

# Church as Sacrament of Yin-yang Harmony: Toward a More Incisive Participation of Laity and Women in the Church

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## Abstract

The author proposes a development of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference's theology of church as a sacrament of harmony, drawing in particular from the East Asian concept of yin-yang unity and integration. In Daoist beliefs, yin and yang are the generative forces of the cosmos whose blending and balancing result in harmony or the unimpeded flow of Qi-Ch'i. Yin and yang are opposite, complementary, non-dualistic, and fluid qualities of beings/things relative to particular contexts. The yin-yang symbolism can be fruitful for reimagining man–woman, cleric–lay, and other dualities in the church as fluid polarities.

## Keywords

church as sacrament, dualism, Federation of Asian Bishops Conference, gender fluidity, harmony, laity, yin-yang

**P**ope Francis has encouraged theologians to “contribute to an up-to-date theology of women” toward a “more incisive female presence in the Church,” that is beyond their current roles in parishes.<sup>1</sup> Some women theologians, however,

1. Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (November 24, 2013), 3, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html).

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reject the concept of a theology of women that implies a dualistic gender complementarity, and instead call for a more robust theology of the laity.<sup>2</sup> To speak of a theology or, for that matter, an ecclesiology of the laity is, however, fundamentally problematic. The role of the laity can only be construed in relation to the clergy, and together they compose the people of God. Furthermore, an ecclesiology that promotes greater participation of the faithful in the ministries of the church cannot start from the clergy–lay distinction as an ontological status, and the dualistic differentiation of the domain of the clergy as intra-ecclesial and that of the laity as extra-ecclesial.<sup>3</sup> What we need is a shared ecclesiological vision under which both the ordained and the laity, men and women, are viewed as equal partners in church ministries.

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC) and its offices<sup>4</sup> have developed a theology of harmony<sup>5</sup> to promote dialogue and participation in the context of pluralism in Asia. In line with this, the Theological Advisory Commission (TAC)-FABC has spoken of the church as a communion of communities that is also a sacrament of harmony.<sup>6</sup> However, it has not adequately developed this idea to include as well the genuine participation of laity in the church, and of women in particular.

In this article, I will elaborate a model of church as sacrament of yin-yang harmony. I will argue that the yin-yang symbolism possesses potential to reimagine man–woman, cleric–lay and other dualities in the church as fluid polarities and enrich the FABC vision of church as sacrament of harmony.<sup>7</sup>

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2. Megan Fincher and Colleen Dunne, "Women Resistant to Pope Francis' Call for New Theology," *National Catholic Reporter* (November 4, 2013), <https://www.ncronline.org/news/women-resist-call-new-theology>.
  3. Richard Gaillardetz, "Does Vatican II Theology of the Laity have a Future?" <https://gaillardetz.com/2010/10/12/does-vatican-iis-theology-of-the-laity-have-a-future/>; Ladislav Orsy, *Receiving the Council: Theological and Canonical Insights and Debates* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 2009).
  4. The FABC is the regional conference of Asian bishops that was formed in 1970 and currently has 19 bishop's conferences as members and 8 associate members. The FABC-Office of Ecumenical Interreligious Dialogue (OEIA) instituted a series of Bishops Institute for Religious Affairs (BIRA) seminars for bishops and other church leaders, which aimed to deepen commitment to and understanding of dialogue.
  5. The theology of harmony is a theme suggested by the Fifth Plenary Assembly of the FABC in Bandung, Indonesia in 1990 and the FABC-OEIA. "FABC Theological Commission Explores Theology of Harmony at Annual Meeting," *UCANews* (May 3, 1993), [https://www.ucanews.com/story-archive/?post\\_name=/1993/05/03/fabc-theological-commission-explores-theology-of-harmony-at-annual-meeting&post\\_id=43252](https://www.ucanews.com/story-archive/?post_name=/1993/05/03/fabc-theological-commission-explores-theology-of-harmony-at-annual-meeting&post_id=43252).
  6. TAC-FABC, "Asian Christian Perspectives on Harmony," in *For All the Peoples of Asia Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1992–1996*, vol. 2, ed. Franz-Josef Eilers (Manila: Claretian, 1997), 294–95. Note that the heading of section 3.3.3.1 is "The Church as Communion: Sacrament of Harmony."
  7. Peter Phan has casually referred too to "yin-yang harmony" as an Asian resource that can be fruitful for rethinking church relations. Peter C. Phan, "The Church in Asian Perspective," in *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church*, ed. Gerard Mannion and Lewis Mudge (New York: Routledge, 2008), 275–90 at 286.

Avery Dulles defines a model as “a relatively simple, artificially constructed case that is found to be useful and illuminating for dealing with realities that are more complex and differentiated.”<sup>8</sup> In *Models of the Church*, Dulles analyzed traditional models of church, identified their goal or ultimate purpose, who benefits from this model (beneficiaries), and the bonds that unite the members, and evaluated them based on six criteria: (1) the model’s foundation in Scripture and the post-apostolic tradition; (2) its ability to provide a corporate identity and mission; (3) the capacity of the model to foster Christian virtues; (4) correspondence of the model with the religious experience of people today; (5) its theological fecundity; and (6) its potential for positive relations of church members with those outside their group.<sup>9</sup> For my own proposed model, I shall likewise analyze its goal, beneficiaries, and bonds, and evaluate it based on these same criteria. This study hopes to make a significant contribution toward an East Asian<sup>10</sup> reimagining of ecclesiology that is pluralistic and inclusive of lay women and men equally with clergy in church ministries.<sup>11</sup>

## A Church Still in Need of Renewal

A dominant model of church that has been operative for centuries is that of a two-tiered church where on the one hand, you have the clergy or the ordained who officially govern, teach, and sanctify, and on the other hand, the laity or non-ordained, understood as non-professionals, who in turn are governed, taught, and sanctified.

The Vatican II teaching on the laity is a great improvement from the pre-conciliar view of the laity as passive recipients of the clergy’s pastoral initiatives. Signs of a movement toward a new ecclesiology founded not on the clergy–lay distinction but on the primacy of baptism and discipleship can be discerned in the Council.<sup>12</sup> Three terms

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8. Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983), 30. *Lumen Gentium* 6 speaks of how the church has often been spoken of through various images or metaphors “from tending sheep or cultivating the land, from building or even from family life and betrothals.” See *Lumen Gentium* (November 24, 1964) 6, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html) (hereafter cited as *LG*).
  9. Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 2nd ed. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan 1987), 45, 191.
  10. The term “East Asia” is often used to refer to the countries with significant Chinese influence (e.g. People’s Republic of China, Taiwan, Korea, etc.), also called the Northeast Asian countries. In other contexts, the name “East Asia” is employed to likewise encompass what is designated as Southeast Asian countries (e.g. Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand) which have significant Chinese population and cultural influence as well. It is in the latter broader sense that we are using the term “East Asia.”
  11. For a background on other alternative feminist images of church such as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Rosemary Radford Ruether’s “Women-Church” and Letty Russell’s church as “table fellowship,” as well as a critique of traditional images of church as bride of Christ, servant, and body of Christ, see Natalie K. Watson, “Feminist Ecclesiology,” in *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church*, ed. Mannion and Mudge, 461–75.
  12. See *LG* 9–17; Kenan B. Osborne, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church: Its History and Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1993).

