration of God’s wisdom in Jesus Christ, who “gathers up all things” (Eph 1.10), is “the head over all things” (Eph 1.23), “fills all in all” (Eph 1.23), “creates all things” (Col 1.15), “holds all things together” (Col 1.17), “reconcile to himself all things” (Col 1.20), “sustains all things” (Heb 1.3) and is the heir of all things (Heb 1.10).

(ii) Kenotic

The second dominant influent of Christian anthropology is *kenosis* (Gk: κένωσις, the act of emptying). The Christian God is a God of *kenosis* or, the self-giving unconditionally of love for

⁶⁰ Denis Edwards, *Jesus and the Cosmos* (Strathfield, NSW: St. Paul’s, 1991), 131.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

another.⁶² The term occurs five times in the New Testament (Rom 4:14; 1Col 1:17, 9:15; 2Col 9:3; Phil 2:7). In these passages (especially in Phil 2:7), Jesus is said to have “emptied himself,” which is a starting point for the Christian idea of self-sacrifice:

At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Saviour instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again (CCC, n.1323).

For Christians, it is the “self-emptying” of one’s own will and subjecting entirely to God’s divine will. *Kenosis*, therefore, is the sacramental “sacrifice” of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.

The Eucharist as a sacrifice represents our Lord’s cruciformity and the “participation of its fruits” (*Summa* III, q.83, a.2). “Being in Christ” is to accept cruciformity or *kenosis* in our lives in imitation of Christ’s love. Aquinas’s explains the nature of this participation:

It is charitable communion with God (and each other) in Christ through the Holy Spirit cannot be separated from Christ’s sacrifice. This participation is our communion in charity with Christ and each other.⁶³

The Eucharist is our offering of Christ’s sacrifice that enables

⁶² In Christian theology, *sis* (Greek word for emptiness), is the “self-emptying” of one’s own will and becoming entirely receptive to God’s divine will: Jesus emptied himself (Phil 2:7).

⁶³ Matthew Levering, *Sacrifice and Community, Jewish Offering and Christian Eucharist* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 105.

in the sacrament our sharing in its fruits of ecclesial unity and communion.⁶⁴ The significance of this participation in the Eucharist leads to perfect communion with God. It corresponds to Abraham's sacrificial desire of his son, Isaac (Gen 22) for perfect communion with God and the Paschal Lamb of the Exodus and the Feast of the Passover, which is the priestly sacrifices of the Old Law, on the Day of Atonement (*Heb 9*). In all of these, blood is used as a purification agent, especially when sprinkled on the altar. This is evident especially during Yom Kippur's "sacrifice of expiation," prescribed in *Leviticus 16*.⁶⁵

For Christians too, the greatest sacrifice is the Paschal Lamb,⁶⁶ which prefigures the Eucharist. Jesus Christ is the Lamb. As to this effect, by the blood of the Paschal Lamb, "the children of Israel were preserved from the destroying Angel, and brought from the Egyptian captivity."⁶⁷ Whilst Judaism still awaits Messiah prophesied in the Hebrew Bible (Malachi 4:5–6; cf. Ezek 36:25–27; 37:14), for Christians he is Christ (*Christós* or "anointed" in Greek) in the New Testament (Lk 18:33, Acts 18:28). The Son of God is the awaited Messiah who fulfils the desire of Israel through the sacrificial communion that he enacts upon the cross.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid106.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 111.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 111–112.

The cultural transformation of the Eucharist corresponds to the sacrificial desire for communion with God. In the rabbinic tradition, such communion is only possible through a sacrificial offering.⁶⁸ Also, there is a close link between Melchizedek's priestly offering of bread and wine (Heb 5:6), which signifies the *sacramentum tantum* – the bread and wine of the Eucharistic offering. The priestly sacrifices – especially Yom Kippur's "sacrifice of expiation" – signify the *res et sacramentum*, or Christ sacrificed. The manna that refreshed the Israelites in the desert and strengthened them in their passage into the promised land of dwelling with God (union) signifies the *res tantum*, or the spiritual effect of the sacrament, which "refreshes the soul in all respects" (*Summa* III, q.73, a.6).⁶⁹

The effect of *res tantum* was explored by Paul, who confessed, "I have been crucified with Christ: it is no longer I who live, Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20). Augustine explained this transformational dynamic of the sacrament or spiritual food of Jesus Christ that is present in the Eucharist. It changes a man into itself: "Nor shalt thou change Me into thyself, as food of thy flesh, but thou

⁶⁸ John D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son. The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven, CT.: Yale University, 1991), 173–174.

⁶⁹ P. F. Palmer, "The Theology of the *Res Et Sacramentum* with Particular Emphasis on Its Application to Penance," 2012, (Book-on-line) <https://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/ctsa/article/download/2486/2112> (26/09/2018); also Levering, *Sacrifice and Community*, 111.

shalt be changed into Me.”⁷⁰ The Eucharist is the “bond of perfection” (Col 3:14) made perfect in union with Christ who suffered (*Summa* III, q.73, a.3), which St. Newman (1801-1890), the eminent theologian makes use of Athanasius’ strong language of “regenerate human nature” into “divine indwelling.” He contends how “Our Lord, by becoming man, has found a way whereby to sanctify that nature, of which His own manhood is the pattern specimen.”⁷¹ Thus, Christ inhabits us personally, and his inhibition is effected by the channel of the sacraments.

St. John Damascene (675-949) too speaks of as the “Lord’s flesh”.⁷² Damascene argued that “communication” in the Church comes about through sharing in Christ’s sacrificial flesh:

It is called Communion because we communicate with Christ through it, both because we partake of His flesh and Godhead, and because we communicate with and are united to one another through it (*De Fide Orthod.* iv).⁷³

Christian personhood embraces the *kenosis* of Christ by his incarnation. True human personhood, revealed in Christ on the cross, consists of active, practiced *kenosis*, which in turn produces true

⁷⁰ Augustine, in “Confessions,” from Levering, *Sacrifice and Community*, 110.

