Lutheran Mission Matters

Mutual Hierarchy
as a Framework for Ecclesiology

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Abstract: This article first briefly argues for the preferability of a mutual hierarchy framework over both the hierarchical framework of Hans Urs von Balthasar and the egalitarian framework of Miroslav Volf for the doctrine of the Trinity. Building on this Trinitarian foundation, it then advocates mutual hierarchy in ecclesiology, particularly in three ecclesiological areas: the relation between a pastor and a congregation, trans-congregational relations, and relations between the church and the mission field. The paper concludes with some questions for discussion in these three ecclesiological areas in the context of the LCMS today.

Hierarchy necessarily entails more than one person or thing. When dealing with human beings, it means that in a given context one person has a higher status or a certain authority over another. A key question when dealing with hierarchy is the nature of the hierarchy. Does it foster genuine community, or does it foster oppression? Two concepts can help to shed light on this question: uniqueness and dignity. Some damaged relationships involve a higher agent who conspicuously diminishes the dignity of the lesser, for example, if a chauvinistic husband abuses his wife. Other damaged relationships are subtler, involving an appearance of equality but actually a hidden oppression. For example, Karl Marx could advocate a classless society, an egalitarian construct; but in practice it involves tyranny because of forced conformity. Although these two concepts of uniqueness and dignity help expose two different types of oppression, they are closely related. A master who demands absolute obedience from a servant actually is projecting his or her image; similarly, seeking absolute equality tends to forcibly disallow uniqueness.

A better way to assess and achieve genuine community comes through what may be termed a mutual hierarchy framework. This framework acknowledges that

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genuine community entails each member of a community exercising hierarchy over another in connection with that member's unique characteristics, gifts, and vocations. A mutual hierarchy framework thus has the potential to better account for the dignity of each member. If a person recognizes that every other member of a community has a unique contribution to make, then that person is better equipped to use his own gifts to complement what others lack and also allow himself to be complemented.

It is true that such a framework has limitations. Saying that a relationship is characterized by mutual hierarchy does not yet delineate what specific characteristics and gifts each member has; two observers might look at a relationship and each describe it in terms of mutual hierarchy and yet not describe it in the same way. Furthermore, what one person sees as mutual hierarchy could be viewed by another as not so. For example, Hitler, Himmler, and Goebbels probably saw helpful abilities in each other, and yet they worked together for evil. But in this case, most observers would agree that Hitler largely projected his own desires onto everyone else so that the situation should not be described in terms of mutual hierarchy. In spite of limitations owing to differing perspectives, the promise of a mutual hierarchy framework remains.

In what follows, the potential fruitfulness of a mutual hierarchy ecclesiological framework relative to both a hierarchical framework and an egalitarian framework will be explored. First, a mutual hierarchy framework will be better illustrated through briefly examining the doctrine of the Trinity, setting the stage for what follows. Next it will be applied to three particular areas of ecclesiology: the relationship between a pastor and a congregation, trans-congregational relations, and relations between the church and the mission field. By trans-congregational relations in the second area I mean relations between Christians, not including relations within a congregation.[1] Finally, I will summarize the conclusions of the paper and suggest some potential applications in the three chosen ecclesial areas for my own denomination, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS).

Illustration from the Doctrine of the Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity can help illustrate the three basic frameworks.[2] Hans Urs von Balthasar, a prominent Roman Catholic social Trinitarian theologian from last century, had a doctrine of the Trinity characterized by largely unidirectional hierarchy.[3] For example, for Balthasar the Son throughout his life was radically passive, always choosing the path of maximal suffering as he obediently followed the will and commission of the Father. This passivity of the Son reached its climax in the descent into hell on Holy Saturday, where the dead Son in the agony of hell radically surrendered himself to the Father in order to suffer the greatest possible punishment for the redemption of mankind.[4] Here so much initiative lies with the

Father relative to the passive Son that the Son seems undignified, compelled to do the Father's mission.