have been employed to refer to the common baptism and shared discipleship of all believers: “people of God,” *christifideles*, and “priesthood of all believers.”<sup>13</sup> By virtue of their baptism, the laity, as part of the people of God, “are *in their own way* made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ; and they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world.”<sup>14</sup> The phrase “in their own way” suggests the distinctiveness of the laity’s participation, which Giovanni Magnani characterizes as a contrastive theology.<sup>15</sup> This theology regards the laity and the clergy as complementary members with their own roles in the church: the laity’s sphere is basically the secular world, while that of the clergy is the church. The mission of the laity is *ad extra*, pertaining to the temporal order while that of the clergy is *ad intra*, pertaining to the church. Ladislav Orsy rightly argues that a theology that claims “the laity has the special task to sanctify the secular but is not mandated to build the church from the inside is a truncated theory. Similarly, to assert that the business of the clergy is to build the church from the inside and not to improve the world would be faulty theology.”<sup>16</sup>

The clergy–lay distinction in this contrastive theology seems to be clear but there are fissures in its understanding. *Lumen Gentium* 33 has noted that the lay role is not confined to temporal affairs:

The laity can also be called in various ways to a more direct form of cooperation in the apostolate of the Hierarchy. This was the way certain men and women assisted Paul the Apostle in the Gospel, laboring much in the Lord. Further, they have the capacity to assume from the Hierarchy certain ecclesiastical functions, which are to be performed for a spiritual purpose.<sup>17</sup>

The contrastive theology conflicts too with the statement in the Vatican II Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity which states that “The laity carry out their manifold apostolate in the church and in the world” (*LG* 33). In both areas there are various opportunities for apostolic activity.

13. However, these terms have also been used in post-Vatican II documents to refer to the laity, thus sending mixed signals and leading to confusion about their meaning. Osborne, *Ministry*, 593.

14. *LG* 31, 34–37 (italics mine).

15. Giovanni Magnani, “Does the So-called Theology of the Laity Possess a Theological Status?” in *Vatican II: Assessment and Perspectives*, vol. 1, ed. René Latourelle (New York: Paulist, 1988), 568–633 at 597ff.

16. Ladislav Orsy, “The Church of the Third Millennium: In Praise of Communio,” in *Common Calling: Laity and Governance of the Catholic Church*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2004), 229–51 at 245.

17. *LG* 33, citing *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (November 18, 1965), 9, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651118\\_apostolicam-actuositatem\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html).

The 1983 Code of Canon Law<sup>18</sup> lists many possibilities for ministry of laypersons within the church<sup>19</sup> such as being appointed as administrator of a parish (c. 517§2), eucharistic minister (c. 230§3), minister of Baptism (c. 861§2), minister of the word to preach but not give a homily (c. 766–67),<sup>20</sup> professor or dean in theological schools, rector of a Catholic or ecclesiastical university (c. 810–12, 818), experts or consultors on church matters (c. 228§2), vice-chancellor (c. 483§2), finance officer of a diocese (c. 494§1). *Pastor Bonus* allows lay people's appointment at the Roman Curia as consultors, senior administrators, or officials.<sup>21</sup>

In these functions or offices, while laypersons for the most part can only make their opinions known, they do not have the power to vote or to decide, because Canon 129 restricts the power of governance within the church only to those who have been ordained. Furthermore, many of these roles are still in the hands of the ordained, and if laypersons are appointed, they are mostly men. Yet, from the preceding, it is clear that it was already possible for women even decades earlier to be appointed to higher positions in the diocese or the Roman Curia if those in the hierarchy were open to their immediate cooperation in the hierarchy's work. That these provisions have not been widely implemented shows that change is needed in the hierarchy's attitude toward laypersons and women in particular.<sup>22</sup>

The persistence of a bias is rooted not only in the dualistic and contrastive theologies of clergy–laity but also of male–female. Reflecting the contrastive theology of clergy–laity are Vatican II and post-Vatican II teachings on the complementarity of men and women's roles based on their differing nature. While *Gaudium et Spes* recognizes women's right to participate in the different spheres of life, it qualifies that this should be done “in accordance with their *own nature*.”<sup>23</sup> Pope Paul VI in *Octogesima Adveniens* cautions as well: “We do not have in mind that false equality which would be in contradiction with the woman's proper role, which is of such capital importance at the heart of the family as well as within society.”<sup>24</sup> Pope John Paul II further rigidifies this

18. *The Code of Canon Law* (London: Collins Liturgical, 2001).

19. Myriam Wijles, “Women in the Church: Canonical Perspective,” *L'Osservatore Romano* (January 2, 2017), <http://www.osservatoreromano.va/en/news/women-church-canonical-perspective>.

20. This prohibition has been reinforced by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments in *Redemptionis sacramentum* (March 25, 2004) 64, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccdds\\_doc\\_20040423\\_redemptionis-sacramentum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20040423_redemptionis-sacramentum_en.html).

21. John Paul II, *Pastor Bonus* (June 28, 1988) 9, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_constitutions/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apc\\_19880628\\_pastor-bonus.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_19880628_pastor-bonus.html).

22. See also Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Feminist Theology and a Participatory Church,” in *A Common Calling*, 126–40 at 136.

23. *Gaudium et Spes* (December 7, 1965) 60, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html) (italics mine; hereafter cited as *GS*).

24. Paul VI, *Octagesima Adveniens* (May 14, 1971) 13, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_apl\\_19710514\\_octogesima-adveniens.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniens.html).

male–female complementarity in his theological anthropology that identifies woman with the feminine (understood as marked by receptivity and openness to new life), and implicitly, man with the masculine (understood as opposite to the feminine but in a way that has been left undefined): “Consequently, even the rightful opposition of women to what is expressed in the biblical words, ‘He shall rule over you’ (Gen 3:16) must not under any condition lead to the ‘masculinization’ of women.”<sup>25</sup> He locates a woman’s value in her personhood and in a femininity defined by particular attention to persons.<sup>26</sup>

In contrast, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, as then head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), implicitly suggests a more fluid view of femininity in the document, “On the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World.” Here he notes that femininity as the capacity for the other is “more than simply an attribute of the female sex.” While femininity for women involves, though not exclusively, the “woman’s physical capacity to give life,” he adds, “[t]he feminine values mentioned here are above all human values.”<sup>27</sup> By implication, though neither explicitly expressed nor defined, masculinity is also not just a trait of the male, but expresses values that are also above all human values.

Francis does not depart from the teachings of his predecessors, although Michael Lawler and Todd Salzman see him nuancing complementarity in four senses.<sup>28</sup> First, he understands complementarity as a result of differing gifts of the Spirit which, when shared and brought together, can benefit each one. Second, he holds a historically conscious and dynamic view of complementarity; the roles and relations of sexes are not fixed in a single pattern. Third, he foregrounds the role of social sins that block the realization of complementarity toward a “new human ecology.” Lastly, he views the family as an anthropological fact that should be examined in all its complexities, and with consideration regarding new forms of families that have emerged. Whether this more nuanced view of complementarity would in actual practice translate to granting the laity and especially women official governing and teaching functions remains to be seen.

25. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* (August 15, 1988) 10, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_letters/1988/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_19880815\\_mulieris-dignitatem.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19880815_mulieris-dignitatem.html) (hereafter cited as MD). In *Love and Responsibility*, a book written by John Paul II before he became pope, he identifies the experiences of puberty, menstruation, and menopause as the factors that predispose the woman to be open to new life and that leads to the attention to persons. Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993).

