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CHRIST IN CIRCULATION: THE EUCHARISTIC EXCHANGE AND MONEY

The practice of liturgy should never be separated from the life of production and consumption. Liturgy draws from the ordinary and everyday products of life: water, bread, wine, table, book, and bodies. But it also transforms these everyday objects by reading them another way, producing and circulating new objects and subjects in and for the world. The mutual reinforcement and interpenetration between liturgy and life suggests a reciprocity between liturgical theology and the human sciences, for while the liturgy cannot be reducible to any field outside itself, an understanding of the liturgy will necessarily traverse the human sciences, even, or especially, the field of economics.

In this essay I explore the convergence of the Eucharist and the theory of money. I argue that the symbolic exchange enacted in the Eucharist through the Eucharistic Prayer opens avenues for an alternative economy by challenging the circulation of money. This alternative circulation within the Eucharist produces different subjects and valuations contrary to the demands of money. This convergence proceeds between the realms of sacramental theology and political economy, represented by the French sacramental theologian Louis-Marie Chauvet and the Japanese philosopher Kojin Karatani. Particularly, this convergence moves between Chauvet's "sacramental reinterpretation of Christian existence" centered on symbolic exchange, and Karatani's critique of the trinity of the capitalist nation-state and the circulation of money. Chauvet deploys the anthropological notion of the symbolic exchange to explicate the formation of Christian identity enacted in the Eucharistic Prayer. Through the symbolic exchange of the Eucharistic Prayer participants are transformed into graced subjects (those living-in-grace) through the circulation of the historical, sacramental, and ecclesial body of Christ. Set alongside this circulation of Christ, I offer a reading of Karatani's understanding of the circulation of money and how one might practice resistance to the capitalist nation-state. Karatani's explication of modes of exchange enhances, by explicitly politicizing, Chauvet's understanding of symbolic exchange, even while it is shown that Karatani's

project is untenable without the gracious and gratuitous circulation of Christ in the Eucharist.

As we will see, Karatani attempts to return to Marx against recent forms of Marxism and its dual orientation regarding the state and the material means of production. Karatani instead sees Marx as offering a fundamental critique of money and its circulation. In this way he interrogates not primarily the material distribution of property or means of production, but the powers of inequality installed through the circulation of money itself and the means of resisting it. What is at stake is exactly the ideology of money that claims the production and exchange of material goods is all that matters and that the circulation of money is immaterial and insignificant.

This ideology of money exists because of its power and piety. As Philip Goodchild has recently argued, money does not merely facilitate the exchange of goods, but “demands and shapes time, attention, and devotion,” by replacing previous social orders with its own based in credit and debt, and in this way becomes the new political body requiring scrutiny.¹ Indeed, money “has to be understood in terms of the social sphere of contractual obligations rather than in terms of a village market where products are exchanged”² because the circulation of money creates social obligations ordered around increasing profits and decreasing debts, and in this way installs itself as the judge of all values.³ Because money promises the world (of goods) but only delivers itself, money sets itself up as a rival to theology by declaring an alternative faith, a faith in money involving a metaphysics, a politics, an ethics, and a theology.⁴ As we will see, the power of money is not principally in ordering material production through exchange, but in ordering all values according to credit and debt within its own circulation. Because of this, resistance to the capitalist nation-state must also begin in the place of an alternative circulation and valuation.

Symbolic Exchange and Grace

To set the stage for the interaction between the Eucharist and the capitalist nation-state we must grasp the direction of Chauvet’s sacramental theology by understanding his use of symbolic exchange. After clearing the field of onto-theological confusions and impasses, Chauvet considers the unavoidable mediation of the symbolic order. He begins with the common understanding that language creates the ‘world’ of significance without which humans would not be able to function. Language does not merely indicate or represent things in the world, but constitutes the very world in which things appear. But more to Chauvet’s interests, it is through language that the ‘subject’ comes to be. Chauvet

¹ Philip Goodchild, *Theology of Money* (London: SCM Press, 2007), 6. See also 41, 77-125.

² *Ibid.*, 101.

³ *Ibid.*, 14, 221.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 216.

explicates this subject from a linguistic and psychoanalytic point of view. The speaking subject is both included and excluded, or designated within and outside of language (the subject of the verb and the subject of the discourse), through the pronoun “I”, which is reciprocally used by a “You” toward which discourse is directed. Yet this I-YOU relationship only occurs within the influence of a third category, that of the social and cosmic world, an IT. This third category is language itself.⁵ The psychoanalytic point of view deepens this linguistic analysis by noting the necessary splitting of the subject within language as both the place where the subject seeks self-reflective unity or harmony, but also where it experiences its own alienation. This alienation creates a distance between the “I” of the spoken/enunciated and the (I) of the speaking/enunciating, hidden behind the image of the former.⁶ This distance, sustained within language as the very possibility of the emergence of the subject, results in the consent to the ‘presence of absence’ in the never-finished process of becoming a subject.⁷