In his egalitarian Trinitarian framework, Miroslav Volf, a Free Church social Trinitarian theologian, acknowledges that in the biblical narrative there is a certain paradoxical hierarchy involved in the sending of the Son and the Spirit into the world; but he overwhelmingly emphasizes the fully egalitarian relations between the divine persons.[5] This culminates at the cross where Volf, while acknowledging a certain paradoxical hierarchical abandonment of the Son by the Father, stresses the egalitarian relations between the divine persons as they give themselves to each other and the world at the cross.[6] Here the uniqueness of each divine person relative to the others is not adequately accounted for, as the hierarchy necessary for distinguishing them is minimized and stigmatized. Although both Volf and Balthasar are helpful as social Trinitarians, for both genuine Trinitarian community is diminished to the extent that largely only one divine working is evident in the world, with each divine person largely doing the same thing in Volf, and the Father more conspicuously diminishing the dignity of the Son by foisting his will and work on him in Balthasar.

The genuine community of the divine persons in their work in salvation history can be better discerned through the lens of a mutual hierarchy framework. A mutual hierarchy framework shows that, contra the Trinitarian trajectory of Volf, each divine person always exercises a unique vocation that involves hierarchy over the others. And yet, contra the Trinitarian trajectory of Balthasar, each divine person always uses the power associated with his vocation to serve the other divine persons and the world. For example, in salvation history the Father always remains in heaven as a stronghold sending his messengers to the world, the Son is unique in taking on human flesh and dying and rising for mankind, and the Holy Spirit is unique in sanctifying human beings in the church. And yet the divine persons are interdependent as they each use the power of their vocations to serve and complement one another in community for the sake of the world.[7]

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Some Basic Contours of Balthasar's Hierarchical Ecclesiology and Volf's Egalitarian Ecclesiology

In the Trinitarian example given above, Balthasar stressed the radical obedience of the passive Christ in his life to his commissioning Father in heaven. Ultimately, this doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation for Balthasar's entire theology, where all things may be divided into pairs, with one element of the pair hierarchical over the other. For example, consider the following ecclesiological statement by Balthasar:

> If Church can be defined as *communio*, her "constitutive elements" must be "totally immanent in each other" in such a way that they "cannot be separated from one another. This is evident, for instance, in the reciprocal structural relationship between sacrament and Word, between the general priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood, between the faithful and the Church, between duty and law, between the whole Church and the local or national Church, between the pope and the college of bishops, between the bishop and the presbyterium." It is this reciprocal immanence of elements, themselves structurally distinct and unconfused, that makes Christ's Church a reflection of the Trinity; thus, too, it renders the operation of the Holy Spirit in her a valid and salvific interpretation of the unity and distinction between the Father and his incarnate Son, in which God shows his nature as love, and love is manifested as the "law of grace."[8]

Here Balthasar, after the pattern of the Father and the incarnate Son, divides various ecclesial members into pairs in such a way that love is defined in terms of the "law of grace" where the lesser in each pair owes strict obedience to the greater.[9] Combining these pairs leads to a pyramidal shape to the church for Balthasar: bishops owe the pope obedience, priests owe bishops obedience, and laity owe priests obedience.[10]

Balthasar's hierarchical ecclesiological framework is problematic in the three ecclesial areas chosen for this paper. First, at the congregational level, it locates all authority with the priest, problematizing the contribution of laity. Second, it makes the magisterium hierarchical (in a unidirectional way) over individual congregations, problematizing congregational contribution.[11] And third, it ultimately places Spirit-led mission work at the bottom of the pyramid, making believers hierarchical over unbelievers in a unilateral way and calling into question the latter's value and the value of mission work.[12] Balthasar's ecclesiology encourages a choice of pastor over laity, trans-congregational church over congregation, and maintenance over mission.

