

## **Relationality in Counterpoint: God and World from Postcolonial Hybridity to Chalcedonian Christology**

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What does the dense postcolonial notion of hybridity have to do with the seemingly impenetrably arcane Chalcedonian christology (except sharing an aura of impenetrability)? In this paper I suggest that both, the postcolonial discourse of hybridity and the imaginary of Chalcedonian christology, are discourses on relationality. To be more precise, each is a discourse on the nature or the “how” of relationality: particularly, on the boundaries, identities, and relational asymmetries that are ever contested and rendered problematic – yet not simply erased. What follows is a conversation between two models of asymmetrical relationality: the “high” Chalcedonian christology and certain postcolonial notions of hybridity. The goal of this conversation is to inquire into the possibilities of ethical envisagement of the fundamentally asymmetrical yet synergistic God-world relationality in terms of non-hegemonic, non-coercive and collaborative interaction. The turn to christology is grounded in my presupposition that the relational ontology of Incarnation, as well as the economy of salvation that is inaugurated through it, engenders a pivotal template for redemptive and ethical God-world relationality. In other words, the highly particular union of God and humanity in Jesus Christ, irrevocably distinctive as this union remains, is the veridical horizon for embodying and thinking divine-human relationality across all the various terrains of created reality.<sup>1</sup>

The emerging presence of postcolonially scored theological temperaments in current theological inquiry has suggested a potentially fruitful linkage between christology and the

notion of hybridity. Statements about the incarnation of Jesus Christ as the supreme instantiation of hybridity have become quite prominent within recent postcolonial theology. Yet these suggestions have not received further christological elaboration. The idea is particularly interesting since the model of christology hinted at seems to be the “high” Christology of Nicea and Chalcedon. Thus, for example, Kwok Pui-lan argues that

the most hybridized concept in the Christian tradition is that of Jesus/Christ. The space between Jesus and Christ is unsettling and fluid, resisting easy categorization and closure. It is the ‘contact zone’ or ‘borderland’ between *the human and the divine*, the one and the many, the historical and the cosmological, the Jewish and the Hellenistic, the prophetic and the sacramental, the God of conquerors and the God of the meek and the lowly.<sup>2</sup>

In a similar vein, the editors of *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* note in their Introduction that “Christianity... offers as its central doctrine the symbol of a *divine/human hybrid*, at once mimicking and scandalizing the operative metaphysical binaries of the time.”<sup>3</sup> These formulations suggest an interesting but as of yet under-explored resonance with traditional “high” christology. Despite stressing the prominent role of Jesus Christ as hybrid in Christian thought, these approaches provide elaboration on the sociological and cultural hybridities of Christianity as a immensely complex religious tradition and cultural imaginary. While such approaches are laudable and provide richly nuanced interpretations of Christian thought and practice historically and ethico-politically, the actual analysis of Jesus Christ as hybrid does not quite reach into the doctrinal intricacies. It deservedly focuses on the hitherto equally neglected cultural, historical, and textual hybridities but there is more to be said about Christ and hybridity. On this account, the image of Jesus Christ as hybrid leaves the interest aroused and searching for more.

Jesus Christ as hybrid: what kind/mode of relationality between divinity and humanity could this be? Of course, hybridity in postcolonial theory and criticism is a notoriously dense and

elusive concept. Hybridity means different things to different theoretical sensibilities. As I pursue it here, hybridity as a critical and constructive notion is above all a figure of problematized, porous, and leaky boundaries of identity. It is important to note at once that postcolonial critiques interrogate constellations of oppressively asymmetrical, inequitable, hegemonic, and unilateral relationalities and the kind of empowerment and agency that are embedded in these asymmetrical grids of power. Thus the postcolonial hybridity distinctively emerges as a kind of forced poetics.<sup>4</sup> Hybridity thrives as a challenge of essentialized identities and differences, especially when both of those are locked into habitually antagonistic zero-sum juxtaposition. Hybridity delves into mutual imbrications and ambiguity. Yet hybridity is not a figure of cancellations, reversals, or seamless fusion. Homi Bhabha has written memorably about hybridity not being “the third term that resolves tensions”<sup>5</sup> but rather hinting at the possibility of the enunciative “third space” which “enables other positions to emerge”<sup>6</sup> beyond the customary binary oppositions. Hybridity emerges as a “catholic” preference for the “both/and” imaginary of reasoning and acting beyond the rationale of binarity. In Robert Young’s words,

hybridity ... makes difference into sameness, and sameness into difference, but in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different. In that sense, it operates ... [as] a breaking and joining at the same time, in the same place: difference and sameness in an apparently impossible simultaneity.<sup>7</sup>

