A Trinitarian Theology of Multiculturalism

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The Trinity contains the affirmation of both unity and diversity. Compared with Jewish and Islamic monotheism, Christian theism was never meant to be a numerical singularity. The oneness refers to a unity of three Persons. The Nicene Creed defines faith in a three-fold confession of 'we believe in': one God, the Father, the Almighty; one Lord, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. Instead of polarising unity and diversity as two logical opposites, the doctrine of the Trinity is a paradox of 'One and the many'. The unity of God and the plurality of the Persons can be either both affirmed or simultaneously rejected.

To understand the paradox of unity and diversity, a dialogue with Chinese Daoism is used here to highlight an important feature of relational ontology or relational unity. For Daoism, unity and diversity are relational opposites forming a dialectic whole. The Yin–Yang visualises the paradoxical nature: at the middle of Yin is Yang, at the heart of Yang is Yin. There cannot be a complete whole unless the two principles are brought together, just like day and night form a circle of time. Mutual indwelling is a chief attribute. Unity is defined by the relationship between the two, not by the numerical oneness of individual being in Platonic–Parmenidean ontology.

In comparison, the Trinity contains this relational unity. To be the One requires mutual affirmation of the differences that three Persons represent. Within the One, there is a relational space for the many. To be one of the many requires each Person to be in a life-giving relationship with the other Persons. In the divine love for the ontological 'other', the identity of the self is affirmed. At the heart of the many, there is the One.

In my view relational unity posits the principle of mutual indwelling within the inner life of the Trinity. 'As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us' (John 17:21). In modern theology, Jürgen Moltmann has reinvigorated the classic idea first articulated by Syrian priest, John of Damascus (676–749). 'But in respect of the Trinity's inner life, the three Persons themselves form their unity, by virtue of their relation to one another and in the

eternal perichoresis of their love'.[1] The divine interpenetration and indwelling among the individuals make the plurality of the Three not a secondary reality, but the primary order of the unity. Moltmann calls this 'the perichoretic unity of the Trinity'. Speaking from the Eastern Orthodoxy tradition, John Zizioulas describes the unity of the Trinity as 'communion'.[2] For Zizioulas, the ontology of the divine Persons is not defined according to individual being, but is expressed as an act (*ekstasis*). Within the Trinitarian life there is a constant movement of opening towards one another by actively going out of one's self. From the debate on religious pluralism, Mark Heim argues that the diversity within the Trinity generates a multiplicity of dimensions that allow for that variety of relations with the others.[3]

This line of modern interpretations of the Trinity represents a theological trend that affirms plurality at the heart of the Trinity. God constantly invites us to partake in the fullness of the divine life, to experience the inclusive nature of God. Once the immanent Trinity is conceived as a relational community opening up for each other, the economic Trinity also changes. The Christian view of the world becomes an open community of myriad yet related lives, marked by the division symbolised by the Cross, yet woven together with a relational life of the Spirit. The immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity are two sides of the same reality of God; their symmetrical relationship is akin to the dialectic oppositions of Yin and Yang that both derive from, and give expression to, the same mystery of the Dao.

In the age of pluralism, the secret of being human is hidden within the relational God. Only in communion with the God of our radical 'other'—in whose image we are created—can we truly be human, together, and with other humans. Whoever understands the Oneness of God also understands the diversity among us; whoever affirms diversity as the reality of our beings also rediscovers God. Celebrating our diversity with this God requires us to go out of ourselves for the 'other', and stands in the ambiguous space between cultures— often in the shadow of the cross—for the life of Christ to emerge. This christological new life is the fundamental 'other' of Christian identity. It can transform the church into a collective force of unity in the ministry of reconciliation that supports, partakes, and indwells in each other

[1] Jüugen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom, Minneapolis*, Fortress Press, 1993, p.177. His pupil Miroslav Volf continues the thought in his book *After Our Likeness:The Church as theImage of the Trinity*, Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998

[2] John D. Zizioulas, Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985. For a brief introduction to Zizioulas' theology see, pp. 88–99.

[3] Mark Heim, *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion*, New York, Orbis Books, 1995, p. 180.

beyond our confined cultural self. It also challenges us to see our history toward multiculturalism from the perspective of relational unity within which diversity is embraced.