Moving now to Volf, in the Trinitarian example given above, Volf stresses the fully egalitarian relations of the divine persons while he minimizes and stigmatizes the thought of hierarchy among them. The case is similar in Volf's ecclesiology, as he stresses egalitarian relations among Christians while minimizing and stigmatizing the thought of ecclesial hierarchy. To take just one example from Volf:

> The symmetrical reciprocity of the relations of the trinitarian persons finds its correspondence in the image of the church in which *all* members serve one another with their specific gifts of the Spirit in imitation of the Lord and through the power of the Father. Like the divine persons, they all stand in a relation of mutual giving and receiving.[13]

Here Volf emphasizes fully egalitarian relations of Christians with one another. By saying "all" members serve one another, Volf implicitly critiques hierarchical

systems where only clergy serve laity in the church. His discussion comes in the climactic "Trinity and Church" chapter of *After Our Likeness*. In this chapter Volf structures his discussion of the Trinity and the church using the same or similar categories: (fully egalitarian) relations, (mainly egalitarian) perichoresis as a sort of mediating category, and a third category of hierarchical sending (in the case of the Trinity) or hierarchical structures (in the case of the church). For both the Trinity and the church, Volf stresses the first category of egalitarian relations and views the third, i.e., hierarchical category, as less-desirable, paradoxical, and an exception.[14]

Volf's egalitarian ecclesiology is problematic in the three ecclesial areas chosen for this paper. First, in the area of life within a congregation, Volf's egalitarian framework leads to a minimizing of the pastoral office through seeing the church as constituted through the egalitarian charismatic gifts of all Christians. For example, in the chapter, "Structures and the Church," in *After Our Likeness*, Volf sees the pastoral office as a subset of the charismata of all Christians and discusses hierarchy only in connection with the pastoral office, not in connection with the gifts of the laity.[15]

Second, Volf's framework provides the rationale for his overwhelming emphasis on an individual congregation over the trans-congregational church. Christians within a congregation are much more capable of egalitarian, face-to-face, relations with one another than Christians or congregations in the trans-congregational church.[16]

And third, Volf's emphasis on the egalitarian relations of Christians through the power of the Holy Spirit tends to foster a choice of maintenance over mission. For example, Volf's book, *Exclusion and Embrace,* is based on an egalitarian understanding of the Trinity and deals with how the church as the image of the Trinity should respond to injustice in the world.[17] The problem here is that if Christians who possess the Holy Spirit have egalitarian relations with non-Christians, why would Christians need to offer non-Christians the Holy Spirit, since non-Christians are already largely considered the same as Christians, people for whom Christ died?

Furthermore, recalling that for Volf, Christians in the trans-congregational church are less capable of egalitarian relations than Christians within a congregation, the case for non-Christians is even worse, as they are further removed from a congregation. In Volf's ecclesiology, Christians have egalitarian relations with non-Christians but should not necessarily be optimistic about the success of these relations in practice.[18] Volf's ecclesiology that prioritizes face-to-face egalitarian relations between Christians within a congregation encourages a choice of laity over pastor, congregation over trans-congregational church, and maintenance over mission.

In both Balthasar and Volf, ecclesial community is not adequately accounted for. In Balthasar's hierarchical framework the distinctness of different ecclesial entities is somewhat accounted for but dignity, less so. In Volf's egalitarian framework, dignity is somewhat accounted for but uniqueness, less so. In both cases, unnecessary ecclesial choices are fostered. Balthasar's ecclesiology encourages a choice of pastor over laity and of trans-congregational church over congregation, while for Volf's ecclesiology it's the opposite: a choice of laity over pastor and of congregation over trans-congregational church. Ironically, the end result logically for both theological frameworks is a choice of maintenance over mission, with the mission field being neglected due to insufficient dignity in Balthasar and due to insufficient distinctness in Volf.

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A Better Way: Some Basic Contours of a Mutual Hierarchy Ecclesiology

Genuine ecclesial community can be better discerned and fostered by utilizing a mutual hierarchy framework. Mutual hierarchy means not having to decide against something just because it is more egalitarian or more hierarchical. Here each ecclesial member has hierarchies over the others in connection with his or her own unique gifts, offices, and responsibilities. Recognizing this can help foster each member in using these hierarchies to serve the others and complement them in the work of God's kingdom. Because of these advantages, this framework can foster the flexibility necessary for the complexities of God's kingdom and a sinful world. Each ecclesial member has unique powers, with varying levels of overlap and complementarity with the powers of others. Recognizing this can help foster flexible teams best adapted for unique problems and work. Such teams can work dynamically, shifting resources as necessary amidst changing circumstances. A mutual hierarchy framework involves far more than strict lordship/obedience relationships that just involve "bossing around" and rather involves such relational categories as friendship, inclusive lordship/discipleship, instruction, encouragement, consolation, forgiveness, and especially love.