26. John Paul II, *Pope John Paul II Speaks on Women*, ed. Brooke Williams Deely (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 2014), 175.

27. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “On the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World” (May 31, 2004), 14, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20040731\\_collaboration\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040731_collaboration_en.html).

28. Michael Lawler and Todd Salzman, “Pope Francis Brings Nuance to Notion of Complementarity,” *Commonweal* (May 29, 2015), <https://www.ncronline.org/news/theology/pope-francis-brings-nuance-notion-complementarity>.

For example, a woman could be appointed to the Congregation for Religious Institutes, where three out of four religious are women,<sup>29</sup> or a qualified married woman to the newly approved Congregation for Laity, Family, and Life.

Francis, however, dismissed both the proposal for a woman to head a dicastery remarking that this would be “simple functionalism” and the possibility of appointing women cardinals, saying that this is falling into “clericalism” (even if there had been lay cardinals before).<sup>30</sup> Echoing John Paul II, he underlines that the “essential role of women” consists in the expression of “the feminine genius.”<sup>31</sup>

Up to the present, the complementary view of both lay–clergy and women–men has been at the root of laity/women’s marginalization or exclusion from greater participation in church ministries.

## **FABC’s Church as Communion: Sacrament of Harmony**

Though not addressing the above issues directly, the FABC model of church as “communion of communities” aims to foster dialogue and participation within the church and with outside groups.

### *Church as “Communion of Communities”*

Central to Vatican II is the declaration that the church is a communion of persons.<sup>32</sup> The concept of communion has been derived from the biblical and patristic notion of *koinonia*. To live in Christ is to live in the church, the body of Christ (1 Cor 12;

29. Luiz Carlos Susin, Susan Ross, and Silvia Scatena, “Editorial: Reform of the Roman Curia,” trans. Francis McDonagh, *Reform of the Roman Curia*, ed. Susin, Scatena, and Ross, *Concilium* 5 (2013), 11.

30. Barbara Boland, “Pope Francis: There Will Be No Women Cardinals” (December 16, 2013), <https://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/barbara-boland/pope-francis-there-will-be-no-women-cardinals>.

31. “Pope Francis: ‘Feminine Genius,’ not ‘Functionalism,’ Key to Women’s Role in Church” (May 18, 2015), <https://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=24949>. In 2017, the pope appointed two lay women as undersecretaries in the Congregation for Laity, the Family, and Life. The new statute for the dicastery allows lay people to assume key positions except the role of the prefect which must be held by a cardinal. Earlier in 2016, Francis also set up a commission composed of six women and six men to study the history of women deacons in the early church. Should the pope decide to ordain women deacons, study commission member Phyllis Zagano notes that this can pave the way not necessarily toward women’s ordination but for women assuming governing functions in the church. Canon law allows the ordained to assume governing functions, and this, Zagano points out, is not confined to priestly ordination; it can include diaconal ordination. See Phyllis Zagano, *Women and Catholicism: Gender, Communion, and Authority* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

32. Orsy, “The Church of the Third Millennium,” 33.

Rom 12).<sup>33</sup> As head of the CDF and later as pope, Josef Ratzinger promoted the image of the church as communion of persons.<sup>34</sup> Ecclesialogist Richard Gaillardetz has noted, however, that the Ratzinger-Benedict communion ecclesiology emphasizes (1) the hierarchical nature of the church's communion, (2) the supremacy of the universal over the local churches, (3) the primacy of the Eucharist over baptism, (4) the stress on apostolic succession over baptismal priesthood, and (5) intra-ecclesial communion over the church's worldwide mission.<sup>35</sup> Still, the image of church as communion, when disarticulated from a contrastive theology, possesses potential for fostering greater collaboration by the faithful in church ministries. Such a communion can engage in a novel way of practicing authority.

The FABC started exploring the image of church as communion in the early 1980s. The Third FABC plenary document "The Church—A Community of Faith in Asia" affirms that "the Church is at its deepest level a *communion (koinonia)* rooted in the life of the Trinity."<sup>36</sup> In the Fifth FABC plenary in Bandung, the bishops coined the phrase "communion of communities" (e.g. neighborhood groups, Basic Ecclesial Communities and "covenant" communities) "where laity, Religious and clergy recognize and accept each other as sisters and brothers."<sup>37</sup>

For the FABC, the church as "communion of communities" is participatory, dialogical, and prophetic.<sup>38</sup> A *participatory* church is one which acknowledges the gifts of the Holy Spirit to all the faithful—lay, religious, and cleric alike—so that they can be used to build up the church and realize its mission.<sup>39</sup> Earlier plenary assembly documents such as those of FABC III have admonished against churches neglecting to promote authentic participation and co-responsibility:

Sometimes organs of lay participation and co-responsibility have not been established, or are left inactive and impeded, existing only in name. Often enough the gifts and charisms of the

33. Richard R. Gaillardetz, "The Ecclesiological Foundations of Ministry within an Ordered Communion," in *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood: Theologies of Lay and Ordained Ministry* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2003), 26–51 at 31.

34. The 1985 Extraordinary Synod called for a shift from the people of God to communion ecclesiology. This shift has been affirmed in John Paul II's apostolic exhortation *Christifidelis Laici* that underlined communion as the central ecclesiology of the Vatican II council. For an elaboration on their critique of people of God ecclesiologies, see Richard R. Gaillardetz, "The 'Francis Moment': A New Kairos for Catholic Ecclesiology," Plenary Session, Presidential Address, *Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings* 69 (2014): 63–80 at 64.

35. Gaillardetz, "The Ecclesiological Foundations," 65.

36. FABC III, "The Church—A Community of Faith in Asia" (1982), in *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1970 to 1991*, vol. 1 (henceforth *FAPA*, vol. 1), ed. Gaudencio Rosales and C. G. Arevalo (Manila: Claretian, 1992), 49–61 at 56.

37. FABC V, "Journeying Together toward the Third Millennium," 1990, in *FAPA*, vol. 1, 273–89 at 287.

38. FABC V, 287–88.

39. FABC V, 287.



laity—both women and men—are not duly recognized, welcomed or activated in significant functions and tasks of ministry and apostolate.<sup>40</sup>

FABC IV underlined the need for fostering an atmosphere of collegiality and co-responsibility and situates this within a “Church which is a communion that tries to liberate others from oppression and discrimination.”<sup>41</sup>

A *dialogical* church engages with people of other faiths and persuasions in a dialogue of life towards the integral liberation of all.<sup>42</sup> Dialogue here is not just a conversation among experts but an attitude and a way of living. For Christians to be able to shift to this dialogical way of life, the church itself should be the primary witness:

This change of consciousness is likely to happen only in a Church which is dialogical in its internal life and structures. At present, the life of some Church communities is characterized by monologue. In particular, young people, women and the poor remain often voiceless within the Church. Unless these people, who constitute the majority of humankind, can find their true voice, dialogue beyond Church’s boundaries will remain deeply flawed.<sup>43</sup>

A *prophetic* church proclaims the values of God’s reign; it critiques and transforms unjust situations and redress imbalances based on these values toward fostering genuine harmony founded on justice. It is “a leaven of transformation in this world and serves as a *prophetic sign* daring to point beyond this world to the ineffable Kingdom that is yet fully to come.”<sup>44</sup>