⁷¹ Newman, *Select Treatises of St. Athanasius*, 193. Newman, John Henry, *Select Treatises of St. Athanasius*, vol. 2, (London: Longmans, Green, 1902, 1978), 193; (Book-on-line)

<http://www.newmanreader.org/works/athanasius/volume2/index.html#titlepage>
(25/05/2019)

⁷² *Ibid*, 194.

⁷³ Levering, *Sacrifice and Community*, 112.

persons. The sacramental deification ultimately bestows such personhood upon the human creature, through the paradox of self-surrender and abandonment. It is when Christians turn to Christ that they give themselves to his personality, and in so doing first begin to have a real personality of his/her own. It is the divine charisma initiating humanity into the same kind of self-sacrificial love toward God and others and thus creating authentically human creatures. This, however, is not at odds with the individual, but the full flourishing thereof. Conformity to Christ does not create uniformity among deified humanity.

(iii) Communal

Discourses on the Trinity and the Creed authenticate a social consciousness of the sacraments as a new “people of God.” They underline the anthropology of communities that correspond to God’s image as a social being. The Church community – the body of Christ (1Cor 12:27) – is the precursor of Christian socialism. The scripture is clear that God cannot be represented in any form except in an authentic community (Deut 4:15–19). Judaism was prohibited from making images of God. At the same time, the scripture is unequivocal that Yahweh’s nature can be represented not by pictorial representation, but by humans.⁷⁴ Humans alone can be called the

⁷⁴ Gary Ferngren, “Honor the Image of God: The Incarnation and Early Christian Philanthropy,” <http://www.abc.net.au> (28/07/ 2014).

image of Yahweh, as they reflect their Creator in their nature and being (Gen 1:26–27).

For the early Church the most notable work of the Holy Spirit has been the building of the Christian community:

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit (1Cor 12:12–13).

This brings into focus the Christology of the body of Christ – the social dynamics of God as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – which results in the breaking down of the barriers between Jews and Gentiles making them all one in Christ. Christians are urged to put away all bitterness, wrath and anger, wrangling, slander, and all malice by being kind to one another, tender-hearted, and forgiving one another “as God in Christ has forgiven one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you” (Eph 4:31-32).

An understanding of the Spirit’s role in building a community principally comes from Aquinas from his teaching of what it means by “being led by the Spirit” (Rom 8:14; Gal 5:80). As Aquinas explains, humankind made in the image of God has been given the soul that is linked with the body. The soul is the source of human intellect and reason. But from the fall, man’s impulse of reason has become imperfect perfect and therefore requires the impulse of the Holy Spirit. Thus, man’s reason is perfected by the seven gifts, the

most important being charity, the principal act of which is love (*Summa* I-II, q.68, a.1). But this love of charity does not stop with God but extends towards one neighbor.

The Christian concept of community is sacramental as it characterizes the dynamics of the Holy Spirit. As advanced by Hegel, while maintaining a clear sense of a concrete individual life of human beings influenced by the human spirit, there is also a form of the universal spirit. For Hegel, the Absolute Spirit of the mind, which governs, leads, and motivates the actions and dynamics of people is no different from the Holy Spirit. They were the same. The Absolute is a process of self-expression or manifestation in and through the finite. The Absolute expresses itself necessarily as the Spirit – as self-consciousness in and through the human mind.⁷⁵

Hegel believed that the genesis of a community comes from individual lives, which are destined to be absorbed into the corporate spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit.⁷⁶ This account attracted the attention of the prominent twentieth-century German pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer who sought understanding of *sanctorum communionem* as the unity of the Church community that transforms

⁷⁵ Alan M. Olson, *Hegel and the Spirit: Philosophy as Pneumatology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 1–13.

⁷⁶ Georg W. F. Hegel (trans. Terry Pinkard), *Philosophy of Spirit*, 1807 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 2018), (Book-on-line) <https://libcom.org/Georg%20Wilhelm%20Friedrich%20Hegel%20-%20The%20Phen> (26/09/2018).

believers to be “collective persons.”⁷⁷ In line with Aquinas, Bonhoeffer, unlike Hegel, distinguished the human spirit from the Holy Spirit. He regarded Hegel’s corporate spirit as beyond individuality, as it is the “objective spirit” that has entered the life of human history and community or the reason for the life of the human species.⁷⁸ In this regard, he draws a clear distinction between the human spirit and the Holy Spirit, which is not some inert concept but the living God. In this, he differentiates social philosophy and sociology, which deals with fundamental social relations from that of the Church: “Social philosophy is the study of the primordial mode-of-being of sociality per se,” which is to be understood not as a historical doctrine, but as a systematic one.⁷⁹ The sociological perspective is therefore not morphological and descriptive, but humanistic: it focuses on the essential structure of the phenomenon of the group as the spirit.

Bonhoeffer’s contribution to the development of authentic society is particularly informative of the term “community” in that that the New Testament does *not* say:

⁷⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer (trans. Reinhard Krauss and Nancy Lukens), *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church* (London: William Collins & Sons, 1930, 1988), 197.

⁷⁸ Georg W. F. Hegel (ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet), *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 1820 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1991, 2003), (Book-on-line) www.inp.uw.edu.pl/mdsie/Political_Thought/Hegel%20Phil%20of%20Right.pdf (26/09/2018).

⁷⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 29.

One theology and *one* rite, *one* opinion on all matters public and private, and *one* kind of conduct. Instead they say: *one* body and *one Spirit*, *one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* Baptism, *one* God and father of us all (Eph 4:4ff; 1Cor 12:13; Rom 12:15); various gifts – *one* Spirit, various offices – *one* Lord, various powers – *one* God (1Cor 12:4ff).⁸⁰

Bonhoeffer deferred to the way Luther put it in his exposition of Ephesians (4:3): It is not “unanimity in Spirit” (“*Einigkeit im Geist*”), but the “unity of the Spirit” (“*Einheit des Geistes*”), that is, it is the “objective principle” that establishes unity sovereignly and unites a plurality of persons into a collective person (*Geramperson*) without obliterating either their singularity or the community of persons: “Rather, unity of spirit, community of spirit, and plurality of spirit are intrinsically linked to each other through their subject matter.”⁸¹

The understanding is trinitarian. Bonhoeffer found support in Schleiermacher who responded by identifying the Holy Spirit and the spirit of the community. For Schleiermacher, the consciousness of the Holy Spirit was the same as the consciousness of the community: “The Holy Spirit is the union of the Divine Essence with human nature in the form of the common Spirit animating the life in

⁸⁰ Ibid, 193.