Yet “the condition of being always on the way which is the fate of the human subject,” says Chauvet, “is not an aimless wandering in a desert waste without landmark.”⁸ The law of this ‘on the way’ of the subject is the symbolic order:

the system of connections between the different elements and levels of culture (economic, social, political, ideological—ethics, philosophy, religion...), a system forming a coherent whole that allows the social group and individuals to orient themselves in space, find their place in time, and in general situate themselves in the world in a significant way.⁹

The concrete process of this law is through symbolic exchange, which exists beyond the order of value. Relying on the work of Marcel Mauss and Jean Baudrillard, Chauvet outlines the different levels of value and exchange, which are governed by the over-arching distinction between value and non-value. ‘Use’ value attaches to a sack of grain according to how many days of food it will provide. In contrast, ‘exchange’ value concerns how a sack of grain might be traded for some harpoons or for money.¹⁰ In our contemporary society, these two logics of value culminate in a third, that of sign value where an object’s

⁵ Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, trans. Patrick Madigan, S.J., and Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1995), 92-95.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 95-97.

⁷ For a critique of this aspect of Chauvet see Vincent J. Miller, “An Abyss at the Heart of Mediation: Louis-Marie Chauvet’s Fundamental Theology of Sacramentality,” *Horizons*, 24/2 (1997), 230-47. For a view which sees Chauvet as less hostile to a more positively oriented metaphysics see Joseph C. Mudd, “From De-ontotheology to a Metaphysics of Meaning: Louis-Marie Chauvet and Bernard Lonergan on Foundations in Sacramental Theology,” *North American Academy for Liturgy Proceedings 2008*, 114-135.

⁸ Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 99.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 100.

value is based neither in its use nor its exchange, but rather on its ability to differentiate social positions.¹¹ These three types of value occur within the logic of the marketplace in either the form of barter or exchange via money. It belongs to the “regime of need which seeks to satisfy itself immediately through the possession of objects” and functions through the exchange of objects.¹² In contrast to the field of value within the marketplace, the process of symbolic exchange opens onto the field of non-value where what is being exchanged are not objects, but rather through the gift of yams, shells, spears, books, or a rose, “the true objects being exchanged are the subjects themselves” in a process of mutual recognition.¹³ The symbolic exchange mediated through gifts is beyond the realm of value because “the symbolic essence of the gift is precisely characterized not by the worth of the object offered...but by the *relationship of alliance, friendship, affection, recognition, gratitude* it creates or recreates between partners.”¹⁴ Because every giving of a gift creates a relationship, it follows that every gift obligates the receiver to give a return-gift, minimally as a thank you, in order to complete the symbolic exchange, otherwise the relationship expressed would descend into that of the marketplace.¹⁵ Therefore, symbolic exchange, as the generation of subjects and the mediation of relationships, can be summarized as the process of gift—reception—return-gift.

For Chauvet, this symbolic exchange within the symbolic order is the proper arena for discussing God’s grace, and sacramental grace in particular, because from the beginning it situates grace within the realm of non-value. The non-value of grace is seen in its *graciousness* and *gratuitousness* because grace can never become the “object of a *calculation*, of a price, of haggling” and because grace “can in no way be demanded” and “we can in no way justify” it.¹⁶ Theologically, *graciousness* and *gratuitousness* belong not only to the initial gift, but also to the entire process of gift—reception—return-gift, such that “even the return-gift of our human response thus belongs to the theologically Christian concept of ‘grace.’ ”¹⁷ This return-gift is vital in constituting and verifying a true relationship between God and humanity.¹⁸

Modes of Exchange and the Capitalist Nation-State

¹¹ Ibid., 103.

¹² Ibid., 106.

¹³ Ibid., 106.

¹⁴ Ibid., 107.

¹⁵ Ibid., 102.

¹⁶ Ibid., 108.

¹⁷ Ibid., 109.

¹⁸ For some, the insertion of grace here, where a transcendent God guarantees the gift, constitutes ideology at its highest. But this need not be the case because Chauvet understands grace and gift as “dispossession,” fitting easily within Slavoj Žižek’s Christian-atheist critique of ideology on an immanent level (they both draw from the same Lacanian source). Of course, John Milbank has argued in the other direction in “Can a Gift be Given? Prolegomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysics,” *Modern Theology* 11:1 (1995), 119-161.

Keeping Chauvet's theological appropriation of symbolic exchange in mind, we turn to Kojin Karatani's account of the market economy and its various irreducible, yet interrelated, modes of exchange. Karatani distinguishes between different modes of exchange for two purposes. First to dispel the myth created by Adam Smith that commodity exchange via money, characteristic of capitalism, is merely an extension of barter type exchanges. Second, to show how these various modes of exchange have combined into the formidable trinity of the capitalist nation-state.