### Church as Sacrament of Harmony

This church as communion, the Theological Advisory Commission of the FABC proclaims, is also a sacrament of harmony.<sup>45</sup> The Vatican II documents clearly identify the church as a fundamental sacrament: “Since the Church is in Christ like a sacrament

40. FABC III, “The Church—A Community of Faith in Asia,” 57.

41. FABC IV, “The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World of Asia,” in *FAPA*, vol. 1, 178–98 at 194.

42. FABC IV, 194; see also FABC I, “Evangelization in Modern Day Asia,” 11–25 at 14.

43. BIRA IV/12, 1991, in *FAPA*, vol. 1, 325–34 at 333. On the disconnect between what FABC says in church documents on equality and co-responsibility in the church and women’s actual experience, see Antoinette Gutzler, “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi: ‘Women Matters’ as an Asian Theological Concern,” in *Harvesting from the Asian Soil: Towards an Asian Theology*, ed. Vimal Tirimanna (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corp., 2011), 213–26; Women’s Voice, Malaysia, “A Feminist Vision of a Participatory Church,” in *Ecclesia of Women in Asia: Gathering the Voices of the Silenced*, ed. Evelyn Monteiro and Antoinette Gutzler (Bangalore: ISPCK, 2005), 199–209; N. J. Viehland, “Q & A with Agnes Brazal,” Global Sisters Report (October 16, 2014), <http://globalsistersreport.org/blog/q/trends/q-agnes-brazal-12961>.

44. FABC V, 288.

45. Theological Advisory Commission (TAC)-FABC, “Asian Christian Perspectives on Harmony,” in *FAPA*, vol. 2, 229–98 at 294–95.

or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race, it desires now to unfold more fully to the faithful of the Church and to the whole world its own inner nature and universal mission."<sup>46</sup> Because a sacrament possesses both a visible and interior dimension, the advantage of the sacrament model of the church lies in its ability to stress the importance of both its institutional character (visible aspect) and inward disposition of communion (interior aspect).<sup>47</sup>

For the FABC, the church is not only a sacrament of Christ but of the harmony that Christ brings forth. The Report on the Assembly of the First Bishops' Institute for Interreligious Affairs (BIRA) on the Theology of Dialogue affirms the centrality of the Asian value for harmony: "*Harmony* seems to constitute in a certain sense the intellectual and affective, religious and artistic, personal and societal soul of both persons and institutions in Asia."<sup>48</sup>

There is no essential concept of "harmony" in Asia nor even a common language to express it. BIRA V/2 expounds on how harmony can be manifested at different levels: at the intrapersonal level in the integration of body and mind; at the cosmic level as one lives harmoniously with nature and shares equitably the gifts of nature; at the social level as we live in communities of fellowship and freedom regardless of cultural, ethnic, and religious identities; at the global level as we collaborate with others to promote harmony; and harmony with God or the ultimate goal of life.<sup>49</sup>

What does it mean for the church as communion to be a sacrament of harmony of humankind? Whereas communion is usually linked to the one body in Christ with many parts, the image that harmony conveys is that of the blending together of a plurality. In this sense, the vision of harmony complements the image of communion.

## Yin-yang Discourses

The East Asian concept of harmony in the yin-yang symbolism possesses the potential to enrich the FABC vision of the church as sacrament of harmony in a way that transcends dualisms or contrastive theologies in the church to promote dialogue and participation.

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46 LG 1.

47 Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 77.

48 BIRA IV/1, 1984, in *FAPA*, vol. 1, 247–50 at 249 no. 13. To speak in terms of the "soul" of a culture may sound "culturalist," distinguishing between the "kernel" (soul) and the "husk" (body) of a culture. In our postcolonial framework, we have moved beyond this concept of culture. Nevertheless, it remains important to note the centrality of the category of "harmony" for Asians.

49. "BIRA V/2: A Call to Harmony," in *FAPA*, vol. 2, 149–53 at 151.

## Harmony in the Balance of Yin and Yang

In many East Asian cultures, harmony is believed to be the fruit of a balance and blending of fluid dualities. In Daoism/Taoism, the Dao/Tao is usually represented in the form of *Taiji/Tai Chi* which symbolizes the two generative forces in the universe—yin and yang. All beings possess the duality of yin and yang. Religious Daoism seeks harmony through interior practices that refine one's bodily Qi.<sup>50</sup> Qi is the "source of vitality, harmony, creativity, and moral courage."<sup>51</sup> The imbalance of yin and yang can affect the flow of Qi and produce chaos. An earthquake occurring in 780 BCE was explained in terms of the domination of the yin by the yang: "When the yang is concealed and cannot come forth, and when the yin is repressed and cannot issue out, then there are earthquakes."<sup>52</sup>

Many alternative healing methods are based as well on the balancing of the universal life force Qi. Illness in the Chinese culture is believed to be rooted in a blocked Qi. Therapies such as acupuncture<sup>53</sup> and acupressure allow the life force to flow freely. Health occurs in the harmonious balancing of yin and yang.<sup>54</sup> For example, sleep is associated with darkness and therefore yin is balanced by wakefulness, identified with brightness which is yang.

The earliest source of yin-yang discourse is the Book of Changes (*I Ching*), which is associated with the Zhou dynasty, established around 1050 BCE.<sup>55</sup> Yang means "sun," while yin means "absence of sun." The concept of yin-yang was illustrated as a hill with a shady (cool, moist, and less active) and a sunny side (warm, dry, and more active) that are the yin and yang, respectively. As the sun moves, the hill is transformed; the yin side becomes yang and the yang becomes yin. More than just a fixed character of things, yin and yang refer to structures and functions in specific and relative contexts. In its original meaning, it has referred to the function of the sun in

50. The Chinese notion of Qi has its origins in the Yin era (1751–1112 BCE), but was developed in the period between the sixth and fourth centuries BCE by philosophers such as Lao Ki, Kong Zu Fi (Confucius), and Men Zi (Mencius).

51. Qi seems to be parallel to the Japanese notion of *ki* and the Indian *prana* (divine breath on which everything depends for health and life), while the Qi in humans resembles the Visayan Filipino concept of *ginhawa* (second soul; breath of life).

52. Joel Kupperman, *Classic Asian Philosophy: A Guide to the Essential Texts* (New York: Oxford University, 2007), 343. Stephen F. Teiser, "Religions of China in Practice," in *Asian Religions in Practice: An Introduction*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1999), 118.

53. Yuasa Yasuo, *The Body, Self-Cultivation, and Ki-Energy*, trans. Shigenori Nagatomo and Monte S. Hull (New York: SUNY Series, 1993), 102.

54. See for instance, Marios Loukas, Julies Ferrauola, Mohammadali M. Shoja, and R. Shane Tubbs, "Anatomy in Ancient China: The Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon of Medicine and Wang Qingren's Correcting the Errors in the Forest of Medicine," *Clinical Anatomy* 23 (2010): 364–69 at 365.

55. Margaret J. Pearson, *The Original I Ching: An Authentic Translation of the Book of Changes Based on Recent Discoveries* (Tokyo: Tuttle, 2011).

relation to a hill—the sunny and shady side of a hill. In its dependence on context, something can be simultaneously yin and yang vis-à-vis multiple relations.<sup>56</sup>

This comparison to a hill with a sunny and shady side shows how its later abstraction into the well-known symbol of the Taiji (the Great Ultimate), a circle with a white dot on the black side and a black dot on the white side, is oversimplified and unable to demonstrate the fluidity of yin and yang.