Hybridity functions as a site of complex agency in the act of living within and yet beyond the gridlock of hierarchically construed binary couplings of identities, races, cultures, etc. However, hybridity as the interstitial “third space” is not a single new form of indiscriminate totality wherein all jaggedness of the materiality of embodied life and habits of mind would be resolved in elegiac syncretism. The relational mutuality entailed in hybridity is not a simplistic “breaking

and joining at the same time” that takes place among provisional and equally empowered differences. Rather, hybridity, as postcolonial theorist Ien Ang suggests,

...confronts and problematises boundaries, although it does not erase them. As such, hybridity always implies an unsettling of identities. This tells us that hybridity, the very condition of in-betweenness, can never be a question of simple shaking hands, of happy, harmonious merger and fusion. Hybridity is not the solution, but alerts us to the difficulty of living with differences, their ultimately irreducible resistance to complete dissolution.

As a “sign of challenge and altercation, not of congenial amalgamation or merger,”<sup>9</sup> hybridity does not gloss over the possibilities and actualities of a dissonant relational make-up even as it simultaneously accommodates asymmetrical reciprocity and consonance. As far as existential actualities of life are concerned, hybridity engenders both relational cross-pollinations of equal stature as well as the space of asymmetrical, even inequitable, reciprocity which is nevertheless disentangled from the binarisms of pure power versus pure impotence. In this sense, hybridity, as an imaginary of relationality, expresses the trajectory of de-absolutization of dualistic, even Manichean, constructions of difference as preemptively oppositional, irreconcilable, and almost automatically antagonistic. Now, if the ethical impetus of postcolonialism is aligned to a quest for repositioned relationality in which the relations of unevenly spread empowerment can be renegotiated and wrenched out of the hegemonic modern Western gridlock of unjust and unproductive dualisms, then hybridity can signal an alternative. Hybridity as an interface for a relational counterpoint of agencies, identities, and rationalities indeed emerges as a “threat,” as Bhabha suggests, to “the symmetry and duality of self/other, inside/outside.”<sup>10</sup> Now, as far as ethical possibilities for relationality are concerned, hybridity can implicitly gesture toward a relational interface wherein unidirectional architectonic of power modulates into multidirectional and reciprocal orchestration of identities and integrities touching one another and thus being touched by one another in transformative – in commendable rather than always regrettable –

ways. That is to say, besides the analytical aspects of hybridity which expose the world of unjust and hegemonic exchanges and interdependencies that are often inhabited with ambiguity rather than rejoiced about (no romanticized ideas of relationality here!), there are also constructive aspects of hybridity. These aspects, as Rita Felski contends, “allow us to conceive of multiple, interconnected axes of affiliation and differentiation” and recognize “cross-pollinations, echoes, and repetitions, thereby unseating difference from a position of absolute privilege.”<sup>11</sup>