The first mode of exchange consists of the reciprocity of gift and return occurring within agrarian communities. This mode is based on the principles of mutual aid and reciprocal exchange. It is rooted in the functional exchange within families called love, and extended to the local community according to its own communal rules.¹⁹ This mode of exchange is very similar to, if not synonymous with, Chauvet's symbolic exchange; as Karatani notes, "a gift compels the gifted to make a return"²⁰ and this compulsion functions through a psychological debt between subjects, created by the imposition of the community's rules and codes.²¹ Karatani is adamant that this type of exchange is not a proto-commodity exchange because it is neither mediated by money nor by contract, and it is based in psychological rather than financial debt such that the bonds of the exchange are social rather than fiscal.²² Based as it is in the family bloodlines and extended to the local community, in Karatani's model, this mode of exchange later becomes the basis for the emergence of the nation and nationalism.

The second mode of exchange, rather than being within a single community, occurs between several communities, in the form of robbery and redistribution or plunder and protection. Not the only example, a feudal lord's taxation of local communities represents this type of exchange. This is a mode of exchange because if a feudal lord hopes to continue plundering a community in the form of extortion/taxation, then he must protect the community from other plunderers.²³ Also, the feudal lord must restrict the amount of robbery to a level at which the peasants can actually survive, and indeed he needs to make provisions for the agrarian community so that it, likewise, will survive. These provisions come in the form of the redistribution of funds, in the guise of public works. According to Karatani's analysis, what initially occurred in the form of plundering transformed into a system of taxation, and the peasant's compulsion to pay the feudal lord morphed into an obligation or duty in return for the protection and public works that the feudal lord provides.²⁴ With time, what

¹⁹ Kojin Karatani, *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx*, trans. by Sabu Kohso (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 202.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 203.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 12. Karatani here sides more with Pierre Bourdieu's suspicion of gift exchange as implicitly coercive. See Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), 98-111.

²² Contra Bourdieu who reduces the gift to a misrecognized contract.

²³ Karatani, *Transcritique*, 13.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 202.

began as a lord's extortion became a national tax, and his personal local armies and local bureaucracy eventually became state functions. This mode of exchange is the basis for the emergence of the state.

If the agrarian exchange of reciprocity and return is compelled by the psychological debt of the community, then the exchange of robbery and redistribution is compelled by the threat of violence. While these two types of exchange are not reducible to each other, they become interdependent such that what emerges as the state (in the form of standing armies and bureaucracies) begins to rely on the national sentiment and empathy grounded in the mutual aid and reciprocity of agrarian communities. As local communities were decomposed by larger states, the sentiment of nationalism was fostered as an *imagined* community based in mutual aid. When a state needs to protect itself and its economy, it does not rely on the exchange of mutual consent (market), nor of plunder and redistribution (taxes and public works), but the mutual aid and reciprocity of the agrarian society.²⁵ For Karatani, this process eventually culminates in the formation of the nation-state.²⁶

The third mode of exchange is that of commodity exchange between communities via money, which ultimately blossoms into capitalism. This commodity exchange is "definitively different from the exchange of plunder/redistribution" and is irreducible to that of reciprocity and return even though it could not exist without either of these models.²⁷ The exchange of commodities via money occurs through the mutual consent established by a contract, which creates an asymmetrical relationship between commodities and money – giving privilege to money. This asymmetry of money will be discussed below, but it is enough to say that money allowed for trade between communities outside of the type of exchange established by the plunder/redistribution enacted by feudal lords, even if dependent on it. If the contracts of mutual consent established between parties are to be valid, they must be enforced under threat of violence, violence held by the feudal lord, and later by the state. Commodity exchange is also dependent on agrarian communities for the production of land and the perpetuation of labor through biological reproduction, both of which occur outside the realm of value according to market exchanges.²⁸

While "in the feudal ages, state, capital, and nation were clearly separated" existing as "feudal states (lords, kings, and emperors), cities, and agrarian communities, all based upon different principles of exchange," the permeation of the capitalist market economy eventually eroded this feudal system, and began fusing the previously separate modes of exchange.²⁹ Between the fourteenth and

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 278.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 278. See also Anthony Marx, *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3-32.

²⁷ Karatani, *Transcritique*, 13. For a similar argument see Goodchild, *Theology of Money*, 92-95.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 204.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

sixteenth centuries, the emerging monarchies conspired with the merchants to topple local feudal lords, even while they sought to foster national identity for the sake of consolidating power for the monarch and creating a homogeneous market for the merchants. In an interesting reading of the rallying cry of the French Revolution—liberty, equality, and fraternity—Karatani notes the modern emergence of the capitalist nation-state. The *liberty* of free economic exchange was tied to the *equality* of law before the State conjoined to the empathetic *fraternity* of national unity. Since this point in history, each mode of exchange began mutually reinforcing the other, creating the formidable trinity of the capitalist nation-state—impervious to attack. This makes it relatively impossible to undermine only one aspect of this unholy trinity of capital, nation, and state for:

when individual national economies are threatened by the global market (neoliberalism), they demand the protection (redistribution) of the state and/or bloc economy, at the same time as appealing to national cultural identity. So it is that any counteraction to capital must also be one targeted against the state and nation.³⁰