⁸¹ Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 193.

common of believers.”⁸² Thus, “the Holy Spirit is apparently nothing but the consciousness of the species.”⁸³ Thus,

The church community has to trust the Holy Spirit in every decision and believe strongly that the Spirit continues to be present in the community and at work in it.⁸⁴

The Spirit, therefore, will not permit our community to fumble about to darkness, if only we are willing to take the Spirit’s teachings seriously.⁸⁵ The Holy Spirit underwrites Christian culture. It is a culture infused by the sacraments. According to the evangelist Luke, the fundamental event for the whole epoch and efficacy of the Church was not its birth – from the time of Jesus onwards a community existed (Acts 1:15) – but the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, which endowed the community with the “power from on high” (Lk 24:49; Acts 1:8), “which alone qualifies it for its earthly task, its work on salvation in the world, and confers on it the mystery of its supernatural mode of existence.”⁸⁶

Christ exists in the visible world as a church community. Existence is unity based and the personal unity of the Church (*Kirche*) is:

⁸² Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 569.

⁸³ Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 195.

⁸⁴ Geoffrey B. Kelly and F. Burton Nelson, *The Cost of Moral Leadership: The Spirituality of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2002), 51.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Rudolf Schnackenburg (trans. W.J. O’Hara), *The Church in the New Testament* (Kent, UK: Burns & Oates, 1965, 1974, 1981), 15.

Christ existing as church-community [*Gemeinde*], and this is of the greatest significance for its sociological structure. It is the Lord's Supper that secures this unity. The Eucharist is the gift to individuals but it is not only in spirit but also in body.⁸⁷

Thus, the Lord's Supper is largely a gift to the church community. As Bonhoeffer says, "Christ gives community with himself" and thereby renews it, thus giving it to itself:

Christ gives to each member the rights and obligations to act as priest for the other, and to each Christ also gives life in the church-community; it is Christ's gift that one member is able to bear the other and to be borne by the other. By the act of self-giving. Christ gives us the obligation and the strength to love one another.⁸⁸

In this way, Christ becomes alive in the church-community, in more exacting words, in the Eucharist as his body and blood. Christianity, therefore, is a unity that is completed in Christ. This is the social implication from Christ, who gives himself in the Eucharist to the church community, is a testimony of Christ's presence in spirit, which is "not merely symbolic but a given reality."⁸⁹ Thus, the theology of the Spirit asserts that Christ is a "collective person."⁹⁰ This is consistent with Paul's definition of the

⁸⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 195.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 243.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 295.

Church as the body of Christ, thereby reinforcing his view that Christ exists as a Church community.⁹¹

Human sociality is a theological testament to an authentic community. They are a personal presence and experience of “God’s face,” especially in a communal setting. The quest or desire to encounter God’s face is found in the “cultic gathering of the community, the act of communing to the sanctuary,”⁹² which is the Church’s precursor. It is where “God’s face is present and turned to human beings.”⁹³ In this bounding up of “the gathering and constitution of the community,” the living presence of God’s face is indirectly perceived by the action of the members of the community. God is present in a concentrated yet most lively way. Barth, thus, acknowledged the actions of the Holy Spirit as being the power through which God turns humans to Godself: “By the enlightening power of His Holy Spirit,” the world “is won for God and claimed for His discipleship and service.”⁹⁴ This interaction and interplay allow for “fruitful contrasts, differences, and contradictions.”⁹⁵

The significant nature of a Christian community is that it does not necessarily conform to uniformity; rather, it is pluralistic and prophetic. As described in Joel, this means that:

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Welker, *God the Spirit*, 153.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. IV, 72-73 (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 79

⁹⁵ Welker, *God the Spirit*, 154.

The basis of the connection between God's presence and the specific abundance and diversity of the prophetic attestations endowed by the Spirit, the gathering, building up, and vitalizing of the entire, diversely differentiated community and of its members will *no* longer be lost from view.⁹⁶

God's presence, therefore, "is not grasped with metaphysical and other reductionist, abstract distortions, but is experienced in the complexity of diverse, concrete, mutually challenging and mutually enriching attestations to the reality intended by God."⁹⁷ The universal Church, which is the body of Christ, is a manifestation of this pluralistic unity, and the Church, therefore, is an ecumenical community.

In seeking God's kingdom, as noted in the *Lima Text* of the World Council of Churches, Christians do not just celebrate the covenantal God in the Baptism and the Eucharist; they also celebrate God as a liberator from oppression and domination, slavery and death in a land where opposites reign: "baptized believers demonstrate that humanity can be re-generated and liberated. They have a common responsibility, here and now, to bear witness together to the Gospel of Christ, the Liberator of all human beings."⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Ibid, 155.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ World Council of Churches, "The Lima Text: Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry - Faith and Order Paper No. 111,"
<http://archived.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-no-111-the-lima-text/baptism-eucharist-and-ministry.html> (21/02/ 2017).

Early Christians sought and experienced a land of righteousness, justice, and freedom in their community. This unity, which bound together early Christian communities, was not so much unity of structure and organization as it was a unity of life. It is life conscious of thought and feeling and love that Christians can share with one another.⁹⁹ Cooke referred to this as the most real kind of life, “most important and basic sense, the kind of life that finds its full expression in the God who by thought and love creates all that exists.”¹⁰⁰

Christ is not just an external exemplar of Christian living. Through the sacraments, believers are united in the power of the Spirit to Christ. Christ’s trinitarian pattern of life becomes the life of Christians: “The relations between Father, Son, and Spirit become the grammar or form of Christian living.”¹⁰¹

Accordingly, John Paul II repeatedly wanted to “correct the implicit individualism of Scholasticism’s sacramental theology by stressing the fact that the liturgical sacraments are communal celebrations.”¹⁰² This is the basis of *communio*, and it countersigns a distinct philosophy, thereby invigorating incarnational thinking about

⁹⁹ Cooke, *Sacraments and Sacramentality*, 71.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Susan K. Wood, “The Trinity in the Liturgy, Sacraments and Mysticism,” in Peter C. Phan (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 382.