Assimilation model: one without many

The sociological term 'multiculturalism' has been used both as a descriptive term for the increasing level of social diversity and a normative term for the general trend of government policy.[4] The prefix 'multi' designates the diverse nature of the population associated with racial, cultural, and religious pluralism. Within multiculturalism, the core reality is the plurality of irreducible cultures. The driving force of social coherence and historical continuity is no longer one, but many. Social coherence is not defined by one homogeneous culture. Rather, the defining reality is the pluralism that many cultures collectively come to form a heterogeneous web of life with the interplay that the many may also define the one.

Australian immigration history, as David Cox summarises, is basically the result of the government's population policy.[5] It consists of four paradigms from the early 'White Australia' policy, through the post World War II 'assimilation' model and the 'integration' policy of the 1960s to the current multiculturalism. In the first 150 years until the Second World War, Australia identified its young nationhood with British culture, labelled its population 'white Australian' or 'British subjects', and secured this cultural monism with legislative and administrative discrimination against 'aliens' on the basis of race.

In the post WWII period, driven by a labour shortage, the Australian government began the intake of European migrants under the 'assimilation model', to absorb differences into the predominant monism. In 1947, 89.7% of the population was Anglo–Celtic; Europeans comprised 8.6%, Aborigines 0.6%, and Asians 0.8 per cent.[6] In the next twenty years, immigration policy still depended upon getting the predominantly Anglo–Celtic community to accept and include migrants with the expectation that they would adopt the Australian way of life and speak English. From the early White Australian history to the post war model of assimilation the social paradigm was homogeneity.

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[4] Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideologies: An Introduction*, 4th ed., Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 313.
[5] David Cox, *Understanding Australian Settlement Services*,Canberra, Australian Government Publish Services, 1996.
[6] Ann-Mari Jordens, *Redefining Australians: Immigration, Citizenship and National Identity*, Sydney, Hale & Iremonger, 1995, p. 7.

The Trinity, however, rejects homogeneity. The concept of relational God highlights the principle of mutuality. *The affirmation of unity requires the acceptance of the plurality of the Three, whereas the denial of the plurality also leads to the rejection of unity.* Contrary to the Trinitarian mutuality, assimilation is an homogeneity of 'one without many'. Homogeneity is a false unity. The sociological immaturity is based on the assumption of sameness while difference is either suppressed in the assimilation or denied during the White Australia era. If people in a multicultural society still hold onto this false belief of unity, they also reject the Trinitarian faith. It is simply because the collapse of three individual personalities into one identity will abolish the triple character of the Persons. Homogeneity will demand a controlling assimilation of all difference, thus destroying diversity all together. The result is a homogeneous singularity, but not God.

For the minority, social manifestation of the assimilation is suffering. For instance, in July 1952, the premier of Queensland John Duggan wrote to the Prime Minister saying, 'All these groups are being absorbed in the community and cannot be classed as minority … except extremely primitive civilisation [Aborigines]'.[7] Now we know that, historically, diversity always existed. Aborigines were first here. The Chinese were among the first settlers in this land during the gold rush. But they were excluded from society based on a fear of Asia, and labelled with the xenophobic term 'Yellow Perils'. Looking back on the anxiety about Asians in early Australian history, sociologist David Walker observes that the colonialist treatment of minorities was no more than a fear of difference, yet the denial of difference was justified by cultural supremacy.[8]

Integration model: one above many

What was denied—human rights—became the most potent force in the 1960s and 70s to reject the basic premise of the assimilation model, most profoundly through the Civil Rights Movement followed by waves of the feminist movement. In 1963, the United Nations addressed the issue of racial prejudice and adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Article I). In Australia, the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 finally ended systematic discrimination against Aborigines in this land, giving them the right

[7] 1 July 1952, 929/5 part B, CRSA 1838/1AA.
[8] Walker engages in a deep soul-searching of Australian history, and names a persistent fear of difference, particularly the anxiety about Asia in the early history. He further confronts the ghosts of racial anxieties that linger over multiculturalism. David Walker, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 1850–1939*, St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1999.

of equality before the law. It was in this period that the 'assimilation' model was replaced by the 'integration' model. Symbolically, the Australian Army, which had objected to the employment of aliens, began the conscription of citizens of non-British origin, particularly during the Vietnam War. [9]

If we review this recent paradigm, we need to affirm a fundamental shift from cultural monism to social tolerance. We must recognise also that a multicultural church cannot be built on the moral virtue of tolerance. The integration model assumes that various parts of society will become integrated into a national culture, often without challenge. It further justifies the need for integration by constructing a superior identity over the 'other', often in the form of nationalism. But integration is an inferior unity. It is a hierarchy of 'one over many'. The determinist nature of integration is single directional—from the many to the one. It is, therefore, a threat to cultural diversity. For the church to shape its unity based on the integration model, there is no theological justification.