By showing the independent genealogies of the nation, the state, and capital—based each in their respective modes of exchange—Karatani strives to distinguish what both liberalism and Marxism joined. Liberals claim that capitalism is merely an extension of the agrarian exchange of reciprocity, while Marxists claim that the nation-state is merely the superstructure built upon the base of economic realities. But rather than postulating a single continuum of exchange, or a general economy of exchange, either flowing from agrarian bartering to commodity exchange (liberals), or claiming the nation-state is merely the product of economic relations (Marxists), Karatani argues that these irreducibly different modes of exchange are tied together and mutually reinforce each other. This disallows a reduction of one aspect to another and requires a different approach than that of liberals and Marxists. For Karatani, unless we truly understand how the exploitative trinity of the capitalist nation-state was formed and sustained, we will never know how it might be decomposed— a decomposition occurring at the site of the *circulation of money* rather than *production of commodities*.

Money, Circulation, Resistance

Karatani's main concern regarding capitalism's dominance through the nation-state is the asymmetrical relationship between money and commodities. Commodities cannot be exchanged in capitalism without the mediation of money. Adam Smith and others thought commodity exchange was similar to all other exchanges, moving from one commodity to another commodity through the mediation of money. This process is represented as 'Commodity-Money-Commodity', or 'C-M-C'. But for Karatani, it is Karl Marx (a lesson which later Marxist overlook) who instead shows that the initiative of this movement is

³⁰ Ibid., 281.

“seized and controlled by the possessor of money” such that in a capitalist economy money is always in search of more money; or rather, investors with money produce commodities in the hopes of receiving more money in return.³¹ This process is represented as ‘Money-Commodity-Money’, or ‘M-C-M’. The possessor of money has the advantage over the possessor of a commodity; those with a commodity need to sell the commodity in order to get money, while those with money can buy anything they want at anytime. Likewise, those with a labor-power commodity need to exchange their work for money in order to purchase the things they need to live, putting them in a lower position than those who buy their labor.³² Therefore, while commodity exchange via money is freely entered into by mutual consent, it certainly is not equal, and quickly leads to distortion and exploitation such that the only true fraternity is between those who already have money or between those who do not have money, but never across the divide.

But this is not to say that capitalists hold all the cards in this game. While those holding money carry an asymmetrical advantage over those without money, the return on an investment is not complete without the commodity being sold in the open market. In other words, the value of the commodity is not realized unless it is sold or transformed back into money, ‘M’.

This is better seen when the circulation of capital (‘M-C-M’) is broken into its two constituent parts. The first part, ‘M-C’, indicates the beginning of the process in which capital is transformed into a commodity through various means of production and the addition of labor. The second part, ‘C-M’, indicates the sale of the commodity on the market and the realization of more money through surplus value, the end goal. The first part, ‘M-C’, is the production process. Marxists have typically seen exploitation as embedded in this process as capitalist hold the means of production, whereas laborers have to sell their labor commodity at an unfair price. Viewing things this way leads Marxists toward theorizing general strikes and/or revolutions in order to disrupt and seize the means of production.³³ But for Karatani, this misses the vital opportunity presented in the circulation process, represented by ‘C-M’. If a commodity is not sold on the market, then its value is not realized, and the flow of capital is arrested.³⁴ In this situation, those workers who are exploited in the production process return in a place of power as consumers in the circulation process.³⁵ If this is the case, then “resistance—the countermovement against the

³¹ Ibid., 208.

³² Ibid., 201. See also Goodchild, *Theology of Money*, 94. For an elaboration of this see Hutchinson, Mellor and Olsen’s discussion of the forced transition from self-provisioning on common lands without the mediation of money to the situation where one can only receive the necessities of life through money gained by selling one’s labor commodity. (*The Politics of Money: Towards Sustainability and Economic Democracy* [Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2002], chapter 4, “Capitalism—The Elimination of Alternatives”).

³³ Karatani, *Transcritique*, 291.

³⁴ Ibid., 9-10, 154-156, 207-208.

³⁵ Ibid., 288.

exploitation—must also take place...in the domain of the circulation process in which neither capital nor state can ever take control.”³⁶ This domain consists of the boycott. Rather than a general strike, which the state can break in favor of capital, or a revolution against the state, general boycotts of major capitalist products are “legal and nonviolent, at the same time as being most damaging to capital.”³⁷