Chinese scholar Robin Wang describes six ways of conceiving the relationship of yin and yang.<sup>57</sup> (1) Contradiction and opposition: Opposite qualities of yin and yang are relative, that is, they are only so in relation to something; something may be small in comparison to a mountain but large in comparison to an ant. Compared to the sun, the moon is yin but compared to the night sky, the moon is yang.<sup>58</sup> (2) Interdependence: This means that opposites cannot exist without the other. There is no up (yang) without a down (yin); no concept of brightness without darkness. Another meaning refers to how things exist, grow, and function. This type of interdependence is demonstrated in the alternation of yin and yang. The sun rises (yang) but also sets (yin). (3) Mutual inclusion: Yang always entails yin and vice versa, as illustrated in the symbol of the Taiji, with the yang as including a dot of yin and yin as including a dot of yang. Day is yang in quality and night is yin in quality but noon till dusk is the yin aspect of yang while midnight till dawn is the yang aspect of yin. (4) Interaction or resonance: A change in one will cause a change in the other. As darkness (yin) sets in, the light (yang) fades away. (5) Complementary or mutual support: Each side provides what is lacking in the other. Activity (yang) is completed by receptivity (yin). (6) Exchange and transformation: Each side of the duality transforms and changes into the other in an endless cycle. Just as in nature there is a time of decline and decay, there is also a period of growth, reproduction, and flourishing.

A common thread in these six ways of conceiving the yin-yang relation is that things are neither purely yin nor yang. These forces continually interact symbolizing harmony within creative tension and that reality is in a process of constant transformation.<sup>59</sup> This fluidity of yin and yang is recognized in the *I Ching*, whose subject as a whole is about change (“*T*” means change while “*Ching*” means classic).<sup>60</sup>

Not all descriptions of the yin-yang theory highlight the fluidity of yin and yang. In these discourses, yin and yang are represented as complementary—equal but fixed dualities. Other discourses extend the yin-yang symbolism to include oppositions considered hierarchical: yin is female and subordinate to yang, which is male; yin is young and subordinate to yang, which is old. Social hierarchies based on gender and age have been linked to a perceived natural subordination of yin to yang.<sup>61</sup>

56. Robin Wang, *Yinyang: The Way of Heaven and Earth in Chinese Thought and Culture* (New York: Cambridge University, 2012), 7.

57. Wang, “Yinyang,” 7.

58. Ann A. Pang-White, ed., *The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Chinese Philosophy and Gender* (London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

59. Teiser, “Religions of China in Practice,” 118.

60. Pearson, *The Original I Ching*, 21.

61. Pearson, *The Original I Ching*, 21.

## The Gendering of Yin and Yang

According to Wang, it was Dong Zhongshu (179–104 BCE), founder of imperial Confucianism, who merged yin-yang theory into Confucianism and who was responsible for the gendering of yin-yang.<sup>62</sup> In the process, many of yin-yang's earlier features such as its fluidity have been lost, as Zhongshu's interpretation favors yang over yin.

First he shifts the understanding of yin–yang interaction from harmony to imposed unity that presupposes the hierarchy of yang over yin. While harmony connotes the blending of difference without sacrificing particularities, imposed unity gathers together two elements to produce sameness that is in accordance with a prescribed ideal order. Second, Zhongshu introduced the interpretation of human nature in terms of yin and yang. He identifies yang with human nature and ren (benevolence) and yin with emotion and greed. Yin and yang became discrete entities and dualistic opposites. Yang is good and yin is evil. This discourse disparaged women and justified the domination of woman by man. Before Zhongshu, woman was considered in terms of her performative role; he changed the understanding of woman to fixed static terms.

Such a transformation of yin-yang occurred at a period when there was a need for a unity ideology that would promote the emperor's authority over the empire. As chief minister of Emperor Wu (140–87) of the Han dynasty, he dismissed from government service all non-Confucian scholars. Confucianism merged with yin-yang schools of thought served as a unifying ideology and provided a hierarchical cosmology that kept everything in its proper place and order under the emperor. Lisa Raphals explains this change in early Chinese thought as a transition from cyclic polarity as in the change of the seasons to oppositional polarity as in the distinction between gender that is premised on essential difference.<sup>63</sup>

Pearson, who likewise notes the ungendered meaning of yin-yang in its earliest representation, argues that now we know more of the social context of the production of *I Ching*. Although society was patriarchal, women as queens could govern cities, and lead victorious military campaigns. They had natural unbound feet and at the start of the Zhou dynasty, were about the same height as men.<sup>64</sup>

The gendered and rigidly dichotomous concept of yin-yang is anachronistic as this is absent in the *I Ching*.<sup>65</sup> In relation to the body and gender, the *Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor*, written between the first century BCE and seventh century CE, is the

62. Robin R. Wang, "Dong Zhongshu's Transformation of Yin-Yang Theory and Contesting of Gender Identity," *Philosophy East and West* 55 (April 2005): 209–231 at 209, <https://doi.org/10.1353/pew.2005.0013>.

63. Lisa Raphals, *Sharing the Light* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 1998), 143. According to Pearson, Wang Bi (d. 249 CE), who wrote the earliest existing commentary on the *I Ching*, assumed that the yin and yang concepts were gendered. He was followed by later scholars such as Kong Yingda (648 CE). Pearson, *The Original I Ching*, 19.

64. Pearson, *The Original I Ching*, 30–32.

65. Pearson, *The Original I Ching*, 21.

classic Chinese source on the body. The body is regarded as a microcosm of the cosmos. As the cosmos, the body is made up of the primordial stuff or fundamental energy called Qi. Unlike in the Western anatomical conception of the body made up of parts (e.g. organs, muscles, etc.) and where gender is based on the genitalia but also “ascribed to every single body part from the skull to the pelvis,” the Yellow Emperor’s body<sup>66</sup> consists of “congeries of vital processes” or “visceral systems of functions” and gender is based on the relative predominance of yin and yang.<sup>67</sup> Charlotte Furth notes how the presence of a womb has no relevance at all for female difference. The body from this Chinese perspective is androgynous and can have multiple combinations of yin and yang that, depending on time and circumstances, can vary not only between persons but within an individual as well.<sup>68</sup> An elderly man may be yang relative to a woman but yin in relation to a young lad.

Based on this, it is incorrect to identify yin-yang with Carl Jung’s anima-animus archetypes.<sup>69</sup> For Jung, men and women are polar opposites and essentially different.<sup>70</sup> Anima refers to feelings and attitudes associated with women that are present in men’s unconscious, while animus represents those qualities linked to men that are present in women’s unconscious. Jung particularly disliked masculine or animus-dominated women, that is, intellectual, independent, and trouser-wearing women.<sup>71</sup>

### *Yin-yang Harmony in God*

For Jung Young Lee, the Taiji (the Great Ultimate) lens allows us to look at reality in terms of “both/and” instead of the “either/or” way of thinking rooted in Greek dualism. Opposites are harmonized in the Taiji. From this perspective God can be both

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66. This is a phrase coined by Charlotte Furth in *A Flourishing Yin: Gender in China’s Medical History: 960–1665* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999), 19.