¹⁰² Joseph Martos, *The Catholic Sacraments* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1983), 128. (Emphasis is added)

God and the world. Baptism, the Eucharist, and the Church are to have specialized roles in fostering a humanism that is directed towards achieving a common culture of human oneness. The rituals and prayers advance humanism by invigorating a personal spirituality that is conscious of humankind's unity. Importantly, the sacraments recapitulate the intrinsic link between the new humanity of Christians, as the chosen people of God inaugurated by Christ, and all of humanity, "since Christ summed up in himself, judged, redeemed and glorified" for all of humanity.¹⁰³

Sacraments establish three significant outcomes that can be discerned from the Gospels by prioritizing social salvation over individual salvation by appealing for a Christianized society of cooperation, mutual respect, and compassion in place of greed, competition, and conflict among social and economic classes.¹⁰⁴ The sacramental outcomes are accordingly societal:

- (a) The *unity* in God's kingdom, especially when Jesus says that "the Son of Man comes in his glory ... [and] all the nations will be gathered before him" (Mt 25:31–33). Accordingly, there will no longer be "Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26–28).

¹⁰³ Zimmermann, *Incarnational Humanism*, 19.

¹⁰⁴ Christopher H. Evans, *The Social Gospel in American Religion: A History*, (NYU Press, USA, 2017), 202.

- (b) The *social equality*, by caring and uplifting the poor and marginalized members of any society, for “the least of these who are members of my family” (Mt 25:40) will cherish the kingdom of heaven (Mt 5:3).
- (c) The essence of *neighborliness* (Mt 36:40; Lk 10:27; Mk12:30–31) in Jesus’s new commandment of love embraces strangers as neighbours. Jesus is applying what had already been prescribed in the Torah: “You ... shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord” (Lev 19:17–18, *ESV*).

Sacraments thus are God’s instruments to restore unity and peace in this world.¹⁰⁵ Thus, celebrating the presence of God is a testimony to the fact that God’s kingdom was already breaking in, and as Christians, we look eagerly for its consummation.

Sacraments contribute to the solidarity of authentic communities. Importantly, they can also become the norm for secular societies as examples of unity for the common good through cooperation, respect, and participation. The sacraments are not esoteric, but they express values that are wholly human and empirically accessible. As indicated by the apostolic writers, a sacrament is “an act of God.” However, God does not merely authorize or command: God is freedom. By becoming God’s

¹⁰⁵ David N. Power, Regis A. Duffy and Kevin W. Irwin, “Current Theology—Sacramental Theology: A Review of Literature,” in *Theological Studies* (1994), vol. 55, pp. 657–705.

witnesses, “God is doing them in, with, and under human practice.”¹⁰⁶ Sacraments make a difference in the world. As reminded by the church historian Vivian Green:

Christianity has survived because first and foremost from the very beginning it has been a society, a brotherhood, a *koinonia*, sustained by a vision of holiness and love, and by a deep faith in the purpose and the providence of God.¹⁰⁷

The Church has provided examples of self-sacrificing and loving lives with belief in Jesus Christ to be the exemplar. This is the effect of the sacraments. Society is transformed as Christians portray Jesus in their lives and in the conduct of their relationship with their neighbours, at which point Christianity is represented both as a culture and existence particularly in Europe, the Americas, Russia, Eastern Europe, and Africa.¹⁰⁸

(iv) Humanistic

The dictionary meaning of “humanism,” is simply about having a strong interest in or concern for human welfare, values, and dignity, which is scripturally derived. St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), the Spanish noblewoman called to the convent, underpins my representation of Christian Humanism:

¹⁰⁶ John H. Yoder, “Sacrament as Social Process: Christ the Transformer of Culture,” in *Theology Today* (1991), vol. 48/ 33, p. 40.

¹⁰⁷ Green, *A New History of Christianity*, 402.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassions looks out on humanity. Yours are the feet with which he is to walk the ways of the world. Yours are the hands with which he is to bless us now.¹⁰⁹”

Christian Humanism has its roots in the Old Testament, occurring more than 3500 years before Christ. The vital humanistic expressions in the Torah are relevant to this day. To recall a few: “Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; for this reason I lay this command upon you today” (Deut 15:15); “You must not oppress a foreigner, since you know the life of a foreigner, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt” (Ex 23:9 *NET*); “You shall not lend them your money at interest taken in advance, or provide them food at a profit. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt” (Lev 25:35-38) and, those “who mock the poor insult their Maker” (Prov 17:5). Jeremiah gave a good description of God’s qualities in the relationship with people: “They should boast that they know and understand that I, the LORD, act out of faithfulness, fairness, and justice in the earth and that I desire people to do these things, says the LORD” (Jer 9:24, *NET*). Other sections of the Torah deal with social relationships. The Wisdom books of Proverbs, Song of

¹⁰⁹ St. Theresa of Avila, , <https://catholic-link.org/quotes/st-teresa-of-avila-quote-christ-has-no-body-but-yours> (19/03/2021)

Solomon, Job, and Ecclesiastes complete the circle of humanism in the Hebrew Bible. To be human, therefore, is “to seek wisdom, and to know wisdom is to learn through personal experience that humans are made in the image of God.”¹¹⁰ The secular humanistic values such as the sacredness of human life, freedom of conscience, compassion for the poor, and devotion to peace, have flourished in a climate long framed by Christian thought and practice.¹¹¹

When Paul used the term “new creation” (Gal 6:15, 2 Cor 5:17) he also meant a “new state of affairs” inaugurated through Christ.¹¹² The new creation finds its initial fulfilment in the salvation of individual human beings and the creation of a new humanity and its ultimate consummation in a renewed universe.¹¹³ Irenaeus interpreted new creation through the incarnation, how the fallen humanity had been reconciled with God, and through the work of God, humanity was being healed and restored to its original glory.¹¹⁴ For the Church Fathers the “image and likeness” meant common and rational ability and freedom, that is, image (freedom and reason) but likeness (immortality and moral perfection in loving God and human beings), which were lost in the fall.