The fruitfulness of such a mutual hierarchy ecclesiological framework may now be explored in the three ecclesial areas surveyed above in Balthasar and Volf. First, a mutual hierarchy framework yields a different conception of the relation between a pastor and a congregation. Unlike the frameworks of Balthasar and Volf, a mutual hierarchy framework does not tend towards a choice between a pastor and laity. The two do not have to be mutually exclusive but rather should complement one another. A pastor can be clearly distinguished from laypeople in terms of their respective vocations. And yet, amidst this distinguishing, there is some overlap between the two, and a pastor can use his distinct vocation to serve laypeople and vice versa.

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This framework also allows for better flexibility in a congregation. For example, certain tasks, perhaps like a building project, may require more lay expertise while other tasks, perhaps like a mission program, may require more pastoral expertise. Further flexibility is possible in that laity can train their pastor in areas where they have better expertise, and vice versa, with the end result that both pastor and laity can have a new perspective to contribute to the congregation after the training process. For example, a newly ordained pastor arriving at his first call will likely learn much about the workings of a congregation from the laity, even as he will also likely contribute skills flowing from studying recent scholarship and mentoring.

A mutual hierarchy framework also yields a different conception of trans-congregational relations. Unlike the frameworks of Balthasar and Volf, a mutual hierarchy framework does not tend towards a choice between an individual congregation and the larger church. A unique individual congregation is typically required for Christians to be baptized in and gather together as the people of God to receive God's gifts. And yet each congregation and its members form and have also been formed by other Christians and congregations.

For example, some Christians have vocations that are more clearly oriented towards the trans-congregational church than others and have unique gifts for this work. A seminary professor might have a special gift of teaching, and a missionary might have a special gift for spreading the Gospel. A mutual hierarchy framework acknowledges the importance of these different gifts and encourages the church to consider both how these gifts are unique and how they might help Christians work together most effectively.

Similarly, just as each Christian working in the trans-congregational church is unique, each congregation is unique, having distinct characteristics and gifts.[19] There is also fluidity and overlap between congregations as congregations send pastoral candidates away from themselves to seminary, Christians move and change congregations, Christians become missionaries, and pastors change congregations. In other words, congregations are dynamic entities. Mutual hierarchy helps discern and foster this condition as trans-congregational members remain distinct from one another, each having gifts; and yet these members change and serve the others in the church, for example, a congregation being formed by Christians outside itself and forming them in return. In this way, ecclesial members functioning in a trans-congregational way can genuinely complement one another.

A mutual hierarchy framework also yields a different conception of the relation between the church in general and the mission field. Unlike the frameworks of Balthasar and Volf, a mutual hierarchy framework does not tend towards a choice between maintenance and mission. First, it clearly distinguishes Christians from non-Christians. Christians are children of God who strive to do His works in the world through the power of the Holy Spirit. Non-Christians do not possess the Holy Spirit but still are capable of doing all sorts of things that can help the world in terms of peace, lawfulness, and service. More importantly, they are dearly loved by God, who made them in His image and desires their fellowship and salvation. Amidst these important distinctions between Christians and non-Christians, each can use their vocations to help the other. Christians can love non-Christians, serve them through their deeds, and

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share the Gospel with them, while non-Christians can love Christians, serve them through their deeds, and engage in conversations with them. Appreciating the mutual hierarchy fellowship Christians share with non-Christians can help both the church and the world. If non-Christians see that Christians treat them with respect and care and work for them, non-Christians may be more likely to befriend Christians, work with them, share their thoughts and worldviews with them, and even be open to hear about Jesus. Similarly, if Christians see that non-Christians have dignity in God's sight and that they, too, can work for good purposes in the world, Christians can be in a better position to value them, work with them, and further develop relationships with them that could slowly flower into opportunities to share the Gospel with them.[20]