This type of resistance, distinguishing itself from both the exploitation of commodity exchange and the violent coercion typical of the state (either in the repression *of* workers in liberalism or the repression *by* the workers in communism), allows for and is fostered by the creation of an alternative to the three previous types of exchange. If a general boycott functions *within* the circulation process to disrupt exploitation, Karatani also advocates consumer/worker co-ops that function *outside* of capitalist production through the use of an alternative means of exchange. Borrowing from Michael Linton, who developed the idea of “Local Exchange Trading Systems”(or LETS), Karatani explains how these co-ops would offer an alternative currency for the exchange of goods and services organized according to a sum zero count meant to ensure that the ‘C-M-C’ process does not transform back into the ‘M-C-M’ process. In this way transactions are always equal, without the possibility of profit or interest occurring in circulation, which ensures that the only debt incurred is that between the actual commodities themselves— either objects or services. This type of exchange, which Karatani names ‘associationism’, is similar to the “exchange of mutual aid in traditional communities and that of the capitalist commodity economy,” minus the psychological compulsion of traditional communities and the imposition of interest in capitalism.³⁸ This ‘associationism’ would consist of shared mutual aid without being enclosed within a traditional community, and it would be able to facilitate exchanges across time and space without requiring the asymmetrical relationships generated by money.³⁹

Returning to Chauvet, in light of Karatani’s analysis, how might Chauvet’s utilization of symbolic exchange be supplemented? How might the modes of exchange presented by Karatani, especially the commodity exchange via money, expand Chauvet’s conception of the symbolic exchange of grace, especially in its economic and political registers? More importantly, how might the symbolic exchange enacted in the Eucharist offer a proper basis for Karatani’s resistance to the capitalist nation-state? Turning to Chauvet and his textual analysis of the Eucharistic Prayer, I outline how the Eucharist not only offers a possible form of resistance to Capitalist exploitation, but is rather an actual witness to, and

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 296.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 206.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 299. It is exactly here that Karatani would disagree with the extension of the reciprocity of gift and return of agrarian societies to our society made by Marcel Mauss (*The Gift*, trans. W.D. Halls [London: Routledge, 1990], 65-83). For Karatani, Mauss’ social democracy stems from the failure to distinguish the three modes of exchange.

³⁹ Karatani, *Transcritique*, 276.

participant in, the divine economy of grace that restores and redeems the exploitative relationships between production and consumption.

Symbolic Exchange and the Eucharistic Prayer

Following Chauvet, this examination of the Eucharistic Prayer proceeds in two movements: The first examines the narrative programs of the Eucharistic Prayer in relation to the circulation of Christ.⁴⁰ The second articulates the gift–reception–return-gift aspect of the symbolic exchange enacted in the prayer issuing forth a graced subject capable of graced exchanges, or rather, a subject living-in-grace.

In his analysis of the Eucharistic Prayer, Chauvet notes how one principal theme is given via three narrative programs. This theme takes the form of the people (operating subjects) giving thanks (objects) to God (the receiving subject), expressed in the opening phrase and concluding doxology of the prayer. However, it is not:

natural for us to render thanks to God in a Christian manner. To carry out the Eucharist requires that the Church first gain this competence. It is precisely the text that allows the ecclesial subject *to gain* this *competence*. This text thus makes the assembly follow an itinerary which, by means of certain “transformations,” has for its goal the assembly’s conversion: it is not God but we ourselves who are changed by the Eucharistic prayers.⁴¹

Because of this, three narrative programs that weave together the historical, sacramental, and ecclesial body of Christ while rendering the participants competent to give praise to God supplement the principal theme in which the participants give thanks and glory to God. The first narrative program (NP) begins with the initial thanksgiving and culminates in the Sanctus. The thanksgiving narrates that the Father gives the gift of the Son, in the form of his historical body. Or as Chauvet represents it:

NP₁: God (Father) → Historical Body of Christ → We

The second narrative program, in the form of a petition, consists of the epiclesis, the words of institution and anamnesis. This petition “entreats the Father to send the Spirit of sanctification to transform the bread and wine into the *body and blood of Christ*.”⁴² In the words of institution it is Christ, himself, who offers his

⁴⁰ While the structure of the Eucharistic Prayer has remained essentially the same since the Patristic Age, Chauvet’s particular analysis comes from a Catholic orientation. See Enrico Mazza, *The Celebration of the Eucharist: The Origin of the Rite and the Development of its Interpretation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999).

⁴¹ Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 269 (emphasis in original).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 270 (emphasis in original).

sacramental body to us, and the anamnesis declares the accomplishment and offering of this sacramental body. This is rendered:

NP₂: God + Spirit → Sacramental body-blood of Christ → We

The last narrative program, in the form of a supplication, “begs the Father to send the Spirit over it [the Church] so that it may *become what it has just received*” such that the sacramental body of Christ might give rise to the ecclesial body of Christ.⁴³ Having received the sacramental body of Christ, the church asks that it might indeed be the ecclesial body of Christ. Chauvet thus renders this narrative program:

NP₃: God + Spirit → Ecclesial Body of Christ → We

Through these three narrative programs it is noted that it is God who creates, in the assembly, the capacity to give thanks and glory to him, and that this is done through the successive gift of the body of Christ to the people of God in historical, sacramental, and ecclesial form. These narrative programs outline the basic structure of the circulation of Christ, mediated through the sacrament, within the church.