¹¹⁰ William R Franklin and Joseph M. Shaw, *The Case for Christian Humanism*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 6.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Franklin and Shaw, *The Case for Christian Humanism*, 91.

¹¹³ Douglas J. Moo, “Creation and New Creation,” in *Bulletin for Biblical Research* (2010), vol.20/1, 42.

¹¹⁴ Irenaeus, “*Against Heresies*,” in Sheerin, *Eucharist*, 446.

“Salvation” is to be understood as “not mere salvation of the soul apart from the mind and body, but in the training of the entire human being toward the perfection of Christ’s humanity.”¹¹⁵ Wright is also specifically helpful in uncovering the neglected theme of a new humanity in the Pauline epistles. Paul extolled Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection for the sake of new humanity (*deuteros anthropos*) and the restoration of creation.¹¹⁶ These briefs account for the patristic and medieval root of Christian Humanism were further advanced by modern theology (both Catholic and Protestant), and hermeneutic philosophy.¹¹⁷

As revealed in Genesis, human beings are made for a relationship with God of which total responsiveness in sacramental worship and obedience, which sustain that relationship. In this way real nobility is found in our lives.¹¹⁸ By the sacraments, God’s love sweeps into our innermost being. This has been possible, foremost by the incarnation; in the words of Irenaeus, “God became flesh ... and showed what was God’s image ... by assimilating man to the invincible Father through the means of the visible Word.”¹¹⁹ Secondly are the sacraments, which are effective instruments of God

¹¹⁵ Zimmermann, *Incarnation Humanism*, 75.

¹¹⁶ N. T. Wright, “The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in Leander E. Keck, *The New Interpreters Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2009), 10:466, 488, 524.

¹¹⁷ Zimmermann, *Incarnational Humanism*, 49.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 26.

¹¹⁹ Irenaeus, “*Against Heresies*,” in Sheerin, 544.

as humans are transcendental beings. As theologized by Rahner in his chapter on “Man as the Event of God’s Free and Forgiving Self-Communication,” God created human beings with a distinctive capacity: “We have the capacity, in our choices and actions, to transcend ourselves and glimpse the mysterious God who has enabled those choices.”¹²⁰ Recognition of our transcendence leads us to our commitment to the kind of freedom and responsibility that Christian Humanism represents: dignity, unity, and the common good.¹²¹

Christian Humanism, thus, is far more fundamental in scope and expectation. It is also much more than personal freedom. It is a call that accounts for our nature and destiny to be like God who is the source of our being, which is always derived from God. We believe all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God; this underpins the special significance of the conduct and accountability of us as a people of God. It is an affirmation of faith in the oneness of humanity as God’s one human family.

Christianity executes this understanding of God in Christ, which has consequences for all humankind. In more precise terms, in the terms of the Roman Catholic Church, all men, Christians, and non-Christians, are in the realm of supernatural grace stemming from Jesus’ Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection. This makes a

¹²⁰ Rahner, *Foundations on Christian Faith*, 116-137.

¹²¹ Clano Aydin, “On Freedom and Responsibility: Discovering the Human as a Transcendental Being,” in *Religion, State and Society* (2013), vol. 41/2, pp.1-3.

difference for the history of the world and the destiny of humankind.¹²² Jesus, who is the source of Christian knowledge, is the supreme cause and author of infinite goodness, justice, and truth.¹²³ Already briefly dealt with above, the sacraments Jesus gave us are the portals of these ethics of Christian Humanism.

The insight into the sacraments is vital to envisage the social dimension of God's kingdom so that humanity can participate effectively in restoring a just society. The sacraments keep the eyes of worshippers on Christ as an example and teacher and, by the Holy Spirit, "so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:4; Gal 5:18). For Jesus, his ministry to Israel was the starting point of his vision to restore the world and for all humankind to be as God intended. We often tend to overlook this key point of Jesus's teaching, which is essentially social: that we constitute God's one human family.¹²⁴

As revealed in both Jewish and Christian scriptures, there is a specific purpose of restoring the union of believers with God, which had been severed by sin. The phrase from Deuteronomy simplifies

¹²² Paulos Mar Gregorios, "How My Mind Has Changed," <http://paulosmargregorios.in/Autobiography/Appendix%202.htm> (17/08/2020)

¹²³ Samuel Clarke, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 83.

¹²⁴ Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1988).

how the sacraments are formative for the shaping of who we are today: “into a good country ... you shall eat your fill and bless Lord your God for the good land that he has given you” (Deut 6:9-10). In other words, the sacraments bring about our communion with God by moving us into a new life following his laws and where we are to experience abundant life (Jn 10:10).

The relevance of the spiritual and social relevance of sacraments is especially preeminent to commemorate God’s deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery. Here, the God-ordained sacrament is celebrated, commemorating as the meal is being eaten; the families in Israel retell the story of the Exodus, recount the divinely sent plagues, and God’s message to Israel through Moses that were part and parcel of the liberation from Egypt. In the New Testament, Jesus himself makes this offer to his followers: “Come to Me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you” (Mt 11:28). Under the new covenant, we recall the Lord’s Supper, when Jesus took the Old Testament sacrament of Passover and filled it with new meaning and new content. He took the bread and the wine of the Passover meal and made them signs and seals of his broken body and shed blood, which he had paid for the redemption of humankind. These tangible sacramental objects and ceremonies carried believers right over into the religious sphere of our worship as a faith community throughout history of the Church.