Conclusions and Potential Applications

This paper has argued that a mutual hierarchy framework is preferable to both a hierarchical framework and an egalitarian framework in the realm of ecclesiology. An analysis of the hierarchical framework of Hans Urs von Balthasar has shown that for him all relationships are hierarchical in one direction so that the church has a pyramidal structure with the pope (and ultimately God) at the top. This perspective tends to reduce the sort of vocation one exercises to commanding those lower down the pyramid or obeying those higher up. An analysis of the egalitarian framework of Miroslav Volf has shown that for him hierarchy becomes a typically negative exception so that it is difficult to account for the differences among human beings. For Volf, the sort of vocation one should exercise is diminished, since the ideal becomes all doing nearly the same thing; similarly, for Balthasar vocation is largely reduced to the vocation of the one(s) highest up the ecclesial pyramid. In both cases, unnecessary ecclesial choices are fostered, toward more hierarchical elements in Balthasar, toward less hierarchical elements in Volf, and toward maintenance over mission in both. In both cases, genuine community is not adequately accounted for.

But a mutual hierarchy ecclesiological framework accounts for the uniqueness of church structures and members, a concern of Balthasar, as well as for the dignity of ecclesial members, a concern of Volf. Here uniqueness is better accounted for, since each ecclesial member should exercise distinct hierarchies over the others. And dignity is better accounted for, since recognizing that all possess hierarchies also fosters recognizing that hierarchy, power, and vocation should be used to help and serve others rather than to try to exercise power over them or usurp their powers. Recognizing this mutual hierarchy fosters such things as the following: recognizing the complexities of situations, enabling flexibility to meet this complexity, fostering checks and balances against abuses of power, encouraging people and congregations to work to identify their own unique gifts, assessing how diverse gifts can complement each other, and better recognizing how the church lives in the image of the Trinity. The paper has briefly demonstrated these things through looking at three ecclesial areas: relations between a pastor and a

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congregation, trans-congregational relations, and relations between the church and the mission field.

To conclude, I would like to draw on my experiences as an LCMS layman and pastor to ask questions for further consideration for each of the three ecclesial areas identified in the paper. In doing so, I do not intend to answer these questions but rather prompt the reader to consider how a mutual hierarchy framework might help assess and respond to current events. With respect to the relationship between a pastor and congregation, I have heard many colleagues critique certain hierarchical LCMS understandings of the office of the ministry as too "Catholic," while others have critiqued certain egalitarian or functional views of the pastoral office as too "Evangelical." Could a mutual hierarchy framework help clarify both, in that there is a distinct pastoral office and that a pastor needs and is dependent in all things on a congregation so that together they are at heart a team?

With respect to a trans-congregational perspective, in recent years I have heard many of my colleagues emphasize the authority of the president of Synod, while many others have emphasized the authority of district presidents, often in both cases depending upon who is in power. But in both cases, has there been too much influence from a hierarchical framework? In recent times have there not been needed calls for reform, ranging from more Waltherian "repristination" efforts to a website bearing the name "Congregations Matter"? Could a mutual hierarchy framework help better to see the unique gifts and centrality of hard-working congregations, while also working towards a measured place for trans-congregational leaders like the president of Synod and district presidents?

And finally, with respect to the relation between the church and the mission field, I hear much about "confessional" types and "missional" types, labels so accepted that they are even freely used in official discussions at LCMS conventions. Could a mutual hierarchy framework help better to demonstrate that there is a great need for both a stable, distinct, and confessional denomination as well as a dignified mission field and mission work? Can mutual hierarchy help us see both that there is a need for rigorous theological reflection and that we must be relating to and working together with the mission field to be living as church in the most beneficial way for the church and the world?[21]

Endnotes

[1] For a helpful attempt at a definition and description of the trans-congregational church by another Lutheran theologian, see Jeffrey Kloha, "The Trans-Congregational Church in the New Testament," *Concordia Journal* 34 (2008): 172–190. Kloha sees three main definitions of church (*ecclesia*) in the New Testament: a congregation, a clustering of congregations, and the one holy Christian church (*una sancta*). While I agree that these usages of church are central in the New Testament, there also is typically a certain looseness in its way of speaking.