Before examining the structure of gift–reception–return-gift we must note a complication between gift and reception within the Eucharistic prayer. This is first noted in the story of institution where the words of Christ are embedded in the prayer. This textual quotation without transition or augmentation shifts from the ‘we’ of the present congregation to the ‘you’, which Jesus spoke to his disciples. Situating this quotation within the prayer functions—along with the anamnesis—to conjoin the past and the present, drawing the Church into the time of the original disciples. “By invoking the witness of Jesus, it is the Church who is convoked by him...*This story by the Church about Jesus in the past* functions in effect as *the words of the Lord Jesus to the Church in the present.*”⁴⁴ The institution is a principal place in the prayer where the church receives itself, in radical dependence from Christ, for even in offering, or giving, the words of Christ back to the Father in prayer, the church finds that Christ gives himself to the church in his sacramental body. Therefore, at the moment when the church offers something to God the Father, the church finds itself receiving from God in Christ enabled by the Holy Spirit. In giving the church receives, breaking down the gift-reception distinction.

Likewise, the anamnesis makes explicit what is implicit in the institution, but in reverse. For “at the very moment when...the Church is in the process of *receiving* the bread and wine as the sacramental body and blood of its Lord—behold, it *offers them.*”⁴⁵ Because God’s grace is outside the order of value, it is only in offering thanks and glory to God that the church receives grace. Or rather, “the

⁴³ Ibid., 271.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 274 (emphasis in original).

⁴⁵ Ibid., 275.

appropriation of this non-object that is ‘grace’ can occur only under the mode of disappropriation” where the Church possesses grace through the dispossession of oblation.⁴⁶ Chauvet makes it clear that this appropriation by the disappropriation of grace does not register as our return-gift to God, but rather is the mode of reception itself; every true reception of a gift—according to the symbolic exchange—functions through disappropriation as the possibility for the emergence of the subject, in this case a graced believer.

Before considering how the Eucharistic Prayer might illumine Karatani’s project, we must make explicit the gift–reception–return-gift circuit enacted in the Eucharist. According to Chauvet’s schematic, in the position of **Gift** is: (a) *scripture*, which presents the (b) historical body of Christ, which is the (c) gift from God, in the (d) past. Under the aspect of **Reception** is: (a) the *sacrament*, which presents the (b) sacramental body of Christ, which is (c) received in the mode of oblation, in the (d) present. The last aspect of **Return-Gift** culminates as: (a) *Ethics* or *agape* living, which is the (b) verification of the ecclesial body of Christ, as the (c) return-gift of living-in-grace, in the (d) already/not-yet of the kingdom of God.⁴⁷ Without this return-gift of *agape* ethics, which is interior to the circuit of grace, and not to be construed as ‘works’, grace would be refused and Christian identity stillborn. The Eucharistic prayer enacts the reality of grace between God and humanity; this entire process is the *becoming* of Christian identity, which is always on its way. This is emphasized by the fact that the sacrament is a point of passage, rather than departure or arrival. The departure is the initial gift of God given in Christ and the arrival is living-in-grace with each other.⁴⁸

In Chauvet’s summary of his analysis of the Eucharistic exchange the convergence between Chauvet and Karatani becomes clear:

The “object” placed into *circulation* in the exchange is Christ himself and that he comes to us in his threefold body, through the Spirit: he is the gratuitous gift announced in the Scriptures [historical body]... he is the object sacramentally received in the Church’s “giving thanks,” the entire liturgy of Christians [sacramental body]; he is the object entrusted to the ethical responsibility of believers—by the “spiritual sacrifice” of their *agape*, he raises up a body for himself within humanity [the ecclesial body]. This “object” does not change the structure of the game itself. But...it demands *another reading* of this structure, and this changes everything...⁴⁹

The structure of this game, however, is not only on the anthropological level of the symbolic exchange as Chauvet explains it, but also the economic level of exchanging commodities via money, as Karatani explains it. In this light, the

⁴⁶ Ibid., 276.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 278.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 280-282.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 289 (emphasis mine).

circulation of the Christ 'object' demands *another reading* in relation to money and capitalism, which in return will offer *another reading* of money and capitalism itself.

Christ in Circulation

In this last section, with the Eucharist's principles of symbolic exchange in mind, I hope not merely to correlate an ethics of grace (as return-gift) to an economics of grace (as non-exploitation).⁵⁰ While this should be practiced, it is not the case that economic life is merely an application of a Eucharistic teaching. This would reduce the Eucharist to an object lesson, situating it more in the realm of instrumental causality rather than that of the symbolic order. Rather, the point is not merely that Christians verify their reception of grace by ethically living out a non-exploitative economic existence; the stronger claim is that the gift of grace mediated by the sacrament is an alternative circulation (of Christ) that stands against, although within, the circulation of money within the capitalist nation-state. Or as Tanner has said regarding a theological economy and global capitalism, they are not parallel planes but intersecting vectors⁵¹ struggling for material recourses, faithful subjects, and productive desires. I note three ways in which the Trinitarian gift of grace within the Eucharist presents *another reading* of Karatani's resistance to the trinity of the capitalist nation-state, offering seeds of an alternative economy.