For Christians, Jesus Christ is the standard of humanness.¹²⁵ Christian Humanism is both incarnational *and* sacramental. Being a Christian is to Christ-like in how we love God by our relationship with one another as God's one human family. The incarnation is the foundation of our humanism, which expresses unique Christian insights that both matter and spirit are in the service of God and of human purpose.¹²⁶ It is founded on love, which is "not love as a generally diffused feeling of warmth and goodwill, but as sharing in the very nature of God. The Christian position is not that love is God, but that God is love."¹²⁷ Through the Eucharist, Christians experience God's love transcending upon us, which in turn fosters humanistic thinking in the image and likeness of God in Christ. The sacrament makes us view God as our ultimate environment; we come to know God in and through other persons, things, personal behaviours, and social goals that surround us. Furthermore, because God made us and loved us, we in return reciprocate by loving God and our fellow human beings and in so doing experience this joy of togetherness.¹²⁸ Christian Humanism directs us "to a deep interest in human beings, their life, well-being, culture, and eternal significance."¹²⁹

¹²⁵ J. I. Packer and Thomas Howard, *Christianity: The True Humanism* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 15.

¹²⁶ Franklin and Shaw, *The Case for Christian Humanism*, 12.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 63.

¹²⁸ Packer and Howard, *Christianity: The True Humanism*, 14.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 5.

Spiritually and philosophically this form of humanism belongs to the Christian faith as coming from Jesus himself who encapsulated the entire Law of the Old Testament concisely into two greatest commandments of Christian anthropology: loving God and one's neighbor as oneself in this new covenant of God and humankind. Christian Humanism interprets human existence considering this conviction that everything in the universe, and especially the human family receives its very life and significance from God who is Creator, Redeemer, and the animating Holy Spirit. It is a divine reality even though it is beyond this observable world.¹³⁰

Christian Humanism, therefore, is more than a philosophical enterprise. It is the basis of Christian missions which does its work through witnessing by acknowledging the sanctification of human nature by its revelation in Jesus to a higher, divine plane of being, acknowledging at the same time, on the one hand, the validity of all things human but also affirming, on the other hand, their insufficiency.¹³¹ Christian Humanism affirms all peoples are one community and have one origin because God caused the whole human race to dwell on the face of the earth (Acts 17:26):

¹³⁰ Quirinus Breen, *Christianity and Humanism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968).

¹³¹ Franklin and Shaw, *The Case for Christian Humanism*, 92; also John Courtney Murray, "Towards a Christian Humanism: Aspects of the Theology of Education," in H. Guthrie and G. Walsh (eds.), *A Philosophical Symposium on American Catholic Education* (New York: Fordham University, 1941), 110.

They also have one final end, God. [God's] providence, [God's] manifestations of goodness, [God's] saving design extend to all [humankind]. Thus, "We do not live alongside one another purely by chance; all of us are progressing along a common path as men and women, and thus as brothers and sisters."¹³²

Created in God's image this unity amounts to the recognition of the sanctity of human life, the equality of human beings, and not the least the importance of proper conduct toward others, who are also made in God's image.¹³³ Christian social ethic is, therefore, based on the principle of *personalism*, rather than on the natural-law concept. Importantly is the recognition of the first principle of Christian personalism that persons are not to be used, but to be respected and loved.¹³⁴ Thus,

Morality begins and ends with the needs and rights of human person. The person is the crown and center of reality, absolutely unique as the locus of freedom in the world. It is this understanding of the person which undergirds its doctrine of inalienable human rights.¹³⁵

¹³² Pope Benedict XVI, "One Human Family" on 97th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2010, http://www.rcsouthwark.co.uk/one_human_family.pdf (27/08/2018).

¹³³ Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity 2008), 248.

¹³⁴ Karol Wojtyła, "[The] person is the kind of good which does not admit of use and cannot be treated as an object of use and as such the means to an end" (*Love and Responsibility*, San Francisco: Ignatius, 1960, 1993), 41.

¹³⁵ Bokenkotter, *Dynamic Catholicism*, 367.

Christian Humanism is unique from other social philosophies especially from that of the other two Abrahamic traditions of Judaism and Islam which too desire to protect and enhance human existence, but with this significant difference: none of these can profess or claim they have a God who once walked on this earth and shared the human experience of life to defeat sin, evil, and renew humanity.¹³⁶ For Christians, the source and goal of human powers are from God the Creator, Redeemer, and Spirit.¹³⁷ On the other end of the spectrum is also secular humanism, which limits itself to “merely” human interests, regarding human persons as complete masters of their own affairs and destinies. The “self-sufficiency” ideologies originating from the “utopian society” of the likes of Karl Marx,¹³⁸ the “will to power” of Nietzsche,¹³⁹ or the “psychological assumptions” of Sigmund Freud,¹⁴⁰ that resonate in the secular humanist manifestos (*Humanist Manifesto (1933)*, the *Humanist Manifesto II (1973)*, and *Humanist Manifesto III (2003)*) assure people that at the center of the universe is nature where humankind is the most developed component and this is all that exists. Therefore,

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Packer and Howard, *Christianity: The True Humanism*, 5.

¹³⁸ David Lovell, “Marx’s Utopian Legacy,” in *The Journal of European Legacy: Towards New Paradigm* (2004), vol. 9/5, pp. 629-640.

¹³⁹ R. Lanier Anderson, “Nietzsche’s Will to Power as a Doctrine of the Unity of Science,” in *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*. (1994), 25/5, 729-750. <https://philpapers.org/rec/ANDNWT-2> (18/6/2018).

¹⁴⁰ Saul McLeod, “Humanism,” in *Simply Psychology* (2005), <https://www.simplypsychology.org/humanistic.html> (18/06/2018)

happiness and enrichment of human life now are all that we should aim at and that religion hinders the enterprise rather than helps it.”¹⁴¹ These philosophies deliberately exclude the transcendent. They exclaim: “No deity will save us; we must save ourselves.”¹⁴² For Christians, in sharp contrast, it is Jesus Christ who is the new humanism. This faith in him generates an awareness that recognizes the beauty as well as the limits of the humanity of what there is in this world and hoping for what still can be, at the same time being aware and grateful for what we continuously receive. In the words of one of the most important figures in Catholic intellectual life in the 20th century, Romano Guardini, “Every man is destined to be the listener of the word which is the world. He must answer, too. Through him [Jesus] everything should come back to God as an answer.”¹⁴³ Secular humanism, on the other hand, deliberately avoids acknowledging the Christian humanistic view on how to view the world. It is by no means a new perspective. It was here long before the finer values of the modern secular worldview emerged.