To prove the point, one can make a simple comparison between the hierarchy of 'one over many' with the relational Trinity. If the model of 'one over many' is used to frame the self-communicating Persons, it will create a lordship over them. The superior one will demand a gradual takeover of three individualities. This problem of subordination of the individuals can be traced to Plato's ontology. Plato believes transcendental truth, a realm of ideas, above physical realities. For instance, there is a transcendental and ideal Chair over all chairs in the world. Once this idea of "one over many" is formulated, the distinctive characters of office chairs, sofas, and wooden stools would have to surrender their individualities in order to fit into the ideal and abstract identity. Likewise, cultural differences, which many ethnicities represent, can neither possess equal ontological status as the dominant culture, nor are their ways of expressing God recognised as epistemologically reliable.

The problem of integration is ontological. Once the unity of one is defined as a singularity, the many cannot insert individualities into the dominating one, which always demands the surrender of inferior differences. If a church holds onto the subordination of integration belief, then it turns away from the Trinitarian God. Upon the acceptance of the false premise of one lordship over three Persons, this belief would then have to presuppose another one over the

[9] Jordens' study on cultural discrimination within the Army is based on a detailed study of Government documents and records. Jordens, *Redefining Australians: Immigration, Citizenship and National Identity*, pp. 137–151.

rest, and forbid it to participate in the plurality, because the subordination is single directional. This becomes a transcendental deity hiding in the heavens. We know, however, 'the Word became flesh and lived among us' (John 1: 14). Incarnation proves that the single directional integration contradicts who God is in the Christ event. One lives in the many, so the many may become one.

If the church still sees itself as the embodiment of the Gospel above culture, then it cannot free itself from standing on a higher moral ground than other cultures. The best that it can achieve out of integration is to see multiculturalism as the addition of ethnic minorities to the majority. However, any given minority would have to rely on the virtue of open-minded liberals to accommodate Chinese food, Korean hospitality, Tongan singing, and so on, in their unmoved social status. This self-image is dangerous. It positions itself at the centre of social gravity, and requires others to change their differences, while viewing itself as the continuity in multicultural discontinuity. The hidden argument of this social phenomenon relates, of course, to power.

There are two arguments, however, against this power. First, sociologists have revealed already an inherent contradiction within multiculturalism: a monoculture power structure inherited from Britain, and a multicultural society of the people from all around the world. From a post-colonialist point of view, it has been argued that unless this class system is diluted to adequately reflect its population, Australia will not function effectively as a cohesive society.[10] Liberation theology has already taught us a profound lesson: the demand of 'one over many' is a social sin, therefore is subjected to Christ's liberation. Second, the unity of 'one over many' is becoming increasingly vulnerable in postmodern society. Historically, when Galileo discovered the moons around Jupiter, it took only one piece of evidence to contradict the authority of Aristotle on, and the church-endorsed worldview of, geocentrism. What postmodern pluralism does to the unity of 'one over many' is simply demonstrating that there are many gravitational centres in this world. It is the task of those who are guarding the power structure to justify its theory of the world.

[10] Adam Jamrozik, Cathy Boland, and Robert Urquhart, *Social Change and Cultural Transformation in Australia*,Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

The theological answer to the problem of integration is simple—namely, equality. *Equality among the plurality constitutes the equilibrium and bi-directional*[11] *relationship within the Persons of the Trinity.* The principle of equality is traceable to the Trinitarian formation. Augustine rightly argued, 'What is there equally true, must there be also equally great.'[12] As in the Nicene Creed, the Son is 'begotten of the Father', and the Spirit 'proceeded from the Father and the Son'. In the doctrine of the Trinity, the relationship of the 'begotten' and the 'proceeded' is never meant to be a sequential order of *a priori* and *a posteriori*. If this were so, it would not only create an insoluble subordination among the plurality by inserting a false premise of creator/created causation into the Godhead, but also dissolve the unity that 'The Father and I are one' (John 10:30).