If so, then to view Jesus Christ as “the most hybridized concept in the Christian tradition” and as “a divine/human hybrid,” is to envision a rather intricate template of divine-human relationality. It entails a profound appreciation of the asymmetrical nature of reciprocity. For hybridity, at least in certain postcolonial perspectives, is not so much about an uncomplicated and seamless fusion, not about the complete erasure of boundaries and differences, but rather about the existential actuality and epistemological imagination of “both/and.” Hybridity is an ontological and epistemological imaginary wherein difference, especially difference perceived as automatically competitive, antagonistic, mutually exclusive and necessarily contradictory, is unseated from the absolute privilege of hierarchical dualism. It is concerned with the seemingly impossible simultaneity of intertwinement of identities and integrities in which their boundaries are mutually challenged even as they are reciprocally enriched to a lesser or greater degree. Finally, hybridity as it bears on the constructive comportment and ethical envisagement in theological inquiry privileges the possibility of a relational concurrence. Within such a concurrence, identities and integrities can be reconciled – without necessity, without compulsion, without fatalistic guarantees – within a conviviality that is non-reductive and non-coercive. This, I submit, is what the relation between divinity and humanity in Jesus Christ as a “hybrid” could fruitfully imply: namely, a seemingly scandalous problematization of boundaries, an unsettling

of identities in an intimate union. This union is by no means a union of intimate competition but rather an opaque concurrence or the simultaneity of two natures and two incommensurable integrities in one person – cohabiting, intertwined, interpenetrating to the point of *apparent* confusion, and yet resistant to complete dissolution into the “third term” that resolves all differences. The language of hybridity here is, as it were, apophatic. The horizon of relationality that it sketches is, in a certain sense, apophatic too. Affirmations of relational unions, cross-pollinations, affiliations, interpenetrations in hybridity are immediately augmented by resistance to dissolution, erasure, and absorption of genuine alterity as in Young’s “breaking and joining at the same time, in the same place: difference and sameness in an apparently impossible simultaneity.”<sup>12</sup>

But apophatic is also, *par excellence*, the Chalcedonian “horizon” (*horos*)<sup>13</sup> of christology. Since postcolonial hybridity is not necessarily a mere codeword for unqualified mixture and seamless fusion (as it is sometimes assumed to be), the Chalcedonian christology emerges as an interesting interlocutor for a constructive orchestration of God-world relationality, particularly, an ethically configured relationality.

First of all, I must note that in this emerging era of global, postcolonial, and intercultural theologies and methodologies, to turn to Chalcedon for inspiration *may* appear like a gesture of entrenched Eurocentrism. Along these lines, Kwok Pui-lan (among others) has noted not that long ago that the Hellenist ontological and epistemological imagination is unproductively substantialist. As far as the christological normativity is concerned, she argued that “the church worldwide is still much under the yoke of the Chalcedonian captivity and Eurocentric theological formulations based on Western heritages.”<sup>14</sup> Now, without dismissing the legitimacy of concern about “Eurocentric” – whatever this under-theorized and homogenizing term might mean –

captivity of theological methodologies and worldviews, I am inclined to think that Chalcedonian “horizon” really serves up a conceptual iconoclasm of the Hellenist metaphysics of substance, that it indeed mimics and scandalizes the metaphysical binaries of its cultural context. It definitely challenges the Aristotelian idea of relationality perceived as extrinsic and the so-called rule of non-contradiction as well.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the Chalcedonian “horizon” makes a piecemeal use of the Hellenist epistemological imagination while refusing, as Lai Pan-chiu maintains, “to be bounded by the straitjacket of the Greek philosophical framework.”<sup>16</sup> But, in addition to the subversive, as it were, dimension of Chalcedonian theological sensibility precisely in the Western cultural context, there is also the fact that the Chalcedonian christological formula entails one of most crucial and normative doctrinal claims about the relationality between God and humanity. As such it also bears the loaded history of operating as the sentinel of orthodoxy in the unceasingly mobile borderland of orthodoxy and heresy with all its attendant violence and often woefully crude yet politically and culturally profitable dualisms.

Keeping that in mind, what is particularly relevant for the conversation between postcolonial hybridity and Chalcedon on the God-world relationality is the centrality of an imaginary of asymmetrical relationality that nevertheless gravitates around reciprocity, reconciliation, and integrity. There is a complex semantic and doctrinal history behind each word, if not each syllable, of the formula. It is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into these fascinating intricacies of the late antique theological mindscape. What is important here to notice is the struggle for a reconciled relational interface of asymmetrical, indeed incommensurable, differences and their unviolated integrity. So Christ, according to the Chalcedonian formula, is

truly God and truly man ... consubstantial (*homoousios*) with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial (*homoousios*) with us according to the Humanity (...) One and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without

division, without separation; the difference of the natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and [both] concurring (*syntrehouseōs*) in one Person (*prosopon*) and one Subsistence (*hypostasis*)...<sup>17</sup>