More than ever the Church is aware of this responsibility to have a real dialogue with the modern world that is undergoing tremendous waves of change in social, economic, and political

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 20.

¹⁴² Paul Kurtz (ed.), *Humanist Manifestos I and II* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1973), 16.

¹⁴³ Quote from the proceedings of the Fifth National Ecclesial Convention in Italy on 13th 2015; <http://www.firenze2015.it/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/In-Jesus-Christ-the-new-humanism.pdf> (a18/6/2018).

spheres of humanity. The Council's *Gaudium et Spes* makes known that the Church can no longer just stand by and remain indifferent to these tremendous changes that are sweeping over the world because "man's earthly endeavours are of vital concern to the Kingdom of God" and that it is man's divine vocation to bring about a more human world by nurturing the value of human dignity, freedom, and devotion to truth.¹⁴⁴

In modern times a threat that undermines the centrality of the person and a person's dignity – the social fabric of Christian Humanism – comes from a dynamically changing technological and globalized market economy. Business is viewed as an instrument of commerce aimed at maximising wealth rather than as people making a life for themselves.¹⁴⁵ In the wider culture business is, therefore, based on the "shareholder-value model" where the agenda is a financial entity composed of resources, including employees who are "human resources" (capital costs, factors of production) to be used to maximize the wealth of its owners.¹⁴⁶ This idea of business as an instrument of capital makes for a narrow and dismal idea of the human person who becomes a sort of slave – a wage-slave to be

¹⁴⁴ Bokenkotter, *Dynamic Catholicism*, 367.

¹⁴⁵ Lloyd E. Sandelands, "The Business of Business Is the Human," in Domènec Melé and Martin Schllag (eds.), *Christian Humanism in Economic and Business: Perspectives of Catholic Social Tradition: Issues in Business Ethics*, 43 (New York: Springer, 2015), 165.

¹⁴⁶ M.C. Jensen, W.H. Meckling, "Theory of the Firm: Managerial behaviour, agency costs and ownership structure," in *Journal of Financial Economics* (1976), vol.3/4, pp. 305-360.

precise,¹⁴⁷ so much so that students of economics and finance are swayed to proclaim: “The business of business is business,” that “It’s nothing personal,” we say, “it’s just business”!¹⁴⁸

Christian Humanism expresses the fundamental relational dimensions of trinitarian ontology. The “presence of Christianity constitutes a vivid source of a type of relationship which is presupposed by the market economy but that cannot be achieved by the logic of economic order.” The market needs a far more sophisticated philosophy than mere economic returns; it needs to be conscious that its success is dependent on the fundamental Christian revelation of the social ontological dimension of human nature. It needs to recognize that the unity of humanity presupposes a metaphysical interpretation of the “humanum” in which relationality is an essential element.¹⁴⁹ While the Church has no mission in the political, social, or economic order, she realizes that it has a vital role in fostering the rights of humankind.

In the last decade, consistent with the papal encyclicals that were initiated by Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* (*On Capital and*

¹⁴⁷ Sandelands, “The Business of Business Is the Human,” 165.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Markus Krienke, “The Search for the Meaning of Liberty from Christian Humanism: New Perspectives for the Twenty-First Century,” in Domènec Melé and Martin Schlag, (eds.), *Humanism in Economics and Business: Perspectives of the Catholic Social Tradition* (NY: Springer, 2015, 69-85, (Book-on-line) https://books.google.com.au/books?id=g5_dBgAAQBAJ&pg=PR3&source=gb_s_selected_pages&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false (23/08/2018).

Labor, 1891), pursued by Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio (On the Development of Peoples, 1967)*,¹⁵⁰ John Paul's *Centesimus Annus (Hundredth anniversary of Rerum novarum 1991)*,¹⁵¹ and Benedict XVI's *Caritas in Veritate (On Integral Human Development and in Charity and Truth, 2009)*,¹⁵² there have been several studies attempting to change this business attitude so that these should be conceived by the lens of the "common good principle."¹⁵³ Benedict XVI also provided an alternative conception for business by facilitating authentic human relationships. The idea of business, he proposes, should go far beyond mere profit and that it ought to recognize not just mere maximization of profits but also that the economic sphere is part and parcel of human activity, and precisely because it is human, it must be structured and governed ethically. He, therefore, rightly justifies that the market should be subjected to the

¹⁵⁰ Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio, 1967* (http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html) (20/6/2018).

¹⁵¹ Pope John-Paul II, *Centesimus Annus, 1991*, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html (21/6/2018).

¹⁵² Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritatis in Veritate (On Integral Human Development and in Charity and Truth, 2009)*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html (20/6/2018).

¹⁵³ Ericka Costa and Tommaso Ramus, "Italian Economia Aziendale as a Model Inspired by Catholic Humanism," in Domènec Melé and Martin Schllag (eds.), *Christian Humanism in Economics and Business: Perspectives of Catholic Social Tradition, Issues in Business Ethics*, (New York: Springer, 2015), vol. 43, pp.148-150.

principles of so-called *commutative justice*, which regulates the relations of giving and receiving between parties to a transaction.