For example, when Paul writes to a particular church (or group of churches), he does not typically explicitly specify whether he is just addressing believers or also the unbelievers in their midst (the "mixed" church). See also Matthew 13, which deals extensively with the mission of the kingdom, i.e. the church, and encourages patience amidst unbelief. From a slightly different perspective, when the New Testament speaks of the trans-congregational church in a region, e.g., in Acts 9:31, it does not only have to refer in a formal manner to the congregations in that region living and working together as congregations but also can include diverse groupings of Christians working together more informally across congregational boundaries. This is even more so the case for the one Church on earth (*una sancta*). Small groups of Christians who are part of the one holy Christian church but are from different congregations and even different denominations can certainly say together "We are Christ's church," although one should not for this reason neglect the importance of such things as congregational structure, doctrinal confession, and corporate sacramental worship. Less structured groupings of Christians are especially important in the context of the mission of the church in today's world as Christians from different denominations work extensively together as representatives of Christ's Church. Already this flexibility in the term "church" hints at the diversity a mutual hierarchy framework can account for and foster.

[2] The Trinitarian analysis that follows is largely based on Chapter 3 of my dissertation "Problems in a Movement: Towards a Mutual Hierarchy Social Model of the Trinity" (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 2010). This chapter focuses on the vocations of the divine persons in salvation history (the "economic Trinity"). See also Chapter 4 of the dissertation for a similar analysis of the divine persons' eternal existence (the "immanent Trinity").

[3] Social Trinitarians posit community as the ultimate ontological category for Trinitarian discourse.

[4] See Alyssa Pitstick, *Light in Darkness: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ's Descent into Hell* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

[5] Volf in "The Trinity is Our Social Program," *Modern Theology* 14 (1998): 407, summarizes his egalitarian Trinitarian framework: "I have suggested elsewhere [in *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*] that hierarchy is not necessary to guard either the divine unity or the distinctions between divine persons, and here I want to add that in a community of perfect love between persons who share all divine attributes a notion of hierarchy is unintelligible."

[6] See, for example, Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 128–129.

[7] Robert Sherman, *King, Priest, and Prophet: A Trinitarian Theology of the Atonement* (New York: T & T Clark, 2004) examines the New Testament and finds that it tends to classify the work of the divine persons in terms of the Old Testament categories of king, priest, and prophet, and three associated theories of the atonement: *Christus Victor*, vicarious sacrifice, and empowering exemplar, respectively. Critically building on this work of Sherman, one can discern in the Gospel of Matthew a first third that emphasizes Christ's occupying the office of king on behalf of the Father; a middle third where Jesus, in connection with the office of prophet and on behalf of the Holy Spirit, sends the disciples out on a limited mission trip (see 10:5) and trains them; and a final third where Jesus exercises His own most proper vocation as a priest during holy week. Discerning this structuring of the Gospel of Matthew can help prevent overly privileging one part of this Gospel over another or one divine person over another.

[8] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory*, vol. 3, tr. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 357–358.

[9] See Aidan Nichols, *Say It Is Pentecost: A Guide through Balthasar's Logic* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 1–22, which shows that Balthasar's

hierarchical ecclesiological framework is cast in terms of an object-subject philosophical framework. In a given pairing, an object is always radically hierarchical over a subject.

[10] For a discussion of the church's lacking a sufficient critical principle vis-à-vis the Magisterium in Balthasar's ecclesiology, see Steffen Lösel, "Conciliar, not Conciliatory: Hans Urs von Balthasar's Ecclesiological Synthesis of Vatican II," *Modern Theology* 24 (2008): 23–49.