First, what the Chalcedonian “horizon” deliberately and “symphonically”<sup>18</sup> admits is its own confusion about how to “define” the paradigmatic God-world relationality in Christ as more than an extrinsic and accidental “mere relationship” and yet not as homogenizing fusion. But second, it leaves open to contextual interpretation the ecology of the exact “how” of this relationality, or the mode of *communicatio idiomatum*, that obtains in the union between the divine and the human. The “horizon” is indeed, as George Florovsky insightfully remarked long ago, permeated by a “paradoxical un-sayingness.”<sup>19</sup> In a similar vein, Sarah Coakley rightly suggests that Chalcedon “leaves us” precisely at a boundary or at a horizon that resists incarcerating precision *vis-à-vis* what ultimately remains a mystery of the most ineffable proportions by “presenting a ‘riddle’ of negatives by means of which a greater (though undefined) reality may be intimated.”<sup>20</sup> However, as viewed in conversation with certain postcolonial notions of hybridity, the Chalcedonian “horizon” is by no means obsolete, its numerous terminological and conceptual nightmares notwithstanding.

The interface of relation that is suggested here is expressed through linguistic and theological walking on the razor’s edge to affirm in the image of hypostatic union – via negations – a fabric of the relationship which obtain only if *both* divinity and humanity concur in a non-coercive and reconciled relationship. This kind of relationship is not accidental or redemptively and ethically neutral since it occurs with a very particular goal: this reconciled union is inaugurated, in the traditional creedal phrase, “for us and for our salvation.” On the one hand, the relational asymmetry<sup>21</sup> is clear – it is the Son, the Word, the Only-begotten, whose

hypostasis, or the person of Jesus Christ, exists within the reconciled coexistence or concurrence of divinity and humanity, without change and without confusion. However, it is the concurrence, not the divine nature *per se*, that permits seeing Jesus Christ as truly divine. And of course, the very same intimacy of concurrence, in which divinity and humanity participate, is so mutually involved that it is without division or separation. Interestingly, as much as the connotations of mixture and confusion are diplomatically avoided, the word that is used to describe the union, *syntreousēs* (from verb *syntrehō*) merits attention. *Syntrehō* denotes coalescing, coinciding, concurring, running together. The presence of *syntrehō* in the Chalcedonian “horizon” signals a relation which enhances the resistance against both coercive and passive annihilation of human integrity (nature) – the weaker, the less empowered partner of the relationship – as well as against a pantheistic meltdown of divine transcendence.

In the absence of various confusion-friendly terms that were perfectly acceptable earlier when used by perfectly orthodox theologians such as Gregory of Nyssa (*mixis*, *krasis*, *henōsis*, and their cognates) concurrence suggests at least an interpenetrating synergy. Or perhaps, to borrow from the later interpreters of Chalcedon Maximus the Confessor and John of Damascus,<sup>22</sup> a certain *perichorēsis*. This kind of concurrence, or synergy, asymmetrical as it remains in the christological context, presupposes permeation, yet without absorption. In epistemological terms, the Chalcedonian “concurrence” comes mesmerizingly close to accomplish theologically what hybridity aspires to do in other contexts – to problematize boundaries without erasure, to unseat the dualistic logic of difference as always already mutually exclusive, to break and join at the same time, and to engender an existential sonority of „both/and” in an apparently impossible simultaneity. Yet it moves beyond the descriptive and the analytical moments of reflection about the anatomy of relationality, such as the discourse of hybridity provides in a curious resonance