67. Nathan Sivin, *Traditional Medicine in Contemporary China* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1987), 4; see also Marie-Paule Ha, “Double Trouble: Doing Gender in Hong Kong,” in *Comparatively Queer: Interrogating Identities across Time and Cultures*, ed. W. Spurlin, J. Hayes, and Margaret R. Higonnet (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 140–41.

68. Furth, *A Flourishing Yin*, 44–45.

69. See for instance Peter K. H. Lee and Chung Hyun Kyung, “A Cross-Cultural Dialogue on the Yin-Yang Symbol,” 33, no. 3 *Ching Feng* (September 1990): 143, where theologian Lee associates Carl Jung’s anima-animus archetypes with yin-yang. Young Lee Hertig likewise mistakenly identifies yin and yang with Jung’s feminine and masculine archetypes. “The Asian-American Alternative to Feminism: A Yinist Paradigm,” *Missiology: An International Review* 26 (January 1998): 15–22 at 19, <https://doi.org/10.1177/009182969802600102>.

70. Carl G. Jung, “The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious,” trans. R. F. C. Hull, in *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, ed. S. H. Read, M. Fordham, and G. Adler, 3rd ed., vol. 7 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1938), at 209–10.

71. Carl G. Jung, “Woman in Europe,” 1927, trans. R. F. C. Hull in *Civilization in Transition, Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 10, ed. S. H. Read, M. Fordham, and G. Adler (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), 118.

transcendent and immanent. As immanent, God is both male and female, but as transcendent, is neither male nor female.<sup>72</sup> Khiok-Khng Yeo writes as well of the yin and yang in God. God's mystery and unknowableness is yin, and God's immanence and knowableness is yang.<sup>73</sup>

In a non-essentializing understanding of yin and yang, each person of the Trinity can be viewed as possessing both yin and yang qualities.<sup>74</sup> The Source of all being is yin in its unknowableness and yang in its function as creator. The Son made flesh in the historical Jesus exhibits yin qualities manifested in his prayerful contemplation, receptivity to pleas for healing, and yang qualities in his active promotion of God's reign, and anger at those who would place unnecessary restrictions to the true worship of God. The Spirit manifests yin in its "receptiveness, quiescence, and femininity"<sup>75</sup> and yang in its leading (impelling) role in Jesus' life, its ability to give life, to raise Jesus from the dead (Rom 8:11), and in the formation of the early church.

From another perspective, Grace Ji-Sun Kim argues in her book *The Holy Spirit, Chi, and the Other*, that Qi is the Spirit in the Asian context.<sup>76</sup> Both God and Qi are first cause from which everything proceeds, the source of the universe. Just as God breathed into Adam to give him vitality, ancient people in East Asia believed that all beings, and heaven and earth, breathed Qi.<sup>77</sup> The balance of yin and yang within the person, within society, and within the cosmos allows the free flow of Qi, the Great Harmony, the Spirit.

Shalom is the biblical concept closest to this vision of harmony.<sup>78</sup> Shalom in the Bible goes with justice (Is 32:17; Ps 85:11).<sup>79</sup> Jesus sought to redress socio-religious injustice or imbalances brought about by the cultic purity laws. In Jerome Neyrey's

72. Jung Young Lee, *The Theology of Change: A Christian Concept of God in an Eastern Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1979), 50–52.

73. Khiok-Khng Yeo, "The 'Yin and Yang' of God (Exo 3:14) and Humanity (Gen 1:26–27)," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 46 (1994): 319–32, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157007394x00374>.

74. Feminist theologians view the relationality, equality in difference, mutuality, and perichoresis in the Trinity as likewise a model for the church and its ministries that gives support to women's equal participation in the church. See Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "God in Communion with Us," in *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective*, ed. LaCugna (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993); Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992).

75. Lee, *Theology*, 110–11. Lee speaks of the Spirit as yin in relation to the Trinity, and as yang in relation to its role in humanity. The Son is yang relative to the Spirit but yin relative to the Father. Lee, *Theology*, 118n.19.

76. Kim, *The Holy Spirit, Chi, and the Other*.

77. Kim, *The Holy Spirit, Chi, and the Other*, 12–14. I shall be referring to the Spirit-Qi as equivalent to the Spirit when discussing the model of church as sacrament of yin-yang harmony.

78. TAC-FABC, "Asian Christian Perspectives on Harmony," 266, 272–73.

79. TAC-FABC, "Asian Christian Perspectives on Harmony," 40.

analysis, the great reversals in Luke–Acts introduced in Mary’s Magnificat are ultimately aimed at showing God’s mercy as impartiality. Jesus redrew the map of those who enjoyed the favor of God to include the dishonored and the unclean. Neyrey thus cautions, “‘Reversal,’ therefore may be too strong a word for this principle; inclusivity and impartiality better describe what is intended by this in Luke–Acts. It does not mean exclusion of those who are honored in society, wealthy, or happy.”<sup>80</sup> Instead, what is being done is balancing the imbalance<sup>81</sup> so the Spirit-Qi will flow unimpeded.

### *Yin-yang Harmony in Humanity*

As God manifests the harmony of yin and yang, humanity made in God’s image likewise exhibits both yin and yang qualities. The reading of humanity from a yin-yang lens has been shaped, however, in the past by the complementary theo-anthropological perspective. In Yeo’s rereading of Genesis 1:26–27, he identifies the female only with yin and the male with yang and the two together (co-humanity) as that which image God’s yin-yang. Similarly, Wang Jianguo describes yin and yang as non-dualistic, relational, and complementary, but notably absent in his description is the third characteristic of yin-yang theory, that of fluidity. In his reading, yin is opposite to yang and vice versa, though these are nondualistic in the sense that there is a yin in yang and a yang in yin. The absence of the fluidity of these forces allowed him to use it to endorse complementary but equal roles: “In God’s family, God does not want females to be masculinized or males to be feminized.”<sup>82</sup>

This echoes John Paul II’s caution in *Mulieris Dignitatem* that the struggle for women’s equality should not lead to women’s masculinization. “In the name of liberation from male ‘domination’ women must not appropriate to themselves male characteristics contrary to their own feminine ‘originality’.”<sup>83</sup>

Those who would hold that men are essentially yang but with a dot of yin and women are essentially yin with a dot of yang reflect the less rigid view of femininity-masculinity of Ratzinger. Women are more associated with femininity (yin), read as the capacity for the other, but even men can exhibit this feminine value: “[It is] only because women are more immediately attuned to these values that they are the reminder and the privileged sign of such values. But in the final analysis, every human being, man or woman,

80. Jerome Neyrey, *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 297.

81. Hertig, “A Yinist Paradigm,” 20. A yinist theology according to Hertig is supposed to redress the domination of yin by yang.

82. Wang Jianguo, “Imago Dei and Yin-Yang Philosophy: A Theological Reflection on the Relationship between Man and Woman,” *Chinese Theological Review* 13 (1992): 11–21 at 21.

83. *MD* 10. The perspective of the ungendered yin-yang discourse contrasts with John Paul II’s view of the body that is based on the polarization of the masculine and the feminine. In this discourse, no one sex is essentially yin (feminine) or yang (masculine); the wholistic person exhibits both yin and yang qualities/functions depending on particular contexts.



is destined to be for the other.”<sup>84</sup> The earlier meanings of yin and yang, though, take a more fluid perspective; not one gender is viewed as essentially yin nor yang; yin and yang are functions in certain contexts and not fixed characteristics.