Jesus also speaks of the equality of people in the parable of workers in the vineyard (Mat 20: 1–16). Interestingly, before Jesus establishes equality among the people in the kingdom of God, he first removes the sequential order of coming early and arriving later. Within Christian moral structure there exists a fundamental equality: even the oppressed and the outcast can be the recipients of salvation in the Beatitudes (Mat 5: 3-12). The upside down structure of salvation rejects the 'one over many' demand of social integration. That is because Jesus inserts the resurrection motif—the rising of the fallen—into the world of suffering.

Multiculturalism: the coming of the many

In 1975, based on Labor's vision of Australia as a multicultural society, Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser committed his government to developing 'a culturally diversified but socially cohesive Australian society'.[13] This policy on cultural diversity was historic, and the social transformation in the ensuing thirty years was both intentional and irreversible. According to the 2006 Census, 'as a nation, we now speak over 300 languages, practice more than 100 religions and originate from over 230 different countries'.[14] More than one fifth of

[11] Relationship cannot be single-directional determination, but must be recepical or bio-directional. For example, a train is pulled by its engine in a single directional movement. The movement is deterministic, but not relational. The engine and the carriages are not ontologically equal. Healthy human relationship, on the other hand, is always bi-directional. Marriage between two people are two equal individuals forming a shared life-giving relationship. The exchange of life is bi-birectional: one supports, and is supported by, the other.

[12] Augustine, 'On the Trinity,' in *Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy*, ed. Gareth B. Matthews, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 5.

[13] Jordens, *Redefining Australians: Immigration, Citizenship and National Identiy*, p. 169.

[14] Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 'The People of Australia: Statistics from the 2006

the population was born overseas, while nearly 50 per cent of the population was either born overseas or had one or both parents born overseas.[15] The recent Censes points to a further increase of cultural and linguistic diversity. In other words, immigration is a core experience at national, communal, family, and personal levels in Australia.

The Uniting Church in Australia was a pioneer in adopting a multicultural policy at the national level. In May 1985, only 8 years after its Union, the church declared its multiculturalism in 'The Uniting Church is a Multicultural Church'. The declaration acknowledged that UCA membership comprised people of many races, cultures, and languages. At the same time the church articulated a vision of mission that required the ecclesial structure 'to provide for full participation of aboriginal and ethnic people, women and men, in decision making in the councils and in the life of the church'.

In August 1990, the National Consultation on Ethnic Diversity was held with 82 people from 60 groups, including 45 participants from migrant communities; this was the first national meeting on the multicultural life of the UCA.[16] The conference affirmed that Christianity was multicultural at its beginning, from Jesus' ministry beyond the Jewish population to the establishment of churches in Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, the Mediterranean area, and across North Africa. In 1998, the Multicultural Ministry of the National Assembly embarked upon a process to think through the biblical and theological basis for the UCA's multicultural policy in order to guide the church to truly reflect its social diversity.[17] The theology of multiculturalism, however, remained limited to the issue of 'gospel and culture', which is traceable to the topic of 'gospel over culture' during the missionary era.

In 2006, the Assembly once more affirmed the ecclesial identity of the UCA as 'a church for all God's people', and endorsed the policy shift from embracing cultural diversity to a ministry actively crossing cultural boundaries.[18] In 2009, the National Consultation on Cross-

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Census.', Camberra, Commonwelth of Australia, 2008, p. i.

[15] A total of 22.2% of the population are overseas born (OSB). Among them, 62.1% of people are born in Non-Main English Speaking Country (NMESC), or they do not speak English as their first language. Among the Australian born, 8% have both parents born overseas, and 10.2% have one parent born overseas. More details see Table 1, 'Australia Key Facts 1996, 2001, 2006', Jordens, *Redfining Australians*, p. 1.

[16] Assembly National Mission and Evangelism, 'Report of the National Consultation on Ethnic Diversity', Labour Conference Centre, Eastwood, NSW, Assembly Communications Unit, 1990.

[17] Multicultural Ministry, *The Vision of a Multicultural Church*,Sydney, The National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia, 1998.

[18] Helen Richmond and Myong Duk Yang, eds., *Crossing Borders: Shaping Faith, Ministry and Identity in Multicultural Australia*, Sydney, UCA Assembly and NSW Board of Mission, 2006.