with the christological „horizon.” The „horizon” entails not merely an insightful description of the existential actualities of multiply located lives of so many human bodies and human minds, amidst cultures, races, ethnicities, and languages especially in the world of global postcoloniality, but also an axiological prescription. After all, the hypostatic „hybridity” of Jesus Christ is the configuration of relationality that is salvific („for us and for our salvation”). This „hybridity” – and here is a difference from the postcolonial imaginary of hybridity – entails the problematization of boundaries and resistance to dissolution of difference redemptively, transfiguratively, that is, as prototypically reconciled. Postcolonial hybridity is a figure of „not yet.” It is not a figure of unconstrained and equitable coexistence; it is not a figure of „realized eschatology” of already reconciled, grace- and justice-filled relations. It does reflect the fragile and often asymmetrical equilibriums of conviviality and interpenetration of differences. Yet they are ultimately never beyond contestation, as they are forged amidst multiple identities, histories, and allegiances that do coexist and intermingle, often without much drama, in the contexts of migrancy, diaspora, and all varieties of multiracial, multiethnic and multilinguistic *loci*– but not always as reconciled. Postcolonial hybridity denotes the intricate anatomy of the provisional or „working” heterogeneity of human life, identity, and integrity as this heterogeneity is lived through the concords and discords of diverse elements sounding together and playing off one another. The Chalcedonian imaginary fascinatingly resonates with this aspect of hybridity yet goes beyond it. It envisages a reconciled and therefore, a uniquely non-reductive and benevolent, heterogeneity in the hypostatic union. This union is the reconciled relationality of a „middle way” between a suffocating union of absorption and a grinding tension of complete difference.

In the Chalcedonian „horizon” a relationality is suggested wherein even the greatest possible difference is conceived in terms of reciprocal openness and compatibility

(incarnation/deification). The asymmetrical empowerment is non-coercively kenotic on the side of the divine: it gives without forcing to take, and assumes to transfigure, not to possess and assimilate without residue. And it is emancipatory on the side of creation: it lives its own life even as it is changed, by consent and not by passive absorption, not by being raped into salvation, but through synergistic participation in the divine life. In other words, the relation gestured toward in the Chalcedonian „horizon” is a relationality of reconciliation without asymmetrical coercion, without necessary animosity, without hegemonic assimilation, and without the „either/or” of competitive and reductive gridlock of activity and passivity, power and weakness, presence and absence. Herein, I believe, resides at least one possible answer to the initial question about what kind of God-world relation could be implied in the claim that Jesus Christ is the divine/human hybrid.

Yet, how could this kind of God-world relation, fleshed-out as a certain hybridity or as a borderscape of the paradigmatic uncreated-created interaction in Christ according to the Chalcedonian “horizon,” play out across the broader terrain of God-world relationality? If the Chalcedonian hybridity of Christ is paradigmatic and not just an otherworldly anomaly<sup>23</sup> for God-world relation, then it could be envisaged, I submit, as a contrapuntal hybridity. My inspiration here comes from the work of postcolonial critic Edward W. Said. For Said, counterpoint specifies the actual relational ecology, or the “how” of hybridity, but even more so points toward an ethical mode of relationality. Of course, the Chalcedonian Christ as hybrid obtains precisely as the paradigmatic salvific and ethical model of relationality to be embodied and followed. The paradigmatic element represents his singularity. God-world relationality, however, obtains in the relational borderland of the fallen/finite creation as it encounters God responsively or adversely. For this relational borderland – our present dispensation –

postcolonial hybridity is an insightful analytical metaphor while the Chalcedonian hybridity remains the *telos* of engodded/deified relationality to be aspired to and imitated. So in the palpably unredeemed borderland of the present dispensation, counterpoint is a sounding and vivacious image of complex cohabitation. Counterpoint is a sounding image of effort toward reconciliatory union amidst the differences of contrapuntal subjects. As Said remarks,

in the counterpoint of Western classical music, various themes play off one another, with only a provisional privilege being given to any particular one; yet in the resulting polyphony there is concert and order, an organized interplay that derives from the themes, not from a rigorous melodic or formal principle outside the work.<sup>24</sup>

Counterpoint is the relation of an asymmetrical, free, often divergent, inconsistent, yet not always necessarily disagreeable, reciprocity without obliteration of integral difference. To reiterate, counterpoint is the process of several voices sounding concurrently, conjunctively, and reciprocally without detracting from any participant of relational events and realities.<sup>25</sup> But the imaginary of counterpoint also accommodates what Said called “irreconcilabilities.”