The ideal human is one who has integrated harmoniously both yin and yang qualities. If one has an excess in yang, he or she should be formed to develop more yin qualities, and if the excess is in yin, to cultivate more of the yang qualities.<sup>85</sup> Cross-cultural researches on infants and children reveal that girls indeed are more sensitive and attentive to the emotion of others. They have a significantly stronger capacity to discern the emotions of others, especially distress; read social cues, especially negative ones; initiate communication; and respond to social interactions.<sup>86</sup> The church, however, uses this to underline women’s role as mothers and at most speaks of a “feminine genius,” but not the need for women in positions of official leadership in the church or the formation of men in these qualities. A yin-yang approach would strengthen men’s yin qualities as well as promote participation of women in official leadership, to balance the excess of yang energies toward fostering a more sensitive and compassionate church.

### **Church as Sacrament of Yin-yang Harmony: Goal, Beneficiaries, and Bonds**

In the yin-yang worldview, each one—male or female, clergy or lay—can be regarded as capable of exhibiting both yin and yang qualities. Harmony is achieved in the balance of yin and yang. The church as model of yin-yang harmony suggests that no one group—male or female, clergy or lay—can be stereotyped as assuming greater yang/“active” or yin/“passive” roles within the church and the secular sphere. In their participation in ministries, their yin and yang can be in constant transformation (with some active in certain ministries more than in others).

The goal or purpose of this model of church is to maintain harmony between the diverse groups within the church, in the world, and in the cosmos. Where there is imbalance of yin and yang or injustice *ad intra* or *ad extra*, the flow of the Spirit-Qi is blocked. Structures of church governance, teaching, and sanctification need to be reformed to become more inclusive and balanced. Ecclesialogists such as Paul Lakeland and Ormond Rush, for instance, have provided us with concrete visions for renewal and reform in church governance and the church’s teaching office.<sup>87</sup> Lakeland

84. CDF, “On the Collaboration of Men and Women,” 14.

85. See Kelly James Clark and Robin Wang, “A Confucian Defense of Gender Equity,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 72 (2004): 395–422, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfh035>.

86. Christine E. Gudorf, “Gendered Identity Formation and Moral Theology,” in Linda Hogan, ed., *Applied Ethics in a World Church: The Padua Conference* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 2009), 110.

87. Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church* (New York: Continuum, 2003).

proposes election of representatives from various ministries to the parish council—which is not just a consultative but a deliberative body<sup>88</sup>—accountability of ordained servant leaders to the pastoral council, involvement of lay people in the selection of bishops,<sup>89</sup> and placing qualified lay people in diocesan administration and the Curia. Ormond Rush on the other hand proposes to envision the church’s teaching office as involving more than the Magisterium but instead would have three distinctive authorities: the *sensus fidelium*, theology, and the Magisterium.<sup>90</sup> Lay people such as catechists and members of BECs<sup>91</sup> are engaged in the interpretation, application, and transmission of the faith. Theologians (men and women; clergy and lay) assist in the creative interpretation of Scripture and tradition in new contexts. The much earlier proposal of Schüssler Fiorenza to institutionalize the dialogue of the Magisterium with theologians through the creation of theological commissions on the diocesan, national/regional, and international levels, may be helpful in this regard.<sup>92</sup>

The beneficiaries of this model of church as yin-yang harmony are the marginalized, both within (e.g. women, lay) and outside the church, who find support or are empowered by the church. They help the church to become a social embodiment of God’s salvific harmony. As a sacrament or a sign of the presence of God’s grace, there is loyalty to the church as well as honest criticism, for the “church is continually called to become a better sign of Christ than it has been.”<sup>93</sup>

The bonds that unify members of the church are the same bonds that link them to the bigger society and the cosmos—the fundamental energy at life’s source (Qi) that is present in each human. There is a sense of camaraderie among those striving to bring about harmony (the smooth flow of Spirit-Qi) by balancing the generative forces of yin and yang within the church and in the world.

## The Model and Dulles’s Six Criteria

The model of church as sacrament of yin-yang harmony is strong in fostering a corporate identity and mission, especially for East Asians who can culturally identify with

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88. This requires a revision of Can. 129 which puts the power of governance or jurisdiction to those in sacred orders, while the laity can only cooperate in its exercise. See also James A. Coriden, “Lay Persons and the Power of Governance,” *The Jurist* 59 (1999): 335–47 at 337.
89. St. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage stressed the laity’s role in the bishop’s election. See Francis Sullivan, “St. Cyprian on the Role of the Laity in Decision Making in the Early Church,” in *Common Calling*, 39–49.
90. *Dei Verbum* 8 identifies these three as the means through which the Spirit assists the church in the development of its tradition.
91. Emmanuel S. de Guzman, “Exploring the Terrain of Sensus Fidelium among ‘Root-Crops’ Christians,” *MST Review* 6 (2004): 1–73.
92. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesia-logy of Liberation* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 274. On lay representation in ecumenical councils in the Middle Ages, see Hubert Jedin, *Ecumenical Councils in the Catholic Church* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1960), 230–31, cited by Orsy, “The Church of the Third Millennium,” n. 8, 229–51 at 249–50.
93. Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 77.

the yin-yang discourse.<sup>94</sup> It can resonate as well among an increasing number of Christians who are appropriating or rediscovering Asian spirituality, especially its modes of healing and contemplation. It likewise opens up other possibilities for the production of a creative and fruitful theology by women and the laity based on yin-yang harmony.<sup>95</sup> The yin-yang metaphor has been used as a way of reading Scriptures,<sup>96</sup> and in understanding the Trinity and the relationship of the nature of Christ and his person.<sup>97</sup> Through the cultural lens of Qi, Christian pneumatology can rediscover its cosmic-natural dimensions.<sup>98</sup> The model, enhanced by the biblical concept of harmony, is also able to foster virtues such as equality, justice for the marginalized, and care for creation.

The church as sacrament of yin-yang harmony possesses potential for positive relations among church members as it redresses imbalances in all relations such as clericalism and sexism within the church. The model is open as well to the presence of grace outside church institutions. The second plenary assembly statement of the FABC affirms the presence of the Holy Spirit in other religions,<sup>99</sup> and that “the Holy Spirit has taught” other religions “to express [their faith] in a marvellous variety of ways.”<sup>100</sup> As Qi is the “great harmony” which makes possible harmonies of opposites, it can be employed to foster acceptance of the “other,” especially the marginalized other.

The church as sacrament of yin-yang harmony is also a church “at the service of the restoration of the whole of creation in its original harmony.”<sup>101</sup> The yin and yang forces within humans interact with those in the environment; an imbalance of these forces within the individual or in society affects the environment. Similarly, the Qi of humans pulsates with that of nature, thus underlining the interdependence of all beings in the cosmos. The church in this model strives not only for societal but also ecological and cosmic harmony. It is “essentially as a centrifugal church open to the whole universe and present in and for the universe.”<sup>102</sup> More than the communion ecclesiology, the church is focused not only on *ad intra* but also *ad extra* concerns.<sup>103</sup>

94. To recall what has been stated earlier, Dulles’s criteria are as follows: (1) foundation in Scripture and the post-apostolic tradition; (2) ability to provide a corporate identity and mission; (3) the capacity of the model to foster Christian virtues; (4) correspondence with the religious experience of people today; (5) theological fecundity; and (6) potential for positive relations of church members with those outside their group.