The first concerns Karatani's constitution of the worker/consumer. As noted above, the worker is in a position of weakness when she must sell her labor commodity for money, being in need of money to buy the necessities of life. Therefore, to engage in a strike both endangers the worker's livelihood and will probably provoke the state (for whenever capital is threatened the state steps in evoking national empathy), all of which make it exceedingly difficult for a worker to truly resist the exploitation in which she is a part. For this reason, Karatani claims that the worker is structurally 'passive'. However, in spending wages the worker is simultaneously a consumer and therefore 'active'. The transposition of the worker into a consumer also transposes the relation of power between the worker turned consumer and the capitalist turned seller such that the capitalist must wait upon the consumer to complete the circuit of 'M-C-M'. Because of this, for Karatani, all forms of resistance must proceed from the consumer side of this process rather than the worker side.

While this is the case objectively and structurally, Karatani never makes the subjective case for why a worker/consumer would desire to take up the burden of resistance rather than simply minimize her exploitation by passing it down the line of workers or the global chain (from advanced to developing nations). The reason for this problem is that, for Karatani, the moments of being a worker and then being a consumer are separated in time and space constituting a rather large gap in the minds and imaginations of these workers/consumers. Yet in the

⁵⁰ See Tanner, *Economy of Grace* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2005).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

Eucharistic exchange of grace, the very moment of being a consumer (reception) is marked within the moment of being a worker (offering), as Chauvet says, possession is always marked by dispossession, and the Christian form of appropriation is through disappropriation. In these somewhat inappropriate terms for the Eucharist, the disparate moments of being a worker or a consumer occur simultaneously through the single action of oblation. This creates a subject capable of living-in-grace (or *agape* living with one another), which by extension disallows the passing off exploitation to others for the benefit of oneself; only in giving do we receive grace, which is the very gift of ourselves from God. Because the moments of worker/consumer are united in the Eucharist, living-in-grace means engaging in each act as a consumer with an eye toward its correlative action or towards the workers of that commodity, no matter how far removed temporally or spatially. This is not an application of, but living in the Eucharist. This covers the concern for the conditions of workers who produce our clothing, harvest our food, transport commodities, and maintain all other aspects of life. This concern is expressed through not participating in the economies of countries or companies known for exploitative practices, as well as intentionally foregoing the comforts afforded a lifestyle patterned after the slogan of "Save money, Live better"⁵² — a lifestyle predicated on the separation of consumers (locally) from workers (globally). This living-in-grace with each other, before God, would refuse the benefit of displaced exploitation (veiled by the supposedly neutral exchange of money), opting to spend more to ensure the transparency of production, knowing that each purchase is either a verification or invalidation of grace as a return-gift to God.

The second way the Eucharist presents a reading of Karatani concerns the circulation of money within capitalism ('M-C-M') as it is structurally broken down in its constitutive moments, the production process of 'M-C' and the circulation process of 'C-M'. As in the case of the worker/consumer, within the moments of production/circulation Karatani places the emphasis on the second term as the site of resistance. He does this to draw out the implications of arresting the normal flows of capital disguised as commodities. But just as it unites the moments of the worker/consumer, the Eucharistic exchange also unites the production and circulation process as God the Father and Holy Spirit put Christ into circulation as the historical 'object', the sacramental 'object', and the ecclesial 'object', given for the life of the world. In putting Christ into circulation, which places the church into an alternative process of production and consumption, the Father institutes an alternative economy where production and consumption are identical. Here the object circulated (the body of Christ) is not exhausted but multiplied in consumption, and the object produced (the church) is not sold on the market but given away. This circulation functions according to the logic of abundance rather than scarcity, encouraging cooperation rather than exploitation at the level of production, and sustainability rather than profitability at the level of circulation.⁵³ In each individual or

⁵² Current Wal-Mart slogan as of Jan, 2010.

⁵³ See Tanner, *Economy of Grace*, 105-139.

corporate action as the body of Christ, the church ought not only to arrest the circulation of money through non-exploitative purchasing as a resistance to the capitalist nation-state, but as a continuation and fulfillment of its very identity as the body of Christ circulating in the world.