Counterpoint may be so performed as to result in patently dissonant harmonies yet still remain counterpoint while it accommodates the non-harmonious and non-serene tensions. Said’s conception of hybridity as counterpoint admits moments of incommensurability. Hybridity mocks the desire for transparent schemes of purity to be conjured up for thoughts, bodies, actions, moralities, and politics. Furthermore, counterpoint as a specification of hybridity, following Said, is an imaginary of reciprocal and interactive relationality, equal or unequal, allowing both – “irreconcilabilities” as well as “concert and order.” Above all, it envisages an irrevocable connection yet never submersive or reductive synthesis. Counterpoint privileges neither an *a priori* militant antagonism nor an *a priori* seamless intertwining. Difference here is affirmed but not fetishized through mutually allergic entrenchment. As a non-binaristic

imaginary of “both/and” rather than “either/or,” counterpoint is hostage to neither “always” nor “never.”

Among the most realistic and incisive aspects of contrapuntal relationality is the accommodation of the locations and occasions of atonality. Harmony, or Said’s “concert and order,” is not fate. But most importantly, dissonance is also not the universal and preemptive condition of truth and of the affirmation of unviolated human integrity within a relational ontology. Thus, a theologically appropriated hybridity suggests a relation in which identities and boundaries do not disappear yet are worked into a laborious stretch of overlapping and intertwining in search of a curative, a restorative, and then also a thriving consonance – without being absorbed in hegemonic and colonial monophony of the strongest.

The Chalcedonian hybridity is the score of the perfect and paradigmatic counterpoint of relationality between God and creation in the performance of hypostatic union, i.e. the incarnation. The articulations of postcolonial hybridity, on the other hand, are useful as tools of critical imagination in revisiting seemingly obsolete theological lore to discover there, perhaps surprisingly, a resonance across shared concerns regarding the qualitative mode and even the ideal ethical “how” of the intrinsically relational life that we all participate in. But the most fascinating fruitfulness of entering into a conversation between doctrinal reasoning and postcolonial reasoning resides in their cross-pollination that includes christological reflection as a pivotal source for re-imagining God-world relationality for our time of convoluted global postcoloniality. It is in this sense that perceiving Christ as hybrid is not only a thrilling intellectual exercise but most importantly, an exercise of moral imagination in the world where the way how we conceive of God-world relation, for good or for ill, shapes and is shaped by how we imagine and enact relational bonds with other human persons.

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<sup>1</sup> As Karl Rahner argued, “if in the Incarnation the Logos enters into relationship with a creature, then it is obvious that the ultimate formal determinations of the Creator-creature relationship must also hold in this particular relationship” – and vice versa. See Rahner, “Current Problems in Christology,” *Theological Investigations*, vol.1 (C. Ernst, trans.; New York: Crossroad, 1982): 163.

<sup>2</sup> Kwok, Pui-lan, Kwok, Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005): 171. Italics added.

<sup>3</sup> *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* (Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner and Mayra Rivera, eds; St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004): 13. Italics added.

<sup>4</sup> I must note that hybridity is often suspected to a glib sublation of the very metropolitan oblivion (“metropolitan hybridity”) toward specific histories of human pain, exploitation, violence, and affliction within colonial hegemonies which postcolonialism precisely envisions to interrupt. R. Radhakrishnan observes that hybridity in its “the philosophic-bohemian sense” is “underwritten by the stable regime of western secular identity and the authenticity that goes with it, whereas post-colonial hybridity has no such guarantees: neither identity nor authenticity,” in “Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity,” *Callaloo* 16:4 (1993):755.

<sup>5</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, “The Third Space,” *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (ed. Jonathan Rutherford; London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990): 211.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995): 26-27.

<sup>8</sup> Ien Ang, “Together-In-Difference: Beyond Diaspora, Into Hybridity,” *Asian Studies Review*, 27(2) 2003:149-150.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>10</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 165.