Cultural Ministry targeted the 'second generation' within multicultural society. Consequently, cross-cultural ministry has taken on a pastoral and strategic role of mentoring youth to become future leaders of the church.[19] Reflecting on the journey of multiculturalism, it is remarkable what the UCA has achieved. In 1998, there were 26 migrant communities within 145 congregations nationwide.[20] In 2009, the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania alone is the home of 48 mono-ethnic faith communities and more than 15 multicultural congregations.[21]

Postmodernism: many without one

Multiculturalism and postmodernism are related but not the same. The former is a phenomenon of population change, whereas the later is a social theory. The epistemological question is whether the theory is a true match of the reality, or a limitation of it. For a multicultural church, the question can be rephrased: can a postmodern interpretation of multiculturalism replace theology?

The debate on multiculturalism has certainly borrowed tools of analysis from postmodern philosophies to deconstruct the structuralism of modernity, and learn the distrust of universalism (and fundamentalism). Moreover postmodernism has provoked a rethinking of traditional issues, including aesthetics, ethics, gender studies, hermeneutics, phenomenology, and ontology.[22] Beyond its initial response to modernity, postmodern theology neither promises clarification of what this new paradigm of postmodernism really is nor provides justification for how to replace the disappearing metaphysical ground with another system of meaning. It does, however, amplify the perplexity of pluralism.

Insofar as the paradox of unity and diversity is concerned, postmodernism cannot be a substitute for multiculturalism. In sociology it has already demonstrated a trend to move beyond the disorientation and fragmentation caused by postmodern impulses.[23] For theology,

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[19] Apwee Ting and Antony Floyd, 'Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Ministry', paper presented at the The Twelfth Assembly – the Uniting Church in Australia, University of NSW, 2009.
[20] Multicultural Ministry, *The Vision of a Multicultural Church*, p. 1.
[21] The figure includes mono-ethnic congregations and multicultural congregations. Multicultural congregations are categorised as Anglo congregations with between 15 and 20 people from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. These figures are provided by Don Ikitoelagi, Director of Cross Cultural Mission & Ministry at the Victoria and Tasmania Synod.
[22] The essays edited by Graham Ward demonstrate that postmodernism has impacted upon a range of complex issues in Christian theology. Graham Ward, *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology*, Blackwell Companions to Religion, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001.
[23] Cynthia Willett, ed. *Theorizing Multiculturalism: A Guide to the Current Debate*, Oxford: Blackwell,1998, pp. 2–3.

the problem of postmodernism is the collapse of the creative tension between unity and diversity, and reduces their differences to a deductive end of logical negation. The gods of modernity wanted a universal system of 'one over many', so postmodern goddesses wanted a rebellious world of 'many without the one'. Postmodern negation is problematic. Its rejection of a universal system of meaning leaves for a multicultural debate neither a teleological purpose nor a methodological population to soar over the storm of relativism.

Relational ontology rejects the postmodern interpretation of multiculturalism. The absolute pluralism insisted upon by postmodernism denies the need for unity. The result is relativism. In the Trinitarian language, if the postmodern 'many without one' is accepted, then the resulting relativism will deny the inner life of the Trinity. When the relational divine life is withdrawn, what is left is ontological individualism. Consequently, divine love for each other is replaced by narcissism. This is no longer a Christian view of God.

Postmodern relativism is not new. Its ancestry can be traced to pre-Socratic atomism in which the world is theorised as comprising countless tiny, indivisible, self-subsistent atoms. In such a world, no relationship between the atoms is possible, just empty and meaningless space. Like atomism, postmodernism is a plurality 'many without one'. The pluralism, which is often paired with another term, 'globalization', gives an impression of togetherness. But togetherness is a false unity, because there is no continuity at all. It is like a bag of frozen vegetables; carrots have nothing to do with beans. When the individuals are in a frozen and solid state, no exchange of life becomes possible.

Relational unity: one within many

From the Trinitarian perspective, the mutual indwelling of the Persons must happen in order to have a continuous life weaving parts into a whole. The shared life of 'one within many' defines the interpenetration of identities, and forms the unity of interdependency. To be a multicultural church means to be in an interdependent relationship. *All participant—not just the ethnical people—are emotionally, economically, ecologically self-reliant while at the same time being open towards and responsible to each other.*

Interdependency addresses a problem of independency. For ancient atomism, the premise of pluralism rests upon the unbreakable nature of atoms. If no atom can be further divided, then there can be only one self-reliable identity. This unity of self-subsistence, however, comes at the cost of excluding all others external to the self. For postmodern multiculturalism, cultural

individualism can also create those unbreakable communities in which independence comes at the cost of isolation. Pre-Socratic philosophies, however, have already given two solutions for the isolation, namely Heraclitus' ontology of change and Empedocles' pluralism of mixed elements. Relational ontology draws strength from them through Daoist lenses.

