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I appreciate the clarity of Volf's paper, its careful elucidation of biblical and historical themes, and its helpfulness in organizing my thinking about the relation of the Spirit and the church. I will list four questions the paper raised for me, only mentioning the first three and then, I will devote the rest of my response to comments on question four.

1. Does Volf really wish to follow a procedure that accepts the notion of a reconstructible historical Jesus and then reads the witness of the New Testament writers as a theological reflection upon such a reconstruction? Hasn't the work of Hans Frei, for example, demonstrated the questionableness of this procedure?

2. Does Volf really want to speak of "the church enacting the reign of God?" Aren't there good reasons to speak more modestly of the church as "confirming" or simply "witnessing to" the reign of God?

3. Does the way in which Volf emphasizes Jesus as bearer as well as giver of the Spirit encourage a disavowal of the *filioque* clause? [The *filioque* clause declares that the Spirit always comes from the Father *and the Son*.] If so, doesn't such a disavowal endanger our recognition of God not only as the One who *always* promises and commands, but also as the One who *always* obeys and fulfills?

4. Does Volf's use of the concept of equality in speaking both of persons of the trinity and of members of the church correspond to what Scripture attests?

I do not find in Scripture an explicit or implicit attestation of the concept of equality in these contexts. It is clear in Matt. 20:25-26 that Jesus rejects hierarchy in the church: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them . . . it must not be so among you." That this is not an isolated command is borne out by the fact that the NT narrative instantiates the declaration that "the son of Man came not to be served but to serve" (Matt. 20:28).

Both terms, hierarchy and equality, are quantitative, legal. (The use of the concept of equality being legal is requisite in framing the laws of society.)

When I was growing up I was taught that equality is a concept requisite for legislation since it is a self-evident truth: “We hold these truths to be self evident, that all [humans] are created equal. . .” (The United States Declaration of Independence). In the context of participation in the church, however, my reading of the NT prompts me to make equality analogous to “prostitutes and cheating tax collectors” and hierarchy analogous to the “scribes and Pharisees,” *i.e.*, to the doctors of the law. Equality goes into the Kingdom of God before hierarchy but, even so like prostitution and cheating, it is not to be endorsed or promoted in a discussion either of the trinity or of the church. In Christ neither equality nor hierarchy occur. If notions of equality (or hierarchy) are introduced into our thinking about trinity or about our participation in the church, confusion rather than clarity prevails.

First, why will the concept of equality confuse us if used in the context of the doctrine of the trinity? At first glance this concept might seem helpful, since each person of the trinity is wholly God and, as the church declared in councils, none is more God nor less God than another. But the concept of equality will confuse us here, I believe, since equality in our time is equated with egalitarianism, a concept confronted by Scripture’s description of the Father commanding and the Son obeying. This is evidently true and never reversed in what has been called the economic trinity (God’s life as enacted with us and described in Scripture). And as Jesus is the revelation of *God*, then God’s revelation *to us* corresponds to God’s revelation to himself in his own life.

That God “obeys” is as true as that God “commands” is a point not always kept in mind by Christians. That God commands is applauded by hierarchs. That God obeys is less noticed by them and when it is, it is used by them to serve their own purposes. That God commands is often deplored by egalitarians; even more deplored by them is the declaration that God obeys. But in Scripture God both commands and obeys. Yet command is not the exercise of sheer power, nor is obedience submissiveness in the face of power. Jesus’ obedience is his willing in accord with the Father’s will. The command is the form of the Father’s love for the Son; the Son’s obedience is the form of the Son’s love for the Father. In the West (cf. Pope Leo’s Tome) both forms of love are forms of *exinanitio*, humble self-giving; in the East (cf. Basil the Great) both forms are indicated by *kenosis*, self-humbling.

This is less abstract if we think of command and obedience in a Christian community in the context of a violent world. My neighbor – being beaten by a gang and left near death in a ditch – is made by Jesus’ parable the occasion of God’s command to me. My action of lifting up the neighbor is my obedience. (Of course, the Father already commanded Jesus to lift up the felled neighbor and he has done so. In Jesus the neighbor is already lifted up to heaven and my action of lifting him simply confirms on earth what is already true of him in Christ.) Or, my being beaten and left on the ground is the occasion of God’s command to my neighbor – probably some crummy Samaritan (at any rate not someone of my ethnic group) – to confirm Jesus’ prior action by lifting me up on earth in correspondence to Christ’s lifting me up and hiding me with him in heaven.

With Christ’s telling of this parable we learn that command and obedience in heaven and on earth are not about hierarchy or equality, neither in the church on earth nor in the community of God in heaven. Rather they are forms of love, which are precisely specified in the parable. The Father always comes low in his command, and the Son always humbly accepts and receives being lifted up – and humbly accepts and receives the command to lift up his earthly neighbors. The Father in the Son always comes low to us, and lifting us up, commands us both to accept our lifting up from another and to confirm his lifting up of our neighbor by, here and now, lifting up our felled neighbor.

Something more is implied in the parable. The man felled is the occasion of the Father’s command to me (as it was to the Son before me); my lifting up of the man is my obedience in confirmation of the Son’s obedience enacted in relation to the man struck down. But why should I lift up this man? He does not belong to my group. Why should I obey the command? Why should the church obey the Father’s command in the Son? Isn’t it better, in terms of the concept of equality, to get rid of this talk of command and obedience? Command and obedience constitute the form of the “effective event” which God is as Spirit. To repeat in reverse: God as Spirit is the effective eventfulness of God’s command and obedience. In the parable the Spirit is the effective eventfulness of God in a brutal occurrence.

The parable does not tell us everything about the nature and mission of the church. But it instantiates the understanding that the church occurs in the world where the command of the Father and the obedience of the Son effectively

eventuates by the Spirit. That is, the Spirit places the occasion of the Samaritan and the felled man, proleptically, here on earth and now, in the triune event of command and obedience which is God's life. This life is described in I John 4 as *agape*, by Pope Leo as *exinanitio*, by Basil as *kenosis*. It is utterly opposite to hierarchy and to equality. In sum, the concept of equality introduces in this context what may be likened to prostitution and devotion to mammon in relation to the Kingdom of God. While nearer to the Kingdom than Phariseeism (hierarchy), it is scarcely an anticipation of that Kingdom.