<sup>11</sup> Rita Felski, “The Doxa of Difference,” *Signs* 23:1(1997):12.

<sup>12</sup> Young, *Colonial Desire*, 27.

<sup>13</sup> Instead of the usual “definition” of Chalcedon I prefer to use the term “horizon” which has a closer correspondence with the original Greek term *horos*. On the importance and usefulness of the Christological formulations of Chalcedon as precisely *horos*, not “definition,” see Sarah Coakley, “What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does it Not? Some Reflections on the Status and Meaning of the Chalcedonian ‘Definition’,” *Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God* (Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, SJ, Gerald O’Collins, SJ, eds.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 160-161.

<sup>14</sup> Kwok Pui-lan, “Ecology and Christology,” *Feminist Theology* 15 (1997): 118. A differently shaped, yet nevertheless similarly reticent stance toward the theological fecundity of Chalcedonian christology from a “whitefeminist” perspective is classically expressed also by Elizabeth A. Johnson in *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad Herder, 2000): 164.

<sup>15</sup> For example, from a non-Western perspective and in resonance with some recent Western readings, Lai Pan-chiu has argued that the Chalcedonian notion of hypostatic union between two natures precisely entails a “challenge to the Hellenistic philosophical hypothesis that contrary attributes could not possibly coexist within the same subject at the same time,” “A Mahāyāna Reading of Chalcedon Christology: A Chinese Response to John Keenan,” *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 24 (2004): 221.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>17</sup> I am using here my own translation with addition of more inclusive language that I believe the original Greek does not strictly contradict.

<sup>18</sup> The opening part of the formula uses *sympḥōnōs* to describe the type of theological unity that underwrote the formulation.

<sup>19</sup> Георгий Васильевич Флоровский, *Восточные Отцы V-VIII вв.: Из чтений в Православном богословском институте в Париже*, 2-е издание (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1990): 25.

<sup>20</sup> Coakley, “What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does it Not?” 161. Of course, these formulations left open plenty of space for enduring dissent and division among various currents of late antique Christianity as well, which the recent ecumenical dispositions have tried to mitigate to the extent that Chalcedonian “horizon” is becoming more destabilized as the sole “definition” of Christological normativity than ever before. A very helpful overview of

the ecumenical debates on Chalcedon is offered by Dorothea Wendebourg, “Chalcedon in Ecumenical Discourse,” *Pro Ecclesia*, 7:3 (1998): 307-332.

<sup>21</sup> Understandably, a view such as Martin Luther’s notion of *communicatio idiomatum*, especially through the mode of *genus majesticum*, would not insist too passionately on the importance of asymmetry in this context while most of the late antique Christian theologians, even those who perceived the hypostatic union in related trinitarian terms of *perichorēsis*, continued to maintain it.

<sup>22</sup> On the daring usage of trinitarian vocabulary of *perichorēsis* in christological reflection in the post-Chalcedon context by Maximus and Damascene, see Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1976): 144-151.

<sup>23</sup> John Macquarrie has argued that “incarnation was not a singularity or anomaly in world history but is a constant characteristic of God’s relation to his creation,” *The Mediators: Nine Stars in the Human Sky* (London: SCM, 1995): 149. While I do not go along with Macquarrie regarding the singularity theme in relation to the incarnation, I do think that the point about anomaly is true as is his insistence on the incarnation – a particular kind of relation between God and humanity – as a constant characteristic of this relation.

<sup>24</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993): 51.

<sup>25</sup> Counterpoint also, to remember the old musings of Jean-Philippe Rameau, is the musical imaginary of a multi-voiced plenitude wherein beauties mutually enhance one another rather than competitively detract from one another to achieve their autonomous apogee. Counterpoint really “works” when not only the contrapuntal subject that is expressed in a maximally rich way but precisely when the countersubjects approach the complexity of the subject as closely as possible. Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Traité de l’harmonie réduite à ses principes naturels*, quoted from Peter Schubert and Christoph Neidhöfer, *Baroque Counterpoint* (Upper Saddle River, NJ : Pearson, Prentice Hall): 8.