[11] Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 113–123, critiques the Eastern Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas in a way that would largely apply to Balthasar as well. Volf questions why for Zizioulas an individual congregation and even an individual Christian can be connected to the apostolic church, and hence Christ, only through a priest's ordination by a bishop (apostolic succession).

[12] Dennis Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology: Vision and Versions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 100, in a brief survey of Balthasar's ecclesiology assesses, "Balthasar may not be the best theological voice available when it comes to the relation of the Church to various cultures, to science, to other religions, or to the plight of the poor."

[13] Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 219 (italics original).

[14] See the section "Relational Personhood" in Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 204–208, for an example of Volf's discussion of fully egalitarian Trinitarian and ecclesial relations; the section "Perichoretic Personhood" in ibid., 208–213, for his discussion of largely egalitarian perichoresis; and the section "The Structure of Trinitarian and Ecclesial Relations" in ibid., 214–220, for an example of Volf's minimizing the significance of hierarchical Trinitarian sending and hierarchical ecclesial structures.

[15] Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 221–257.

[16] See, for example, Volf's discussion in "The Catholicity of the Local Church" in *After Our Likeness*, 270–278.

[17] Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 7, says that *Exclusion and Embrace* is grounded in the same egalitarian view of the Trinity as *After Our Likeness*. *Exclusion and Embrace*, 290–295, summarizes Volf's proposal to deal with violence in the world. For Volf, Christians should be nonviolent, absorbing violence through self-giving love, standing with arms wide open in the hope that the other will reciprocate, accept what he already has been declared in Christ, and then be embraced. Lacking here are much of the *positive* actions of Christ and the church, a concern that Volf himself mentions in these pages. For example, Christ in Matthew 8–9 does a series of very powerful miracles that display a positive, offensive mission strategy that contrasts with Volf's largely passive strategy.

[18] On the other hand, Volf, "The Trinity Is Our Social Program," 417, can allow a certain hierarchy in connection with mission: "I have argued that the social vision based on the doctrine of the Trinity should rest primarily on the downward movement in which God, in a sense, comes out of the circularity of divine love in order to take godless humanity into the divine embrace." There is thus a tension in Volf's missional thought here as in other parts of his theology in connection with a hierarchy-equality polarity that sees hierarchy and equality as opposites. Volf's missiological discussion is related to the problem of the relation between God and creation in general in Volf's theology. Was God's creation of the world a fully egalitarian act, or did it involve unfortunate hierarchy? Was the act of creation egalitarian, which calls into question God's distinctness from creation, was it chiefly hierarchical and hence against God's true nature, or did it involve both of these things in uneasy tension?

[19] Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008) is a great resource to help a congregation assess its own identity and vision.

[20] A mutual hierarchy ecclesiological framework is compatible with the core Lutheran "two kinds of righteousness" framework. The problems the two kinds of righteousness guards

against can easily be defined in terms of hierarchy and equality. If only vertical or passive righteousness were allowed (a danger of a law-gospel framework if law is only understood in its "second" use as a mirror to reveal sin and vocation/mission is neglected), God would only be defined in hierarchical terms, not caring about human fellowship and vocation. On the other hand, if only horizontal or active human righteousness were allowed (a danger of "social gospel" thinking), the hierarchy of God over creation would disappear, resulting in an egalitarian understanding of the God-world relationship. But a two kinds of righteousness framework does not have to choose between vertical righteousness alone or horizontal righteousness alone, but rather views these two as both distinct and complementary. See Robert Kolb, "Luther on the Two Kinds of Righteousness; Reflections on His Two-Dimensional Definition of Humanity at the Heart of His Theology," *Lutheran Quarterly* 13, (1999): 449–466.

[21] See also Leopoldo Sánchez, "Toward an Ecclesiology of Catholic Unity and Mission in the Borderlands: Reflections from a Lutheran Latino Theologian," *Concordia Journal* 35 (2009): 17–34, as Sánchez similarly argues that a Christian should not have to choose between confession (or, in the broader term of the article, unity) and mission, but rather see that each mutually informs the other.