Relational unity is an ecological model that can be visualised as a mountain. Individual species occupy a particular location—mosses live near creeks, pines survive on the mountaintop, and birds fly in between. Each life form occupies a location, and each existence is interdependent upon the survival of the 'other'. A unity of interdependency is a state of equilibrium, like the symbol of Yin–Yang. A species exists in the constant state of receiving and giving in the totality of nature's own balance. Each one's survival ensures the continuity of the forest while the diversity of life is the true security of individuality.

Unlike postmodern pluralism without a purpose, the unity of interdependency is a discourse of life. For Daoism the tension between unity and plurality is not conceptualised as a logical antithesis for fixed ideas. Rather it is a process of evolution. The creative tension between unity and plurality generates an unfolding discourse. Like a mother, the Dao unfolds its life into its progeny; the essence of life is collectively exemplified in the existence of each species. Within the unity of interdependency, there rests a flow of life 'passing into each other' in an active equilibrium of giving and taking. The Daoist calls this flow of life—Qi.

Multiculturalism has certainly made the crucial step of creating room for cultural diversity. But beyond the tolerance of difference, the 'passing into each other' is yet to happen. The passing into each other is both the essence and the continuity of life. In a forest, the core identity of each species is never an isolated atom. But each one is a miniature of the relational world. For a bird, the environment is not just its external reality but also, fundamentally, an internal reality. Each moment of eating is a point in the long process of many becoming one. Evolution consists of countless internalisation of the external nature during which external-material space is recorded by the internal clock, namely the genes. The essence of life is then passed into the existence of future generations.

The same logic applies to a multicultural church. Plurality is not just an external reality belonging to ethnic people, but also a set of internal helix in whoever lives in the changing world. For the church, the internalisation of the external has to happen in order that the relational Trinity becomes an inner potency of the people of God. To be sure this unity of

equilibrium is not metaphysically immune to change, nor transcendental above culture. Rather it lives within every person. Each person is a miniature of 'one within many' with the inner potency to internalise the 'other'—namely, the world.

The not-being of the Cross

Faith calls us to take a journey with Jesus to discover the 'not-being-oneself' in the context of the 'other'. Jesus challenged the disciples to go across the sea and encounter the people of other side (Mark 6: 45). The mission to the gentiles was the result of a ministry dispute between Paul and Peter (Gal 2: 11–14). And the defining point was the removal of the division between 'oneself' (Jew) and 'not-being-oneself' (gentile). Once the culturally imposed division was removed, Christian mission began to see its full potential in the world. Paul went beyond Jerusalem and preached the Gospel in Athens (Acts 17: 16–33).

A multicultural church needs to relearn a christological lesson in the postmodern world. 'Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus' (Phil 2: 4–5). At the core of faith, there stands the reality of the 'other', namely the cross. The cross was rejected by the world, including the disciples, yet it became the chief identity for Christianity. Paul even commanded his young church to 'know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified' (1 Cor 2:2). The cross is the radical 'other' of our faith and the not-being of this world.

Relational ontology speaks for the relationship of both being and not-being that is akin to the paradox of the cross and resurrection, and recognises the cross of 'not-being-oneself' as the cross-cultural bridge between the self and the plural world.

To understand the christological not-being, we need to understand the assumption of subject negation. For example, in the history of the White Australia policy, not-being Anglo meant either being declared non-existent or being systematically excluded from society. In this case, not being is treated as the negation of the subject. Subject negation, however, is a fallacy. Any relationship must be both being and not-being. For example, in a Christian's heart there is a place for the cross. Christ is not the 'other' external to the person, nor does he negate the person's cultural identity. Between them there lives a philosophy of subject correlation. Within the person there rests an ontological space—'not-being-self'—harbouring the 'other' to rest in one's life. The result of subject correlation is identity renewal. And it comes as the result of a self-emptying act to make room for the not-being of the cross.