Lastly, turning from Karatani's analysis of resistance centering on consumption and circulation, the final offering of *another reading* concerns Karatani's concrete proposals. As mentioned above, along with disrupting the normal flow of capital through a general boycott which directs money toward less damaging sectors and agents, Karatani advocates: (1) creating an alternative currency which would not create interest (LETS) and (2) creating producer/consumer cooperatives where the workers have full ownership over the means of production and transparent relationships with the consumers. Both of these options seek to create an alternative space for non-exploitative production and consumption beyond the constraints of the capitalist nation-state. From this perspective, it is clear that the church, as constituted by Christ in its reception of Christ, is already governed by an alternative currency beyond that propelled by the "continuing debt to love one another" (Rom. 13:8), which is a perpetual living-in-grace. Governed by the debt of love, which is repaid in the currency of actions (and therefore assimilates all possible currencies), this opens a space for halting the circulation of credit and debt created by money. Concurrently, the church is the proto-type of a consumer qua producer co-op where the 'object' of Christ is consumed *sacramentally* and produced *ecclesially* so that Christ might also be produced/consumed *ethically* in the world. Therefore, in the gift—reception—return-gift circuit of the symbolic exchange, the return-gift of ethics (as the verification of grace) joins together the separated poles of producer and consumer and creates not only an optimal space from which to resist the capitalist nation-state, but indeed, the very in-breaking of the Kingdom of God.⁵⁴

In these three ways the circulation of Christ closely mirrors the reciprocity of gift and return in agrarian societies, but functions trans-nationally and without coercion (just as Karatani's association would). Indeed, living in Christ, for Paul, as the continuing debt of love, overcomes the bloodlines of traditional communities (the family of Abraham extends beyond the Jews: Gal. 3: 26-29; Rom. 9:7-8), as well as moves beyond statist taxation and capitalist asymmetry (via the Gentile collection for the Jerusalem poor: 1 Cor. 16: 1-4; Rom. 15:16, 26-27). In these and other ways *agape* "is accomplished as an infinite exchange between peoples"⁵⁵; we have already been given the "*possibility* to love because we are given the true shape of love...within the series of Christ's continuous and coherent actions, and in the series of exchanges between him and his followers."⁵⁶ This obligation to love (as the circulation of Christ) resists the obligation of profit (within the circulation of money). This *agapic* obligation

⁵⁴ For an application of Chauvet to the practices of giving thanks, returning gifts, and consecrating property within capitalism see Beiler and Schottroff's *The Eucharist: Bodies, Bread, and Resurrection* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 91-128.

⁵⁵ Milbank, "Can a Gift be Given?" 149.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 150. (emphasis in original)

functions on the consumer side of circulation, fulfilling Karatani's condition of possibility for resisting the capitalist nation-state while also replacing the object of circulation (money), not merely with a sum-zero currency as in LETS, but a currency of infinite abundance in Christ; the infinite abundance in Christ, finally, unites the worker/consumer positions in a Eucharistic subjectivity, which materially discerns and enacts alternative valuations.⁵⁷ With these unities, the Trinitarian circulation of Christ unties the knot of the Trinitarian capitalist nation-state woven by the circulation of money.

This circulation of Christ in the Eucharist facilitates the initial material production of Christ's body linking individual, ecclesia, and cultural bodies.⁵⁸ This material production of Christ in the world, effecting material distributions, begins through a critique of, and alternative to, the circulation of money governing societal means and ends. The circulation of Christ in the Eucharist is not merely a symbolic gesture without material value; the Eucharist creates space for understanding value beyond the valuations inscribed by money. Or rather, if the Eucharist is purely symbolic, this is only because money itself has become a defining symbolic fiction creating its own reality, a reality that cannot be changed until its circulation is challenged. Indeed, to charge that the Eucharist has merely a symbolic function without material existence is to ignore Karatani's critique of Marxism and its focus on material distribution rather than the immaterial circulation of money. As for money, in which there is no true distinction between the material and immaterial, so also for the Eucharist. The body of Christ and its *agapic* obligation challenges the new political body of money and its obligation to seek and serve money itself (contra Christ's sending to seek and save the lost!).

In the Eucharist, it becomes possible to see through the obscuring veil of money and discern Christ in the world. One can see his hunger, his thirst, his nakedness, sickness, homelessness and imprisonment within every potential economic transaction (extending the parable of the sheep and the goats, Matt. 25: 31-46), even if his presence is displaced and distanced from our immediate purview. The Eucharist does not merely create an alternative worker/consumer consciousness, nor does it create an alternative site of production/circulation. Rather it always has been, and needs to again recover, its place as an alternative circulation, which opens sites for an alternative economy. This is not to say that the church must master all market relations, but rather that the circulation of Christ propels market relations toward goals very different from the economy of capitalism, which is propelled by money. The church is an alternative economy, not merely of spiritual matters, but of material concerns and resources, relating the spiritual and material in the mundane objects of bread and wine, dollars and

⁵⁷ For the helpfulness of Goodchild's suggestion of creating alternative institutions of valuation to counter the valuations of money, and therefore regulate sources of credit beyond mere profitability (*Theology of Money*, 244-258), he structurally excludes the moment of subjectivity (36-45) and therefore creates an impossible demand. Who will create and direct such institutions?

⁵⁸ See Timothy Brunk's "Consumer Culture and the Body: Chauvet's Perspective," *Worship* 82, no. July (2008): 290-310.

cents as the verification of living-in-grace or not. For within this global capitalist economy, the face looking back at us on the currency we use is always the face of Christ, pleading on behalf of the least of these. And it might very well be the case that every swipe of the credit card is the slow separation of the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the tares.

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