The social doctrine of the Church has thus “unceasingly highlighted the importance of *distributive justice* and *social justice* for the market economy” because it belongs not only within a broader social and political context but also because of the wider network of relations within which it operates. Benedict asserts:

If the market is governed solely by the principle of the equivalence in value of exchanged goods, it cannot produce the social cohesion that it requires in order to function well. *Without internal forms of solidarity and mutual trust, the market cannot completely fulfil its proper economic function (Caritas in Veritate, n.35).*

Business should create not only wealth for shareholders but should also demonstrate how it is committed to the values of a broader range of stakeholders especially the workers themselves, the local communities, and the general public whose immediate well-being should take priority over global communities in general.¹⁵⁴ The Church is therefore committed to encourage and collaborate with the state and other private sectors that every business enterprise should serve the common good of society by addressing the social questions through a true sense of solidarity and by respecting the “subsidiary

¹⁵⁴ H. Alford and M. J. Naughton, (2002). “Beyond the shareholder model of the firm.” in S. A. Cortright, & Michael J. Naughton (eds.), *Rethinking the purpose of business: Interdisciplinary; Essays from Catholic Social Tradition* (Notre Dame: Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 2002).

principle.” The “Subsidiary Principle” is one of the key principles of Catholic social thought, and now adopted by the United Nations, holds that nothing should be done by any larger organization, which can be done as well by a smaller and simpler organization.¹⁵⁵

Christian Humanism is the sacramental response of the Church as the “people of God” instilled by Jesus himself (Mt 5:3-10) in a world of destitution and injustice. In this regard, the call of liberation theologians such as Juan Segundo, Leonardo Boff, Segundo Galilea, and Francisco Taborda are especially significant. It is a development from a relationship between sacramental theology and memory, including liturgical memory that was inferred especially in the works of Schillebeeckx and Johannes Baptist Metz, for the liberationists. These express all the ravages of injustice including the war in our world. Jesus draws our attentiveness to the liberation themes by words and praxis that reveal God’s countenance is concerned for all humanity, and not the least “the humble of the earth” and all those who are crucified.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Pope John Paul II in *Centesimus Annus (1991)* took the “social assistance state” to task by reinstating that the as a “Welfare State” contradicts the principle of subsidiarity by intervening directly and depriving society of its responsibility: it was ‘an injustice, a great evil, grave evil and a disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and a higher association of what a less subordinate organization can do’ (Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno, 1931*, n.79).

¹⁵⁶ Edward Schillebeeckx (trans. John Bowden), *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord*, (New York, NY: Seabury, 1980), 768.

The sacraments are anticipatory and liturgically express signs mediating salvation for a healed and reconciled life. The *anamnesis* (Gk. ἀνάμνησις meaning "reminiscence", "memorial sacrifice"), which is central to the theology of the Eucharist, causes us to reflect, unmask and protest the life that is not yet reconciled.¹⁵⁷ Thus, celebrating the presence of God is a testimony to the fact that God's kingdom was already breaking in, and as Christians, we look eagerly for its consummation. By becoming God's witnesses, "God is doing them in, with, and under human practice."¹⁵⁸ In this way "sacraments make a difference to the world."¹⁵⁹

Undoubtedly there are other media, including scripture, preaching, and music that can achieve personal transformation so that believers become Christ-like in their relation to the world. Nonetheless what is evident is the role derived firstly from the sacraments, which were instituted by Jesus himself. Through placing sacraments in a more intellectual framework, it is possible to explore and rationalize why they are such powerful, meaningful, and efficacious instruments for participation in Jesus' social mission. In the sacraments there is a remarkable and unmistakable "encounter" between the believer and God himself in Christ.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 836.

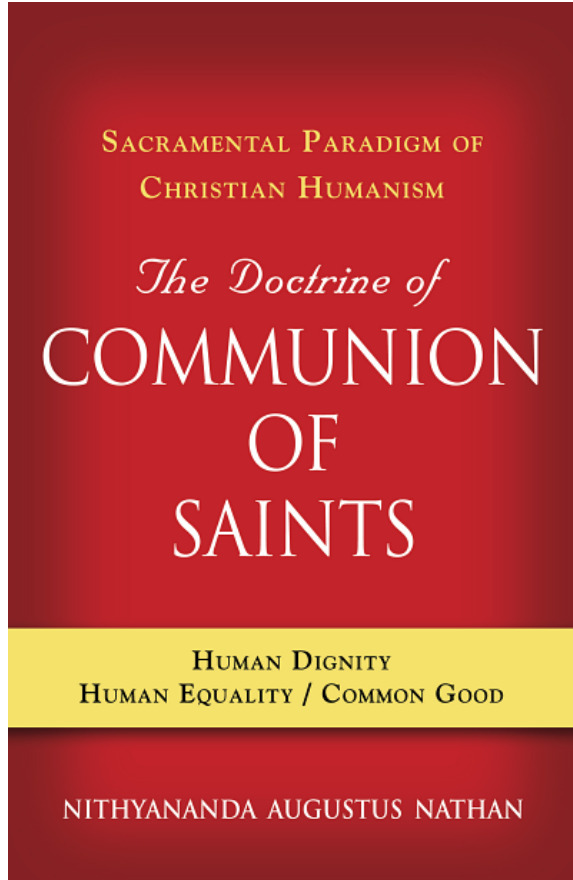
¹⁵⁸ Yoder, "Sacrament as Social Process, p. 40.

¹⁵⁹ George, *The Difference God Makes*.

Summary

The sacraments are divine initiatives of communication. Jesus speaks to us in the sacraments. Baptism and the Lord's Supper (the Eucharist) are the primary sacraments appointed by Jesus to bring the members of the Church into communion with his death and resurrection, and thus with himself through the Holy Spirit by developing a deep consciousness of men and women in achieving unity with God and among believers as God's one human family. By the sacraments, the Holy Spirit instigates us into a deep and transforming experience of our personhood. Sacraments, therefore, are the portals of the Church that convey the humanism of God manifested in God's incarnation.

The quintessence of the sacraments is to accomplish the divine kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven." Sacraments contribute towards the solidarity of authentic communities, which reveals the identity of the unity for the secular world by the common good through cooperation, respect, and participation as a "people of God." This vital sacramental mission commits believers to be a "living message" of Jesus Christ. It engages us meaningfully in a world that cannot separate action for justice from the *kerygma*, the proclamation of the Word of God. It heightens our will in shaping a society that recognizes the basic right to the dignity of every man, woman, and child



This is a treatise of the communion of saints, which continues to suffer doctrinal authenticity as an Article of Faith of the Apostles Creed. The book reveals it is a profound expression of the sacramental truth of the Eucharist, which is the portal of Christian Humanism characterized by human dignity, unity, justice and the common good.

The Doctrine of COMMUNION OF SAINTS: Sacramental Paradigm of Christian Humanism

By Nithyananda Augustus Nathan

Order the book from the publisher BookLocker.com

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/10792.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**