In relational Trinity this act of making room for the 'other' speaks for the self-limitation of God. The ontological humility not only makes the relationship among the Persons possible, but also reconciles the differences that they represent. The Father makes room for 'not-being the Father', so the Father does not overshadow the Son as the Revealer. As the Father, God reveals God as the eternal Father in 'distinctive fellowship' with the Son (using Barth's term).[24] The Son accepts the Father's will 'not-being the Son' on the cross, and endures the agony of being abandoned (Mark 15: 34).[25] By virtue of letting go of himself, salvation is achieved through the cross, which is the foolishness of God to the world (1 Cor 1:25). Moreover, the Holy Spirit must leave eternity beyond and seek an identity of 'not-being the Spirit', in order to enter into Mary's womb to be born as a mortal being named Jesus (Luke 1: 30–31).

Like the contraction of a mother's womb during childbirth, the withdrawing of God is simultaneously the letting being of life. In modern theology, Moltmann follows Luther's bold labelling of the 'Crucified God' to highlight the contradiction and coherence within the Trinity. For Moltmann, the mystery of Jesus as the godforsaken and the nature of God who 'does not spare' his Son are understood within the relational context between the Father and the Son. 'In the forsakenness of the Son the Father also forsakes himself… But the Father who abandons him and delivers him up suffers the death of the Son in the infinite grief of love'.[26] Moltmann's Trinitarian theology of the cross has overcome two metaphysical limits on Christian thought. The first one, 'God cannot suffer', is overcome by arguing that the Father is not immune to suffering in the death of the Son. The second one, the distinction between God and history, is overcome by arguing that the suffering history of the world has the imprint of the cross on the immanent Trinity (following Hegel).

The passion of Christ represents the radical openness of God to the world. In a multicultural church, it draws the brokenness of pluralism into the life of the relational Trinity. The brokenness includes leaving home, inability to speak the language, the death of family members in another continent, the cost of divorce, the diminishing cultural identity, and the painful journey to be accepted into the church. This christological brokenness further

[24] Barth's terms have been borrowed to illustrate the self-differentiation of the Father and the internal fellowship with the Son. For Barth's discussion on the Eternal Father see (*Church Dogmatics*) I.1, 390.
[25] Here a dialogue is explored between the concept of not-being within the Trinity and Moltmann's christology of Jesus being the 'godforsaken'; see Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, London, SCM Press, 1974, pp. 145–153.
[26] Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, p. 243.

unmasks any naive expectations about multicultural society. The togetherness of postmodernism, as postmodernists have recognised, is no more than fragments. Behind the romance of recreational diversity, the true reality of multiculturalism is suffering. For those who live in cross-culture situations, beneath the impression of tolerance there are many scars of Christlike forsakenness, of being rejected and denied.

However, the cross, which diminishes all attempts to name the being of God and the being of us, reveals the humble reality of God as the ultimate not-being of the world. The separation of forsakenness between the Father and the Son is held in equilibrium with the unification of love between the two. When the Father allows the Son to die through the Spirit, it is also the moment when the Father draws the Son close in love, sealing the Father's pain and the death of Jesus in the tomb. And then out of the depth of absolute nothingness, the Spirit of life is ready to break free by infusing life—in the act of creation—into the resurrection of the body.

When God withdraws God into God, it creates the infinite space of saving grace for whoever is willing to seek redemption of that inner brokenness to stand before the cross and to be accepted. To be sure, the relational space between the Father and the Son and the relationship between the cross and us are only different in degree, but the same in kind. They are hypostases of the interpenetrating love of the Trinity. When God draws the brokenness of multiculturalism into the relational life, the passion narrative of Jesus is also rewritten in people's hearts with the language of the interpenetrating love of God. Within God's not-being-itself, there is a freedom for the people of God to truly be. In cross-cultural ministry, we are called to stand in this relational space of 'not-being-itself' with the relational God.

Multiculturalism needs reconciliation. It is not only because we believe in a relational God, but also because the centre of individual faith is concentric with the cosmic background where the entire creation is in labouring pain to be reconciled with the Creator (Rom 8: 15–18). Thus a cross-cultural ministry is, on the one hand, a Christlike ministry of reconciliation in the divided world; on the other hand, the diverse nature of this ministry is a visible image of the relational Trinity.

Here is a concluding story. 'Why is the ocean the greatest?' the sage asked his pupils. No-one knew the answer. The sage then answered: 'the ocean takes the lowest position… Ocean does not act, but nothing is left undone'. By humbling itself, the ocean draws all forms of living water into its emptiness. The rest are just evolutionary details of the creative act. Today the

church is called to be that ocean.

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