95. See the use of the yin-yang metaphor as a way of reading the Scriptures, in Hyun Chul Paul Kim, “Interpretative Modes of Yin-Yang Dynamics as an Asian Hermeneutics,” *Biblical Interpretation* 9 (2001): 287–308, <https://doi.org/10.1163/156851501317072729>.

96. Hyun Chul Paul Kim, “Interpretative Modes.”

97. Jaeseung Cha, “A Dialog between Patristic Christology and the Yin-yang Perspective on the Relationship of Christ’s Nature with His Person,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 7 (2013): 294–309, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15697312-12341312>.

98. Kim, *The Holy Spirit, Chi, and the Other*, 30.

99. See also BIRA IV/2, 1985, in *FAPA* vol. 1, 251–55 at 253.

100. FABC II, “Prayer—The Life of the Church of Asia,” in *FAPA* vol. 1, at 40–44 at 43.

101. TAC-FABC, “Asian Christian Perspectives on Harmony,” 275.

102. TAC-FABC, “Asian Christian Perspectives on Harmony,” 294.

103. Phan, “The Church in Asian Perspective,” 286.

Though the term harmony is not in the Bible itself, it constitutes one of the major themes in Christianity, akin to the salvation offered by God through Christ Jesus. Aside from *shalom*, which is the closest biblical equivalent of harmony, other terms that emphasize its other aspects are “‘covenant’ (berith), ‘justice’ (sedaka), ‘blessing’ (beraka), ‘reconciliation’ (katallage) and ‘communio’ (koinonia).”<sup>104</sup>

The patristic tradition anticipates the notion of the church as sacrament of harmony. In the context of a threat of schism in the church, St. Cyprian writes of the church as a sacrament of unity.<sup>105</sup> In the Christian perspective, however, the church can only be truly a sacrament of harmony if it is in communion with the perfect personal relationship in the Trinity, the source and summit of harmony.<sup>106</sup> Unlike in the Daoist perspective where yin-yang and Qi are impersonal forces, the Trinity is a personal God. The Spirit that accompanies and empowers us is the spirit of Adonai and Jesus. Our filial relationship with a personal God made known in Jesus makes us sisters and brothers so that the greatest commandment involves two dimensions: love of God and love of neighbor. This relationship of love with a personal God, according to FABC, is the Christian contribution to the concept of harmony in East Asia.<sup>107</sup>

Yin-yang’s Daoist origins may also connote for others passivity in the face of conflict to promote harmony at all costs. In Daoism, to live harmoniously with the natural world, one should never go against its rhythms, never fight with one’s emotions and desires.<sup>108</sup> A person needs to be philosophically awakened to the virtue of *wu-wei* (non-action or non-striving). Combined with the traditional Chinese emphasis on politeness, *wu-wei* has been interpreted or identified with passivity.

Other discourses on *wu-wei*, however, would not identify it with sheer passivity. Daoism is different from stoicism, which likewise stresses the need to respect and flow with the rhythms of nature. But unlike stoicism, the Daodejing<sup>109</sup> does not foster withdrawal from the world. “One continues to look at the world through hooded eyes; and the focus is not merely on the dynamics of the world, but also on what one is to do.”<sup>110</sup> Thus harmony is not achieved through passivity but via “active waiting” or a “wait and see” stance. This sense of waiting is perhaps captured by the psalmist’s verse, “Be still, and know that I am God!” (Ps. 46:10). Joel Kupperman asserts that “a good Daoist is, and will continue to be, an independent agent and not a conformist or a doormat.”<sup>111</sup>

104. TAC-FABC, “Asian Christian Perspectives on Harmony,” 266.

105. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (December 4, 1963), 5, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html).

106. TAC-FABC, “Asian Christian Perspectives on Harmony,” 281.

107. BIRA V/4, “Taoist and Confucian Contributions to Harmony in East Asia” (1996), in *FAPA* vol. 2, 161–65 at 164.

108. See also BIRA V/4, 162–63.

109. Daodejing/Tao Te Ching is the classic Chinese text central to Taoism and Chinese Buddhism.

110. Kupperman, *Classic Asian Philosophy*, 125.

111. Kupperman, *Classic Asian Philosophy*, 125.

He or she can steer the course of events quietly and inconspicuously. Direct confrontations are avoided and the opposition is given a space to maneuver.<sup>112</sup>

An important complement to the “active waiting” or “wait and see” stance is the prophetic dimension in Christianity that stresses the counter-cultural and critical role of religion vis-à-vis structures of oppression. The bishops warn “against idyllic peace or sinful counterfeit harmony in society” that simply serves “vested interests and egoistic goals.”<sup>113</sup> It is the poor and the excluded who bear the cost of this kind of harmony. The well-being of the poor and the marginalized will “depend upon peace and harmony nourished by justice.” The FABC likewise rejects any suggestion that the quest for harmony is reductionistic and willfully ignores valid distinctions and disagreements: “[H]armony does not consist in leveling off differences in order to arrive at consensus at any cost. Avoiding controversies and bypassing disagreements do not pave the way to harmony.”<sup>114</sup>

## Conclusion

The Vatican II teachings, though a great advance compared to the pre-Vatican II two-tiered church, do not provide for an adequate ecclesiology that would open up a space for the full participation of the laity and of women.

In this article, I have proposed the church as sacrament of yin-yang harmony as an ecclesiological model in the East Asian context. It builds on the FABC theology of harmony and vision of church as sacrament of harmony. It goes beyond these in offering a way of reimagining the roles of women and men, laity, and clergy in the church beyond complementary polarities based on an essential difference toward fluid dualities whose equal and balanced participation in the church would enable her to truly become a sacrament of harmony. Women and men, lay and clergy, possess yin and yang energies; they can function within the church as yin or yang relative to certain contexts. An excess of yang energy within an individual, the church, society, or cosmos would lead to an imbalance that would block the flow of Spirit-Qi. The ideal is in their harmonious integration.

Though the term “harmony” is not found in the Bible itself, it is congruent with the overarching themes of salvation, including Jesus’ vision of the Reign of God, and the early church’s hope for universal and even cosmic salvation. As the model seeks the balance of yin and yang forces, it is strong in fostering virtues of equality and justice. Within the church it aims to redress imbalances brought about by domination due to clericalism and sexism. Outside the church it addresses social issues of injustice and promotes care for creation because yin and yang are also the generative forces in the cosmos. Steeped in the sacramental attitude that recognizes the presence of the sacred in all of creation, it recognizes that the Spirit-Qi is operative in other religions as well.

112. Kupperman, *Classic Asian Philosophy*, 124.

113. BIRA IV/11, in *FAPA* vol. 1, 317–24 at 321.

114. BIRA V/3, “Working for Harmony in the Contemporary World,” in *FAPA*, vol. 2, 155–60 at 158.

As a theology drawn from a local cultural (Daoist) resource, it has the potential for further development of an East Asian contextual theology.

Unlike in Daoism, however, in this Christian model, the balancing of yin and yang forces is ultimately a work of the Spirit—a personal God who empowers toward justice. While it acknowledges the need to be still and listen to the Spirit-Qi, there are times as well when one has to pass through a phase of conflict in order to attain genuine harmony in society.

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